

Kelton

10 Lessons From Journalism

Put journalistic principles
to work for your business.



Kelton

Write a story worth telling

When we started in the world of insights 15 years ago, no one talked about storytelling. As a company founded by former journalists, we built our reputation in this industry by creating compelling, insightful narratives about human beings and what makes them tick. A decade and a half later, the desire for better stories shows no signs of abating, and for good reason. How the story is told – and its ability to compel individuals to behave differently based on what they learn – is more important than ever.

We first shared Kelton's 10 Lessons from Journalism six years ago. Since then, we've continued to test our approach to storytelling as the discipline and technology evolves. In our latest update, you'll find a couple of new rules to live by, plus fresh examples of media outlets and businesses at the forefront of next gen storytelling. Our hope is that our approach to storytelling will help to demystify the process, enabling you to inspire action.



01 LESSON:

Let **Hypotheses** Guide You

When there's little to no information to go off of, it can be challenging to even know where to start. Well-formed hypotheses help you get moving towards answers.



01 LESSON:

Hypotheses enable us to **focus** and **dive deep** when there isn't a ton of existing information

There are **three major benefits** to leading with a hypothesis:

- 1 It saves time
- 2 It costs less money
- 3 It produces deeper and more concrete insights.



01 LESSON:

...And what if a hypothesis is **wrong**? Be prepared to iterate...
And don't close doors

You know what they say...

“

Fail fast to succeed sooner

“

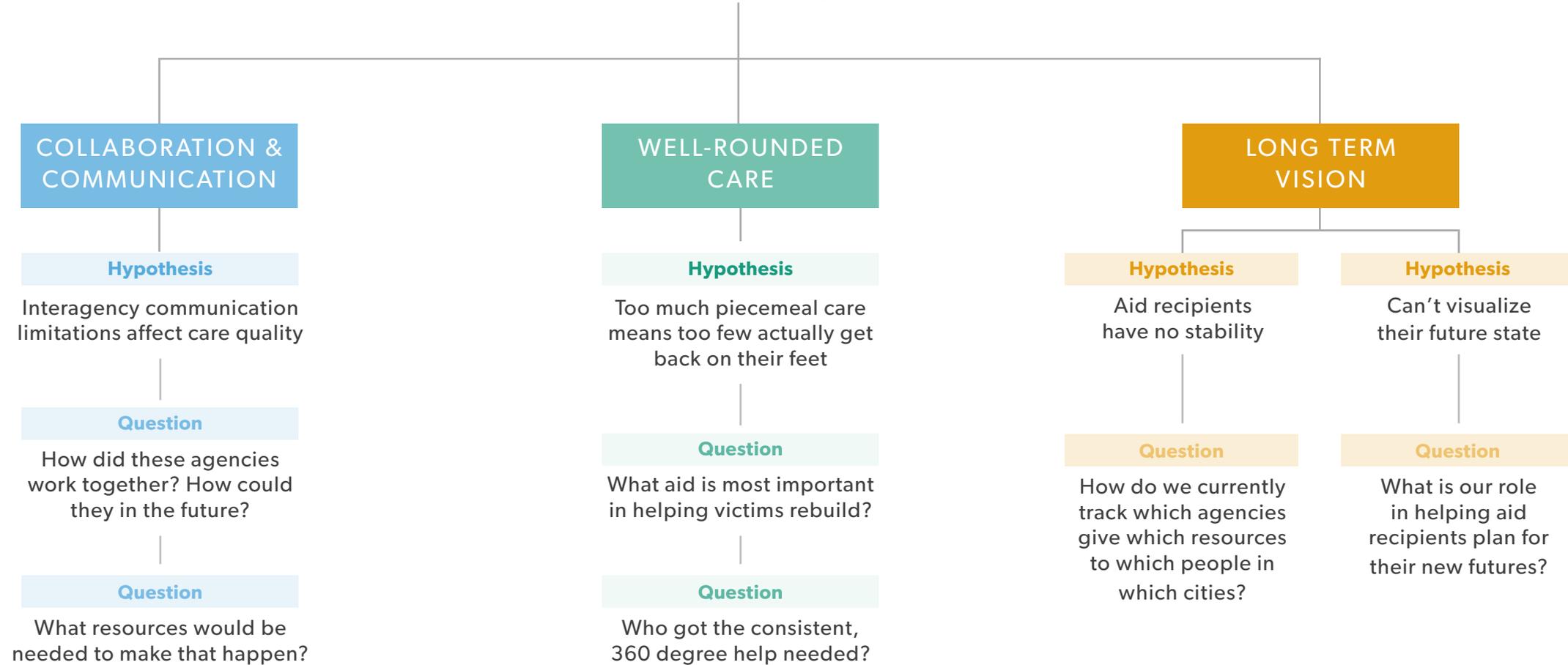
Be wrong at the start
to be right at the end



In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina,

a prominent nonprofit wanted to understand how their resources could be used **most effectively**. The organization knew very little about how aid had been received by the community it was serving other than secondhand information about the issues they faced.

We started tackling this tough question with a set of hypotheses to drive our questioning.



02 LESSON:

Storymaking vs. Storytelling

Challenge yourself to be a creator, not just a communicator. You're not just translating someone else's narrative, you're responsible for creating one from scratch. Here's how we approach it.

The current conversation about storytelling puts too much emphasis on the “TELLING”

To be truly transformative, stories need to be grounded in human truths and crafted with the needs and interests of the audience in mind. Focus too much on the “telling” part of storytelling, and you risk muddling the key point: the takeaway that inspires action.



STORYTELLERS...

Are passive narrators. They focus mostly on presentation, regurgitating existing stories without meditating on the outcome the story should help achieve.



vs.

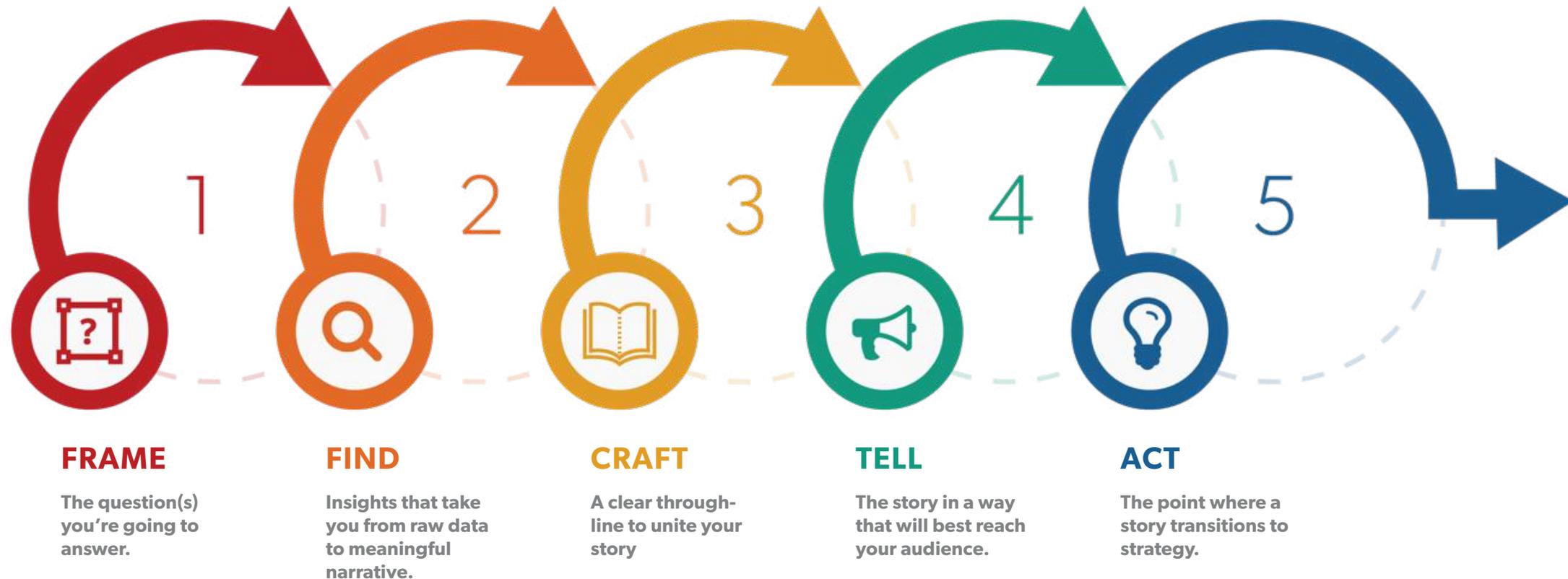
STORYMAKERS...

Are active creators. They focus on designing new stories to tell, putting more thought into why and how they'll direct their narrative than how they'll “perform” the story.

At Kelton, our stories are developed through **creative collaboration**

KELTON'S STORYMAKING PROCESS

Our systematic approach to crafting powerful, transformative stories.



A brand narrative to get the public on board with public transportation in a car-centric city.

Our client needed to get the word out about new public transportation options, but they needed to get their story straight first.

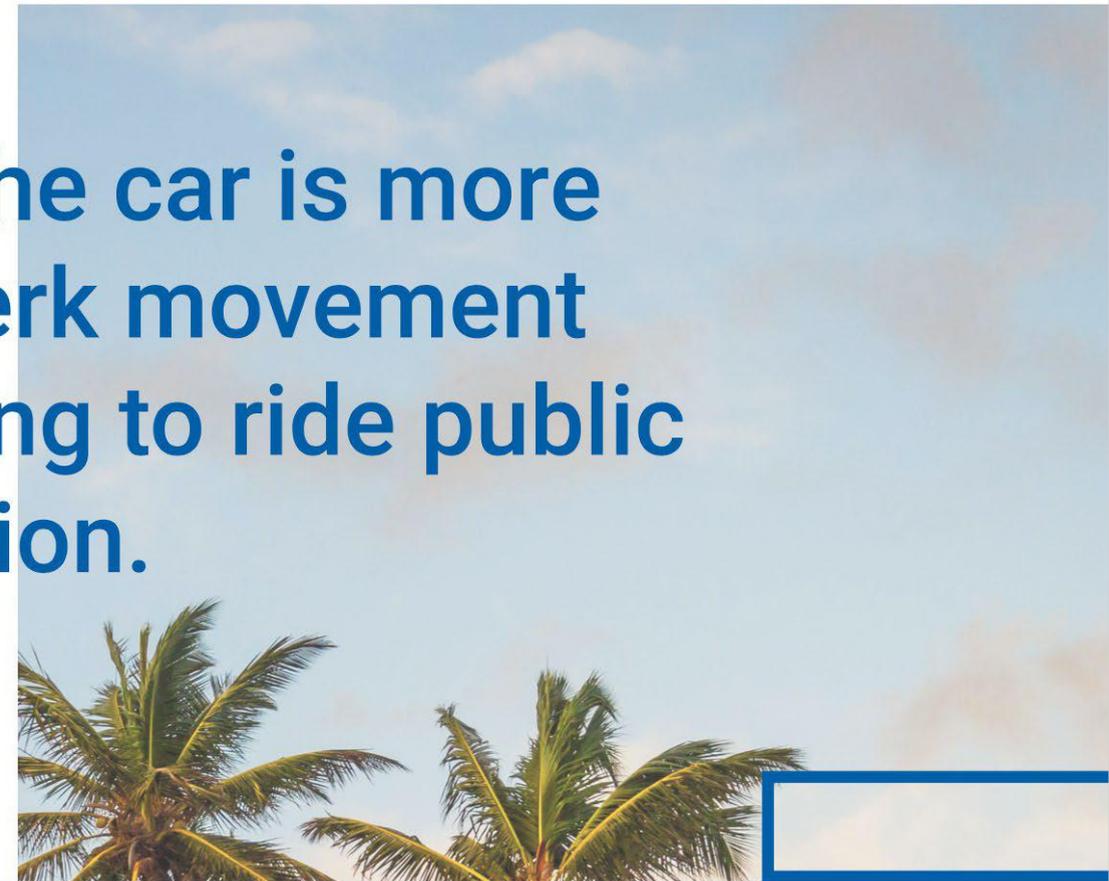
We partnered with our client to develop a truly compelling brand story and communications playbook that spoke to common needs, beliefs, and concerns that people had around public transportation.

We didn't just tell the stories of their riders. We created a master narrative for their brand, based on those stories. And that compelled individuals to share the document, read and re-read it, and take action.

“

— Getting in the car is more of a knee-jerk movement than deciding to ride public transportation.

— Zach, Occasional Rider



03 LESSON:

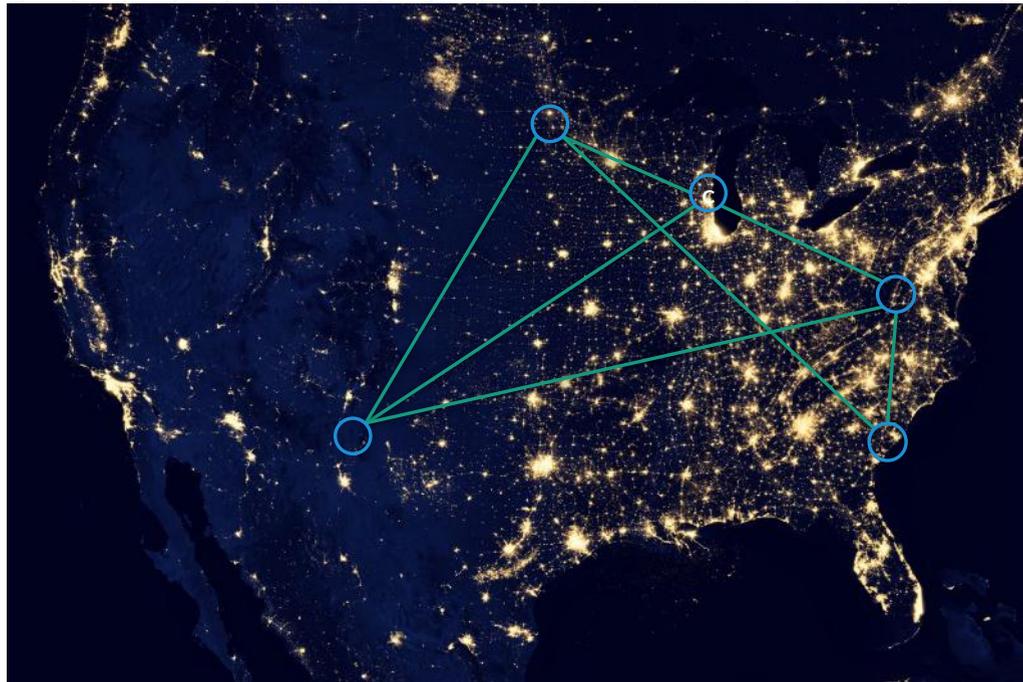
Put Humans at the Center – **the truth is in their stories**

Focus on main characters that will drive your narrative, and get audiences invested in their challenges.



The two most frequently used words in market research are **DATA** and **CONSUMER**.

When you focus on
"DATA" ...



LIFE BECOMES A MAP

When you focus on
"CONSUMER" ...



THE PERSON BECOMES A PROFILE

03 LESSON:

As Journalists,
we **seek out stories**

For a narrative to be
compelling, we have
to **connect with the
main character.**

HUMAN TRUTH



EMPATHY

A Memorable Spotlight on Gen Z

We recently partnered with a major global tech manufacturer to help them better understand how Gen Zers were using devices today. In our final reporting, we chose to focus on a teen named Karina.

It was obvious that Karina considered her devices to be essential, and that they made her feel happy and content. Other teens we interviewed felt similarly, but Karina's story was particularly memorable because her younger sister happened to be there, too.

Throughout the interview, we witnessed Karina's sister emulating her every move — including her tech habits. By focusing on Karina's profile, we were able to paint a picture of a very important finding from our research: that Gen Zers were influencing tech habits in younger generations in very specific ways.



"My devices are my life. I can't remember what it was like not to have them. I never want to go back."

- KARINA F.

04 LESSON:

Remember the Inverted Pyramid – **don't bury the lead**

Follow the Inverted Pyramid format, putting the most relevant and compelling facts up front.

Inverted Pyramid Style of Storytelling

It's the single most frequently made mistake in business reporting and insights: up front pages include way too much background information, with valuable takeaways scattered throughout a lengthy deck. The result? The most critical information that you need your reader to know gets lost and forgotten in a sea of nice-to-have context.

Journalism operates in the exact opposite way, placing the most critical information up front so that their audience remembers the most important takeaways from the story. Structuring your next report Inverted Pyramid style will ensure that your main points are more likely to stick.



Inverted Pyramid Example

Intro sentences

Contain a provocative hook and contextual detail.

The first paragraphs

set the stage for the topic, and focus in on an individual's experience with the events.

Subsequent paragraphs

introduce supporting information critical to the story.



How The Tiny Nation Of Georgia Became A Bitcoin Behemoth

April 23, 2018 - 8:15 AM ET

ANDREW NORTH



Cryptocurrency mining has come to Georgia. U.S.-based company Bitfury has been accounting for much of the buzz.
Andrew North for NPR

Since long before anyone can remember, the big, fertile slopes of the Alazani Valley in eastern Georgia have been planted with grape vines. It's the heartland of wine-making in the country that invented it 8,000 years ago. But in recent months, the valley has been going through a new kind of ferment, because of bitcoin.

"You see that building there with the power line outside," says Bezhan Buzhaidze, pointing to an abandoned-looking, cinder block storehouse in his hometown of Telavi, the hub of Georgian wine country. "That's being turned into a data center for mining cryptocurrencies."

It's another sign of how this tiny former Soviet republic of fewer than 4 million people has become a virtual printing press for this new money you can't see.

Cryptocurrency mining is the digital equivalent of minting real money, except that anyone with the right hardware and software can do it, by taking part in what amounts to a giant virtual competition. Think of it like a lottery, where computers linked across the Internet compete to solve complex mathematical puzzles, with the number of players constantly rising. The owner of the computer that finds the right solution is rewarded with a "block" of bitcoin or other cryptocurrency, which is then registered and verified on a decentralized database system known as the blockchain.

Following paragraphs (not shown) include more contextual details.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/04/23/597780405/how-the-tiny-nation-of-georgia-became-a-bitcoin-behemoth>

05 LESSON:

Know Your Audience

Pay attention to who your readers are and what they care about, and position your narrative to make sure your story resonates.



Competent Journalists are Versatile

They know how to adapt their stories for different mediums, and how to structure their narratives so that they appeal to various groups of people with different perspectives and concerns.

Be Multi-Modal

Consider how your story might eventually translate to other platforms and structures. Can your presentation break down into a handout for internal distribution? Will you need to voice over a written report in an upcoming stakeholder meeting? Craft your narrative and key points with this in mind.



Think of your audience, and what they care about

Always take a step back to consider what your audience's main concerns and objectives are. An internal insights team will surely want to know more of the technical aspects of your report, while the C-Suite will want to focus on what the outcome means for strategic direction.

Be empathetic to your audience's motivations so that you can drive your point home in a way that sticks.



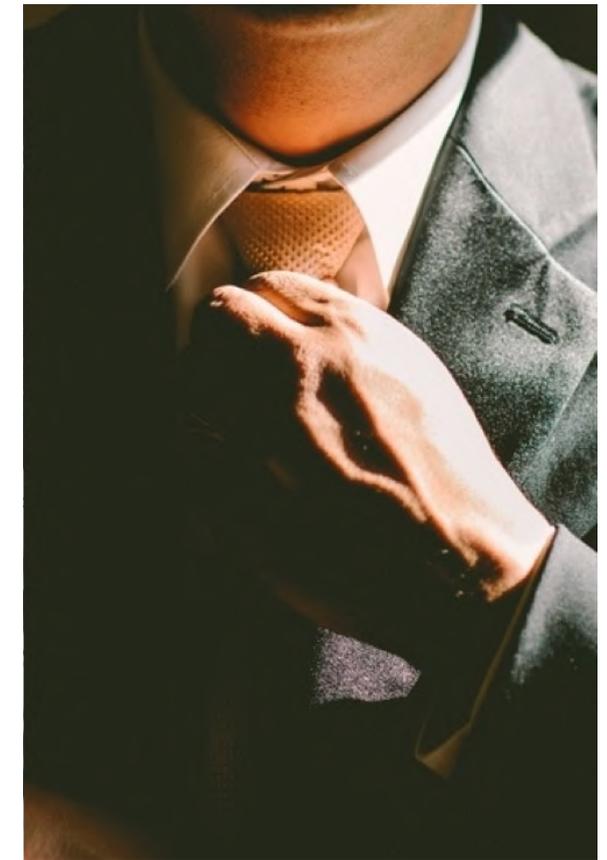
RESEARCH

What kind of analysis did you do?



MARKETING

What's the big idea?



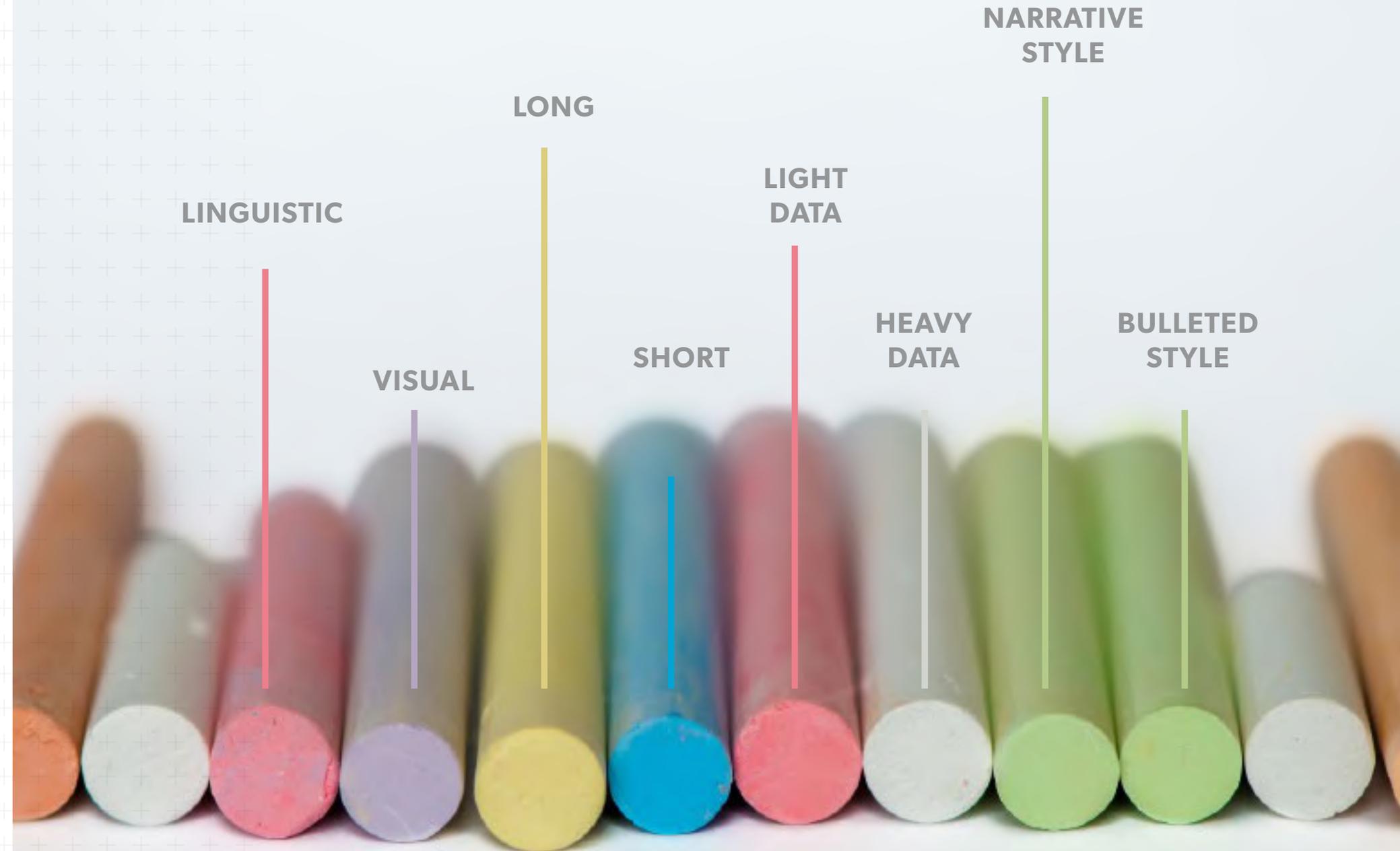
C-SUITE

What's the business case?

How do they best **absorb** information?

Don't assume your audience will want to receive information in a certain way just because that's how it's traditionally been delivered. An agile startup might appreciate a video highlighting key takeaways, while a more established Fortune 500 might find a comprehensive report paired with a concise brief more useful.

Consider all the ways the information will be shared internally, and design for those scenarios.



06 LESSON:

Never underestimate the power of the **written word**

Lengthy PowerPoints are the enemy of well tailored prose. For the right audiences, get out of PowerPoint and into a medium that celebrates the full power of language.

Beware the Powerpoint presentation: it's where stories go to die

Powerpoint may have become the default in the business world, but it's far from an ideal vehicle for powerful stories. While certain scenarios might call for a Powerpoint deck, take heed that it's very easy to provide way too much- or way too little- information in this format.



Think like an author: Ditch the deck for more story-conducive formats

Challenge yourself to create your next report as a concise memo. Incorporate an easy-to-read text hierarchy that makes key points clear, and include call outs that draw readers into your narrative.

If more context is needed, consider other more sensory formats, like podcast or video style reporting. Whatever you choose, avoid defaulting to Powerpoint just because it's the status quo. Always ask yourself: "what format will let me tell my story as clearly, memorably, and concisely as possible?"



Lean Reporting at Amazon

Silicon Valley moves too fast for 100 page Powerpoint decks. More and more, Amazon and other e-commerce and tech powerhouses are opting to ditch the decks whenever possible in favor of succinct memos (think six pages or less).

It may seem impossible, but these companies are proving that disrupting the reporting status quo can be done with the right type of internal buy-in.



07 LESSON:

Break Audience **Expectations**

Nothing is more memorable than a new experience. Pursue new storytelling formats to capture attention.



Journalists carefully craft headlines to draw attention

Powerful, memorable headlines are:

- 1 Concise
- 2 Descriptive
- 3 Relatable
- 4 Thought-provoking

The screenshot shows a BuzzFeed News article with the headline "The Health Ministry Suggested That We Need To Be Vegetarians To Be Healthy And No One Wants To Hear It". The author is Sonia Mariam Thomas, BuzzFeed Staff, India. Below the article is a row of social media sharing icons. Below that is a tweet from the Ministry of Health (@MoHFW_INDIA) with the text: "Good nutrition is one of the keys to a #healthy life. Choose wisely, live well. #SwasthaBharat #AyushmanBharat #HealthForAll".

Advertisers use imagery for the same purpose

The same basic principles that apply to headlines also apply to imagery used in conjunction with storytelling. In many cases, powerful images can communicate key points even better than language.



RHINO HORN IS MADE OF EXACTLY THE SAME STUFF AS HUMAN FINGERNAILS. STILL WANT SOME?

It will not cure your terminal illness. You will not make your hair grow faster. And rhino horns definitely won't do anything to increase your sexual potency. If you absolutely must swallow a powder with no medical benefits, may we suggest you grind down your own fingernails and give that a go. Switch to nuts and save the rhino.

www.wwf.com.cn

The journalistic power of Video Storytelling

Prominent media outlets and marketers alike are exploring the possibilities of immersive reader experiences with the help of video and Augmented Reality. The *New York Times* recently debuted a new AR-style article on the 2018 Winter Olympics, in addition to a wider content library of similar immersive experiences.



<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/05/sports/olympics/ar-augmented-reality-olympic-athletes-ul.html>

08 LESSON:

Include Experiential Details

Immerse your audience in the world you're presenting by providing detail around moments of purpose, consumption, and consideration.



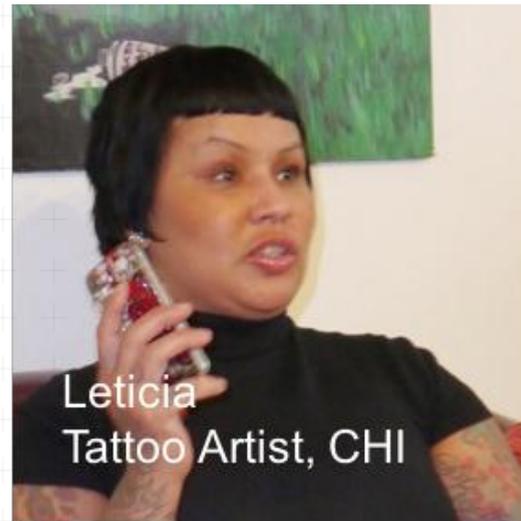
WHEN REPORTING ON INSIGHTS PROJECTS, WE OFTEN SHARE DETAILS OF **MANY PEOPLE'S LIVES**



Claire
Homemaker, SF



Gayle
Homemaker, CHI



Leticia
Tattoo Artist, CHI



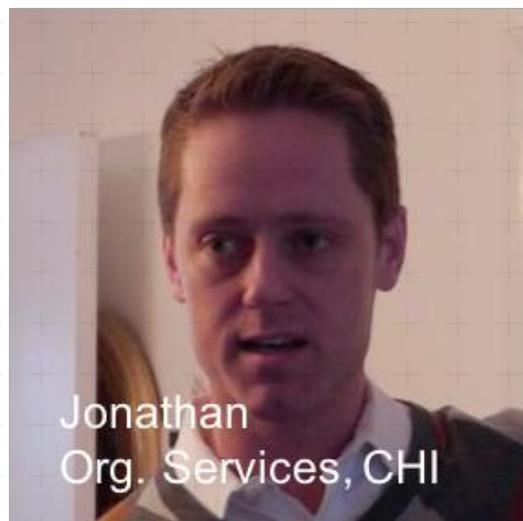
Angelina
Travel Agent, SF



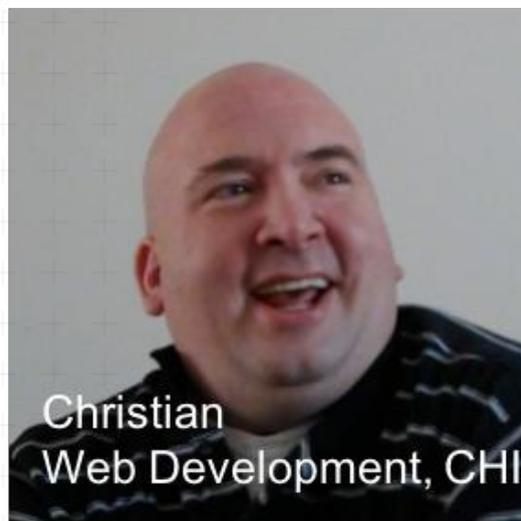
Rebecca
Chef, CHI



Joseph
Caterer, SF



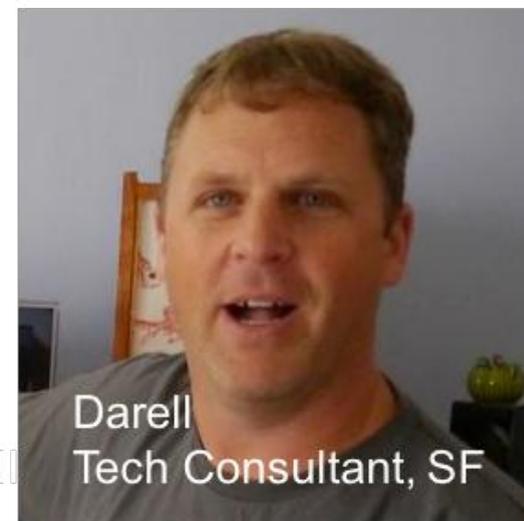
Jonathan
Org. Services, CHI



Christian
Web Development, CHI



Robert
Computer Technician, CHI



Darell
Tech Consultant, SF

... But there's always one person, and one detail, **EVERYONE REMEMBERS**

"I'll never forget this one mom we interviewed on behalf of a beverage brand. She led us out to a small stairwell behind her apartment, and showed us where she'd stashed a soda behind the stairs. She always kept one soda hidden in this secret spot, just for her. When parenting became overwhelming, she would duck out to the stairwell, retrieve her soda, and take a quick break. The soda had become a part of a small but sacred act of self-care for this woman."

– Gareth Schweitzer
Co-Founder and President
Kelton Global



09 LESSON:

Who's Your Editor?

A good editor brings perspective. They remind you to consider the wider context in which you're writing, re-focus you on the goal of your story when you veer off track, and keep your audience top of mind.



Working in silos, perspective is often **absent**

When composing your narrative, take a minute to solicit feedback from people who might approach the topic from another angle.

Ask your Editor to help you identify potential blind spots or gaps in your story, and have your draft reviewed by readers with different backgrounds and experience levels to confirm the story resonates across audiences.



10 LESSON:

The Rules of **Engagement**

Ultimate rules to live by when you're looking to tell a compelling story.





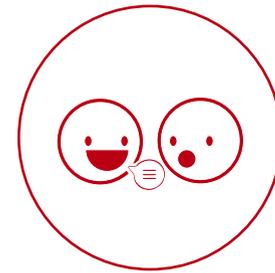
Never, ever read a slide

When presenting in person, keep written information succinct and focused on the key takeaways.



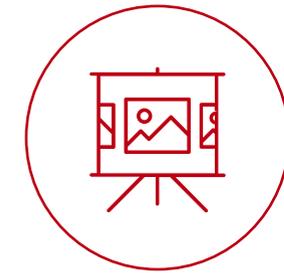
Your content is only as interesting as **you think it is**

You can't fake passion. Talk about things you truly care about, and relate the topic back to your audience's wants, needs, concerns, and challenges.



Go off script

A short, powerful personal anecdote can help your audience remember a key point. Bonus points for humor!



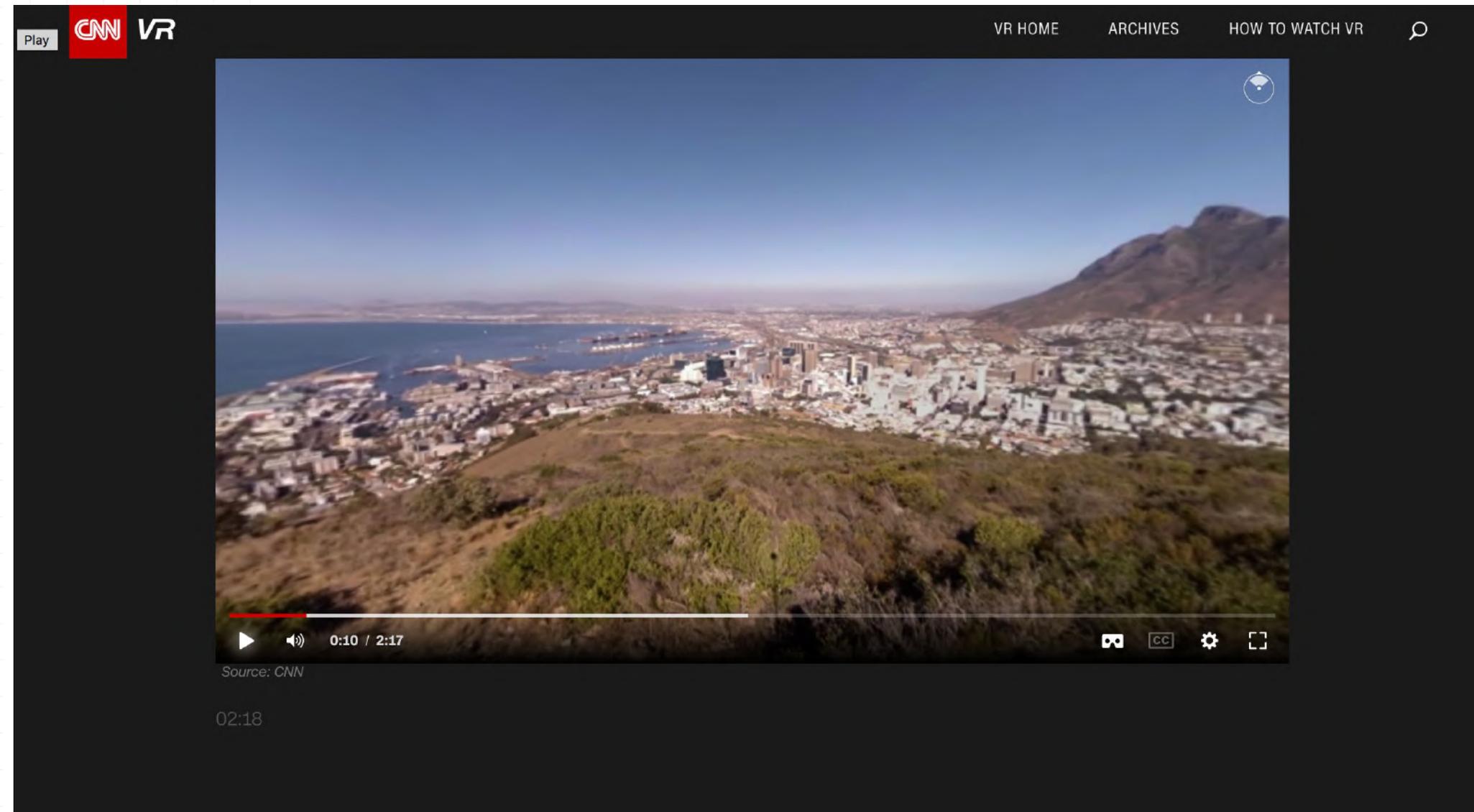
Let video and pictures **speak for themselves**

Powerful visuals can augment your point.

Cape Town Is Running Out of Water

— CNN

CNN uses Virtual Reality to immerse readers in the experience of a major drought in Cape Town, South Africa. While a reporter voices over key points in the story, the reader can explore 360 degree views of Cape Town in motion.



<https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/07/vr/cape-town-south-africa-water-crisis-vr/index.html>

Harness the power of storytelling.

From insights, to financial reporting, to global strategy, there's no better way to get your point across than with a memorable, compelling narrative. When we apply journalistic principles to the way we communicate findings and recommendations, good ideas and key takeaways prompt real action. While the methods we might use to craft compelling narratives will evolve, 10 Lessons from Journalism rings true with every medium— whether old or new.

About Kelton Global

Kelton is an insights and strategy company that helps global businesses chart new paths to growth. We make sense of consumer behavior and motivation to help the world's biggest, most well-loved brands define what's next.

We LOVE talking about this stuff.

Want to learn more about how Kelton can help your businesses with consumer insights and storytelling? Give us a call or drop us a note.

+1.310.479.4040 | contact@keltonglobal.com

10 Lessons From Journalism

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2. | Storymaking **vs** Storytelling
3. | Put Humans at the Center –
the truth is in their stories
4. | Remember the Inverted Pyramid –
don't bury the lead
5. | Know Your **Audience**
6. | Never underestimate the
power of the **written word**
7. | Break Audience **Expectations**
8. | Include Experiential **Details**
9. | Who's Your **Editor?**
10. | The Rules of **Engagement**