

Powerful Storytelling Today: Reference Sheet

Working on a story? Refer back to Soledad's tips and techniques as you move through the process.

Elements of a Great Story

- Reveal human complexity.
- Ensure your story is 100% true to earn your audience's trust
- Include challenges: attempts, missteps, failures.
- Use data and details to build context and credibility.
- Celebrate a hero's assets to fuel optimism and hope.

The Idea

- Look for the "weird," surprising, or illogical. Spark your own curiosity first.
- Ask a question about something you interact with every day.

Gathering Support

- If you don't have an existing audience (or want to reach a bigger one), build early support for funding and distribution.
- Today's technology gives storytellers unprecedented freedom and reach. Use social media!
- Think about existing advertising or other promotion your company is engaged with, and consider if your story could work on one of those platforms.

Casting + Research

- Focus on finding your "hero" to help you hone in on the details of your narrative.
- Consider your story's medium — text, audio, or visual — and look for a subject who will work for that medium.
- Find a subject whose backstory works with the narrative you're trying to share.
- Build an in-depth knowledge-base to take control of the story before your interview

The Interview

- Remember that listening is the secret to great storytelling.
- Allow for silence.
- Ask "But why?"
- Start prompts with "Tell me about..."
- Avoid "yes or no" questions.
- Push for failures, mistakes, vulnerabilities, and struggles.
- Give yourself space and time to be surprised.
- Try "unconfuse me" to challenge in a non-confrontational way.

Structuring Your Story

- Step back and look over everything you've gathered so far
- Find the holes in your narrative and map out how you'll fill them in
- Start your story in the middle to grab your audience's attention
- Cut ruthlessly to ensure your story is focused and sharp
- Think about where your story will live to ensure the end product works with the platform