

Chapter 40

Applying Digital Storytelling to Business Planning

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ABSTRACT

Digital storytelling for business planning has two different modes of perception, thinking, and communication: the narrative and the logical scientific. This chapter pointed out how the structure and the contents of the digital storytelling work influence its effectiveness through examination of works and the audience's evaluation of the works. Critical points regarding the structure of work were the consistency and the balance. The most important link was from a contrast between the initial situation and obstruction in the narrative part, to key success factors deriving in the analytical part. The link represents what is the problem that the storyteller found. Regarding the contents of work, familiarity to the audience—a story of “something like you”—is effective in understanding, persuasiveness and empathy of the story's message.

INTRODUCTION

Digital Storytelling

In this chapter, digital storytelling means a short digital work that combines narration and visual-auditory material, such as photographs, music, and movies, produced by an individual as his or her own story¹. The origin of digital storytelling was a kind of democratization movement of visual art on the West Coast of the United States in the 1970s–1980s. In the 1990s, the movement developed through the appearance of low-cost and easy-to-use equipment, such as personal computers, digital cameras, and the Internet. In 1994, the San Francisco Center for Digital Media was founded and developed into the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in 1998 (Lambert, 2013). Although a virtual reality game in which players develop their own stories with a character is also called digital storytelling (Murray, 1998), this chapter addresses digital storytelling following the CDS's movement.

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Lambert, one of the founders of the CDS, pointed out that digital storytelling has seven components: self-revelatory, personal or first person voice, scenes of a lived experiences of the storyteller, photos more than moving images, soundtracks, short-length (under five minutes) and simple designs, and the storyteller's ownership of the entire process and distribution (Lambert, 2013). As Lambert (2013) noted, the storyteller's private life need not always be revealed, but telling a storyteller's non-fiction expressed in the first person is recommended because it is the easiest way to deeply reflect himself or herself.

Regardless of whether or not a story is the storyteller's nonfiction, digital storytelling is oriented to be subjective, personal experience-based, emotional, sensory, and self-reflective in general. Through these aspects, digital storytelling contrasts with the ideal of logical scientific presentation in academic society.

Hartley and McWilliam (2009) added the definition of an element: that digital storytelling is a workshop-based practice called a story circle, although the workshop basis is an implicit premise from the beginning of the digital storytelling movement. In a story circle, participants not only learn how to create works but also communicate with each other during the process of developing stories. A story must be told to someone; thus, members of a story circle function as both author of their stories and hearers of other members' stories. In addition, if the workshop has a specific social theme, such as an environmental problem, digital storytelling can assist the social movement by sharing members' consciousness.

Digital storytelling has been applied to a variety of fields, not only visual arts but also a new style of media, education, therapy, and various social movements in public health care, social services, and others. Digital storytelling has spread not only in the United States but also in countries in Europe, Oceania, North America, Asia, Africa, and South America (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009). In Japan, where the workshop for this research was held, workshop-based practices by educational institutes and non-profit organizations have been observed since the 2000 (Nishioka, 2014).

Digital Storytelling in Business Situation

From the earliest time of the CDS, business use of digital storytelling has been positively attempted. For example, Coca-Cola adopted digital storytelling early in its brand marketing process. The company's brand story appeared on its website and recently has become more interactive with customers on social networking services (SNSs), such as Facebook. Because brand is an identity, a story can be told even for an agent who is not a human being.

The narrative approach did not result directly from the influence of the CDS but has expanded in social sciences from the 1980s and has broadly influenced businesses. A number of narrative approach practices have appeared, such as narrative planning, narrative marketing, storytelling for career development and storytelling in system development. Denning (2007) focused on leadership language; leaders must tell true stories about themselves, think through narratives, and understand the audience's story. Kusunoki (2010) advocated that an excellent corporate competitive strategy is a story. Future scenario planning (Schwartz, 1991; Van der Heijden, 1996; Wade, 2012) is also an example of narrative approach in business. In the early stage of the scenario planning process, one tends to place importance on logical analysis by identifying a focal issue, listing and classifying key factors and driving forces, and selecting scenario logic. In the latter process, the narrative approach becomes more pertinent as it fleshes out, interprets the scenarios and finds indications of the future (Schwartz, 1991). Scenario planning could be regarded as a hybrid version of the narrative approach and logical analysis.

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