THE 5-STEP Structure To write ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING

A practical, proven formula for thought leaders or business experts to outline any blog, book chapter, white paper or article in under 15 minutes

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Please share with your friends or any aspiring writer or author who needs a nudge in the right direction.

5 steps explained



WRITE A STORY

Imagine meeting someone for the first time and within five minutes they ask you to marry them. Feels kind of weird and awkward, right? A bit icky? It probably turns you off from that person and leaves you wondering, 'What just happened?', even if they list all the reasons why getting hitched might be a good idea.

It is no different when you are writing to someone, whether in a blog post, article, book, or even a sales email.

If you jump in too soon and overload your reader (your date) with a sell, some hard-hitting information, or boring facts and stats without first holding their hand, getting to know them, and creating some common ground then they are going to put down what they're reading and run in the other direction, never to be seen again.

You've got to spend time at the start creating a bond with your reader. You have to create an emotional connection, to build trust and credibility and help the other person feel something towards you (other than just scared or bored). The best way to do this is by telling them a story.

There are five types of stories you might use:

- Case study Document an existing organisation or leader, someone or something famous – think Michelle Obama, Elon Musk, Apple or Facebook. Maybe something that was reported about them in the news last week.
- 2 Scenario Write a hypothetical story based on someone or something your readers can relate to, e.g. Dave who is always running late to meetings and struggles to stay on top of his work. Can you relate?
- 3 Pop culture reference Describe a scene from a movie, book, or TV show. Ideally something your audience has seen or can relate to, present or past – Game of Thrones, Wizard of Oz or Harry Potter.
- 4 **Client story** Explain something that happened while working with a client. You may need to change names or details for privacy reasons or you could ask for permission and a quote from them to add weight to your story.
- 5 Personal anecdote Be inspired by something that happened to you in the week, while at work or even out walking the dog. It might be a conversation you had with your daughter or cooking with your son.



2 EXPLAIN WHAT THE POINT IS



Once you've identified a good story and plucked up the courage to take the next step, you then need to link the story to the main message of your blog, article, book chapter or white paper.

This is the thing that most of us fail to do!

Without explaining your point, the relevance of the story, then you'll end up writing waffle that has no meaning. Your audience will get bored and switch off because they won't understand why you're telling them a story about the day you washed 300 sweet potatoes in an hour on your own. So what? How does that relate to what happens in a leadership team every day? What is the insight from the story?

More importantly, what is the main message for what you are writing?

Is it that we're so used to operating in silos, but we could be doing so much more (peeling way more potatoes) if we were working together effectively? Is productivity on the decline?

This is where you start to share information and draw on some facts, stats and current research from other books, leaders, or studies that have been reported on in the media. You need to back up your arguments, to show that you are well researched and across your industry, that this isn't just here say. It also brings credibility to your message. That this is a current issue that shouldn't be ignored.

This is where you begin to make your audience feel like they *want* to hang out and spend more time with you. You start to show that you understand them, that you get the problem they might be experiencing in work or life right now.



Great, now we're ready for that dinner date! Your reader wants to know more about you and what you're telling them and, most importantly, why it is important for *them*.

This is the point where you need to explain to your audience why on earth they should care.

Why should they be worried about what you're telling them? Why do they need to change their behavior or their mindset? What are the implications if they don't'? What happens if they do?

This is where you're really starting to sell the problem. You've made a connection, you've given them the information you have to build trust and credibility around the issue and now you need to *convince* them why this is important, specifically, why act now? What will happen as a result?

L SHOW HOW TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE



If you've followed the steps in the structure then by this point, you'll have them on the edge of their seat. They like you, they like what they're hearing from you, you've persuaded them that they have to change, now the question is: how?

How do they change? How do they take what you've just told them and implement a difference to their own work or life? How do they get to the utopia that you've just told them about?

Most people fall flat on the how. They stick to the information, the problem, but don't give a solution, or worse, just gloss over it.

In a shorter piece of work, like a blog or article, you might give three top tips that would help your audience get over the fear of public speaking/have a tough conversation with a superior/increase meeting productivity time. In a longer piece of work, like a white paper or a book chapter, then perhaps you'll give them an exercise to do, e.g. identifying their values. Otherwise, walk them through one of your models or diagrams that demonstrates how they must change, e.g. explaining four key areas that they must address and what happens when they do.



You are drawing on your knowledge, experience and any intellectual property that you have developed that makes you and your solution unique.

This is where you start to stand out from everyone else, from anyone else in your market who might be offering a solution to a similar problem. What knowledge, experience or insight do you have that would help solve your audience's problem?

Remember, to keep it brief, but to go deep. You need to give them something real and tangible. What could they implement today, to help them make a change tomorrow?





So now you're at the end of your date, what's next? Well, of course, you want them to want more!

Don't just leave your audience hanging. After all, you wouldn't just eat, stand up and leave without paying the bill. Spend time at the end reiterating the benefits that happen as a result of the change. What is the result that happens when your reader implements what you've just shown them to do?

How do things start to improve? Do they become a better person? Does life get easier? Does productivity sky rocket, results improve or revenue increase?

Like any good date, you want to leave on a high!

Leave your audience feeling inspired to change, ready and able to take the next step, and eager to have a second date with you.

While the next step is in their hands, the chances of them returning to you will increase if you can forecast their future with your solution in it. Prompt them to imagine their life with your help.

Rhetorical questions are great for this. Just think:

How would your relationships and your writing improve if you started structuring your blog, book, white paper or article like this today?

final words

So now you know the secret to structure and map out any blog, book chapter, article or white paper. Pretty sweet, eh?

But you might still have one final question: How much do I need to write?

Well, here are my word count recommendations for each thing you are writing:

- Blog approx. 500 words
- Book chapter approx. 2500 words
- Article- approx. 500 words
- White paper approx. 2500 words

Remember, writing becomes a hell of a lot easier when you break down your work into small, bite-sized tasks. That's why on the next page, you'll find a cheatsheet that takes these word counts one step further.

I have broken the structure so that you know how many words you need to write for each step.

How quick and easy does it now seem to write just 100 words of a story in a blog?

My hope in writing this guide is not just that you read it, but you print it out, stick the cheatsheet on your wall and action it in your writing – today.

Let me know how you get on.

Kelly

FACEBOOK

LINKED IN

THE SECRET 5 steps structure to write absolutely anything CHEATSHEET

Step	Writing task	Blog	Article	White paper	Book chapter
1 story	Write an interesting case study/client story/personal anecdote/pop culture reference or relevant work scenario that hooks the reader in, something they can immediately relate to and engage with.	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 500 words	Approx. 500 words
2 WHAT	Explain the relevance of the story. What is the main point you are making and how does it relate to the story? What is the insight? Think about using current facts, stats and studies to back up your arguments and give credibility.	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 500 words	Approx. 500 words
З why	Clarify why it's important your reader knows or does something about what you're telling them. Why is what you're telling them important? Why should they care?	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 500 words	Approx. 500 words
4 ноw	Identify how your reader must change to help them overcome their problem, what you've just told them. Think about summing it up in three key steps or top tips. In a longer piece of work, you might even give them a simple exercise to do or walk them through a model.	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 500 words	Approx. 500 Words
5 PAY-OFF	Write a mini conclusion that sums up the benefits of doing all of the above and leaves your reader feeling inspired to take the next step (and come back to you).	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 100 words	Approx. 500 words	Approx. 500 words
TOTAL WORD COUNT:		500 words	500 words	2500 Words	2500 words

Please print this out and keep it with you at all writing times!

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EXAMPLE 1 Blog

HEADING	The difference right now between a professional writer and YOU			
STORY	 When I first started out as a journalist, it was common practice for me to just sit and stare at a blank screen, as if waiting for divine inspiration to strike me. I kind of knew what I wanted to write, sometimes I had a vague idea – but I didn't know how to start or what I was really going to say until I was really in the moment. As if by magic, I would just suddenly get this idea and I'd get into flow, churn out all these words, writing until my heart's content. That was great! Well, when it happened, but when it didn't, I just sat there – wasting time, chewing up energy not really achieving anything. What I learned was that this kind of process – this kind of 'organic writing' that I quite often hear people describe it as – can only get you so far, for so long. 			
WHAT	Writing naturally, when the inspiration takes you, seeing what comes up, is just not sustainable. Here's why. Just do a quick recap and assess how often do you actually feel like you're in flow? How often do you write like you've been possessed? How often does the inspiration 'just arrive' and then you produce this amazing piece of writing?			
PULL QUOTE	Because for most people it is not that often – it's great when it's great, and it's crap when it's crap.			
WHY	 There is reason that professional writers everywhere – a journalist writing a news article, an author writing a business book, or a PR person writing a media release – follow a framework. They have a structure that they use to save themselves a considerable amount of time, to prevent themselves from writing off-task and off-track, from writing something no one is going to read. These structures are all designed not just to benefit you – the writer – but also to benefit your reader. We're time poor today, we want our information quickly, we want people to get to the point. Yet, we also want to be engaged, entertained, to feel heard and understood – we want it all! And we want it all quickly, otherwise, we get bored and move onto the next thing. That's why clarity of you message is so important and that's what a structure is good for – whether it's for a blog post, book, white paper, even an email. 			
ноw	So while organic writing is awesome for just going with the flow and having an authentic voice, it's just as important to marry that with a logic behind the emotional pull. So if you don't have a structure behind you right now, then think about answering these 3 key questions, in this order, the next time you write a piece of work: 1. What is the main message of whatever it is you are writing? 2. Why is it important your reader cares? 3. How do they implement a change into their own life to make it better?			
PAY OFF	They are pretty simple and straight-forward questions, but they can save you a considerable amount of time AND help you sell your idea, your message to your reader in a much more succinct and impactful way. Just try it and see.			
AUTHOR SIGN OFF	Kelly Irving I'm an editor and writing coach with a love for deep-diving into brains and businesses. Through my one-to-one work and online program, I provide an action-by-action process that speeds up the time it takes to produce your best book, and turns overwhelm and self-doubt into momentum and excitement for writing.			

EXAMPLE 2 PR Article

HEADING	How to cultivate confidence in your team and go from good to great as a leader
	As far as the American public was concerned, the 1970 Apollo 13 mission was just another routine space flight. That was until we heard the words, 'Houston, we have a problem' (well, in the movie anyway). The movie highlighted just how infectious Gene Kranz's confidence was. 'We've never lost an American
STORY	in space and we sure as hell ain't gonna lose one on my watch,' he tells his assembled flight team. 'Failure is not an option!' Would this have been so inspiring (and effective) if Kranz wasn't able to lead with confidence? If he
	wasn't able to inspire his team to believe that they could make the impossible happen?
WHAT	In today's ever-changing business landscape, we desperately need leaders like Gene Kranz – leaders who can well lead, and who lead with confidence. Because exercising leadership like this is so much more that having the competence to get the job done. You must have the confidence to make an impact beyond your wildest dreams.
SUB HEAD	Competence versus confidence
	Leadership is seldom easy. Decisions must be made under time pressure and with many shades of grey. You have to inspire your team through a world of complexity and uncertainty, unite them, and give them drive and great purpose. Without confidence, how long do you think you will last? This is especially the case in today's disruptive climate.
WHY	Confidence separates average leaders from great leaders. If you're competent in your job, you can tick all the boxes and get the job done. You have the ability required for your role, the right level of skills, the right level of knowledge and the right capacity. However, being competent in your job is no longer enough if you are striving to be a great leader.
	You must be able to cultivate a culture of confidence in your team and everyone around you so they too believe they can do whatever it is you want them to do. That means you must first have confidence in yourself and your leadership ability. You need to lead with confidence, and so have the ability to inspire confidence in everyone else around you, so they too can achieve great feats.
SUB HEAD	Cultivating confidence
	 Cultivating confidence with others starts from the minute we walk into a room, the minute we open our mouths and speak. Often those judgments are made in less than a minute and within seconds. (In fact, a series of experiments by Princeton psychologists Janine Willis and Alexander Todorov revealed forming a first impression of a stranger takes a mere tenth of a second.) If, based on how they show up, we believe a leader to be confident, we will assume that they are competent. If we get any sense of a lack of confidence, however, we will assume a lack of competence. This may not be fair, but that's what judgment is all about!
ноw	These judgements also have to do with people's assumptions about what a leader should look like. If you show up and seem anxious and insecure, or seem to have some self-doubt, you won't be perceived as a leader because people will think you are a liability, regardless of your actual level of competence and skill to do the job.
	So, in order to cultivate confidence in other people, you must first believe and have confidence in your own ability to weather the storms, to perform well under pressure, to learn from mistakes and bounce back, to create and innovate, and to keep raising the bar and driving higher levels of performance.
PAY OFF	Setting direction, executing strategy and creating an engaging environment for employees to bring their best all takes confidence. You must have confidence and belief in your own ability before you can instil these in others.
AUTHOR SIGN OFF	Michelle Sales is a highly sought-after speaker, trainer, facilitator and coach who helps senior leaders and their teams learn to show up as the best version of themselves, to build their confidence and influence with others, and to maximise their leadership and performance. She is the author of the book 'The Power of Real Confidence' published by Major Street in 2018.