Twitter Thread by Wes Kao ■

Wes Kao ■
@wes_kao

Most people suck at storytelling.

Here’s an easy trick for telling better stories:

When I’m telling a story, sometimes I get nervous.

I can’t tell what my audience is thinking.

Are they silently enthralled–or asleep? ■

Ideally, you want the confidence to know:

✔■ Does my audience care?

✔■ How do I know what to say?

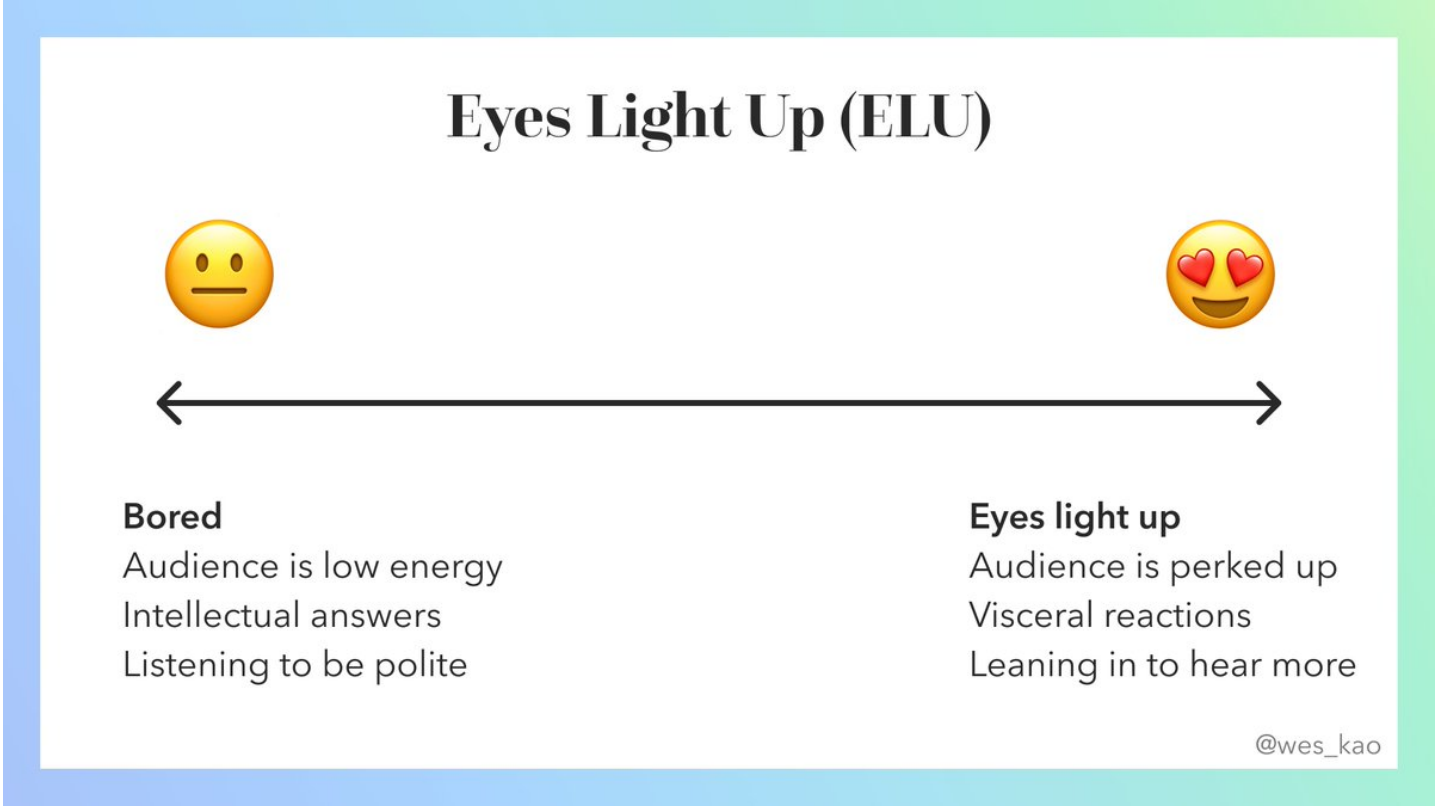
✔■ Am I giving too much detail?

Here’s a simple trick:

Aim to make your audience’s *eyes light up*.

I call it ELU for short.

The ELU moment happens when your audience is viscerally excited about your story.



When your audience's eyes light up:

• Their energy level shifts

• They perk up and look alive

• They are actively here with you

These are the clues you're on the right track.

The key:

Stack as many Eyes Light Up moments as possible.

The best stories are one ELU moment after another.

That's why they feel fast-paced, with rhythm and momentum.

Have you noticed you're best at telling stories you've told 100 times?

It's because you know exactly what all the ELU moments are!

You know when people will gasp, frown, or hold their breath.

Translation: You know the eyes light up moments. And you're stacking them hard.

ELU will tell you everything you need to know about how your audience feels.

People are not great at acting.

They can’t hide their emotions. They might say “That’s interesting…”

But their face shows they’re almost asleep. They’re trying to be polite.

If your audience looks dead, change what you’re talking about.

Boring parts? Trim it.

Backstory no one cares about? Trim it.

Going down a rabbit hole and your audience looks confused? Trim it.

Get back on track. Get back to making their eyes light up.

We all know what makes a good story:

• Conflict
• Narrative arc
• Stakes that make the audience care
• Show, not tell
• Etc etc etc

It’s hard.

But one thing is for sure:

You don’t tell a great story simply because you memorized a bunch of tactics about storytelling.

When you’re too focused on tactics, you miss out on the most important thing:

Getting data about what is resonating with your audience.

When I say “data,” I don’t mean numbers. I mean qualitative data…

Like how their face looks.

People lie, but faces don’t.

“The problem with market research is that people don't think how they feel, they don't say what they think and they don't do what they say."

Ogilvy said it best.

You can’t trust what people say.

So don’t just listen to what they say. Watch for how they behave.

How to apply this in your daily work:

Practice different versions of your story.

Meet 15 people at a party? Test 15 different ways to tell your story.

Notice when their eyes light up (& when their eyes glaze over).

Refine accordingly.

For personal stories:

You’ll see which parts get your audience on the edge of their seats.

For product and company stories:

You’ll understand what your customer is most excited to hear about.

Cut out all the boring parts your customer or audience doesn’t care about.

Yep, kill those darlings.

You want to save room for the good parts.

https://t.co/vv9wtRaLuI

> Most people assume backstory is necessary for high-impact communication.
>
> This is wrong and wastes everyone\u2019s time.
>
> A framework for higher ROI communication:
>
> — Wes Kao \U0001f3db (@wes_kao) December 4, 2021

The Eyes Light Up framework will help you answer:

✔■ What parts do prospective customers actually care about?

✔■ What should you spend more time talking about?

✔■ What keywords get them to perk up?

You should definitely still learn storytelling strategies and tactics. There are plenty and there's no limit to how good of a storyteller you can be.

But when you're in the moment telling your story?

Stay present.

Watch for what gets your audience's eyes to light up.

That's it for today.

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