

May 2025



## Make an Overture

Every time I sit down in the audience for a keynote or breakout at a conference, I am hoping I will hear a brand new insight or innovation that can make the world better sooner! But excitement doesn't always translate to absorbing and adopting new ideas. When most of us encounter true innovation, it passes us by because it is too unfamiliar for us to understand.

So, what can someone with a brilliant new idea do to speed up the rate of understanding and adoption to their new idea? There is a method to introduce fresh concepts in a way that feels familiar to the audience. I call it the "speaker's overture." (*Please scroll down to find out more...*)

Upcoming online classes at The Goodman Center		
<b>RUN MEETINGS</b>	<b>TELL STORIES</b>	<b>PLAN CAMPAIGNS</b>
Meetings for People who Hate Meetings	Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative	Strategic Communications: Cutting Through the Clutter
May 13 & 15 11am - 12pm PT	May 13, 20, 27 & June 3 9am - 10am PT	July 8 & 10 11am - 12pm PT

## Make an Overture (cont.)



On my recent trip to New York, I was lucky enough to catch *Gypsy*, starring the unparalleled Audra McDonald. *Gypsy* premiered on Broadway in 1959, and was written by Jule Styne (music), Stephen Sondheim (lyrics), and Arthur Laurents (book). This powerhouse team followed a musical tradition that presenters and public speakers can borrow.

Before the curtain rises, the pit orchestra plays a medley of the tunes you are about to hear, called the overture. The overture contains a riff from “Let Me Entertain You,” a snippet of “Small World,” and a taste of “Everything’s Coming Up Roses.” For audiences that have never seen or heard the show, these new melodies are being gently introduced to our brains. When the songs come back within the story of the show, they feel familiar. Our brain recognizes the musical idea. We can absorb them. We can almost hum along.

In presentations, we call this “telling them what you are going to tell them.” If you have brand new ideas, programs, and innovations for our field (and we hope you do!), sprinkle some of those big ideas into your intro, so that when we get to the meat of your presentation, the audience can absorb them. “Hey, that sounds familiar.” Which is a whole lot better than, “I’m not sure I’m understanding this. Sounds risky.”

Great examples of the speaker’s overture can be found in a few of the most popular TedTalks of all time (according to Oprah Daily). Watch the first minutes of Kelly McGonigal’s talk, [\*How to Make Stress your Friend\*](#), and you will hear strains of her big idea that changing your mind about stress can change your body’s response to it. In Sir Ken Robinson’s talk, [\*Do Schools Kill Creativity?\*](#), before the 3-minute mark he shares, “all kids have tremendous talents, and we squander them, pretty ruthlessly.”



Your opening will help the audience absorb and adopt your new ideas, if you play them a speaker’s overture.

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## Jump on This Storytelling Trend

Over the last few months, many of our colleagues and partners have lost their jobs and/or their funding. One form of resistance is showing up in powerful ways: storytelling.

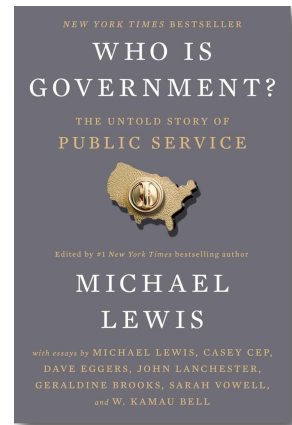


The team at [Silenced Science Stories](#) are “amplifying the voices of federal scientists and researchers affected by federal budget cuts and grant terminations.”

Currently there are 26 stories of these scientists and researchers and illustrations from a fantastic group of artists, who are putting literal faces to the losses in our science community.

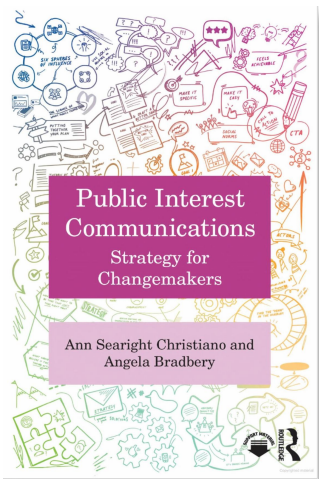
Michael Lewis’s bestselling book, [Who is Government](#), is another example of how personal stories communicate the purpose and impact of government work. Lewis shares that “the idea was that you get these stories out, and it explodes whatever is in people’s heads about the federal bureaucrats.”

You can jump on this (ancient) trend by making your work personal for your audiences. Tell the stories of your people and what they do.



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## The First Textbook for Public Interest Communications



We are excited to share that our friend, Ann Searight Christiano, Director at the Center for Public Interest Communications at the University of Florida has co-authored a textbook, [Public Interest Communications: Strategy for Changemakers](#). Full of evidence-based practices for deepening your impact and growing audience engagement, this is going to be an incredible resource for anyone in communications.

You can order your copy [here](#).

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## About Us

This edition of *free-range thinking* was written by Kirsten Farrell and edited by Jasmine Elist. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit [www.thegoodmancenter.com](http://www.thegoodmancenter.com).

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