**Applying Storytelling to Research Deliverables:**

**Using an Imaginary Story as the Introduction to a Presentation**

Here is an example in which a proprietary segmentation provides the heart of a research study. In this case, a pharmaceutical manufacturer has been stymied it its efforts to expand its market share because of the complexity of the market. Essentially, it did not know whether to organize its marketing initiatives around product category, brand, channel (type of retailer), price point, severity of patient condition, or patient demographics (age, gender, income, etc.). As a result, its efforts were fragmented and inefficient.

In this example, the presentation of the results is provided in two parts. The first is an imaginary story, read to the audience backed by simple visual images. This part tells, as an allegory, of the discovery of the segmentation. It makes abundantly clear that the segmentation solution is not only the key learning from the research, but also the solution to the client’s problems. In a more subtle way, it emphasizes the value of the researcher as advisor to top management.

The second part, not shown here, is a more traditional presentation describing the segmentation, profiling the various segments, and identifying those groups that provide the greatest ROI.

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**“The Knight and the Impenetrable Forest”**

Once there was a great lord who ruled over a broad and fair domain. Like all lords, he wanted to expand his territory. However, much of his land bordered on the Great Pharma Wood, a dark, impenetrable forest that contained rich deposits of gold, but from which few travelers ever emerged.

Despite various efforts over the years, the great lord was never able to broach, let alone conquer, this forbidding place. The only compensation was that none of the competing fiefdoms had any success doing so either. Over time, his thinking evolved, so while he no longer expected to absorb the Great Wood outright, he hoped to establish a preeminent influence there, and of course, seize the gold.

One day a young knight visited the lord’s castle seeking employment, perhaps, he thought, organizing the armor collection or sweeping out the stables. The lord had other ideas. “You’re a very bright young man,” he said. “If you can find a way to navigate the Great Pharma Wood, and locate the gold there, I will reward you handsomely.”

“How?” asked the young knight. “Will you give me your daughter’s hand in marriage?” “Her hand is not mine to give,” the lord replied. “She is her own master. But I will ‘like’ you on FaceScroll. That will give your career a real boost.”

The knight agreed to accept the lord’s offer, and the next day set out on his steadfast stead. Within a few hours he reached the forest, and slowly rode along its edge, looking for the best way to enter it. In fact, there were many paths that beckoned, but none that were particularly promising. Finally, he selected one almost at random, and plunged into the Great Wood.

The path curved and turned frequently, crossing many other trails veering off in all directions. Often these intersections were marked by signs, saying things like, “This Way to the Pricing Bar” or “Discount Pharmacies 1.2Km.” Soon, the knight became hopelessly lost in the maze and would probably have become another sad statistic had not his trusty stead had a much better memory, and been able to retrace their steps.

By nightfall, the young knight sat exhausted and dejected by his campfire. As he stared into the flames, he wondered what he would tell the great lord and what the opposite of “liking” someone on FaceScroll would be. Suddenly, he became aware that he was not alone, and looked up to see an old woman with a pointed hat—obviously a witch—standing before him.

“Why are you so distressed?” asked the crone. “I cannot find the way to navigate the Great Wood, and so I have failed in my quest,” the knight responded sadly.

“You have given up far too easily,” the witch replied. “Because you are truthful and faithful to your quest, I will share the Great Secret with you.” From beneath her cloak she pulled out a large globe and placed it near the fire. As they both stared into the glass, a clear picture emerged of the Great Wood. But rather than an incredible maze, it now appeared to be superbly well organized.

“The key to understanding the forest is the Segmentation,” she explained. “It reveals its underlying structure and the behavior patterns of all the creatures that live there. Treat it like a map. See, all those paths that seemed so chaotic really follow a grid. And if you look carefully,” she added in a hushed tone, “it will show you where the gold can be found.”

The knight was ecstatic. So much so, he even forgot to thank the old lady for her gift. By the time he remembered, she had disappeared.

The next morning he rode boldly into the Great Wood holding the Segmentation as his guide. As promised, all that had seemed confused was now clear. He navigated many paths with a real sense of where he was going, until he had covered the entire forest. And he found the gold.

He rode out of the wood at sunset, hoping to see the witch again, but instead saw a beautiful young lady waiting by his campsite. “Have you seen an old lady?” he asked her. “I need to thank her before I return to the castle.” The lady smiled. “I am that woman, no longer in disguise. I see you made good use of the Segmentation.”

“You have saved me and my reputation. How can I ever thank you?” he asked. “You could offer me your hand in marriage,” she replied sweetly.

And so it was. The pair rode back to the castle and presented the great lord with the Segmentation. He was so pleased that he married them on the spot, and appointed them both as his chief councilors. Within a short time he extended his sway over much of the Great Wood, and all the competing lords in the land recognized his preeminence there.