

Once upon a time...

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Stories are part of who we are and technology has opened new ways for us to share our stories. Sponsored by Nedbank and Native VML in collaboration with 360 Degrees the 7th edition of the Digital Edge Live took place recently at the Sandton Convention Centre...

The theme was Making Stories and presented to the audience as a book, with the various chapters examining various parts of storytelling, what has influenced it and what it looks like today and what it might look like going forward.



The foreword

As all books do, Digital Edge started with a foreword. In this case two; both pondering the meaning of stories and storytelling to humans, asking why stories are important to us and how technology has changed stories and storytelling.

Nedbank's Thulani Sibeko, Managing Executive - Nedbank Group Marketing, Communications and Corporate Affairs says storytelling is as old as humanity and we are driven to tell stories.

"We tell stories and are told stories... they are part of our neurological make up and the basis of our memory."

Stories help us make sense of things and technology has opened up new ways to tell stories and everyone is part of the story as opposed to previously. "Through technology we share stories, they do not belong to us but everyone is part of the story."

Native VML's CEO Jason Xenopoulos, says our imagination is our true home and regardless of what story you tell and what technology you use, you must look at human nature and significance. "We are made by our stories and by telling them we are brought into being. Stories create the world around you as they are the organising principle of reality. They give shape to our world."

We have reached the critical inflection point in the evolution of storytelling, but as we create ultimate realities we risk abstracting ourselves further he says. "Storytelling must still reach into what is human and what it means to be human. As we hurtle further into technology the story must be the heart of what we are."

And as in every book, it is the story of the battle between good and evil.

The good

Dr Sindi van Zyl told her story of how she has leveraged social media to make a difference in the lives of HIV-positive pregnant women. "The journey of the HIV pregnant women is a long one and the system does not provide adequate support for them. This frustrated - and angered - me. I decided to use digital to make a difference." Through her social media she helps countless women worldwide.

What's your story?



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Stuart Lowe, director of WhyFive Insights and the father of Jenna of the #Getmeto21 campaign spoke to the delegates about his daughter's journey to save her life with a double lung transplant and how she was the face of the Organ Donor Society, connecting with thousands of people to inspire them to become organ donors. "The viral component was crucial to the campaign. It shows what we can do with technology and storytelling to change the world."

The evil

"There is a battle between good and evil and you do not have choice. If you are using a mobile, you are already a pawn in this and your data is the battleground," Chris Roper ICFJ Knight Fellow, sub-Saharan Africa, told delegates.

"We are in a data revolution and while we have the most powerful weapon to keep the government in line, data, they are spying on us constantly." The open data revolution asks that government publish all data in a useable form to everyone. Governments are not comfortable with that. It is a massive threat to their power he adds.

"Citizens should decide what governments need to reveal and not governments. Open data is an essential tool for democracy. It allows us to tell our own stories with the tools to make our lives better."

Traditional models of journalism are dead, readers are being replaced with users and data tells their own story, or add to others stories. "We must fight for this right," he concludes.

The big ending

Every book needs a hero. At Digital Edge Live the hero of the day had to be Spike Lee, the ultimate storyteller.

The United States film director told the delegates that art can save lives and that is what he wants to do with his new feature film, *Chiraq*, which examines black-on-black murders in Chicago. "Art can impact the world in a positive or a negative way."

This film will also be Amazon's first theatrical release, the online company's first such venture. Lee also used crowdfunding to produce the film.

His advice was not only to do things your own way, but if South Africa wants to produce great art, it has to produce great artists. For this to happen government has to support artists.

And they all lived happily ever after...

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from VMts.

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