



## Storytelling for Businesses with Park Howell

### Leading Learning Podcast Transcript for Episode 396

Park Howell: [00:00:00] Everything begins by teaching people this three-word framework because we find that it is the foundation—or, as I say, it's the DNA of story.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:13] I'm Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:15] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:23] Everybody loves a good story. It's what draws us to good books, good movies, good podcasts. And we know that good stories can draw prospective learners to us and the learning experiences we offer. But telling a good story is harder than it looks, particularly in the realm of business, where often too much emphasis is put on numbers, data, and building a case rather than appealing to emotions, human connection, familiar patterns, and satisfying hooks. If you listen to this episode, you'll get a mini class in how to tell a good story for your learning business.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:59] Park Howell is the founder of the Business of Story. Park comes from the marketing world, where he ran his own advertising agency for 20 years before winding that down to focus on storytelling, specifically stories in the context of businesses and brands. One of his big a-has is the and-but-therefore agile narrative framework, and the ABT framework is the focus of this episode, number 396. Celisa talks with Park about the power of storytelling and its connection to how the human brain works. Park and Celisa walk through the ABT framework at a conceptual level and then at a practical level as Park puts Celisa on the hot seat and works with her to craft an ABT. So, sit back, listen, enjoy, and learn from this conversation that Celisa and Park had in January 2024. And, after it's over, you might want to go back and re-listen to this introduction, which leverages the ABT framework in the opening.

Celisa Steele: [00:02:12] Would you tell listeners a little bit about the work you do?

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Park Howell: [00:02:17] Yes. Real quick backstory is I've been in the advertising/branding/marketing world for almost 40 years. I ran my own ad agency for 20 of those years in Phoenix, Arizona. In the early 2000s, I realized that the way we were marketing and branding, as we knew it, was no longer working, primarily because of the Internet, social media. I used to tell our clients, "You own the influence of mass media." Well, we all know that the masses have become the media, and there's so much noise out there that I had to go and find an answer. How do we communicate these important stories to the world? And that's when I found storytelling and learned that, really, stories are the very first technology that humans ever used to communicate, to not just survive the savanna but thrive and evolve to where we are today. So, in 2016, Celisa, after studying story for almost 10 years and applying it in my ad agency, I wound that down, and now all I do is consult, teach, coach, and speak on the power of story in organizations and business, at universities, in any number of areas.

Celisa Steele: [00:03:34] Well, great. I have had the chance to hear you speak, and it was a wonderful message, and that's part of why I wanted to have you on the podcast to share a little bit about that ABT agile narrative framework. I want to focus our conversation on that because it is, I think, both a practical and elegant tool. I think it's going to give listeners a lot of ideas to try out. Now, we'll get to what ABT stands for, but I'm hoping right now you could just explain how you came to arrive at this framework.

Park Howell: [00:04:07] Yes. When I was studying story in the early 2000s, I was lucky because our middle child, our son Parker, was going to film school at Chapman University in Orange, California. He started in 2006, graduated in 2010, and he's made a really nice career in the film world ever since. But, while he was going to school there, like I was saying earlier, Celisa, I was looking for an answer. How do you hack through the noise and hook into the hearts of people? I asked Parker. I said, "Please send me your books and your recorded lectures when you're done with them since we're paying for them because I would like to know what does Hollywood know about communicating and being competitive in the most competitive storytelling market in the world?" And that's Hollywood.

Park Howell: [00:04:52] That's when I came across *The Hero's Journey*, Joseph Campbell's *The Hero's Journey*, and it struck me right between the eyes the first time I learned about it. And I thought to myself, "This is such a marvelous framework for strategizing around brand story development and even long-form communication." And I asked myself, "Why don't they teach *The Hero's Journey* in communications courses, in advertising courses, even in MBA courses?" I took that 17-step of *The Hero's Journey*, and I mapped it to business with what I call my 10-step

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Story Cycle System. And, as you know, I wrote a textbook about how to apply it, and we had a lot of success with it. Still do. But it's complicated.

Park Howell: [00:05:36] In all of my travels, I said, "Okay, how do we simplify this? How can we break down the elements of this so people could use it immediately?" And I found the five primal elements of a short story that was really inspired by a company out of Melbourne, Australia, called Anecdote that teaches these five primal elements in leadership, communication, and whatever, and realized you could take those elements and, in under a minute, share a story that makes your business point for you, that shows your impact in action. And I started adding that to my repertoire of teaching and found that that was still a little bit complicated for people. And then, in 2013, just over a decade ago, I was introduced to the work of Dr. Randy Olson. Dr. Olson is a Harvard PhD, evolutionary biologist. He does a really crazy thing in his mid-30s—he gives up tenure, he goes back to school at USC film school, he graduates, produces three documentaries on climate change and global warming, but realized that his mission in life was to take what he learned in Hollywood—much like what I learned from Chapman University—and translate it to the science and academic world to help those big thinkers, those scientists and PhDs, take their complex messages and make them simple. It was in Dr. Olson's second book called *Connection* that he was just publishing in September of 2013.

Park Howell: [00:07:08] They sent me galleys of the book—his publisher did before it went out—and that's where I was introduced to the and-but-therefore. It blew me away when I looked at this. From all my years in branding, always trying to make a complex message simple, I looked at this, and it struck me intuitively. But I was like, "Am I just drinking the Kool-Aid here, or is this really a thing?" And I contacted Dr. Olson. He and I have since become fast friends. He and I, together, have helped evolve the and-but-therefore. He, still in the science world; me, taking all of that finding and working with him in the science world and translating it to the leadership and the business world. And the rest is history. Now, in all of the training I do, like the one you experienced at the PAR RevUP conference, everything begins by teaching people this three-word framework because we find that it is the foundation—or, as I say, it's the DNA of story. And, by the way, I love the fact that I beat a Harvard PhD evolutionary biologist to that title because, when I said, "Randy, you've found the DNA of story," and he's like, "Wait a minute, I'm the scientist here." And I go, "Yes, but I'm the brander, so you got to put a tag to it." And that's where we are today, teaching it everywhere.

Celisa Steele: [00:08:29] Go a little bit deeper on and-but-therefore, ABT. Explain a little bit about how that works.

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Park Howell: [00:08:36] Yes. The and-but-therefore, it's not something we invented. It literally has been around since the beginning of time. In fact, the very first story of Gilgamesh that they found carved out of cuneiform tablets is based...as you look at the story structure, you'll see the and-but-therefore throughout it. What and, but, and therefore does is use the three forces of story, and those three forces are agreement, contradiction, and consequence. We have determined that our primal, pattern-seeking, cause-and-effect, problem-solving, business-buying brain, the limbic brain, loves to get messages through these three forces, using these three forces of story. Because that limbic brain, that amygdala, hippocampus, that survival mechanism that sits at the base of our brain is a problem-solution dynamic apparatus. It has to be. So the algorithms, think of it like software. It takes in the algorithm of setup-problem-resolution, so that it can quickly make meaning out of it to determine what the next step should be. Let's take, for instance...I didn't share it a few weeks ago when you saw it in action, but I like to bring up this little story of Thog and Larry. We're going to go way back to the savanna. These are cavemates, cavemen. Larry's sitting around the fire inside the cave, and he's warming his hands, and he looks up, and Thog comes into the entrance, and Thog looks pretty disheveled.

Park Howell: [00:10:17] And Larry says, "Thog, where you been?" And Thog said, "Well, I was down at river catching saber-tooth salmon for dinner." And Larry goes, "Uh huh." That's setup. Then Thog says, "But saber-tooth tiger show up." Larry goes, "Uh oh. What'd you do?" "Well, I give salmon to tiger. It like salmon better than Thog. Therefore, I'm safely back here at fire with you, Larry." And Larry goes, "Aha." Setup, problem, resolution—so easy a caveman can do it. "Uh huh." "Uh oh." "Aha." So you now advance that to where we are today. Our limbic brain has not changed appreciably since Larry and Thog and everybody else who's trying to survive the savanna. It's the same brain that we use to try to survive this onslaught of communication coming at us. And we have learned that those three words, the three-word algorithm is that first learning technology that we still use and rely on today. But so many people in large organizations and businesses get stuck in their logic, reason brain, and they don't use the power of story to connect with that crazy *Homo sapien* that's sitting across from them, whose brain is simply trying to make meaning out of the madness of being human beings. The ABT enables you to hack through the noise and hook into that limbic, problem-solving, decision-making, buying brain.

Jeff Cobb: [00:11:56] At Tagoras, we're experts in the global business of lifelong learning, and we use our expertise to help clients better understand their markets, connect with new customers, make the right investment decisions, and grow their learning businesses. We achieve these goals through expert market assessment, strategy formulation, and platform selection services.

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Celisa Steele: [00:12:26] Walk us through an example that might be an organization trying to sell an online course that they have or something that's a little bit more practical in terms of today.

Park Howell: [00:12:39] All right. Celisa, can I put you on the hot seat?

Celisa Steele: [00:12:42] Oh, boy. We'll try it. Yes, sure.

Park Howell: [00:12:44] Let's build an ABT for your podcast.

Celisa Steele: [00:12:49] Okay.

Park Howell: [00:12:50] So it'd almost be like your brand narrative, but we are going to make it so short and sweet and problem-solution-centric. Are you ready to play along?

Celisa Steele: [00:13:02] I'm ready to try.

Park Howell: [00:13:03] This is always fun. Here's what I want you to do, and this is for all of your listeners too. Get out a pen and paper, and just follow along, and follow the coaching that I'm going to give Celisa here. Celisa, who is your number-one audience? Can you identify the number-one audience that you attract to your podcast?

Celisa Steele: [00:13:24] We like to say that we serve learning business leaders—the folks who are in a leadership position in an organization that has to develop, sell, and market continuing education, professional development, lifelong learning offerings.

Park Howell: [00:13:39] Awesome. So I'm just going to write down learning business professionals.

Celisa Steele: [00:13:45] Okay.

Park Howell: [00:13:46] Will that work for you?

Celisa Steele: [00:13:47] That works.

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Park Howell: [00:13:48] What do they want? We are creating our statement of agreement here. Remember the three forces of story are agreement, contradiction, consequence. The “and” is the statement of agreement. The “but” is the statement of conflict or contradiction. The “therefore” is a statement of consequence—here’s the way forward. In developing your “and” statement, you want it to be positive. You want it to be aspirational. You want to communicate a shared vision with your audience so that they know that you understand who they are and appreciate what they want and why that’s important to them. So we now know that you know that your number-one audience is learning business professionals. What do they want relative to your podcast? They might not even know you yet, but you know them so well that you know that this is ultimately what they want, that you’re going to help them to get. What is it that they want that they can get from your podcast?

Celisa Steele: [00:14:47] They want to provide excellent resources to the learners that they serve.

Park Howell: [00:14:53] Okay. Provide excellent resources. And then why is that important to them?

Celisa Steele: [00:15:01] Because that’s how they help move the dial in the field, industry, or profession that their learning business serves. That’s how they make a difference in the world—by delivering those excellent resources that will support those learners.

Park Howell: [00:15:14] To make a difference in the world. Okay. We’re going to boil this down just a little bit. But, right now, our statement of agreement is “You are a learning business professional, and you want to provide excellent training opportunities that have real-world impact in the lives of your learners.” Is that fair enough?

Celisa Steele: [00:15:34] Amen.

Park Howell: [00:15:35] Okay. But what is the problem that they have? What’s frustrating them right now? What are they fearful of, and what’s causing that? This is your “but” statement.

Celisa Steele: [00:15:46] There are a lot of places where you can get support in terms of developing training—the instructional design, what needs to go into that. There are a lot of places where you can go for more generic leadership or management. But what a learning business professional really needs is a resource and someone who understands both angles of that. What does it mean to provide excellent learning, and what does it mean to run an excellent business, and combining those two?

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Park Howell: [00:16:14] Would it be safe to say that maybe they're not having the impact they currently wish to have because they're not certain of the way forward or because there's just too much information out there that doesn't focus on their core need of building a business and training people in the process?

Celisa Steele: [00:16:35] I think the second piece that you said around there's not enough focused resources for them. They have to sift through and figure out which way to go, and it's a broad spectrum between developing the learning all the way to the business side of things as well.

Park Howell: [00:16:51] Because there are not the focused resources that they need to help move the needle. Then the "therefore." Therefore, I want you to tell me what is an emotion that they are going to get when they really start dialing in their business practice.

Celisa Steele: [00:17:10] An emotion? That's what you said.

Park Howell: [00:17:11] Yes, the emotion. I want you to focus on the emotion.

Celisa Steele: [00:17:16] Is confidence an emotion?

Park Howell: [00:17:18] Yes. Confidence is fine. Let's work with that one.

Celisa Steele: [00:17:22] Okay.

Park Howell: [00:17:23] Now you can gain the confidence to build an incredible training program or training business, impacting hundreds of thousands of people around the world when you do what? By listening to your show?

Celisa Steele: [00:17:38] By listening. That's right.

Park Howell: [00:17:41] Okay. So there's a real quick ABT on the fly. We have setup, problem, resolution. I've kind of cobbled this together, Celisa. I always like to have people start with the pronoun shift of "you" being you, the audience you're talking to, to get you as the storyteller to tell your story, in this case, your and-but-therefore from the perspective of your audience. And the best way to do that is with a "you." So it's something like, "You are a learning business professional, and, if you had focused resources to build your business, then you would have the

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incremental or the exponential impact on people's lives you seek through your training products and services. But you're frustrated because you're not currently having that impact due to the fact that there are so many different resources out there you don't know what to focus on. Therefore, you can now have the confidence to build your program and that impact by listening to one show, the Leading Learning Podcast." Now, that's not perfect, but it does show you the framework. I want you to always start with your audience. What do they want relative to your offering, and why is that important to them? What you're doing, Celisa, when you do that is I talked about the three forces of story: agreement, contradiction, and consequence. What I've learned in this process, there are also three forces to trust-building.

Park Howell: [00:19:22] And the ABT is the framework in order to do that because it makes you, from the storyteller, number one, to first do the discovery and think about your audience so that you demonstrate to them that you understand who they are. They're like, "Oh, Celisa's actually taken the time to actually understand who she's talking to. That's cool." Then appreciation. So understanding is the first force. Appreciation is the second force. You are showing them that you appreciate what they want and why that's important to them. The third force of trust-building is empathy. That shows up in your "but" statement. "But you're frustrated, but you're fearful, but you're annoyed because here's the problem." So you're empathizing. They are hearing it through your story. They're saying, "Wow, she gets me. She understands who I am. She appreciates what I want and why that's important to me. And she empathizes with why I don't have it." The "therefore" then, the trust is built. "Therefore, here's the way forward." Setup, problem, resolution. Again, our primal, pattern-seeking, cause-and-effect, problem-solving, decision-making, limbic, buying brain loves to get messaging in this way because it doesn't have to work for it. We are just simply feeding it the algorithm in the way it wants to take in information.

Celisa Steele: [00:20:50] I will say, even the minute I learned about ABT, it's so easy to apply it. I think the next day I was working on a session description, and I started thinking and-but-therefore, and it gives you a really nice scaffolding to help you think about how can you convey the message about whatever this thing is. But I found it immediately useful. So simple and elegant.

Park Howell: [00:21:15] Yes, in our world, it really is. And I say our world, in the learning and development world, teaching and training, because I do this—share the courses online, and I do them in person, hybrid, virtual training, and that kind of thing. I am your customer. I am your listener. I have built a business about this and learned a lot from you all. It's really effective, and I think maybe you found this too, because you can identify your audience being that learner. In

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particular, what is it that that learner wants out of the training that they may not even know is yet available to them, but you, as the training producer, can identify what that is and why is it important to them? What kind of growth do they want to get out of it? But, now, this is the gap that your training is going to help them overcome. But they're frustrated. They're not growing the way they are. They're not having the impact because of this major problem that your training is going to bridge, to help them overcome. Therefore, as the learner, imagine when you have this new tool or this new skill, the impact you can have when you take this particular course, or by taking this particular course, or whatever. So it works. It's a beautiful, great framework in the learning world.

Celisa Steele: [00:22:41] I have one kind of nitpicky question, but I think you addressed it when I heard you speak. "Therefore" isn't a word that I tend to use a lot in daily conversations, and so I think you suggested some potential substitutions, when I heard you talk, or other words that people might use that might sound more natural or conversational than a "therefore."

Park Howell: [00:23:02] Yes. We start with and-but-therefore because that's the framework. And everybody asks that question too. It's a really good question. It's not nitpicky at all because I don't use "therefore" a lot either. But, when I'm first writing an ABT, I'm just going to use the and-but-therefore. They're my markers to get me in. Quite often, especially in the business world, I'll replace "therefore" with "now." "Now, here's the way forward." All I'm trying to do with the and-but-therefore is to get the structure, the framework of setup-problem-resolution down in my mind. A lot of people are really concerned about using the word "but." So you can use "yet." You can use "however." There are lots of other words you can use, but I would suggest go ahead and use "but." We have found that to be the number-one trigger word.

Park Howell: [00:23:54] Now, people will push back and say, "Well, Park, I've always been told never, ever, ever to use the word 'but' in business communications or training or whatever." And I think that's true if you are reviewing someone. "Celisa, it's so great to have you on the team. The impact you've had here over the last year has been marvelous. Everybody loves working with you, but..." Well, I've just negated everything that has come before that. And you don't want to do it like that in leadership at all. However, if you are trying to shake someone out of status quo—and isn't that really what learning is all about, putting them through the rigor of upskilling through learning?—the only way you are going to shake that status quo *Homo sapien* brain into action is to give them a good, what we call, "but bomb."

Park Howell: [00:24:46] "You got this, and it's important to you because of this, but you ain't never going to accomplish it unless you do this. Therefore, here's the course to get there." It's

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the way to shake the brain out of being complacent. And you're talking directly to that person, saying, "You can stay in status quo if you like, but here's the problem if you do that. Therefore, here's the answer to that problem." So we have lots of substitution words. There's not really a substitution word for the word "and." Sometimes you don't even need to have "and." Sometimes you can be so powerful in that first setup you don't need it. But we find the power of story rests in the specifics, so, when you use the word "and," it builds more momentum for your story in the context of your story. We even have—I didn't really get a chance to go into in that training session—the if-then clause that we can use that adds even more specificity in your "and" statement of agreement. "If you do this, then you'll get that." And again, it plays to that cause-and-effect brain. In the "but" section, there's a most powerful word in addition to that "but." It's a conjunction. It's the word "because." Celisa, being in the training world, you may be aware of this Harvard study on the word "because" in behavior change and that they found that it is the single most powerful word to create behavior change. You know how they did it? They had this silly little study. I think it was back in 1978 or something like that.

Park Howell: [00:26:17] There are lots of articles on the power of the word "because." What they did is queue up a line of people, unbeknownst to them that they were taking part in a study. They were waiting in line for good old-fashioned Xerox machine to make copies. There might have been six or seven people waiting in line. They sent the first person in with copies and asked if they could cut in front of the line and would tell the person, "Can I cut in here? Because I've got to make copies." Well, believe it or not, they got 60-percent compliance with just asking to cut in. But when they add the word "because" so the next person would show up, a different line, and say, "Hey, can I cut in front of you because I have to make copies?" that 60-percent compliance went up to 92-percent compliance. The third one was, "Can I make copies because I'm in a hurry?" That, then, went up to 94-percent compliance. And so they did some more study on this word "because," and again it plays back that cause-and-effect thing. "I've got this thing happening here because of this." And we have found when you add the "because" to your "but" statement of agreement, it makes it even more powerful. "But you're frustrated because of this problem." It really sets up the problem you're going to solve for. "Therefore, imagine when you achieve your success by doing this to overcome that problem." And that's the way it works. Kind of crazy, isn't it?

Celisa Steele: [00:27:46] Yes, that is fascinating because that second option in that story, it's just stating the obvious.

Park Howell: [00:27:54] It is.

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Celisa Steele: [00:27:54] “Can I cut in line because I need to make copies?” They’re all waiting in line to make copies. That’s fascinating, yes.

Park Howell: [00:28:00] Yes. But it went up to 92-percent compliance. Then you add some urgency to it, and you even tweak it by 2 percent.

Celisa Steele: [00:28:07] Yes. Wow. So another question. You mentioned earlier the limbic brain and the rational side and that sometimes businesses tend to think too much about the rational side in making their case and trying to convince the logical mind that this is the thing to do. But it seems like there is a place for both the storytelling and the data. How do you balance or marry them up? Or how do you think about providing some of that data that bolsters the and-but-therefore?

Park Howell: [00:28:37] I follow the lead—it’s a great question—I follow the lead of American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt. He wrote *The Happiness Hypothesis*, among some other really, really interesting books. He states emphatically...in fact, I had him on my show a few years ago, and we covered this a little bit. He said our brains, our minds are story processors, not logic processors. Yet, in organizational communications, we tend to lead with logic and reason. It has a place, but not until after you’ve set the context—the emotional context, the problem-solution dynamic—with a story, so that *Homo sapien*, storytelling ape sitting across from you can picture what that outcome is, what that problem is, or whatever.

Park Howell: [00:29:27] And then you’ve probably been there—we all have been there—when someone has really persuaded us, and then we’re like, “Whoa, whoa, whoa, okay, wait. Okay, I think that makes sense. Can you prove it to me?” Then you roll out the logic and reason. You sold to the heart. You are now squarely inside their heads. You get them nodding yes, like you are right now, but then they might go, “Well, wait a minute. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, not so fast. Can you show it to me or prove it to me?” That’s when the numbers come into play. So there’s still a place for logic and reason. Just don’t start with it. Start with the emotional pull of story. Show the dynamic in action so that they can picture it, then they can feel it, and then back it up with logic and reason.

Celisa Steele: [00:30:10] So you started earlier saying how old storytelling is. It goes back to the earliest human, maybe even pre-*Homo sapien*, our instinct there, and so storytelling is very old. It’s this innate desire we have, and you’ve been involved with it for a long time. But I’m curious to know if you’ve seen anything that’s changed about storytelling. Maybe you talked about it a

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little bit when you're talking about the noise and social media. But, in general, how have you seen storytelling change since you've really been focused on it?

Park Howell: [00:30:44] I don't honestly think it has. I think it is as normal to us as our digits, as our arms, as our legs. Yuval Harari, who wrote *Sapiens*—I don't know if you've read that book. I love, love, love that book. He says it is literally our first learning tool. Because our brains have not changed appreciably, it's still how we make sense out of the world. So I don't think storytelling, in how it works, has changed at all. I think we are very creative individuals, so we tell stories in lots of different ways. Look at Christopher Nolan, *Memento*—here's a fabulous one of the world's best storytellers. He's a director from Hollywood and just did *Oppenheimer*. One of his first movies was *Memento*. And, if you remember *Memento*, he tells that story completely backwards. It worked. Not many people can pull that off. He was able to pull that off. But *The Hero's Journey*, when you look at the archetype and the structure of *The Hero's Journey*, it's been around since the beginning of time, and it doesn't change. So I think, in answer to that question, you can be as creative as you like in telling your stories. The frameworks that I teach are foolproof, and they're not something I invented at all.

Park Howell: [00:32:08] They've been revealed to me by lots of different scholars, and all I've done is piece it together to make it work in the business world, in the learning/training world, and the organizational/communications world. I teach it to the likes of the US Air Force. I spent four years, twice a year, going out to Andrews Air Force Base, working with their brigadier to four-star generals and their staff, teaching them these frameworks so that they could recruit and retain more airmen and women, as well as be able to communicate their big ideas to Congress. But it was the frameworks that we were working on. The Home Depot, learning and development for Walmart Canada. I taught at Arizona State University as a professor of practice, never having taught in my life. It's one of the reasons why I found that I loved learning and development and teaching. For five years, I taught a storytelling program within the School of Sustainability there. And, again, I go back to these proven frameworks, the chassis of communication, and then you, as the storyteller, can bring your own personality and creativity to it. But don't deviate from the chassis, the frameworks, unless you're Christopher Nolan and can pull it off.

Celisa Steele: [00:33:26] All right. Well, speaking of chassis, we'll shift gears here a little bit and....

Park Howell: [00:33:30] Very nice.

Celisa Steele: [00:33:31] We always like to ask the guests who come on the Leading Learning Podcast about their own approach to their continued learning. Do you have habits, sources, or practices that you use to help you continue to learn and grow?

Park Howell: [00:33:46] Yes. My number one is what you're doing right now. I host the Business of Story Podcast. I've done it for over eight years. I'm coming up on 500 episodes. And I bring in experts from around the world in some form of storytelling. People are like, "Park, how can you keep talking about storytelling after 500 episodes? You must have covered everything." And I'm like, "No." It's even amazes me. People have a different approach to the story you're telling. It's like their own spoke coming in from the wheel, but it all comes down to that same storytelling hub of these frameworks. So my number-one way to keep growing is by interviewing great people like yourself and other story artists from Hollywood, from business, from learning and development, from—you name it—around the world. That's what I do.

Park Howell: [00:34:36] Number two, because most of those people who show up have a book or a course they're selling, I typically read that book and/or scan it very intensely and sometimes take their courses. So it's ongoing learning for me. And then I just pay attention to what's happening. I do a lot of media research on what's happening in pop culture out there to figure out how story is already infiltrating our lives and we don't know it—through the songs we love, the books we read, and the shows we watch, and the movies we watch—and how that impacts us as storytellers. You and I, I guess we could define ourselves as organizational communicators through our learning, teaching, and training. And so everything comes through all of these different channels, but with a focus on how can I help someone grow as a more confident, compelling, and persuasive communicator in their organizational role? It's using all of this story that's whirring around us that we see every single day. And so it sometimes shows up in the most surprising ways.

Jeff Cobb: [00:35:49] Park Howell is the founder of the Business of Story. In the show notes for this episode at [leadinglearning.com/episode396](http://leadinglearning.com/episode396), you'll find links to the Business of Story Web site and Park's profile on LinkedIn. If you'd like to learn more about the ABT narrative framework, you have a couple of options. Park has put together a short, hour-long online course that goes into more detail and has you practice writing ABTs. He's also co-written, with Dr. Randy Olson, *The Narrative Gym for Business*. The book only takes about an hour and a half to read, and every chapter has exercises for you to apply and start crafting your own ABTs.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast  
available at [www.leadinglearning.com/episode396](http://www.leadinglearning.com/episode396).*

Celisa Steele: [00:36:30] At [leadinglearning.com/episode396](https://www.leadinglearning.com/episode396), you'll find options for subscribing to the podcast. Jeff and I would be grateful if you would subscribe, if you haven't yet, as those subscriptions give us some insight into the impact of the podcast.

Jeff Cobb: [00:36:44] We'd also be grateful if you'd rate us on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen, especially if you find the Leading Learning Podcast valuable. Those ratings and reviews help us show up when people search for content on leading a learning business.

Celisa Steele: [00:36:57] Lastly, please help us grow the Leading Learning community. At [leadinglearning.com/episode396](https://www.leadinglearning.com/episode396), there are links to find us on X, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Jeff Cobb: [00:37:07] Thanks again, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

*[music for this episode by DanoSongs, [www.danosongs.com](http://www.danosongs.com)]*

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