Hello and thanks for requesting the notes from my presentation on April first in Chicago. If you have any questions please DO NOT HESITATE to reach out. I love staying in touch. The best way to reach me is by email: steved@stevedonahue.com.

All of these companies have a senior leadership position called Chief Storyteller. But everyone in a company should be a storyteller. And the story you tell should be an “Epic Story” because it will turn you into a Hero or Heroine on a Noble Quest. You will navigate change and disruption more naturally and effectively because it's simply a part of your career narrative.

I started to tell the epic story of my adventure across the Sahara Desert.

My original adventure took place many years ago. But I returned to the Sahara 33 years later to retrace part of my route and make a documentary film. Many of these photos are from that more recent journey.
This is one of the key concepts from my presentation. I used the example of when you cry from watching a movie. If you tell YOUR own epic story it creates the reality that changes your results.

This is the brain science term for what happens when a story creates your reality. **BONUS MATERIAL:** Check out this article by a leading brain researcher, Dr. Paul Zak. He’s the scientist that made the link between brain chemistry and narrative. [https://hbr.org/2014/10/why-your-brain-loves-good-storytelling](https://hbr.org/2014/10/why-your-brain-loves-good-storytelling)

This is a cause and effect flow chart that explains why epic stories are so powerful. When you tell an epic story the reality it creates gives you results that are transformational!

This story structure is over 4,000 years old. **BONUS FACT:** The oldest record story in human history is an epic story. It’s called the “Epic of Gilgamesh”. This story type is still around because it works!
Every epic story has a HERO or HEROINE who is on a NOBLE QUEST. But he or she must fight BATTLES with the help of a TRUSTED GUIDE or COMMITTED COMPANIONS. These components are like a secret code – a leadership code cleverly concealed in everything from ancient poems to Oscar winning movies.

Epic Stories always have the same 5 components and they are always about Transformation whether it’s Kung Fu Panda, Lord of the Rings, the Wizard of Oz or . . .

. . . one of the largest accounting firms in the world. KPMG told an epic story about themselves. Within one year KPMG had become the #1 ranked accounting firm in America. There's a great article in the Harvard Business Review about their epic story. **BONUS LINK:** https://hbr.org/2015/10/how-an-accounting-firm-convinced-its-employees-they-could-change-the-world

Professional sports is built entirely on the 5 Components of the Epic Story. If you are a sports fan you have already bought into the story because it makes you feel like you are on the Quest to win the championship. Businesses are now realizing that they can harness this narrative to drive change and achieve their goals. I showed you much more epic your work as an Internal Auditor is compared to professional athletes.
I returned to my own epic story and introduced you to my best friend Tallis and the reason why we crossed the Sahara.

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People often ask me if I have any regrets about my decision to cross the Sahara – just one, those shorts!

I have an epic story from crossing the Sahara Desert. But I’m actually more proud of the epic story for my business. You don’t need to climb Mt. Everest or swim the English Channel to have an epic story. You just have to put the 5 Components into play in your own career, team or company.

The first thing is to Create your Noble Quest. You may have noticed that sometimes I use the word “Quest” and sometimes I say “Noble Quest”. There’s a difference. Tallis and I were on a Quest to spend the winter on a tropical beach. There’s nothing NOBLE about that – we wanted a tan. 😞
Our research shows that the best Quest for business is where your mission feels like an inspiring goal that serves the greater good. It's not about the money. It is quite simply NOBLE. But here’s the amazing paradox . . .

Companies on a Noble Quest make more money than their competitors who are simply trying to make money.

My new book, which is coming out later this year, explains this amazing Paradox: A non–monetary Noble Quest is better for your bottom line. Better for your career too. (keep an eye on your inbox, I’ll let you know when it’s released!)

And your Quest, Nob le or not, but hopefully noble, must uniquely inspire you and your team.
Finally, you’ve got to be able to say YOUR QUEST in 9 words or less. The fewer the words the better. There’s really no way of knowing what will inspire you/your team/your company, your own epic story until you start talking about it.

Starbucks is on a Quest. 6 words. It feels Noble.

AirBnB – 7 words. Uniquely inspiring to them. Nothing about the bottom line.

Sara Blakely became the youngest woman on earth to earn a billion dollars. And she really is on a Noble Quest. She’s recently pledged to give at least 50% of her wealth to charity. That’s epic. **BONUS LINK:** Check out the amazing story of SPANX— [https://www.success.com/shaping-sara-blakely-meet-the-billionaire-founder-of-spanx/](https://www.success.com/shaping-sara-blakely-meet-the-billionaire-founder-of-spanx/)
I work with the Allstate IT department. So this is NOT the Noble Quest for all of Allstate. It’s just the IT department. The Epic Story works in small teams – big departments – entire organizations and even on just a personal level, in your own individual career. In fact – it’s very important to make it personal.

A lot of my clients do what KPMG did. KPMG asked their employees – What is your personal noble quest, what’s your purpose at KPMG? – they got 42,000 responses.

When you really nail your Noble Quest the other components start falling into place. The Noble Quest turns us into Heroes and Heroines. We become more committed. We become more creative. And your Noble Quest forces you to make some very important choices.

The second step is to Pick Your Battles. And when you pick the RIGHT Battles you get 3 competitive advantages.
How would you like to have More Energy, Better Focus and Increased Impact? Here we have another paradox. We think that our Battles exhaust but the right ones give us power. The problem is that most of us have too many Battles or we fight the wrong ones.

That’s why you have to Focus. And when it comes to your epic story the magic number is 2. The best stories never have more than 2 major battles. It doesn’t mean you ignore everything else on your to-do list. It means you FOCUS on the 2 major things that will give you the most impact and the most energy.

We all have our own inner enemy that we must battle to achieve greatness. What’s in your way? Everybody has something. For most of my life I have battled perfectionism. Anytime, anyone, looks inside themselves, identifies their inner enemy and decides to fight that battle, transformation occurs.

Internal Auditors have a tremendous amount of responsibility. You wouldn’t be trusted with that if you didn’t have your own secret weapon. In this section of the presentation we discussed HOW you win your Battles.
When you choose the right battles you get power from energy, focus and impact. But each one of you also has your own unique powers. If you’re going to win your battles you have to know what your powers are.

I did some research on the Methods of Measuring the Performance of Internal Audit. We had a few good laughs over this but the research is quite legitimate and it might give you insight into your unique abilities. **BONUS LINK:** [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227576321_METHODS_OF_MEASURING_THE_PERFORMANCE_OF_INTERNAL_AUDIT](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227576321_METHODS_OF_MEASURING_THE_PERFORMANCE_OF_INTERNAL_AUDIT)

The final part of the “formula” looked at 3 powerful roles we can play in telling our own epic stories.

I talked about my role as a non-conformist as an example of a non-epic role in my own life.
The whole point is that you don’t have to change WHO you are. In fact, that would be a mistake. Because your powers are linked very closely to WHO you are. All you need to do is to play a different role from time to time.

The Hero/Heroine has a primary trait of courage. They take risks. The result is winning battles. This is not about running into a house on fire. It’s just about getting a little bit outside your comfort zone in a way that produces a new and better result.

And that’s why we call the Hero/Heroine the Change Maker.

If you are someone’s boss You will play this role A LOT. But, depending on the consultative or advisory component of your work as an internal auditor, many of you play this role quite often.
Another name for the Trusted Guide is The Change Coach. Because Heroes require Guides to make change happen. So, when you are trying to effect change in a client organization or for an internal client and THEY are the ones that need to do something different – to get out of their comfort zone. THEY are the Heroes and you are the Guides.

Finally, we have Committed Companions. They are All in. They take responsibility. They get the job done. These people rarely receive the glory they are due but they’re just as important as Heroes and Guides.

We also call them CHANGE ALLIES. These are the grinders. They don’t give up. They just keep showing up. I love this Epic Role because Committed Companions are the ones who will give you a push when you get stuck.

It’s natural that you’d be more comfortable in one of these roles and less in another. You’re not in this epic story alone. You have to play these roles for each other. At any given time someone on your team, maybe a client needs YOU to be their Guide or Companion. Conversely, you might be holding everyone else back because you won’t get a little bit out of your comfort zone.
You can boil it down to a very simple question. What role does the story require me to play right now? And this is how transformation occurs. You play the role the situation requires so that you can win your battles and achieve your quest.

If you want to TELL an Epic Story You need to HAVE an Epic Story. And once you have it, you have all 5 components – before you tell it – you need to get your story straight in terms of the plot, the players, the whole point of the story.

This is your story distilled down to the essentials of who you are, what you do, why you do it, and most importantly – what is the payoff? Why would anyone care? Why would anyone want to be part of your story.

This is the actual order of the ESS. It’s a little bit different from the Epic Story Pyramid. You did a great job working on your own statements and sharing them. That was Epic! And a few of you have the the TROPHY to prove it.
You probably remember Jay Alverson and his Noble Banjo Quest. I love how he customized his trophy!

Here’s the example of my own Epic Story Statement for those of you who are working on refining your own story.

I finished my desert story by describing how the nomads became our Trusted Guides.

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Here’s the beach where Tallis and I spent the winter. We achieved our Quest!
I finished with techniques to help you think like a storyteller. Say “Oh Boy!” to find the story inside your problem. Say “Yes, And...” to keep the story going so that it can transform you. And say “I Sing...” to make sure the story is told. We all need to sing more in this way because the world is full of unsung heroes – and how do you know your story is epic until someone else “sings” it?

I told the story of the 10,000 books to illustrate “Oh Boy” – “Yes, And” – “I Sing”. You knew that I had to go to Korea because you are already thinking like a Storyteller. That was impressive by the way! 😊

My final message was about how my story was “sung” to me in Korea and I tried to “sing” your story to you.

What you do as Internal Auditors is truly Epic. You help make America an amazing country that is the envy of the world. Keep telling your story and let me know if there’s anything I can do to help!

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