

Why is Storytelling Biologically Important for Survival? With Paul Zak

Tear Jerker: The Moral Molecule and Storytelling

Dr. Paul J. Zak is a fascinating man. Not only did he discover the implications of the brain's release of oxytocin and publish a book on it, "*The Moral Molecule*," he also pioneered research in the field of neuroeconomy and works on storytelling with the Department of Defense to help them understand why stories are so persuasive.

He is the director of the Center for Neuroeconomics Studies, and a Professor of Economics, Psychology, and Management at Claremont Graduate University.

Dr. Zak studies oxytocin, a molecule that our brains release when we engage in positive social interactions. **It creates trust and connects us as social and emotional beings.**

Oxytocin is incredibly important to storytelling because, as we know, stories change our behavior. When our brains encounter a good story, oxytocin is released, causing us to feel empathy. The **empathy is what causes us to want to take action**. People who have this experience are more likely to act on their emotions: purchasing a product, donating to a charity, etc.

For storytellers in the business world we need to "identify what the key factors are that motivate action after you [hear or see a good] story... If you think about story as a way to influence others, then you've got to think about having a really tight story."

What are these equations and molecules and how can we harness them to exponentially increase our stories' potentials? Listen now to find out!

In This Episode

- Oxytocin, or **the moral molecule**, and its acute, chemical effect on the brain
- What the **neuroeconomy** is, and how to apply it to your business
- What you need to know as a business communicator to release oxytocin in your audience
- Steps to build stories that have a distinct chemical effect on the brain and influence others
- The **ZEST score**, and how to use this mathematical equation to predict your story's success

Quotes From This Episode

"A spoonful of story helps the data go down." —@ParkHowell (highlight to tweet)

"We think we write and speak well but we can all get better at that. You want to influence humans around you? These are the skills to acquire." —@pauljzak



“When business leaders use story, little anecdotes around the data they’re trying to express, it ignites the subconscious.” —@ParkHowell

“I’ve got to think about more effective ways to influence people, to motivate them and storytelling is something that our brains just love.” —@pauljzak

Resources

- [Paul J. Zak TED Talk](#)
- Paul’s short video: [Empathy, Neurochemistry and the Dramatic Arc](#)
- [Future of Storytelling website](#)
- Paul’s book, [The Moral Molecule](#)
- [ZESTxLabs](#)
- [Business of Story](#)

[Convince and Convert Blog: Social Media Strategy and Social Media Consulting](#)