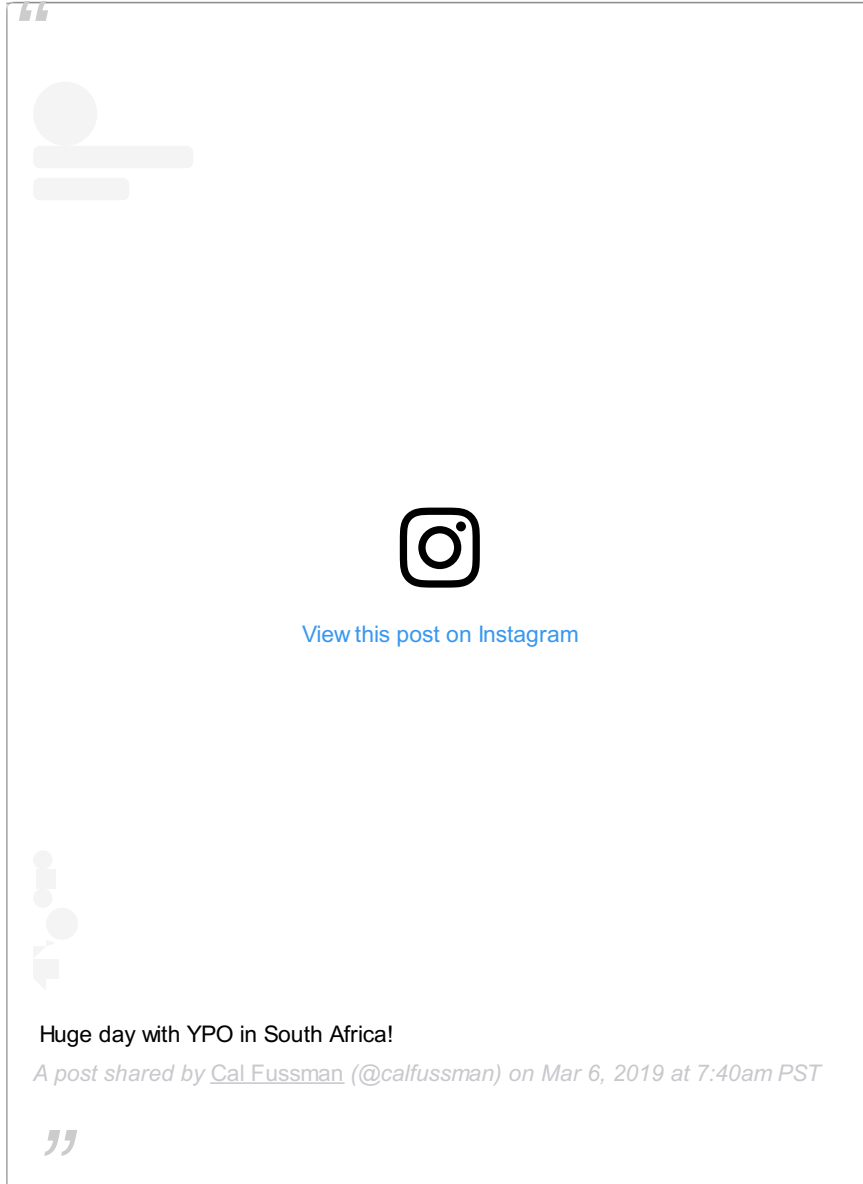


# Cal Fussman on the compelling social impact of storytelling on the long game

By  Leigh Andrews

11 Mar 2019

Last week, YPO hosted the world's largest gathering of CEOs right here in Cape Town, on 6 and 7 March 2019, for its Global Leadership Conference and YPO Edge, with the theme, 'Life of Re'. I spoke to master storyteller Cal Fussman about lessons he's learned from interviewing the likes of Simon Sinek.



Fussman's own website explains it best:

*“When Cal speaks, you're listening to everyone he's ever interviewed. Lessons and stories from hundreds of world icons.”*

Among them, the most inspirational and looked-up-to: Nelson Mandela, Richard Branson, Serena Williams and Simone Biles.

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As a result of these insights, [‘Big Questions’](#) podcast host Fussman inspires others to take a new look at their business through storytelling and connection on the level of heart, head and soul.

So one of the most relevant interpretations of the YPO 2019 ‘Life of Re’ theme when it comes to Fussman is that of the power of constant brand reinvention and retelling of that story you’ve entrenched in your own staff, but not necessarily in your consumers.



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On the value of engaging storytelling in this regard and the power of brands telling their own stories, Fussman said that talking about and putting the ‘Life of Re’ theme into action is actually very new.

He’s an old-school guy. Back in the day, if a company wanted its story told, it had to go through the media. Now, we’re in a space where a company has control over the telling of its own story. But if it tries to do so in a manipulative way, that will fast be smelled out, especially by the savvy younger generation.

Convince vs compel: Get the storytelling basics right

That’s why it’s important to tell your story honestly, in a compelling way. The idea is that you’re not trying to convince people what you do – you’re trying to compel them to understand what you do, and the benefit thereof. So it’s the difference between aiming to convince and to compel – storytelling does just that, which is why Fussman was excited to speak on the topic at YPO.

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Hello Cape Town!

A post shared by [Cal Fussman](#) (@calfussman) on Mar 5, 2019 at 4:24am PST

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On how the C-Suite in general beyond YPO members can make a positive change in society beyond their bottom line, Fussman said the first step is to understand *why* they're doing what they're doing. The bottom line is not the *why*.

Proving his own storytelling prowess, Fussman shared that he recently interviewed author Simon Sinek on just this, and the lesson applies universally: If you understand *why* you're doing what you do as a brand, you can go in so many different directions, and help so many different people.

If you're just looking at the bottom line, it's simply about figures.

## **Jeff Bezos: Proof of power of the long game**

Fussman also spoke of Sinek's about-to-be-revealed new book, *The Infinite Game*, and his overarching point that if you're just looking at the bottom line and treating your business results like a sporting event – where the game is over at the end of this quarter and we simply aim to win – you're not understanding that this is an infinite game.

You've got to be playing this for the long game. There's no better example of that than what Jeff Bezos has done at Amazon – that is the long game.

“Fussman remembers interviewing Bezos back in 2001, at a time when everyone was asking him when Amazon would make money. It got to the point where this was coming up in every story, from every interviewer. And so Fussman went into the interview determined not to ask that question. After about 40 minutes, the publicist sitting next to Bezos couldn't take it anymore and asked, “When are you going to ask the question?!” When Fussman responded that it wasn't on his list, Bezos let rip with his loud, booming laugh.”

Now we've seen Bezos' long game in play, and Fussman encourages anyone else in business to look at the long game – the outcome isn't necessarily obvious from the story you tell at the very beginning, but it builds with each customer experience.



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Fussman added that he will be one of the first readers of Sinek's *The Infinite Game*, out later this year, as Sinek is an inspirational deep thinker who, at his very core, approaches subjects in such different ways that they stand out as vastly different from the rest – you would never think that way yourself unless you were living in Sinek's world.

Yet Sinek's views resonate strongly, which is why they are [constantly being shared](#) on social media.

He's a powerful storyteller himself, and that sense of relooking, rethinking, refocus and reinvention is ultimately what YPO is all about.



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[Click here](#) for more on Sinek's 'infinite game', [here](#) for Fussman's 'Big Question' podcast and be sure to follow YPO's [YPO Edge](#) on Twitter and the [hashtag](#) for further insights from the global gathering.

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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