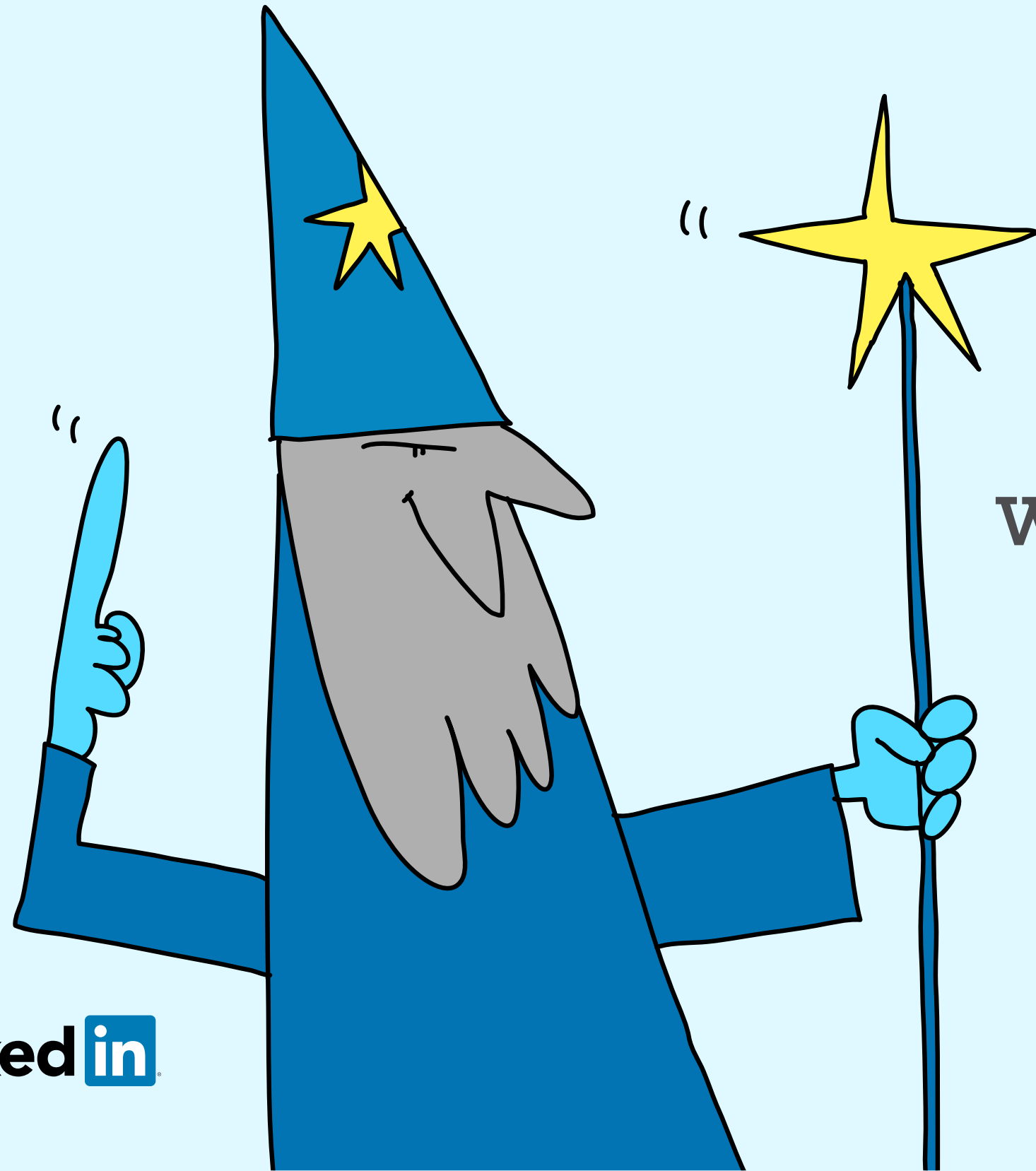


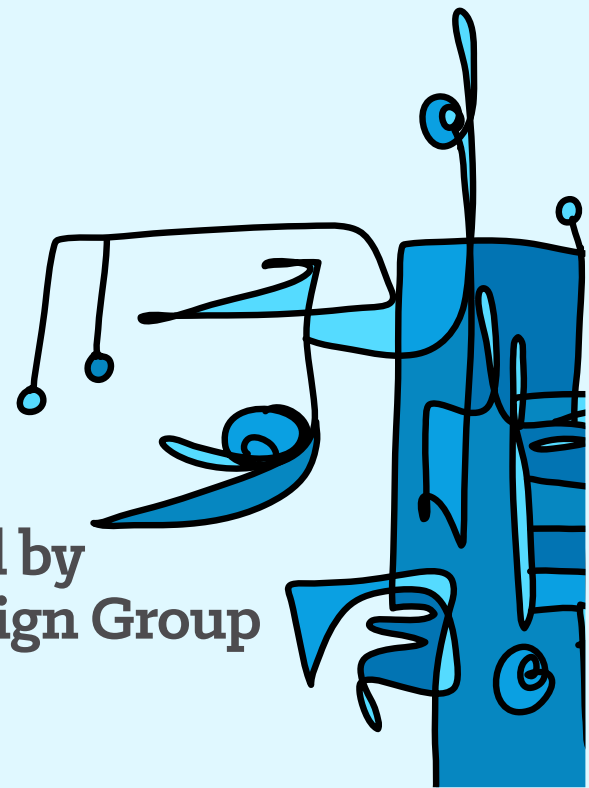
ONCE UPON A DIGITAL TIME



How to Be an
Amazing Storyteller
When Everyone is a “Storyteller”

LinkedIn

Written by Brian Solis
Designed and Illustrated by
Gapingvoid Culture Design Group

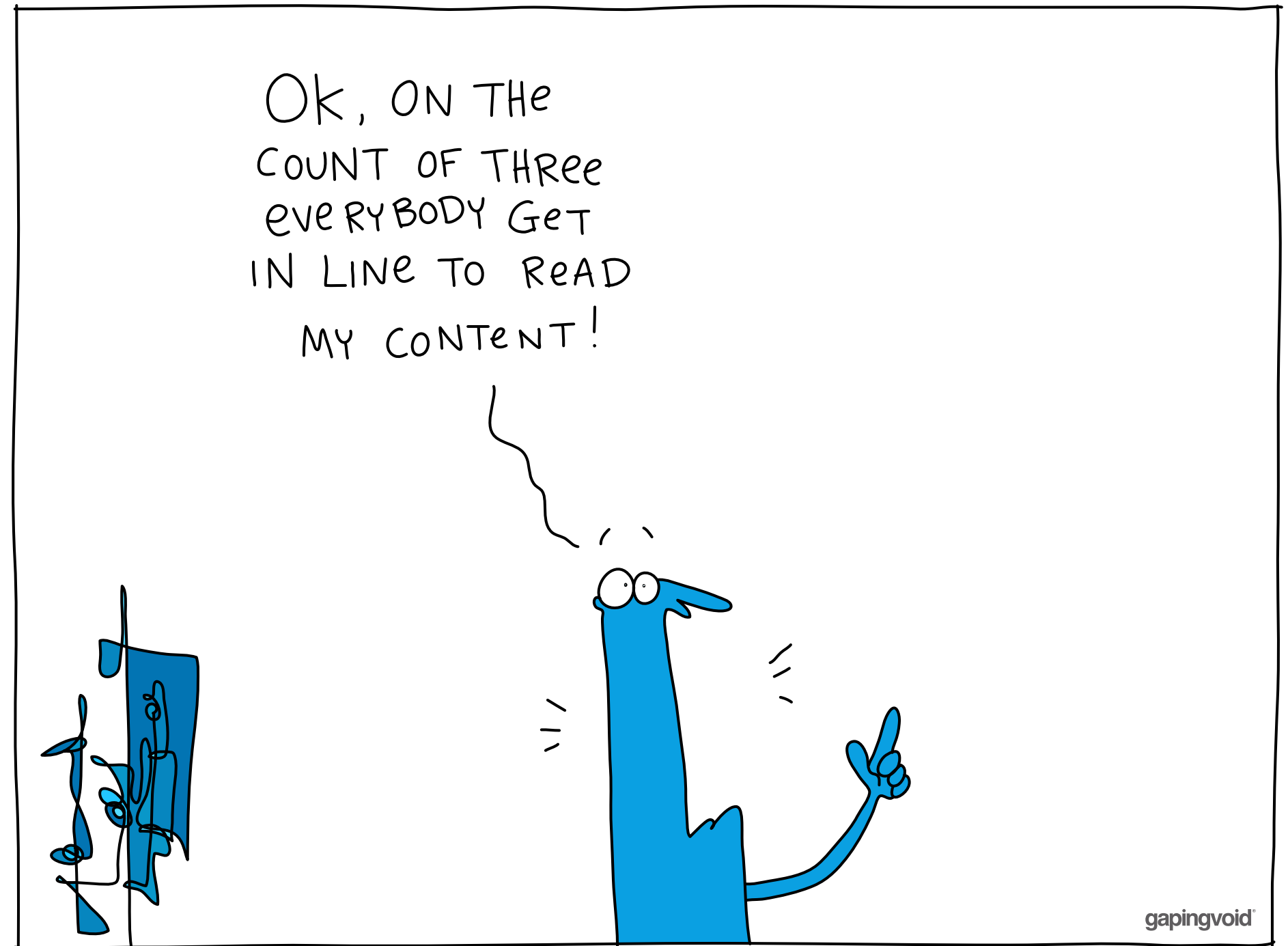


Social media changed the narrative.

The great thing about social media is that it gave everyone a voice. The down side of social media is that it gave everyone a voice.

Unfortunately, among those who were suddenly gifted with platforms and voices were marketers. And marketers wasted no time in broadcasting, publishing, pushing, measuring.

At some point, we got so caught up in the process, calendars, numbers, that we lost our story, we lost our audience, we lost our purpose.



Content marketing is still marketing.

Did you know that 60% of marketers still don't have a documented content strategy?

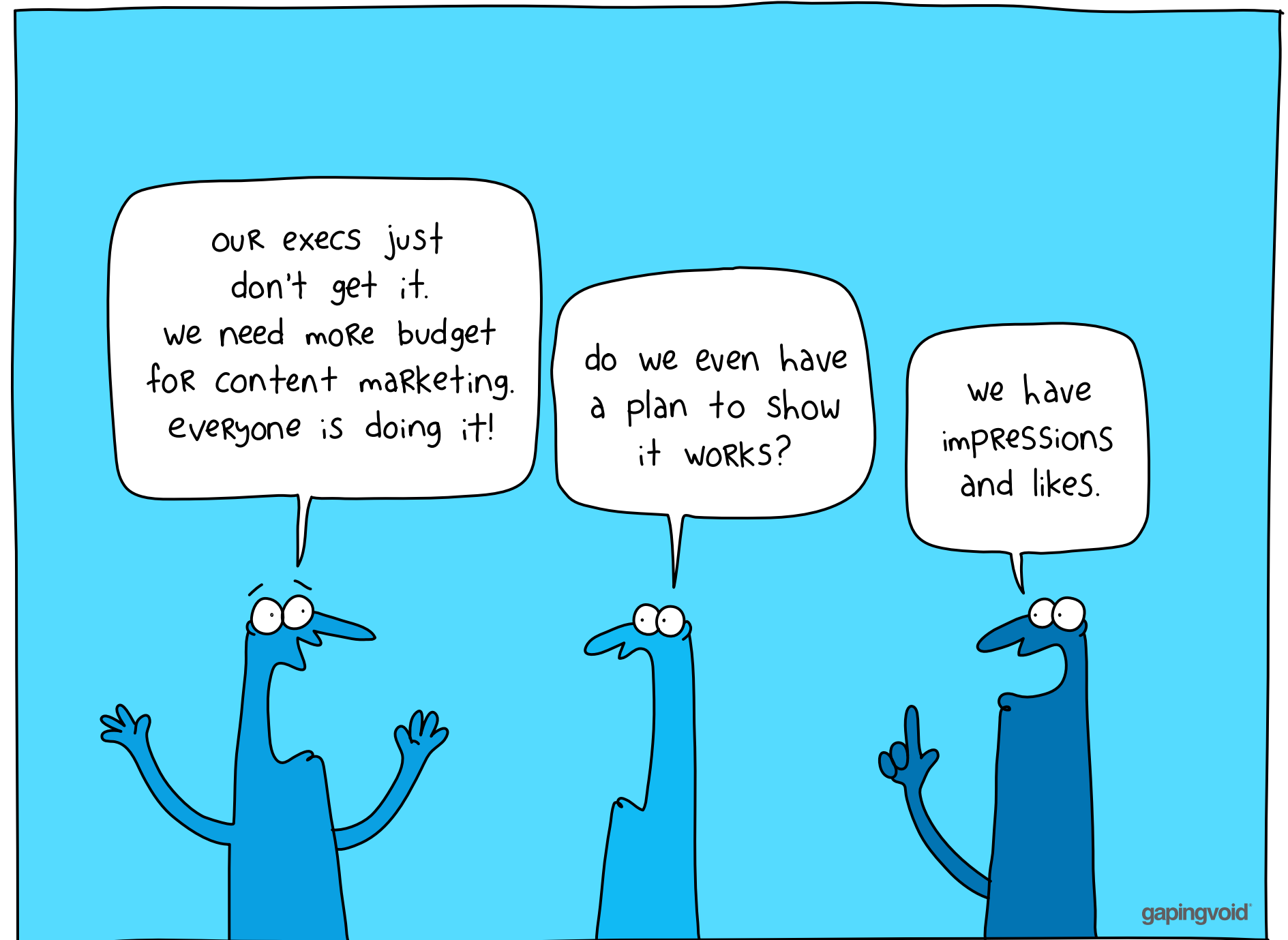
63% still say that generating traffic and leads is a top challenge.

Yet, 73.6% of marketers plan to spend more on content in the coming year.

Too many marketers have no idea who they're trying to reach, what's important to them, and why.

There's a reason why 95% of content fails to connect with people. Content is more often designed to be "viral" instead of engaging, useful or empathetic.

Source: Content Marketing Institute



One does not simply publish content.

With social and digital media comes great responsibility and sometimes restraint.

Content is now a commodity. Social media isn't so social these days. People are now brands while brands try to be people.

To be honest people are tuning out, unfollowing, and unsubscribing. They're too busy getting likes and followers, staging that perfect shot, striking that perfect pose, and sharing that perfect motivational quote and living their best life.

So, how does anyone stand out in an always-on, "look at me" world?

HEY.

LOOK AT

ME!

Is mobile the first or second screen? Neither. It may just well be the only screen.

Phones are no longer phones. Mobile devices are now everything. They're digital appendages. They're windows into new worlds. They're lifelines to relevance, self-meaning and self-actualization.

Q: How often do we touch our phones?

A: 2,617 times a day.

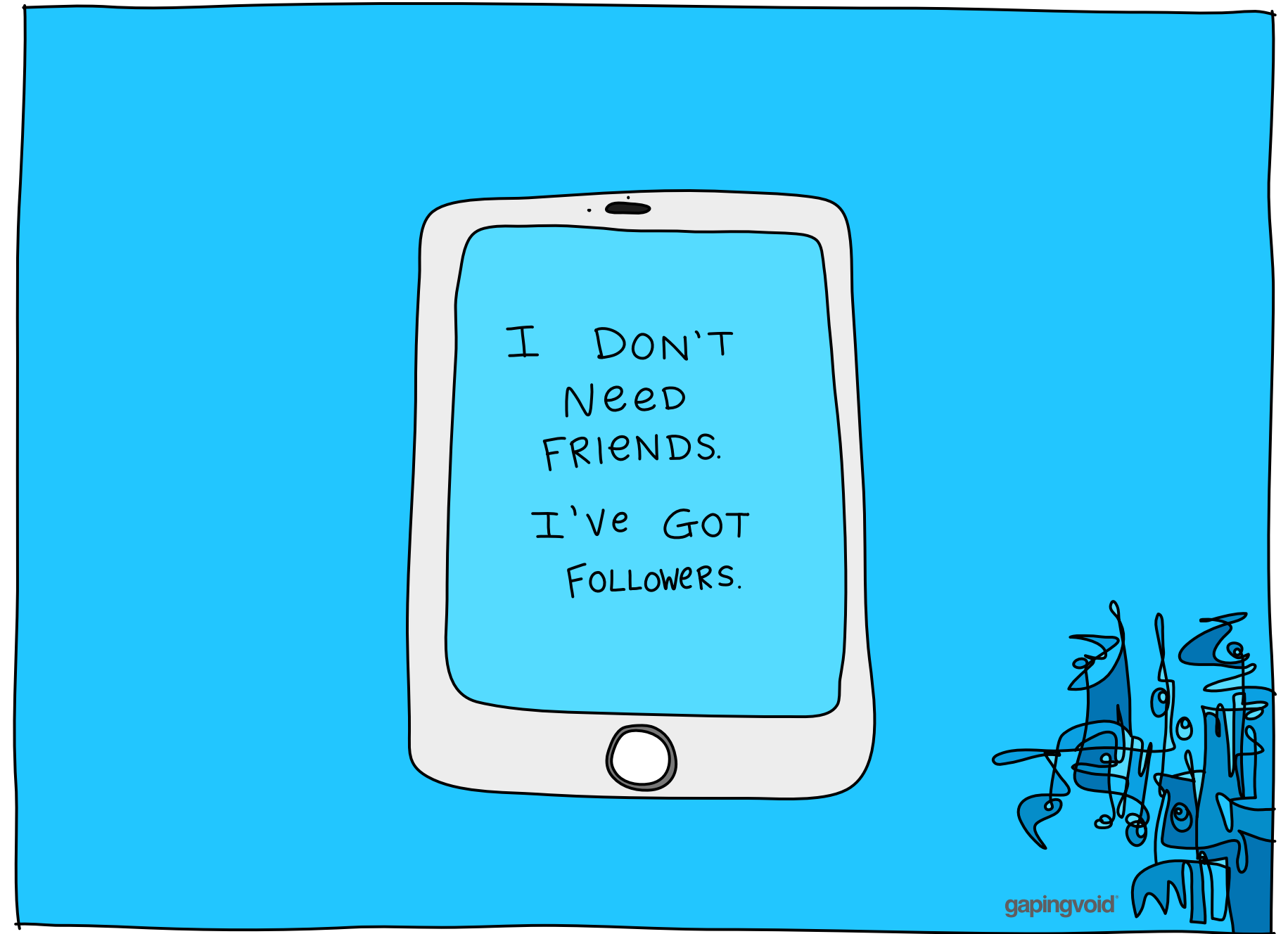
According to one study(*), people tapped, swiped and clicked 2,617 each day on average. The heaviest top 10% of users touched their phones 5,427 times a day.

Q: How many separate times a day do people actually use their phones, not just touches?

A: 76 sessions a day for average users(**). The top 10% averaged 132 sessions a day.

*Source: dscout, Michael Winnick

** Study of Android users only. iPhone not included



Welcome to short attention span theater!

The problem can't be with content marketing, right? It has to do with people's addiction to their phones and multi-tasking.

No one has attention spans anymore, right!?

I'm sorry, what were you saying?

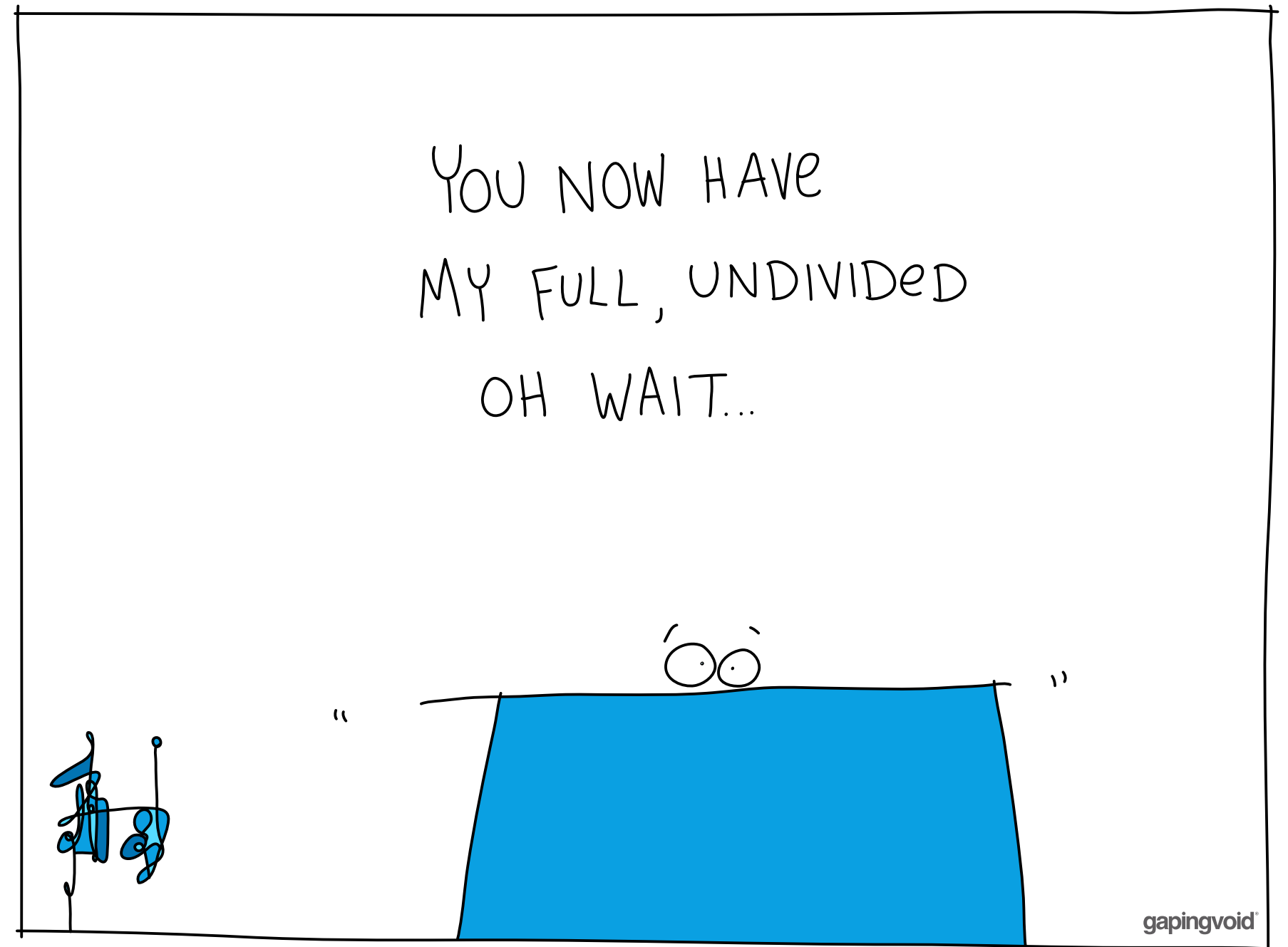
Just kidding!

The truth is that contrary to fake news, attention spans aren't the issue and neither is multi-tasking.

People are just hyper-focused, self-seeking, empowered, elusive and in control of their experiences.

The people who matter aren't distracted, they're focused.

They are open to relevant content at the right time, in the right context, and in the right format. Good news.



The Follower Fallacy, The Traffic Trap, The Like Lunacy. Social's perfect storm of misdirection .

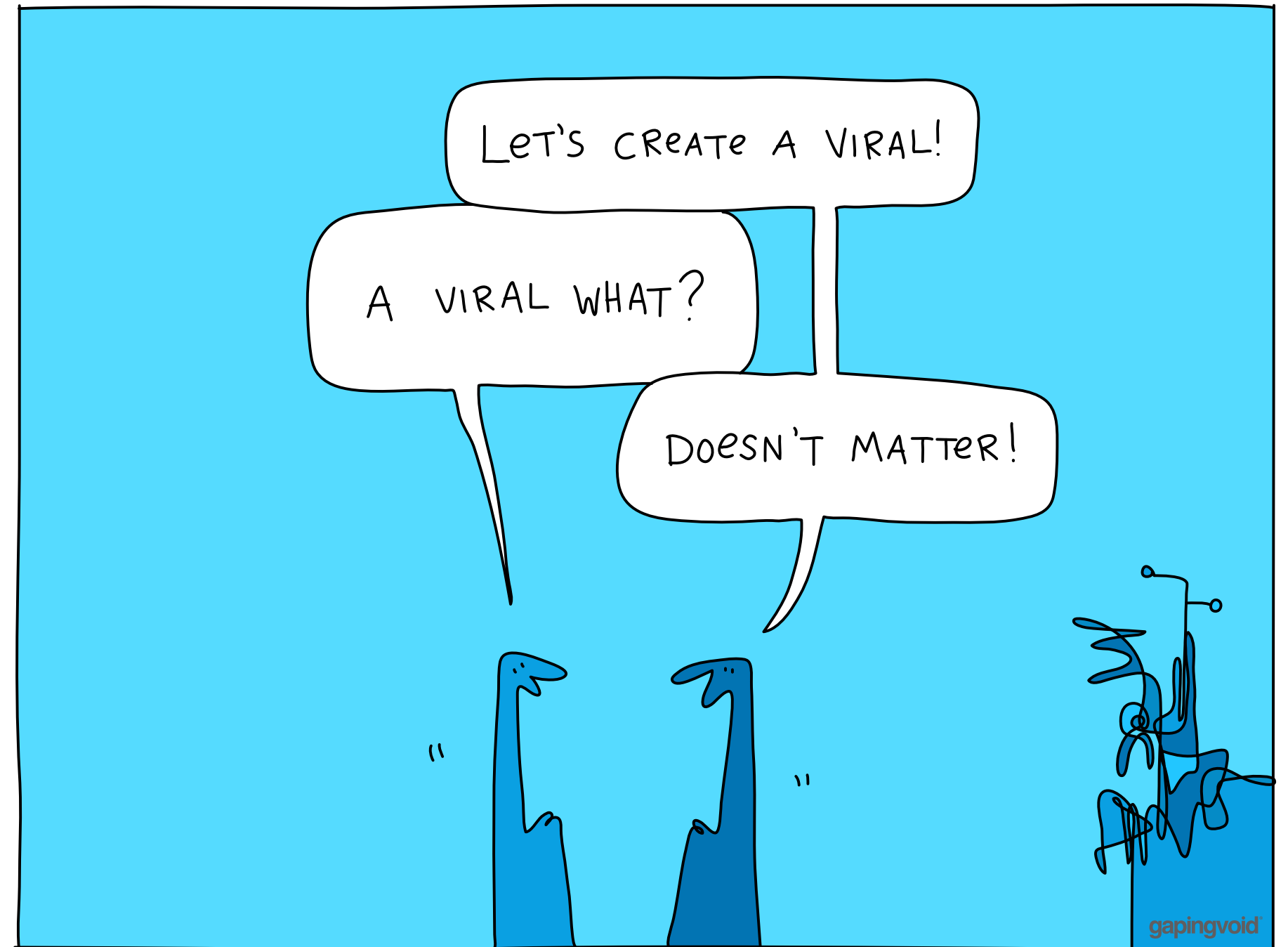
Digital marketers are going to extremes to outdo one another. Everyone wants to run the campaign that everyone talks about online, at conferences, in books, etc.

But, instead of hyper-investing in audiences and relevant strategies, we prioritized quantity and measure our success on vanity metrics, likes, traffic, views, followers.

These numbers actually take us further away from the people who matter to our business.

Instead, we need to measure the value we add to moments that matter.

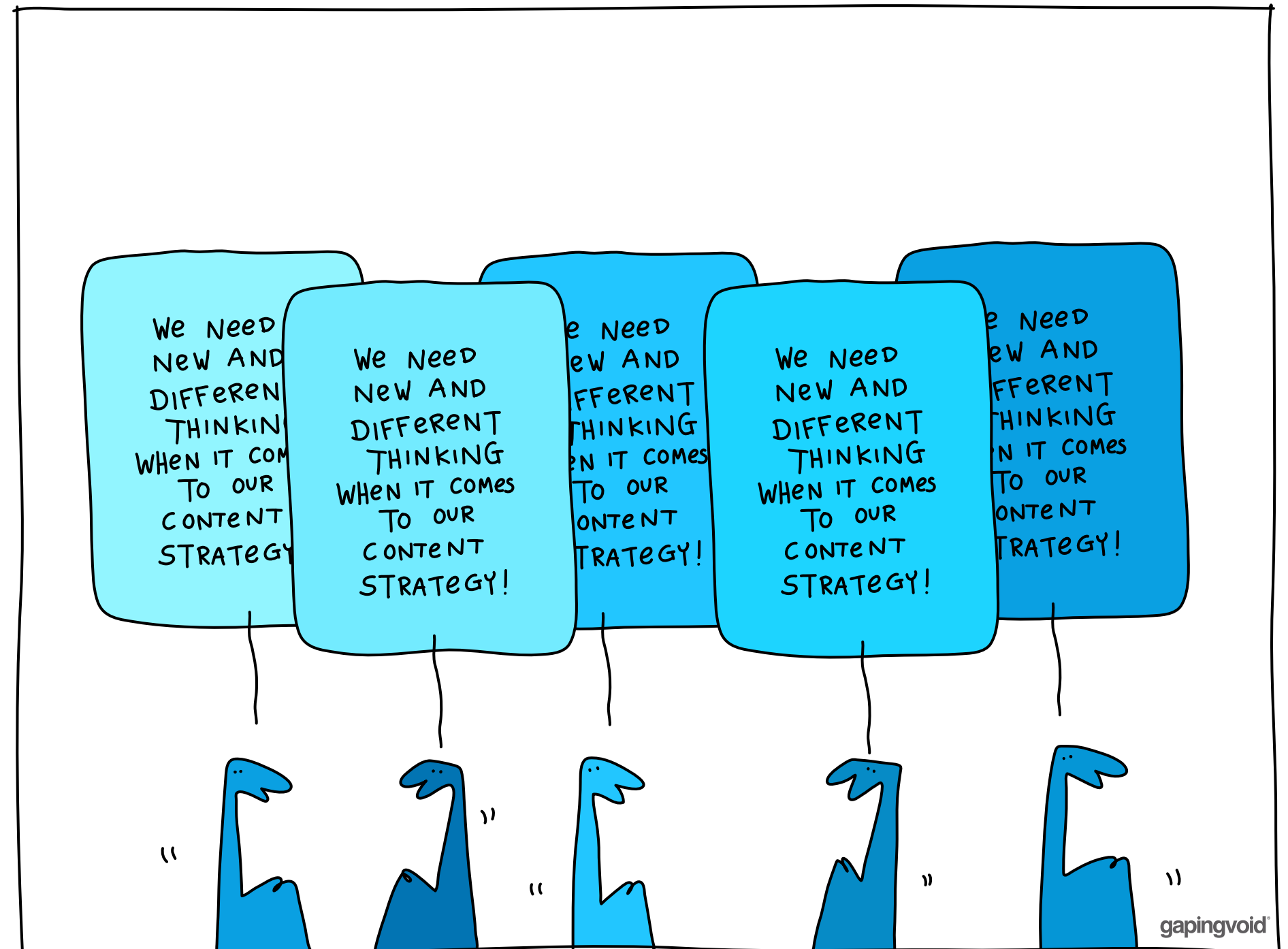
Start with what matters to customers and of course the business. Otherwise, very little else matters in the long run.



There's too much marketing for content marketing.

Ironically, we may be in a marketing filter bubble for content marketing. Much of what we read, what we hear about at conferences, and what we see celebrated online isn't 100% relatable to our work. While much of it certainly is worthy of attention, the relationship between your brand and your audience is yours to build. It's unique, or at least it's supposed to be.

While there's always value to learn from our peers, nothing tells us more about how to be successful than learning from the people who matter to our business; our customers and ultimately how to make them successful with their audiences.



Too often, content marketing isn't about audiences, it's about us.

Have you noticed that you often create content for the people approving your work and not those who need to hear from our experience, lessons, and advice.

Risk-aversion, regulation, compliance and legal put the fun in dysfunctional.

That's not on-brand or message!

We can't say that! It'll never get approved!

We can find every reason not to take new chances or to innovate. But, if you study B2B journeys, preferences and buying behaviors, there's plenty of evidence to support your cause.

Did you know that 80% of B2B buyers expect the same buying experience as B2C customers? B2B customers expect the same personalized and seamless cross-channel and cross-device experiences. This is exactly the time to break new ground. Your customers need you.

TOP TEN WAYS OF BEING A SUCCESSFUL CONTENT MARKETER:

1. READ TOP 10 LISTS
2. PLUG INTO REAL-TIME EVENTS, TRENDS, HOLIDAY
3. FOLLOW NOTABLE THOUGHT LEADERS
4. FIND INFLUENCERS TO SHARE YOUR CONTENT
5. GET CHATBOTS IN PLAY!
6. BUILD A FUNNEL PROGRAM
7. CREATE A BRAND PERSONA
8. AI SOMETHING OR OTHER
9. BUILD A VR/AR EXPERIENCE
10. DO SOMETHING WITH BITCOIN OR ANOTHER CRYPTOCURRENCY

gapingvoid

Your audience has an audience of audiences. Talk to and through them.

Anyone can create content that grabs people's attention, but not everyone can captivate someone and compel them to action.

Everyone in social media has a network of their own; you're now engaging an audience with an audience of audiences.

Relevant stories talk to and through people to connect and resonate across social graphs.

The focus of our work shifts from impressions to expressions so that you can deliver value to your customers and in turn, they can pass it on to their networks.

INFORMATION becomes currency.

RELEVANCE becomes the new viral.

UTILITY is the new experience.

The goal is to talk to and through people and to build a community where the value of belonging is measured in how people feel and what they can do differently as a result of your engagement.



And marketers lived happily ever after...or not.

"If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book."

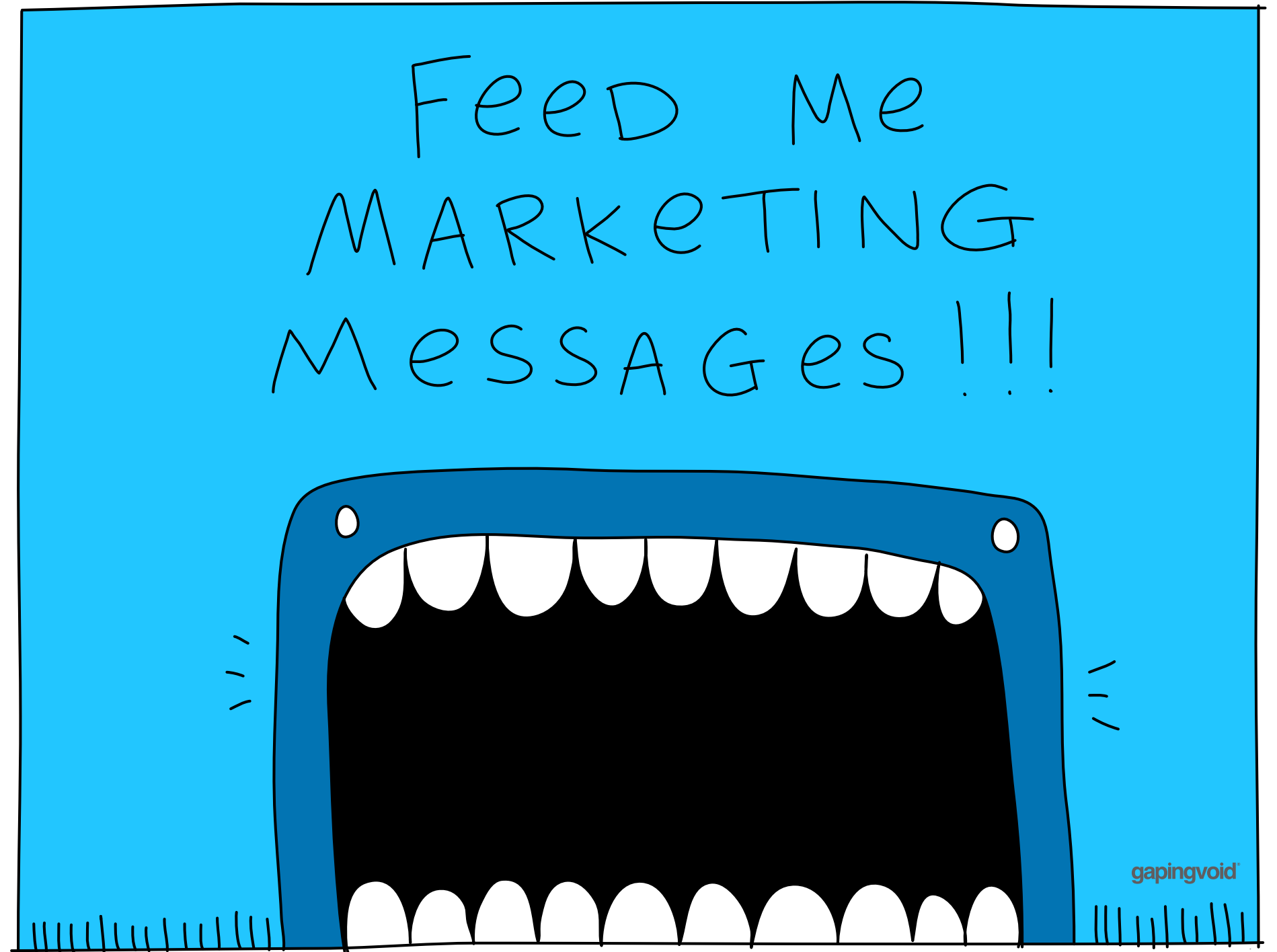
That's the opening line of "A Series of Unfortunate Events" by Lemony Snicket.

It grabbed your attention didn't it? It certainly imprinted an unforgettable impression upon me.

There's power in a story.

The challenge is, how we shift from content marketers to legitimate storytellers and we make our story engaging, relevant, useful, relatable, believable, desirable, aspirational.

Well, let me tell you a story...



A great time ahead...

...when the world is full of wonders, and creativity and empathy are celebrated...

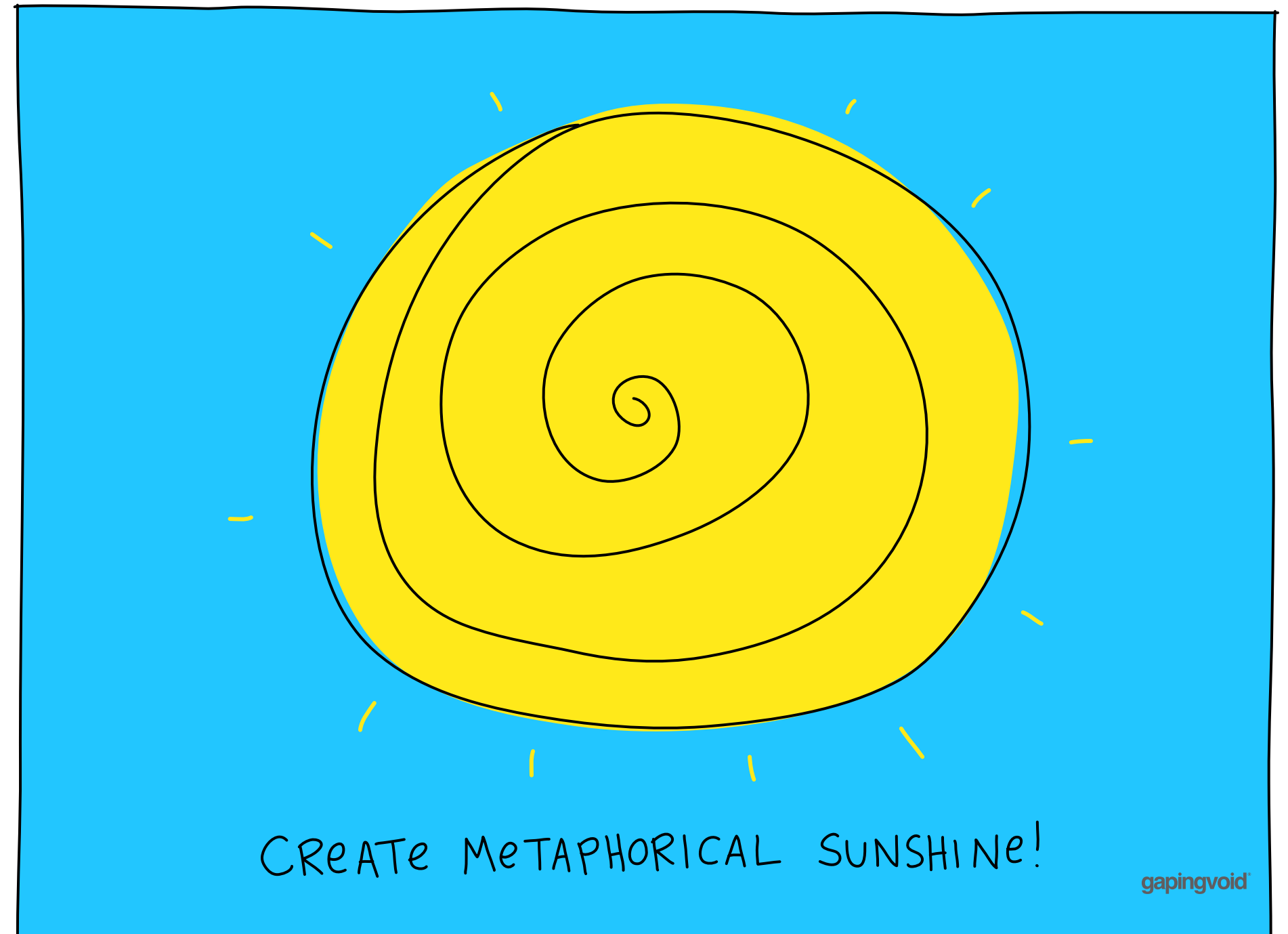
There once was a blossoming storyteller who wished to captivate the hearts and minds of everyone.

Alas, this would-be storyteller was first met with great resistance as so many other hopeful raconteurs before had spoiled the path ahead and sated once ready audiences.

This is where our story begins. For the world could not be genuinely enchanted until the story and the storyteller would find a new way forward.

But there's hope in a new beginning. Remember, you're the one who can fill the world with sunshine.*

*Source: Snow White



Everyone is a “storyteller” but there are very few stories worth following.

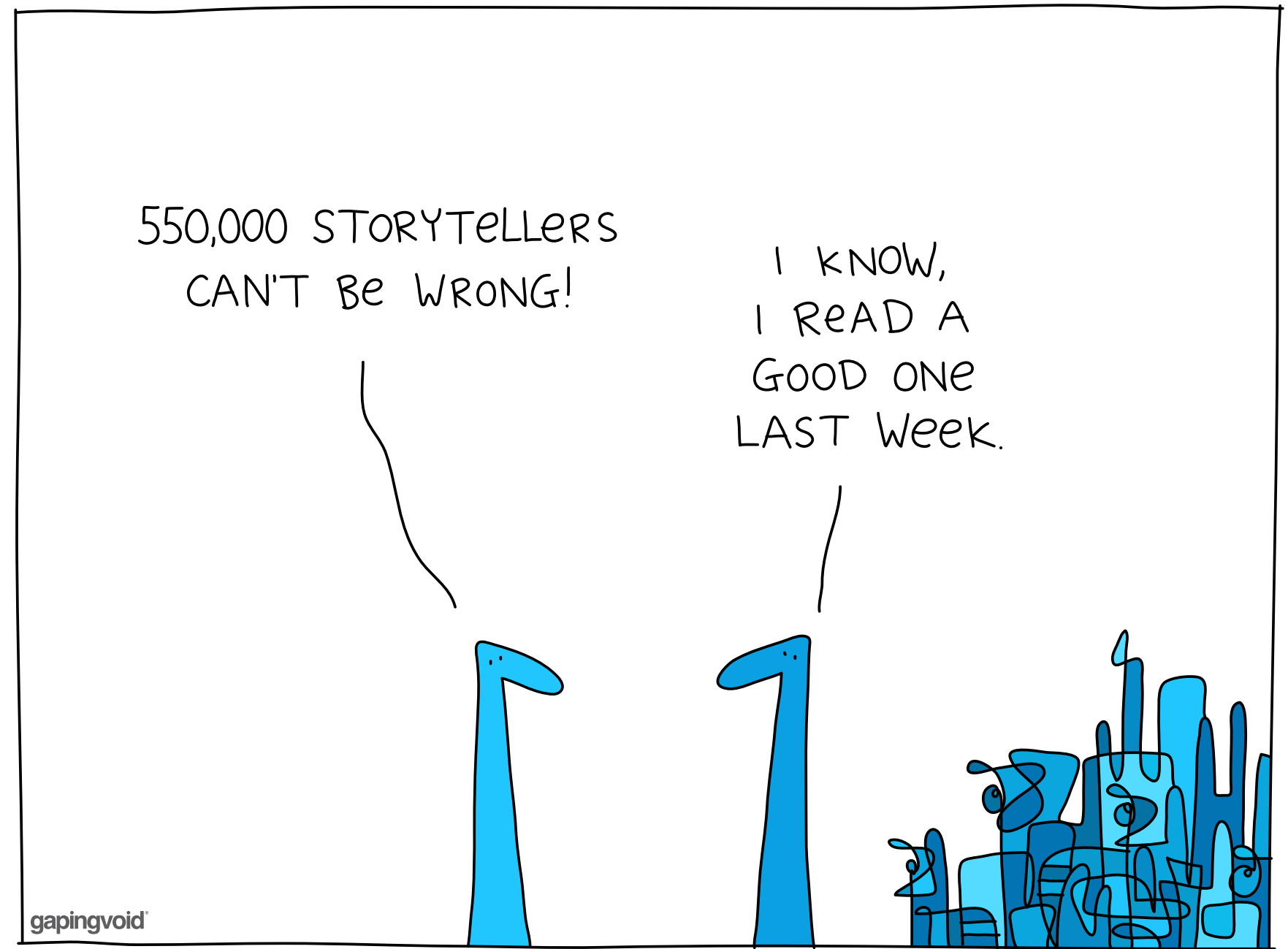
You can't just change your title to “storyteller.” While content marketers are hoping to plug into the power of story, we first need to think a bit deeper about the gift that is human attention and engagement. You have to earn it.

“You are not a [explatic removed] storyteller.”

Those are the words of Stefan Sagmeister of design firm Sagmeister & Walsh from a now infamous interview with Adweek.

Storytelling is both art and science, it's a dance. It requires emotion, human connection, and an understanding of what motivates and inspires action. It's even harder for business, in that you need the data to know what your customers want. It's not for everyone, that's why great storytellers often become cultural icons. Spielberg, Hemingway, Orwell, Grisham, Ogilvy, Bernbach, etc.

What's scary is that the power of story and it has very little to do with “traditional marketing,” but that's actually a good thing.



Fun fact: 550K marketers list storytelling in their profile on LinkedIn.

A good story is personal.

Stories ignite our imagination. TED, the purveyor of “ideas worth spreading” believes that stories affirm who we are, and allow us to experience the similarities between ourselves and others, real or imagined. Stories help us make meaning of our lives.

There is no standard for storytelling. But, there are common pillars.





GREAT STORIES ARE

Do you have a story to sell or a story to tell?

Great stories have the power to transform our perceptions of the world and our place in it.

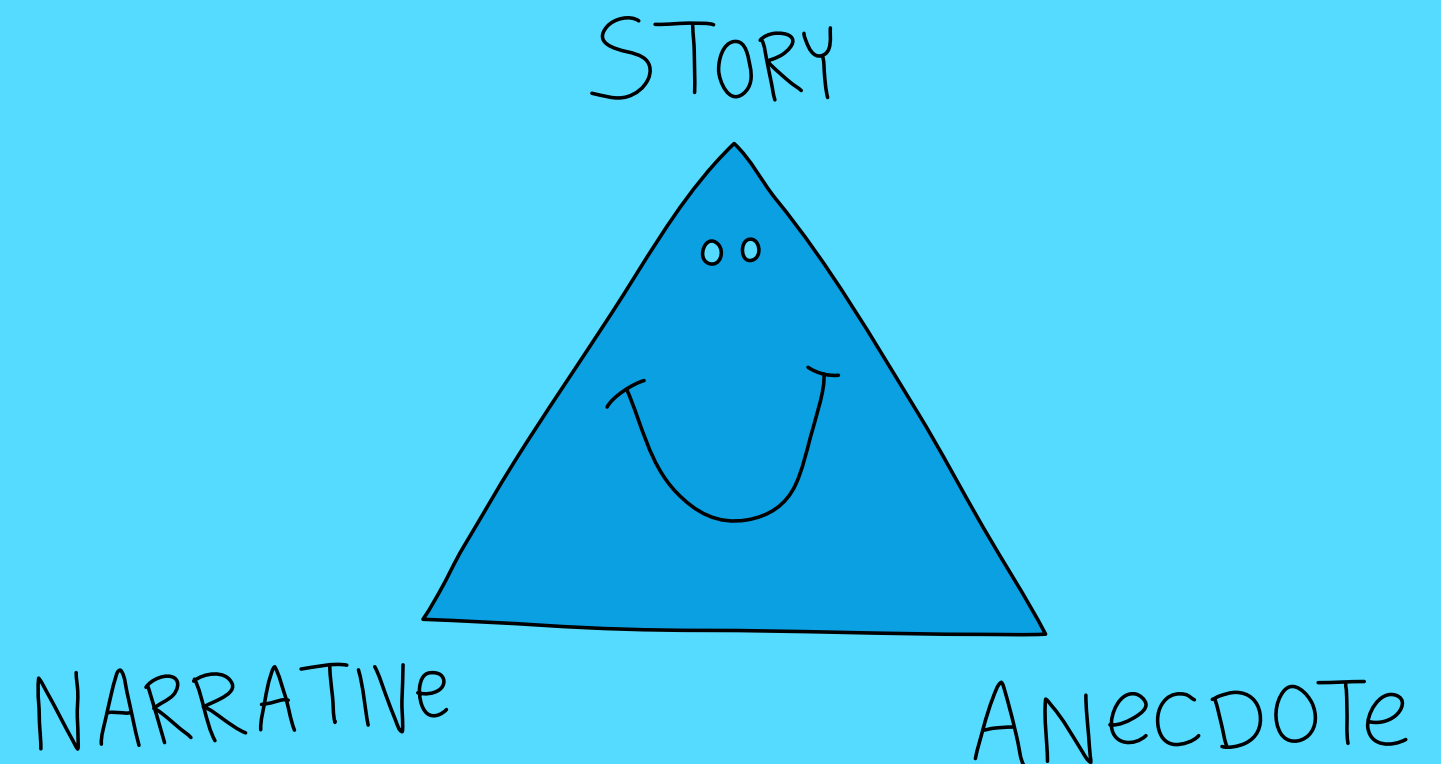
To begin, start with the basics.

Often, marketers confuse the difference between narrative versus story, and story versus anecdote. These nuances only matter if you care about your audience, their experience and what happens next.

Story is a structured account of imaginary or real people and events. It includes a setting, a plot, characters and a sequence of events.

Narrative is a sequence of events, organized into a story. It is the choice of which events to relate and in what order to relate them, rather than the story itself.

Anecdotes illustrate a point. They can be moments, incidents or lessons that are amusing, challenging, inspiring, life-changing or tragic.



The marketing campaign arc is the opposite of a traditional story arc.

Have you ever spent time studying the classic story arc of great stories?

They all follow the same foundational method.

In the beginning, the story starts and builds as the protagonist pursues their goal.

Somewhere in the middle, the rise levels off where there's a climax against that goal.

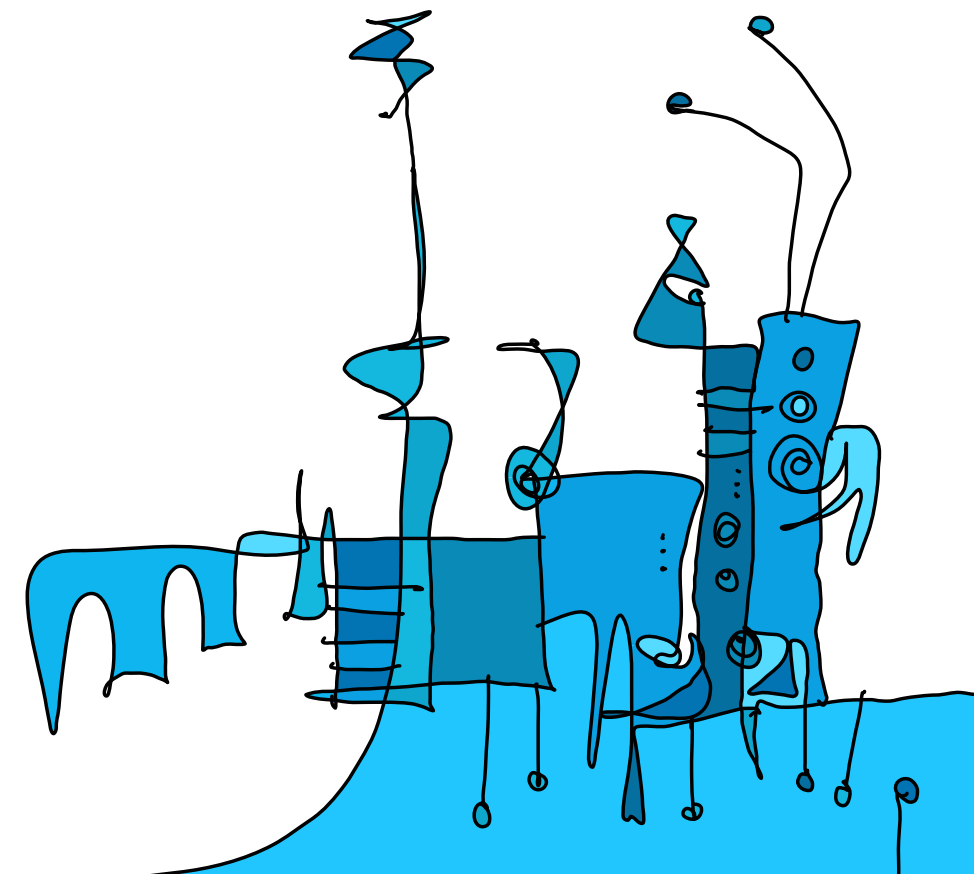
Toward the end there's success or failure and finally denouement/resolution and then the end.

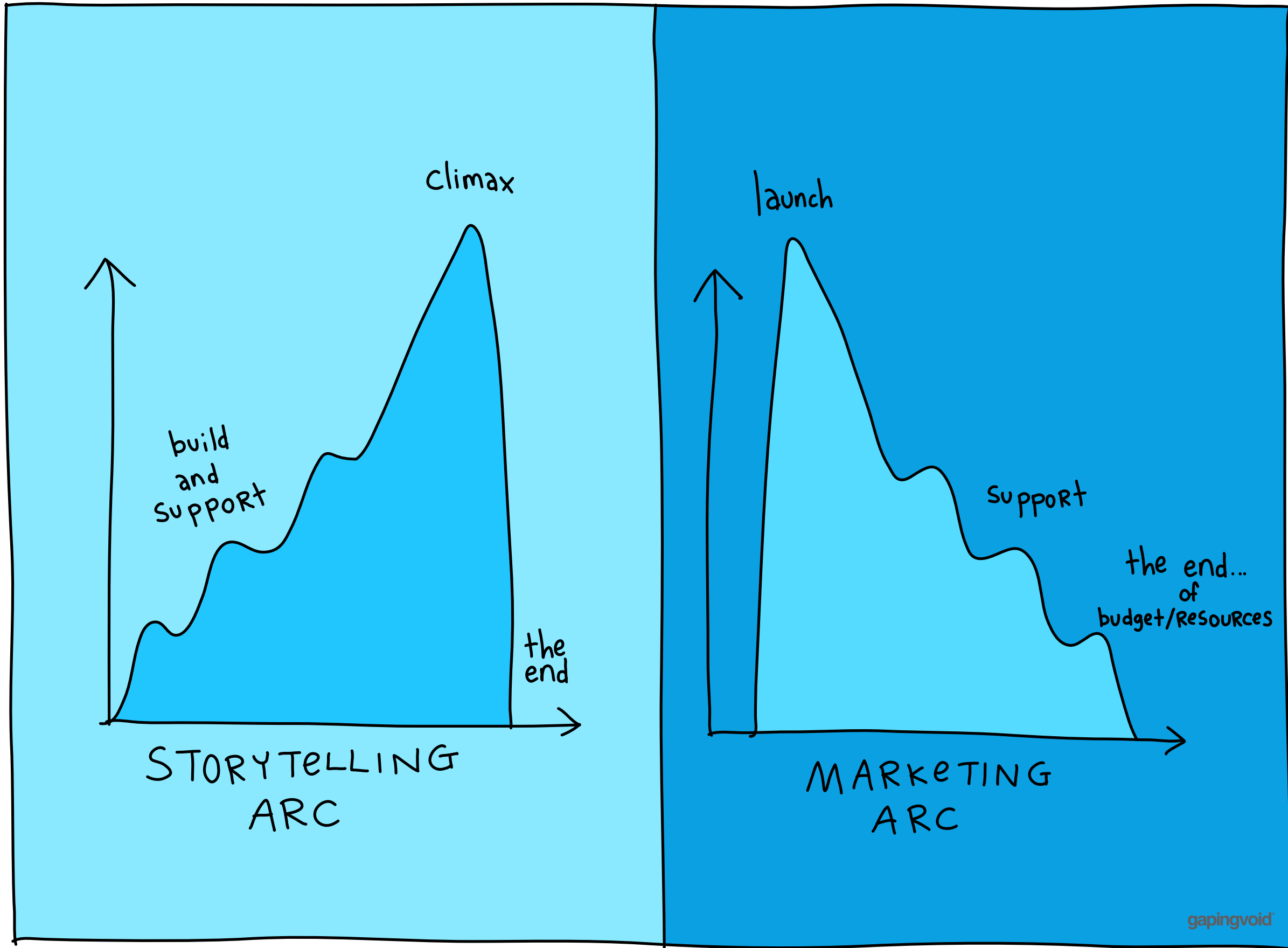
The marketing campaign arc is almost the opposite of that.

Budget. Creative. Approval. Prep.

Then there's the launch!

"HEEEEEEEYYYYYYYYY LOOK OVER HERE! LOOK!!!" and then, "Aaaaand, we're done...", as the campaign runs out of time, budget and resources.





gapingvoid

Storyboarding helps storytellers and stories come to life.

In the early 1930s, Walt Disney invented the technique of storyboarding to develop his first feature-length animation film: *Snow White*.

Storyboarding plays a critical role in developing, “conversationalizing” and refining the story, the characters, overall believability, purpose and resonance.

It’s a formal process to get closer to the audience, to know who they are before engaging them.

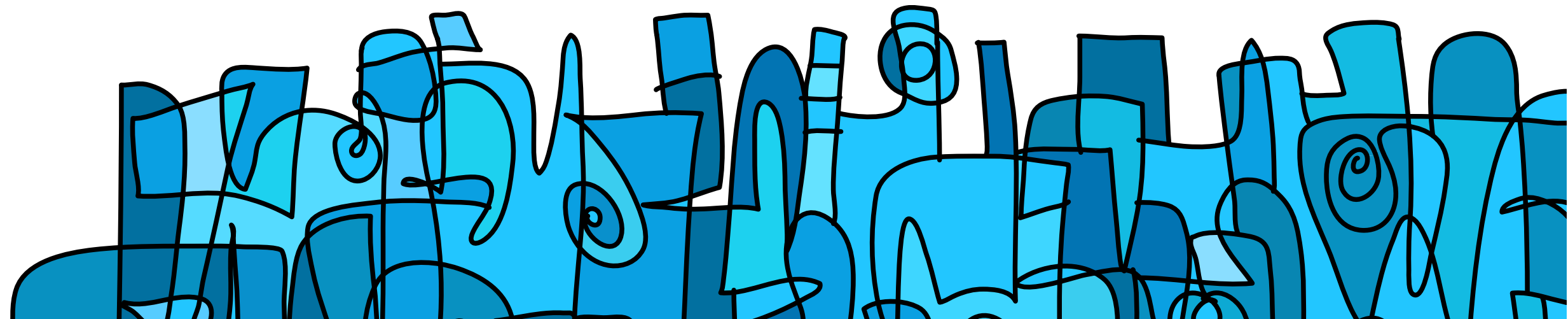
Great content starts with great stories and great stories start with thoughtfulness and intent.

“Art as Case Study?”

[Airbnb used the storyboard process](#) to re-imagine its brand, value proposition and host/guest experiences. The team hired Pixar storyboard artist Nick Sung to visualize the moments that comprise an Airbnb stay from the host and guest perspective. They built the most important of those moments into stories.

The process brought new perspectives and ideas to life. A new Airbnb was born...from brand to apps and services to value to stories and narrative to creating a community for hosts and guests.

[These storyboards](#) now hang prominently in its HQ.



Your audiences are the heroes in the hero's journey.

Storyboarding, storytelling, engagement, all begins with the customer at the center of everything.

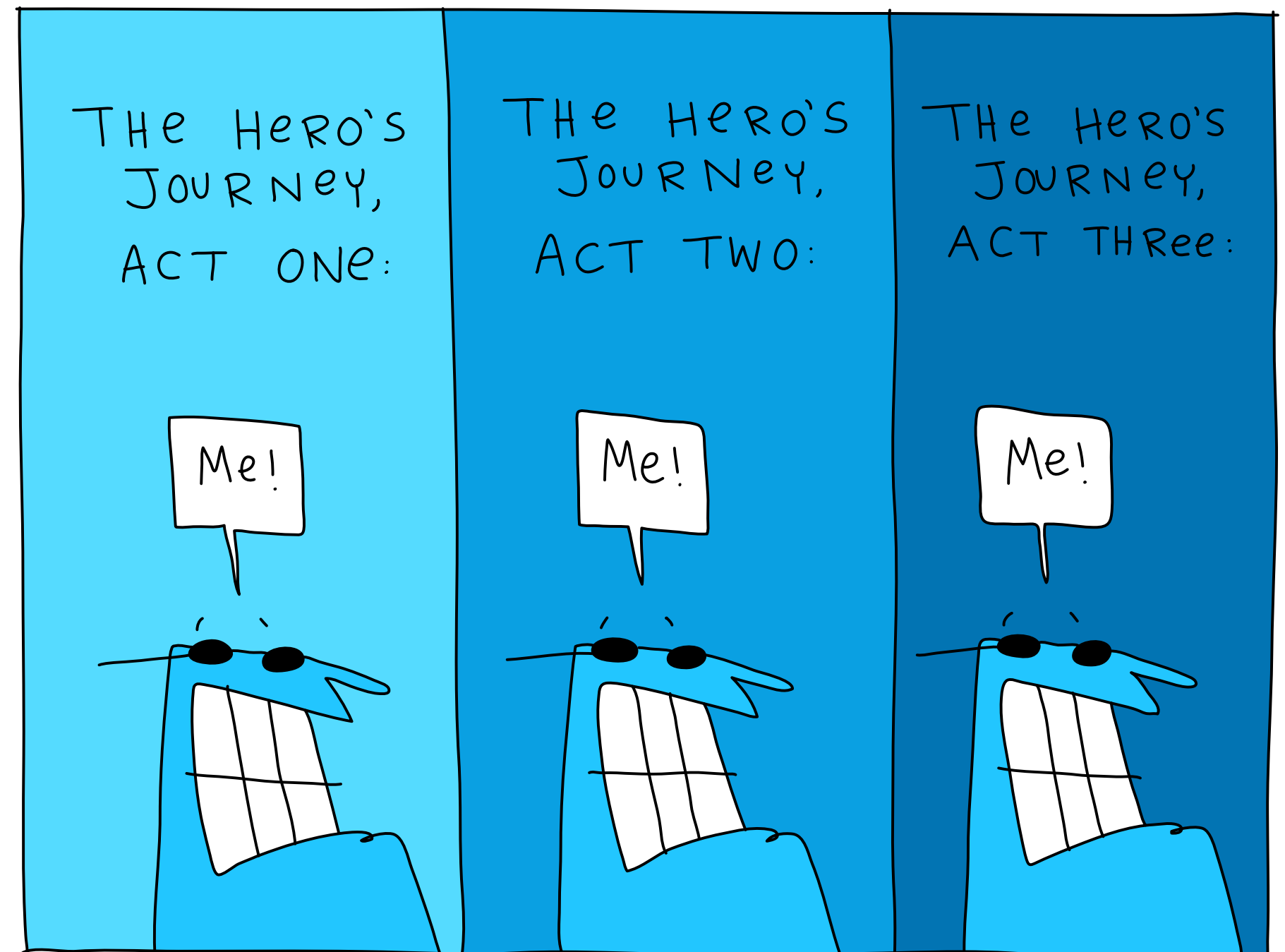
In his book, *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell introduced us to the Monomyth more popularly known as "The Hero's Journey."

Christopher Vogler famously adapted it for Hollywood as, "The Twelve Stage Hero's Journey." Screenwriters everywhere based character arcs on the new "Hero's Journey" in some of Hollywood's highest grossing movies including, *Star Wars*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Matrix* and *Harry Potter*.

Adapt the Hero's Journey to your work. In it, the "Hero" is your customer.

Think about your customer's journey and how they traverse their world every day. What challenges do they face? What do they ask? Where do they go for answers and what do those answers look like? How can you help them become the hero in their story?

Use those answers to inspire your stories.



Audiences are in control of their experiences and they happen with or without you.

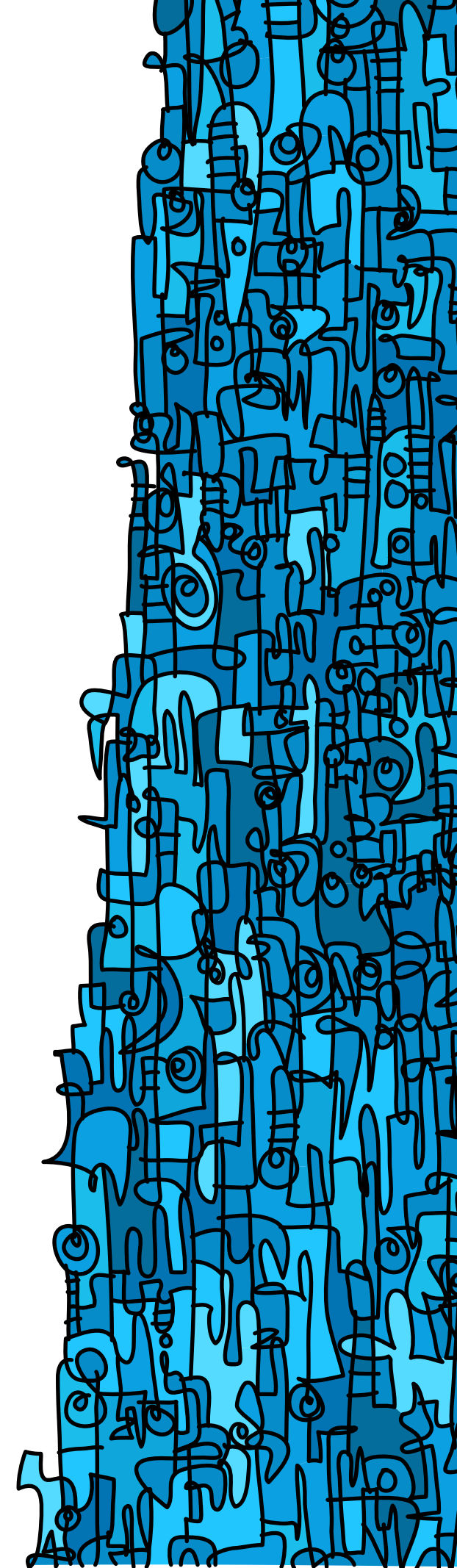
The most engaging stories are influential. They leave an impact and incite action.

Through storyboarding, Airbnb learned about the individual needs, expectations and aspirations of its audiences (hosts and guests).

To get there, marketers along with storytellers must not only learn their customer's "hero's journey" but also understand what they love, need, look for, value and how they make decisions.

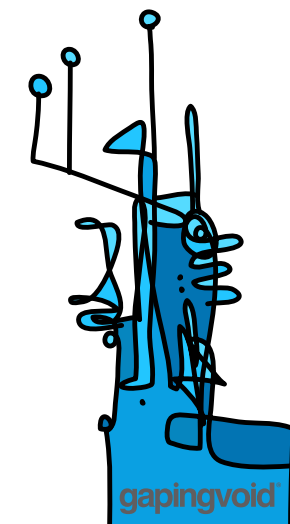
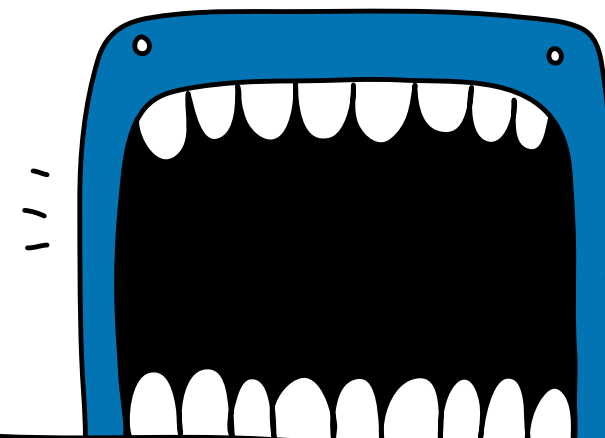
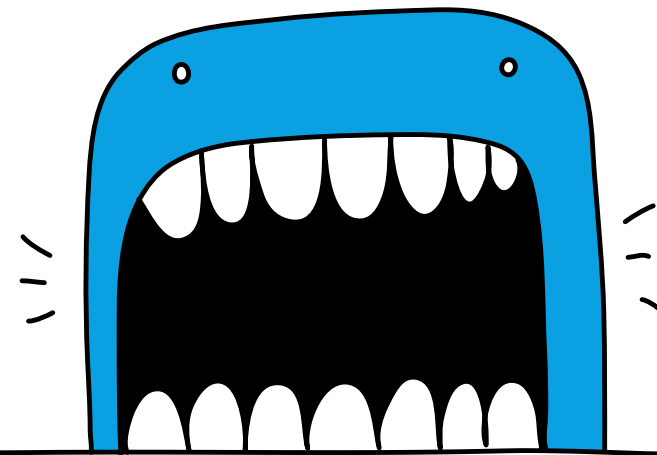
There are six customer trends every marketer must know.

1. Content is momentary unless designed otherwise.
2. Every item can and will be researched.
3. Connected customers have high expectations.
4. Impatience is now a virtue.
5. Customers expect that businesses know them and personalize content and engagement.
6. People now expect a series of rapid, integrated, intuitive steps toward their intended outcome.



BUT ALFRED
HITCHCOCK
SAID WE SHOULD
ALWAYS TRY TO
MAKE THE
AUDIENCE
SUFFER!

ALFRED
HITCHCOCK
WASN'T TRYING
TO SELL
OUR WIDGET!



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Use stories to entertain, engage but also inform and guide people.

Mobile searches for “best toothbrush” have grown more than 100% over the past two years. It doesn’t stop there.

Umbrellas (+140% in 2 years)

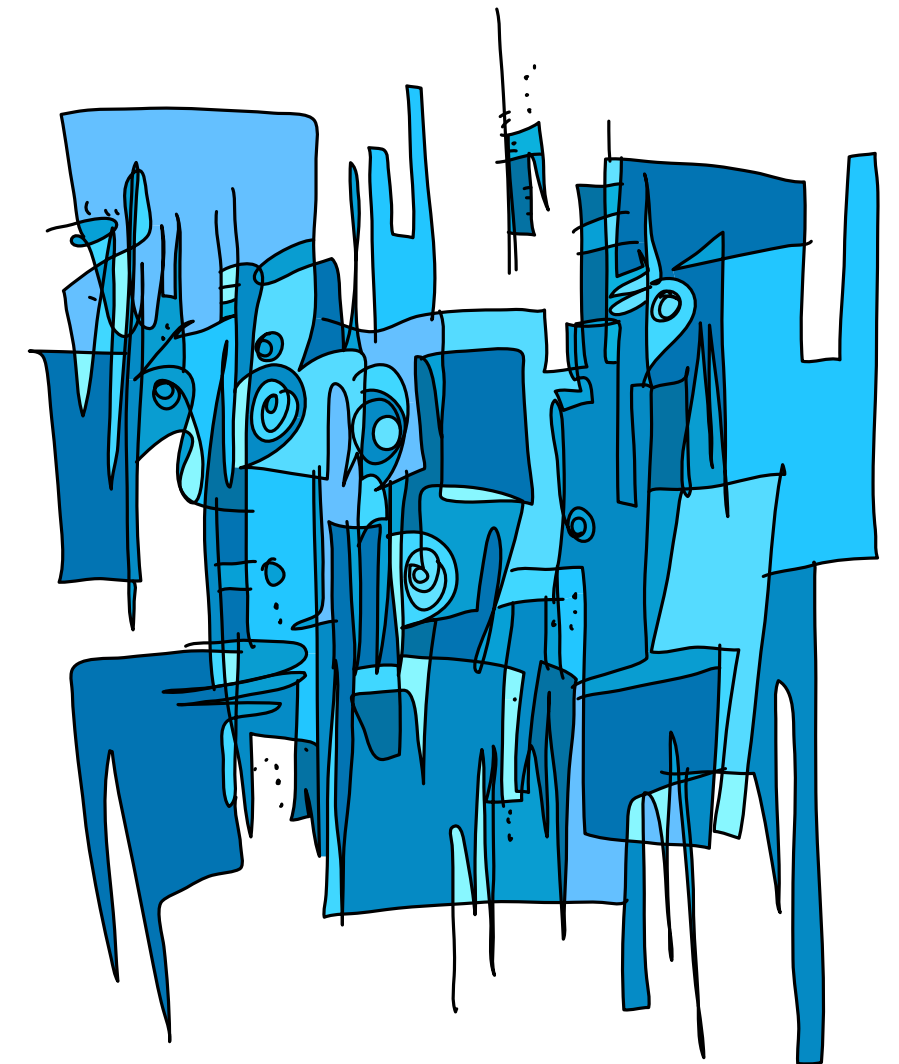
Shower curtains (+120%)

Whether it’s B2B or B2C, people search for information, insight and peer experiences.

Google learned in what it calls “micro-moments” that 90% of smartphone users are not absolutely certain of the specific brand they want to buy when they begin looking for information online. 73% say getting useful information from a business is the most important attribute when selecting a brand.

According to Nielsen, 83% of consumers trust recommendations from people they know, and 66% trust other consumer opinions posted online.

Trust is currency. We seek it. We earn it.
We spend it.



A hand-drawn graphic consisting of several concentric, irregular circles. The innermost circle is white and contains the text 'UTILITY IS THE NEW EXPERIENCE'. The surrounding circles are light blue, and the outermost area is a darker blue. The lines are hand-drawn and slightly irregular.

UTILITY IS
THE NEW
EXPERIENCE

Stories are best served in the moments and places that matter.

When people have a need, they're open to "marketing" or they search for content that helps them take their next steps.

Do you know what they're asking? Where? Who?

Do you know what they're finding?

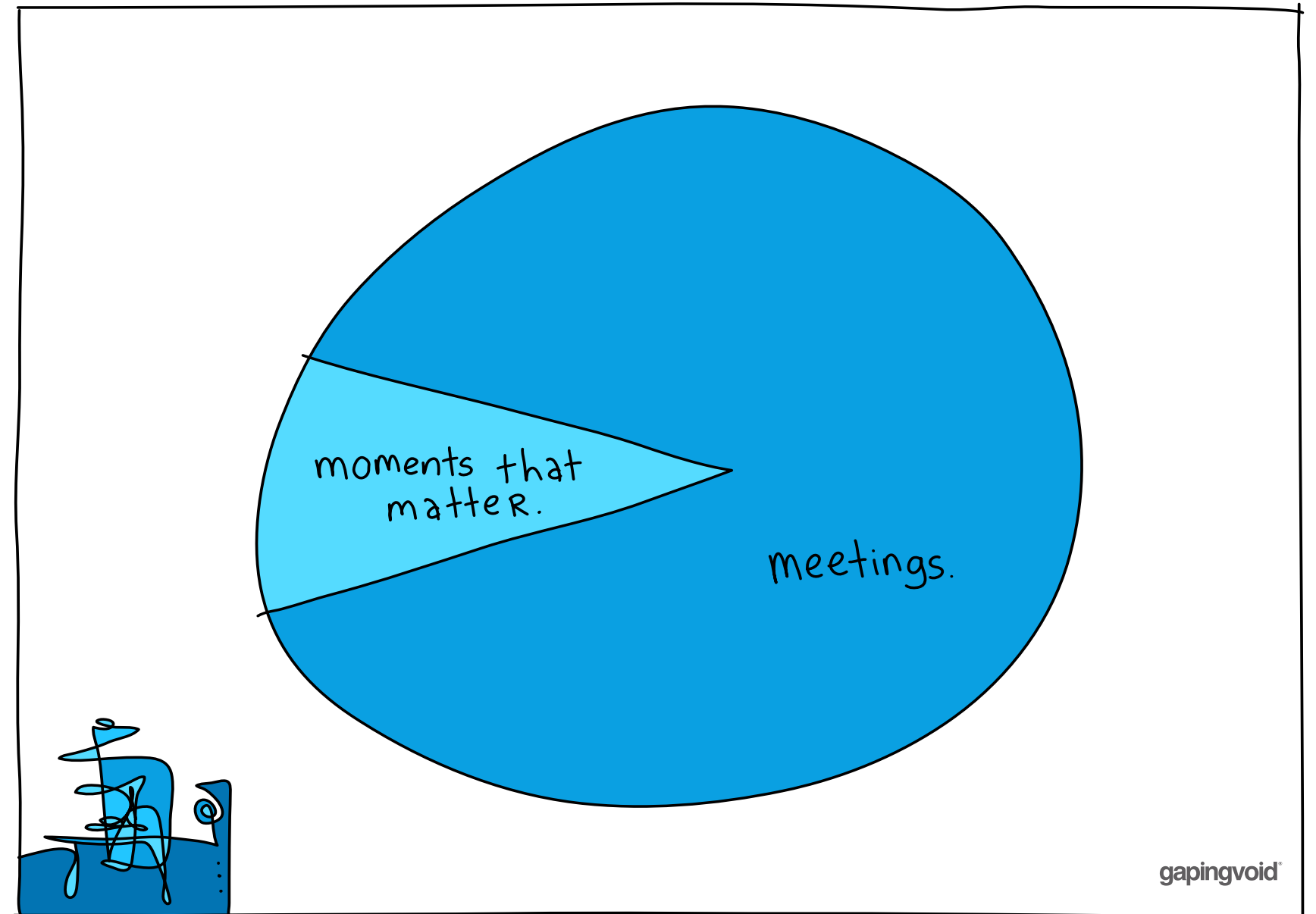
Is your brand/business part of the results? If not, who is guiding their next steps?

What do they value?

What happens next?

These are the moments that matter and they happen every minute of every day. And, they serve as the guiding lights to help develop proactive content strategies, meaningful, useful and engaging stories, and distribution strategies to reach them in the moments and places that matter.

Your reward? Reciprocity.



ROI: Return on Innovation!

You can't avoid ROI. It's a good thing.

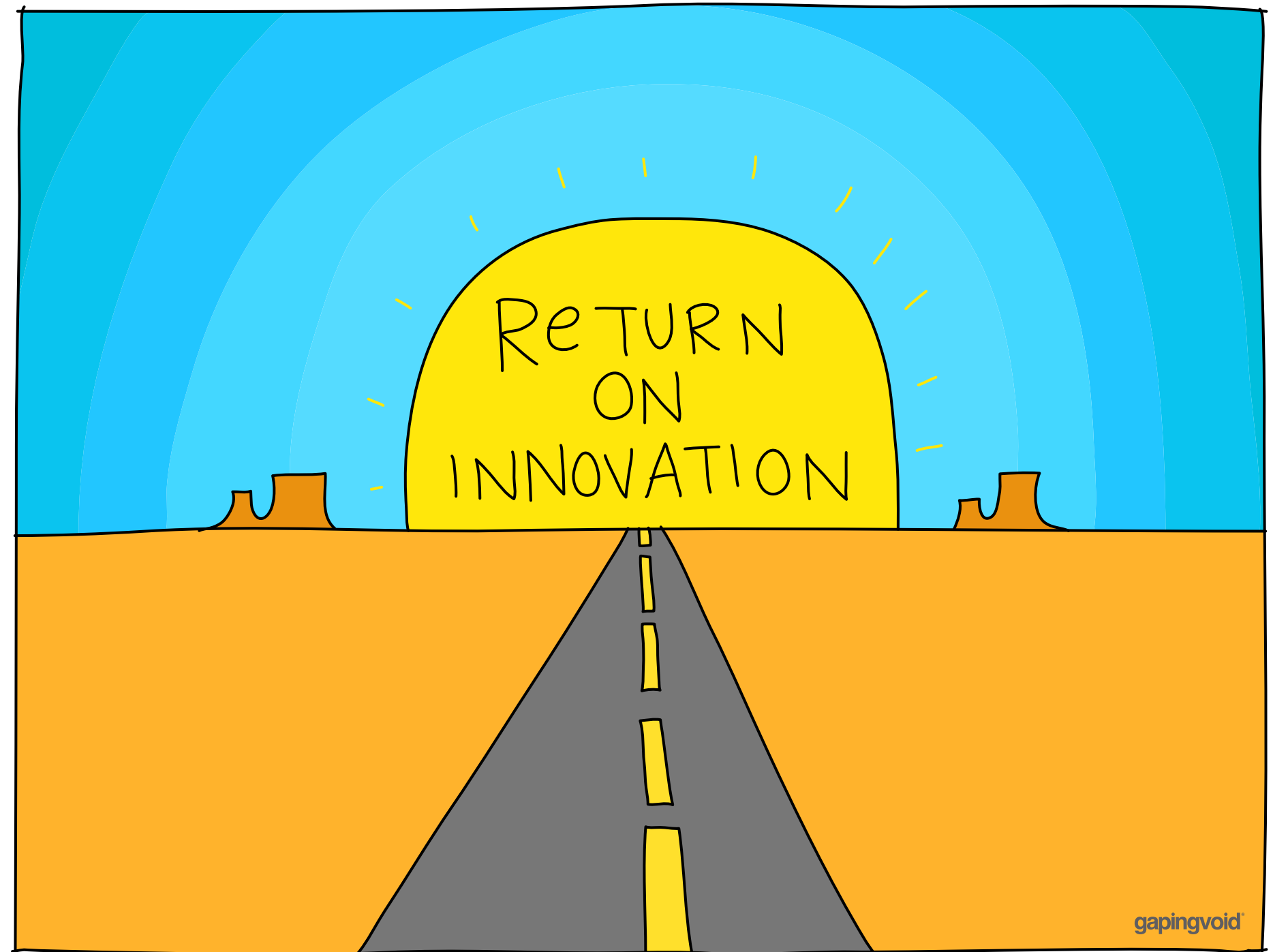
You must always measure KPIs that connect the dots to the business of course.

Measurement must also track the impact made upon roles and lives of the people you're trying to reach. That means you have to know what moves the needle with them.

Always ask yourself:

1. Is your story meaningful to your hero?
2. Is it helpful?
3. Does it provide value?

Then measure the things that matter to them and to your business each step of the way.



This is the end...my only friend...the end.

You see what we did there?

We used this guide to demonstrate the art of storytelling.

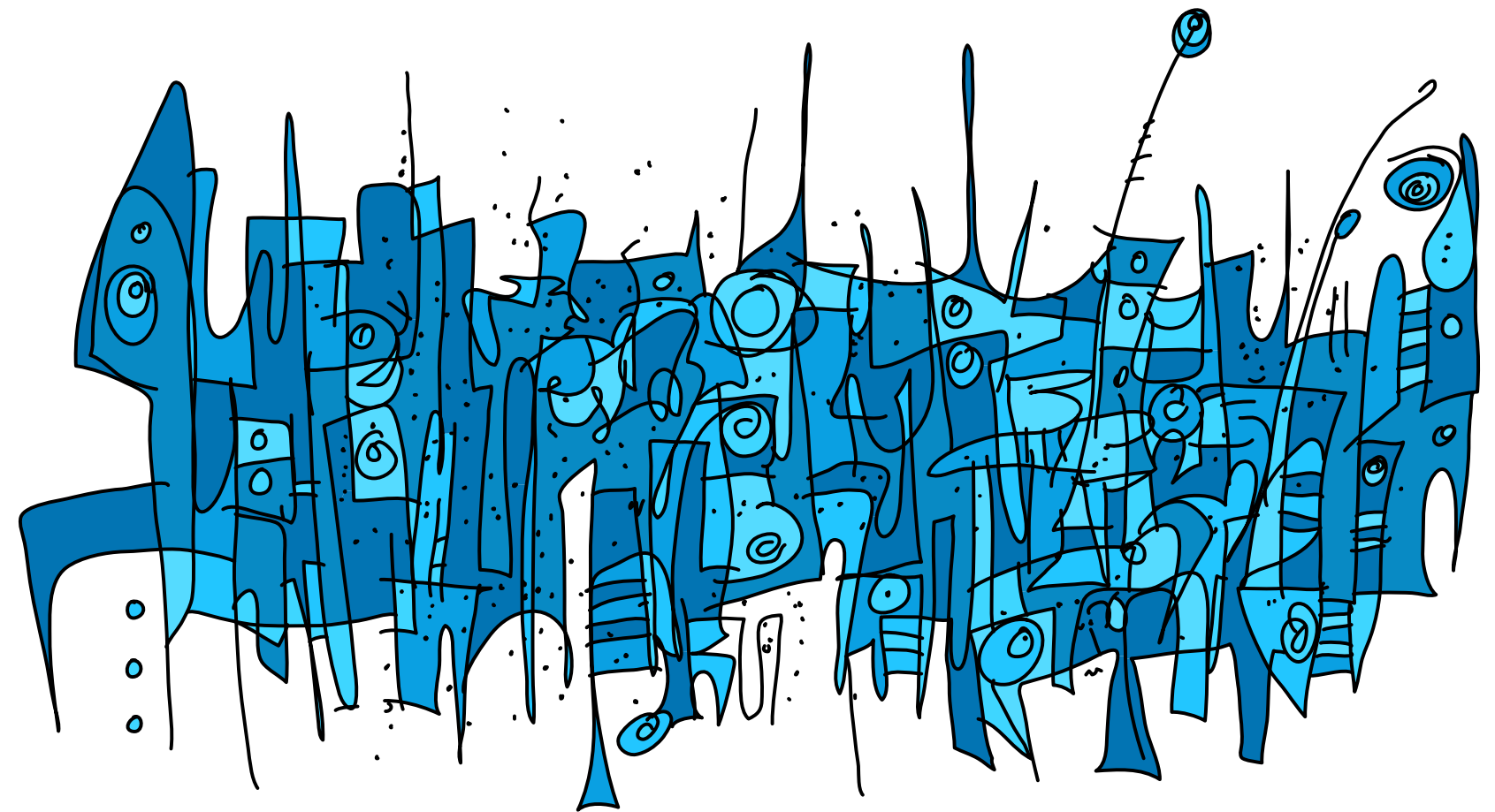
Your customers are not marketers. They're human. Well, that and they're incredibly connected.

They too have deadlines, demands and too little time. But they also have needs, questions and they will always need guidance and help.

Storytelling is the new relevancy and relevancy is the new viral. Storytelling starts with learning the art and science of story and audience engagement and not starting with classical digital, social, mobile or content marketing checklists.

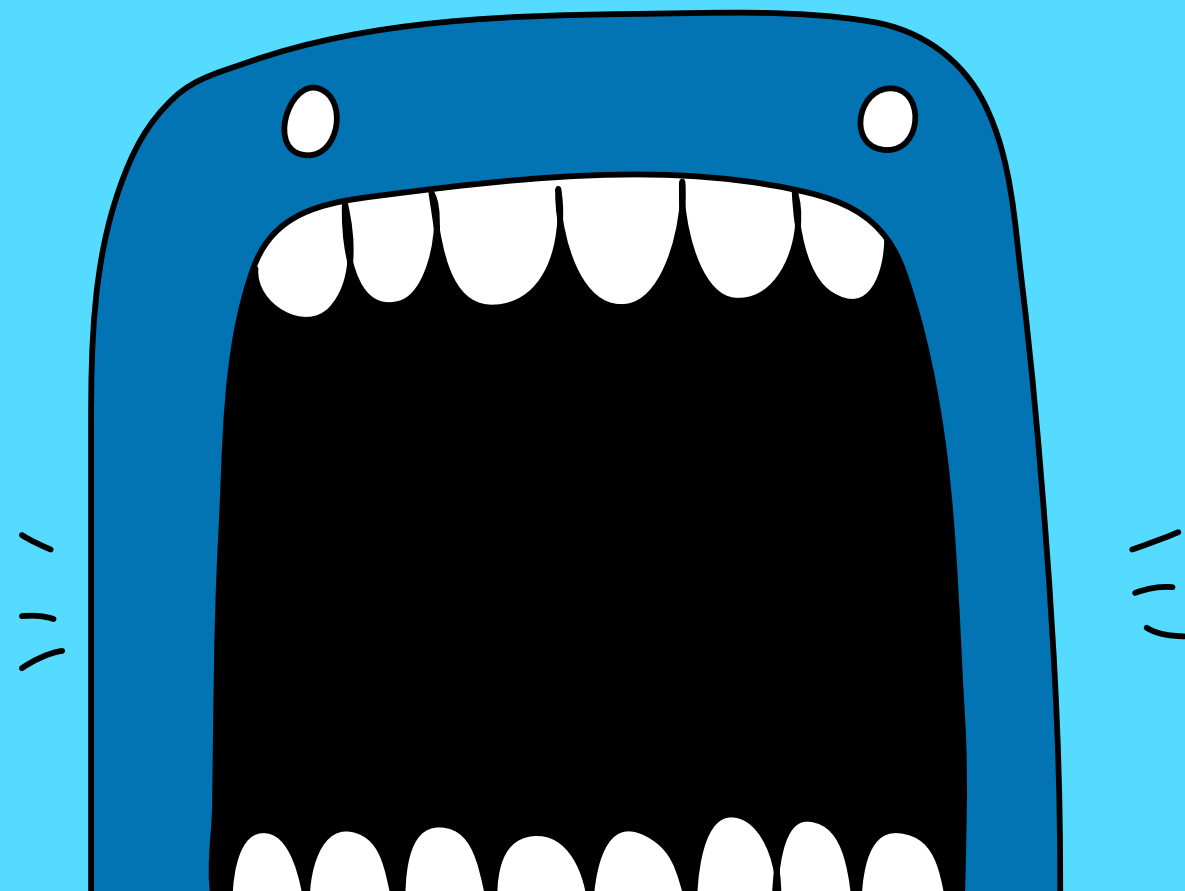
Like customers, storytellers too, are human as you become a digital storyteller, you help your customers become the hero in their journey and in doing so, you also become the hero in your business journey.

The end...or not.




LEADERS CAN COME
FROM ANYWHERE.

SO WHAT
ARE YOU
WAITING FOR?



gapingvoid

The background of the image consists of blue curtains with a white outline, framing a central white area. The curtains have a scalloped top edge and vertical pleats.

**Great stories
bring
great people
together.**

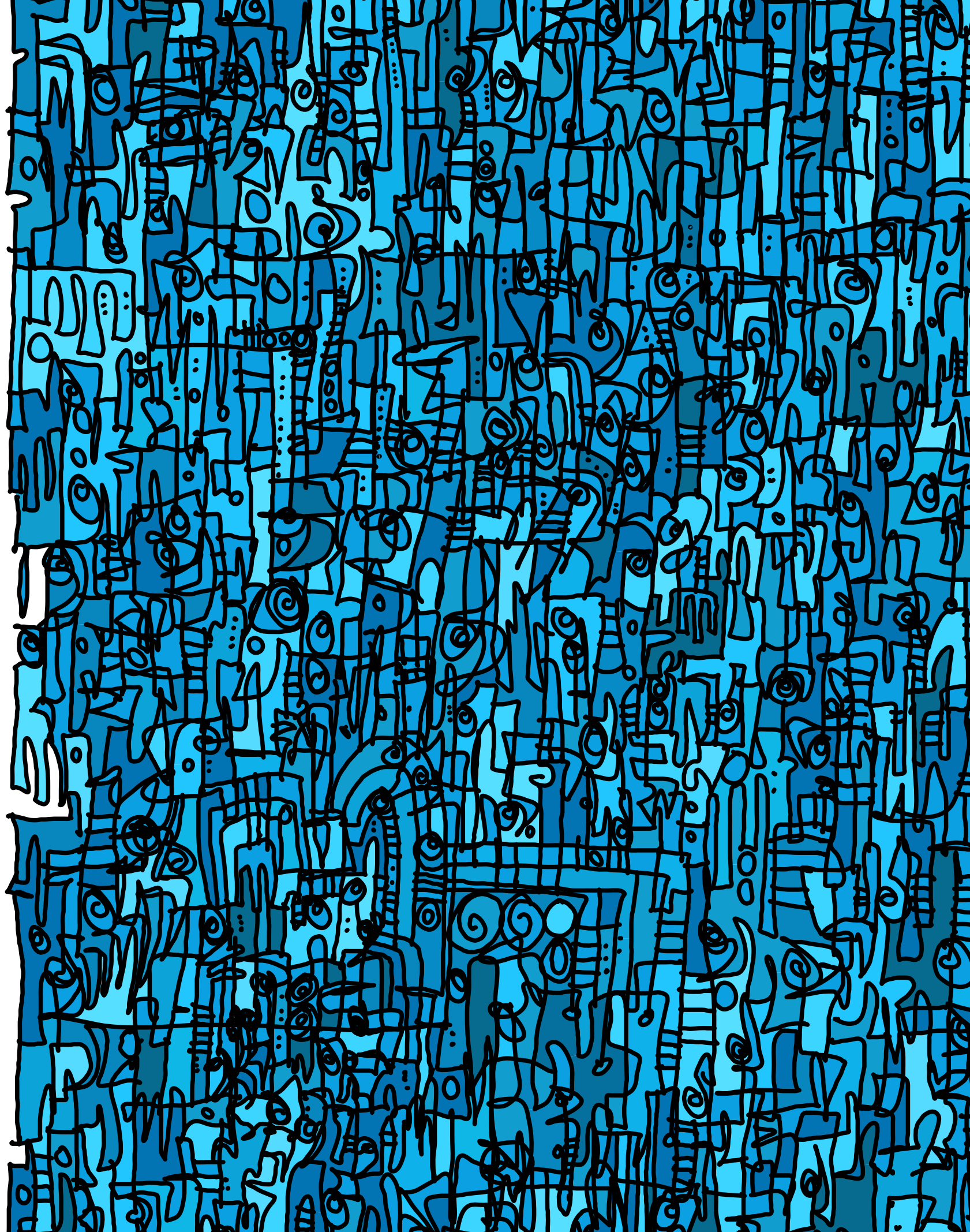
Community is much more than belonging to something; it's about doing something together that makes belonging matter.

About LinkedIn

For the first time in the history of media, you can reach the world's professionals all in one place. More than 530M people worldwide gather on LinkedIn to stay connected and informed, advance their careers, and work smarter. Together they comprise the largest global community of business professionals.

These are the decision-makers, influencers, and the leaders of today and tomorrow; precisely the people you want to target.

For more information, visit:
marketing.linkedin.com



About Brian Solis

Brian Solis is a principal analyst at Altimeter, a Prophet company. He is also an award-winning author, prominent blogger/writer, and keynote speaker. A digital analyst, anthropologist, and futurist, Solis has studied and influenced the effects of emerging technology on business, marketing, and culture. His research and his books help leaders better understand the relationship between the evolution of technology and its impact on business and society and also the role we each play in it. Solis also helps leading brands, celebrities, and startups develop new digital transformation, culture 2.0, and innovation strategies and that enable businesses to adapt to new connected markets from the inside out.

www.briansolis.com

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Culture Design Group

Gapingvoid Culture Design Group is a consultancy committed to solving hard, human-centered challenges that impact a broad variety of change projects.

Since 2008, we have been working with leaders in some of the world's largest companies on diverse projects ranging from end-to-end culture design to improving employee engagement, sustaining change projects, digital transformation, M&A culture alignment, and improving healthcare experience. This is done by reframing the employment experience and connecting employees to more meaning and purpose in their work.

Our methodologies are built on Lean Six Sigma, and our solutions are designed to affect behavior change with creative tactics such as this ebook.

Clients include Microsoft, AT&T, L'Oreal, Rackspace, and Roche/Genentech.

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