URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/becoming-a-better-storyteller

Square and Twitter Co-Founder Jack Dorsey explains some important steps to becoming a better storyteller. According to Dorsey, the first step is to get ideas out of your head, whether you do it by writing or coding. Once the ideas can be reviewed outside your head, you can then decide whether to share them, or put them on the shelf for later use. Dorsey also explains his admiration for Apple's ability to tell epic stories.

Transcript

The biggest thing for me on that path is I needed to draw something out and I needed to get it out of my head.. I found myself very early on thinking about something, like thinking about this early idea for Twitter and saying to myself, "I could build this." You have those shower moments or you're walking at midnights in some town in New York City and you've got this amazing brand-new ideas.. And then, you start thinking, "Well, I could really start doing this if only X and if I had this person or if this technology existed or if this happened or this happened." What I realized I was doing is I was constantly making excuses for not working on it.. And then, the window had passed and then I couldn't do anything.. I think it's really, really important to write it out or to draw it out or to code it.. But you need to get it out of your head.. The reason you have to get it out of your head is you need to be able to see it on a surface that is not in your mind.. Once you can see it and once you can step back from it, then you can also decide, "This pass is my filter.. This pass is my constraint.. So, maybe I can show it and share it with some other people." Then, they'll be like, "That's the stupidest idea ever," or "That's somewhat interesting but maybe this and this and this." So, the sooner you can do that, then you have a lot of momentum around it..

You can really decide if you want to commit to it and work on it more or put it on a shelf for a later date.. The realization that I think everyone needs to have about that latter option, putting it on the shelf, is that you can come back to it.. It will surface back up in another piece of work or another idea at some point in your life.. Having that ability to close off a chapter and move on is really, really important.. You can't have all these open threads.. That's what I realized I was doing.. That also encouraged me to really write more and to really think about what is the story, how are people coming to this and like when I show my friends this, how are they going to react.. I would write it down.. I would actually treat it like a play.. When I realized that I was writing plays, I read a lot more plays for style and for substance and for technique..

I think it's really good.. I think there is another company that I've always looked towards for inspiration.. I know a number of people in this room probably have the similar company in mind, which is Apple.. Apple, I think, is run like a theater company.. It has a great sense of pacing.. It has a great sense of story.. It has a great sense of execution.. It's all event-driven.. It's all stage-driven, the stage being a billboard and the stage being a keynote or the stage being a product launch.. All of it has a very, very cohesive end-to-end story..

I mean, you think about what happened when Steve Jobs came back to the company.. The first thing he did is he killed every product line the company was working on.. For two years they had no product on the market whatsoever.. All they had were a bunch of posters all around the world with Steve's heroes.. It said, "Think different." It was just focused on bringing up the product and making people wear the brand again and how the brand is aligning to this particular feeling and story.. And then, they came out with the iMac and then built iTunes and then the iPod.. They realized, "Wait a minute.. People are carrying music on their phones now.. So, we better build a phone, iPhone." So, this unfolding of the plot and the epic story has been very, very interesting to watch, especially if you look back to that time when he came back to the company.. So, I have learned a lot from that company and other companies who operate in a similar fashion...