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Q&A with Nancy Duarte, CEO of Duarte Inc. and author of *DataStory*

Q | Why did you write *DataStory*, and why now?

A | Data is accumulating at an unprecedented velocity. It gives organizations valuable insights into customers, employees, products, markets, and innovations but it's of no use without a communicator to determine what action the data is telling us to take. *DataStory* was written to teach individuals how to harness the power of data, become better storytellers and use data to make critical decisions.

Q | Data and numbers can be difficult to understand. How can individuals make data stick in the hearts and minds of others so they take action?

A | To make data stick, you can do the following:

- **Marvel at the magnitude:** Connect the data to something relatable to the audience so they understand its scale, and can comprehend it and relay it easily to others.
- **Humanize the characters:** Understand who the hero, adversary, and mentor are in the data so you can help the hero overcome conflict and create strong outcomes for future data.
- **Understand data's emotional arc:** The shape of your chart follows an emotional arc as if moves between ill fortune and good fortune. Communicating that arc the way a storyteller would helps the audience attach emotionally to the data.

Q | What makes *DataStory* different from other books in the same genre?

A | There are plenty of books on visualizing data, but never one on how to communicate it to speed up decision making and drive results. *DataStory* tackles how to communicate data and outlines the DataStory method, which is a program for effectively incorporating story patterns into business communications.

Q | Where did the information and methods in *DataStory* come from?

A | *DataStory* is based on the analysis of thousands of slides our team has built from multiple brands in a cross-section of industries: consumer, hardware, software (cloud and native), social media, search, biotechnology, finance and consultancies. The discoveries in this book were made from studying data slides from the most

successful brands in the world. We isolated the charts and words associated with them and found patterns in how great brands communicate with data.

Q | What is the biggest career constraint for those who work with data as part of their role?

A | Almost every role today uses data for decision making. Many of us understand the importance of “visualizing” data, but we lack the understanding of how to transform numbers into persuasive narratives to drive action. As you grow in your career, you can become a strategic advisor and ultimately a leader using data to shape a future where humanity and organizations flourish.

Q | What is it about story that makes it such a powerful communication device even for data?

A | Humans are natural storytellers, it’s the most basic way we communicate with one another. A good story can inspire us, move us, and stick in our memory for years to come. This is what makes it a powerful way to communicate data and statistics.

Q | You wrote an entire chapter about how executives communicate. This might be the first time an executive has laid out so clearly their expectations. Why was this chapter particularly important for you?

A | Executive decision-makers are the toughest customers, and the ones people are generally the most intent to learn how to appeal to. Once you know the best approaches for persuading them, you can easily draw upon these elements for recommendations you make to anyone.

NANCY DUARTE is a communication expert who has been featured in *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Fast Company*, *Wired*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *TIME* and on CNN and is also a *Harvard Business Review* contributor. As a persuasion expert, she cracked the code for effectively incorporating story patterns into business communications. She’s written five bestselling books and four have won awards. On the list of top 250 Women in Leadership, Duarte ranks #67 and on World's Top 30 Communication Professionals for 2017, she ranks #1. Nancy has spoken at numerous conferences and her TEDx talk has over two million views. She speaks at business schools and lectures at Stanford University a few times per year.

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DataStory will be published September 17, 2019 and will be available at [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), [800CEOread.com](#) and wherever fine books are sold.