

Digital storytelling: a short guide

«First I thought Digital Storytelling (DST) was either about allowing people with a specific **story to share** it, or a media team to **create a professional video**. After watching a [DST](#) video, I then thought they were supposed to **teach people how to develop their digital skills**. After having talked with the Maks team and followed their work, I realised it was far more than that.»

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In a nutshell

Digital Storytelling (DST) comprises short personal narratives made with images and voice off by the storyteller. The main objective is to allow each one to share their opinion, with an emotional component, in order to further empower them and influence the audition. The participants have to be creative and thoughtful to create their story in an intelligible manner, using technologies as a support for that. Finally are Digital Storytelling made to be shared and influenced others, and not for Maks itself.

Definition

Digital Storytelling (DST) comprises short videos made with images and voice off by the storyteller. The main objective is to allow each one to share their opinion, experience to other, with an emotional component, in order to further empower them. DST is also teaching people to learn how to use language to talk about their story, their thoughts on a subject, not just describing actions or event.

When people are confronted with digital skills, they often end up at home after the workshop saying they can't remember of anything they learnt. Digital storytelling is a good reminder for them about their work, that they are able to work with technologies and tools but not "for" these tools. DST main **learning goals** include the development of:

- **Creativity and imagination**: proposing, creating stories and finding ways to realize it
- **Analysis and reflection**: analyzing event, choosing story goals, thinking how one can share these goals clearly, get to know yourself better
- **Strategy and media literacy**: demystifying the digital so that people become [prosumers](#)
- **Computer science and computer skills**: technical skills, use of technology, apps, mobile devices and video creation
- **Group dynamics**: working and sharing within a group about his personal experience, giving advice, listening and helping each other

Format

The duration of a DST project is around 5 days (full-time or part-time) with 30 hours' training. As already mentioned, digital storytelling are short videos (1-3 minutes long), with images/photos and voice off.

Regarding the methodology, participants spend most of their time exploring the surroundings area with their smartphones thinking about their story and searching for creative shots. It's based on [project based learning \(PBL\)](#).

Step by step plan

Each DST step by step plan is **specific** to the the kind of Digital Storytelling training organised. This is connected with the chosen topic, or a specific audience. However, there's a general step-by-step plan, adaptable to any project:

1. Introduction to the topic

There can be a goal stated early: for example, encouraging youth creativity, empowering people to be more active, providing a platform for expression or a chosen topic, for example radicalisation. The workshop starts with an introduction like watching a video on the subject or reading an article and discussing about it.

2. Group exercise

Exercise chosen according to point one (1) above. It's a good way to start building trust within the group to then share his personal experience to others.

3. Introduction to visual communication

Starting with basic question like what is Digital Storytelling, for example, thinking about what we have, being responsible of it.

4. Rules of Storytelling

Teaching about basic rules of how to create a story, for example where to put the emphasis as to make it interesting.

5. Individual exercise

Trying to write a short a DST based on the rules they just learnt

6. Working on technical skills

Playing with light, exposure by taking picture with a photo gear, smartphones to understand how it works, what is possible to be done.

7. Defining a personal Storytelling project

Think about the story you want to share, how to make it interesting based on a 3 parts story plan and emphasize the important moment of your story.

8. Group work

Realizing your story. It can be with any material. The people in the group can help each other, for example go around to take some pictures and then, to edit the content.

9. Distribution

DST projects always ends with an exhibition. It's the best way to congratulate participants on their effort, to give them the chance to talk and show to others about their new skills.

The video are then shared on [vimeo](#), [Maks website](#) and [other platforms](#).

Anticipated results

People spend more time on consuming the computer than producing a work, a video. They get to know themselves and others better, while learning to share in a safe environment and building a team trust.

The educator will introduce to them "how to create a story" and they will make a personal work on what they want to share and how to create the video. Finally comes the "digital": they will have an introduction to learn how to use digital tools. It's important to understand that the technology come as a support and not on the first stage of the training. Their goal is to USE the technology to share their experiences. At the end, they acquire skills useful for their working life, as well as soft skills.

Digital Storytelling has a proven impact because of the moving themes which are accessible to everyone and open doors for people to share on subject we normally don't speak about.

The theme of a Digital Storytelling project can be:

- **simple, very positive** : a kind of project aim to encourage the participants, help them to get to know themselves better, develop their skills and start planning for the future
- **specific** in a context such as, [radicalisation](#) or [women abuse](#): The women can plan again those situation with a DST, which is very important for them to find others who faces the same challenge and at the same time, through away this bad memories
- **personal**: a nurse used DST to explain the problem encountered by the people working in the same hospital, and this way, improved the working conditions in the hospital

Feedback of the project “radicalisation, exclusion and respect in secondary schools” (2016 - 2017)

The choice of this theme came after the Charlie Hebdo’s attack. Maks created a digital storytelling activity on this theme: it was very important not to hide this reality and fighting by talking, sharing and thinking about it in a personal way. Immediately after the Brussels attacks, this DST project became more real and the school were glad to have a way to talk about this theme. Maks called this project « radicalisation, exclusion and respect in secondary schools » in the schools, instead of “radicalisation”.

Maks Staff started this DST activity with reading some newspaper articles and asking questions to the student like : what is your opinion, what do you feel about it ? They also question the students by discussing about the source of the internet information : be careful not to believe everything on the web. A part of the Digital Storytelling made by muslims student were very interesting. For example, one told the story of an atheist who converted to Islam and showed a positive image of their religion like the big and welcoming families.

Every DST workshop ended with an open presentation including local and national media: Saliha Ben Ali from Syria was invited to share her story on the topic: She created a non-profit organization called [S.A.V.E. BELGIUM](#) (Society Against Violent Extremism), after her child died in Syria. The teachers noticed the difference between before and after this project.

Public involved in DST

Digital Storytelling can be created by everybody, we all have a story to share. Maks got experience in the Digital Storytelling for the young people and the little schooled target groups. Various schools and organization(youth detox center for example) asked for a DST project as its premises.

Maks’s first aim stays the same: improving the living conditions in their area, to empower the population to be more active by providing a platform for expression for more tolerance and solidarity. Therefore, Maks is organizing DST in their premises as well, for unemployed people, analphabets, undocumented migrant, seniors and many other.

The staff

To organize a DST project, you have to be a discussion facilitator, develop your listening skills and to be a good mediator to know when to stop the discussion. Most of the time, one of the animator is a a staff with a degree (psychology, video, photo etc) and another animator who is a PTP.

In a **worldwide** context, Maks is part of

- [YEP4Europe](#) : project aiming to create Digital Storytelling on the topic “migration” to speak about this current topic and see the point of view of youngster from different place. At the same time, YEP promotes active netizenship in the european youth. Maks published the methodology of Digital Storytelling during [this project](#).
- [Brights](#) : boosting global citizenship by letting people express themselves on various subject, digital storytelling based. Maks is working on writing a “train-trainer”methodology that can be used by anybody organizing a Brights project
- “Practicies”, a Horizon 2020 project on prevention of radicalisation using Digital Storytelling.