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Book Review: Resonance by Nancy Duarte

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MARRIOTT
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BOOK REVIEWS



*Resonate: Present Visual Stories
that Transform Audiences*

By: Nancy Duarte

Review by Marianna Richardson

Who doesn't like a good story? From nursery rhymes to fairy tales to *Star Wars*, a good story becomes a part of our way of thinking. Stories take us to new ideas and places where we would never go. We fondly remember the first time we heard about Jack Sprat who ate no fat, the magical kiss that saved Snow White's life, and the declaration of Darth Vader to the surprised Luke that he is his father, even if we heard the story years ago (or for some of us, decades).

Nancy Duarte invites business presenters to use the power of a story to promote presentations that resonate with the listener. Through powerful, visual stories, presenters tap into the emotional and logical frequencies of their audience so that the message deeply resonates within listeners, thus changing thought and behavior. A resonating message will be remembered long after the PowerPoint is forgotten and the handouts are thrown into the trash bin.

Duarte's book doesn't stop with this cerebral, life-changing insight. No, she gives the reader practical and easy ways to incorporate these seemingly difficult principles into the previously boring, tedious, and hard-to-sit-through business presentation. This process takes more time analyzing the audience and defining the journey of discovery the presenter wants them to experience. Also, the presentation must have creative and meaningful content that is ordered for impact, that produces emotional contrast, and that creates a S.T.A.R. moment (Something They'll Always Remember).

This seems like an impossible task. Yet, Duarte gives the reader example after example through case studies and stories of how to practically implement these principles. The book is very visual, illustrating the impact of good visual design which plays an important role in storytelling. For example, the reader is given five types of S.T.A.R. moments to be used in a presentation (e.g., memorable dramatization, repeatable sound bites, evocative visuals, emotive storytelling, and shocking statistics) along with famous S.T.A.R. moments that the reader will remember.

Why should we put in all this extra work into our presentations? Well, if we spend the time, we may gain a competitive advantage over others and promote our ideas. Duarte says it herself, "If presented well, a smart idea acts as the igniting spark for an explosion of human and material resources" (p. 203). The promise of transforming the world seems to be a rather tall order. Through her book *Resonate*, Duarte makes this promise seem possible.