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Introduction

THE CAVE MAN AND
THE WHITEBOARD

This book will take you from the dank caves of prehistoric Europe to the New York Stock Exchange. We’ll go from TED talks to the tenth birthday party of Facebook.

We’ll meet a type of video that helps us remember things – better and for longer. We’ll see how these videos are persuasive and three times more likely to be shared than a talking head. And we’ll find out how just one of these videos can make you $100,000.
What is this video type?

Some people call it video scribing. Others like to say whiteboard animation or fast drawing. Either way, its effect is magic.

Video scribing starts with a blank whiteboard – and lets you tell your story with bold images and absorbing voiceover. It’s a highly effective style that has revolutionised communication for companies and individuals across the world.

But what makes a great scribe? And why is video scribing so powerful?

Drawing on expert knowledge, detailed research and a collective wealth of experience, this book provides a unique introduction to the history of scribing and what makes a great scribe video – one that will engage a viral audience and bring your message to life.
Communicators throughout the ages – from Zhuangzi to Jesus, Aesop to Jay-Z – have known that story is one of the best ways to convey a message.

Scribing is a perfect medium for stories and visual metaphors as it will, quite literally, draw in your audience and capture their interest throughout.

You might be struggling to communicate your business’s unique selling point. You might be dying to shout about an idea in a way that will actually make people sit up and listen. You might want to spark a little more imagination in your class of teenagers.

Video scribing is the tool you’ve been waiting for. Let’s find out why.
Chapter 1
WHAT IS VIDEO SCRIBING?
(Or teaching America’s biggest corporations to tell stories)

“The responses have been emotional! People are responding with true excitement, surprise, delight.” – David Hutchens, VideoScribe blog

David Hutchens used to be an advertising copywriter, but he got bored of writing about mobile phone services, floor wax and Happy Meals.

He quit his job and began developing training packages for big companies like IBM. It was there he discovered what he really enjoyed – storytelling.

He began producing high-energy speeches, manuscripts, games and learning products for companies like Coca-Cola, Nike and General Electric.

He wrote a book that helped organisations learn and grow. Then another. And another.

When he came to promote his book about storytelling in the workplace, he realised he needed a new approach:

‘I needed movement, change and feeling – the heart of all stories.’
David made a simple, attractive scribe video to explain the ideas in his book, and then he watched it take off on social media. His video helped him engage new audiences, and in turn help those businesses to connect meaningfully with their customers.

David’s video is a compelling watch whether you’re a business owner or not.

But what kind of video is it? And why is it so much fun to watch?

It’s not a multi-million pound animation, or a live film with famous actors. It’s a whiteboard animation.

Leadership storytelling and “Circle of the 9 Muses”
Have we met before?

Also called scribes or scribe videos, whiteboard animations show images drawn onto a white background before your very eyes. They unfold in sync with a voiceover to communicate your ideas in a clear, linear narrative.

Like cartoons, scribe videos tell a story. Unlike cartoons, they are not animated in the traditional sense and don’t need to be silly or end in a punchline.
Sound familiar?

Well, you’ve probably seen them before. In the series finale of Weeds. In 2007, when UPS explained its USP using just a man, a pen and a whiteboard. In a series called RSA Animate, where inspirational talks were made into scribe videos and went viral. And on tech blog Mashable, to celebrate Facebook’s tenth birthday.

David follows a long line of audacious scribers, from prehistory to the present day.

Just how far back does scribing go?
"It’s amazing how it seems to captivate and hold the attention of students. Something about scribing just works!" – Tobias Billings, Sparkol blog

It started with a vision.

Acellus set out to empower struggling students with online courses to supplement their schoolwork. They hoped to make a difference to thousands of kids close to dropping out of education.

But when your audience is young people – who can feel disconnected in a standard classroom – how do you keep them engaged?

You use a scribe.

Acellus started by producing short, targeted video lessons and scribing quickly become a primary tool in their box of teaching methods.

Acellus is now used in all 50 states in America. In thousands of schools. By over a million kids.
It sounds revolutionary – reaching so many people through the power of scribning. Yet in one sense, they are doing nothing new. Way before the internet and video sharing sites, way before video itself – in fact, way before computers or electricity or students – humans scribed to one another.

Let’s go back 40,000 years.

**where to catch the best bison**

You’ll find the origins of video scribning in the dark caves of El Castillo, Spain. More than 40,000 years ago, cave paintings shared stories of hunting, ceremony and survival.

For millennia, people used images to share the secrets of being human and staying alive. First came the cave artists, then came the scribes – an educated few using a stylus tool to document history with images and, eventually, words. Soon no respectable king, council or religion was without one.
Pressed by printing

While text is a comparatively recent invention, it soon caught on. And with the arrival of the printing press, scribing became a niche market.

As technology advanced, the printing press turned into the typewriter, which turned into the computer, which birthed the internet – the most prolific tool ever known for spreading knowledge fast and wide.

The tool that helps even ‘bad’ students succeed.
Return of the scribes

So today’s scribes have all this at their fingertips – images, text, speech, the internet and, thanks to some clever people in the 1880s, video. Put it together and what have you got? Video scribing – a technology that harnesses 40,000 years of human ingenuity.

Following breakthrough campaigns by UPS and the RSA, whiteboard animation has become a contemporary form of communication for the largest companies on every continent.

It’s used in corporations, classrooms, campaigns and creative studios.

The stylus may have gone, the quill is now rather passé, but armed with a marker or a mouse, video scribing allows you to communicate complex ideas simply and to send those ideas around the world at speed.
Sitting at your computer right now, you can scribe to the world. You can commission cutting-edge professionals or build your very own scribe at your desk, today.

Much of this choice is thanks to one man. Ken Robinson. Sir Ken Robinson, the world-renowned educationalist, who inadvertently set off an avalanche of whiteboard animation.

Author of ten books, winner of prestigious awards, holder of countless honorary degrees, Sir Ken is our generation’s spokesperson on the problems facing education.

It’s no surprise that when he delivered a talk about schools killing creativity, it became the most watched TED talk of all time.
But that was just the beginning.

The RSA in the UK took just a portion of his talk and animated it. They played Robinson’s audio over a hand scribing illustrations on a whiteboard. The video, with its recycled narration, spread like wildfire.

It had half a million views in its first week.

At the time of writing, this small, incomplete hand-drawn excerpt of Sir Ken’s talk has been watched almost 13 million times on YouTube alone. More than twice the number of views of the original talk on the same site.

Changing Education Paradigms by Cognitive
The RSA made a number of scribe videos for their RSA Animate series on philosophy, civilisation, psychology and world economics. Their animators, Cognitive, adapted a technique that emerged in the early nineties, where artists draw out a creative story, recording their work as the narrative develops.

We call this whiteboard animation although it is more of a time-lapse technique.

RSA Animate fired people’s imagination and shot whiteboard animation to the forefront of creativity.

New companies were quick to realise its potential. Truscribe was one of the first. It built a successful business around whiteboard video. Based in the US, its highly skilled team of writers, artists and video professionals work with Fortune 100 companies to create thousands of hand-drawn whiteboard videos every year.
Automated for everyone

What about making your own?

Sparkol, a UK company, created VideoScribe – easy-to-use software that empowers you to create your own whiteboard animations. Launched in 2012, it produces attractive videos very quickly and opens up video scribing to those who can’t afford professional services.

There’s even a free-to-download mobile version called VideoScribe Anywhere, so you can create engaging scribes on the go.

Scribe videos have been used to lobby governments, and by governments to explain policies. They have been made to pitch business ideas, win contracts, teach lessons, campaign for change and – wonderfully! – even propose marriage.

Their potential is endless. Whether you pay for a professional service, or take matters into your own hands, the accessibility of scribing means you can share your message loud and clear.

It’s the style that made a brilliant speaker even more brilliant. But what is it exactly that makes scribe videos so compelling?
Chapter 4

WHY SCRIBING WORKS

(Or how a video has an impact in half the world’s countries at once)

“With this portal I am able to reach thousands of employees who will be able to get the training they need to make a difference in the world. My scribe is going to be a signature 16 piece of our marketing for this initiative and will be seen by thousands of people.”

- Jennifer Gaumond, CARE Canada, via email May 2013

Whiteboard animation is startlingly inclusive. It speaks to the eyes and the ears. It can break down barriers to understanding, conveying complex information very simply.

Which is why CARE Canada turned to video scribing.

The international humanitarian agency has its work cut out supporting women, children and families in over 80 countries. Its workers find themselves facing wildly different scenarios – post-conflict zones, natural disasters, famine-stricken communities and poverty of all kinds – and the team themselves come from all over the world.
CARE Canada needs its people to share knowledge, stories and training across the planet. But how do you teach people thousands of miles apart? How do you ensure that people with such different backgrounds and challenges are all on the same page?

As part of their e-learning initiative, CARE Canada used a scribe video to tell their signature story. Far from being alienated by irrelevant and distant communications, the video enabled CARE’s team to relate to and understand their role in the wider organisation. Though far away, video scribing allowed them to engage with the charity’s core.
Anticipation and completion

So how does whiteboard animation work? What is its magic?

One of the secrets of video scribing is the concept known to artists and illustrators as viewer completion. Each of us instantly recognises two dots and a curve as a smiling human face – despite the lack of detail. Our minds complete the image.

Scribe videos also stimulate viewer anticipation – they ask the audience to guess what is being drawn next. This continual anticipation creates surprise and rewards the brain with dopamine.

The anticipation of images goes a long way to explaining the mesmerising effect of whiteboard videos – why they create such enjoyment, learning and longer engagement.

As their artwork is revealed, scribes demand your contribution and your curiosity.
Selling the sea and Weeds

Once your audience is hooked, you can start to present your message. Scribes are perfect for condensing important info in an entertaining way.

Creative agency Founded got themselves a date with P&O Cruises, and they wanted to make a good impression. They knew that securing a contract with the cruise giant could make their reputation. But with fierce competition, they’d need to stand out somehow.

So they made a scribe.

It explained their credentials and approach succinctly. It also made them seem approachable and enthusiastic. P&O were blown away:

“Founded has shown not only the fresh and bold creative thinking we want, but a clear ability to deliver with the passion that we need from a creative partner.”

Founded went on to produce a memorable ad campaign for P&O, and in 2015 were awarded Breakthrough Agency of the Year at the MAA Awards.

Flashback to the final season of Showtime’s comedy-drama Weeds. How do you sum up your protagonist’s dramatic journey over seven seasons, in just a few seconds? The show used a whiteboard animation for the opening credits, summarising the entire story through the medium of video scribing.

Simple, and very effective.
First rate production on a much smaller budget

Scribe videos will wow your audience. They will also surprise your accountant. You can produce a high quality product with significantly less outlay than you would with other types of animated or live action videos. This allows you to make vast savings in terms of budget, time and resources.

Every day, we ogle our TVs and computers, sucked into the best videography Madison Avenue has to offer. These advertisements are created by hundreds of people with seemingly limitless budgets.

Anyone who tries to compete with the big players using a hand-held video camera, non-professional actors and a copy of Adobe Premiere Pro faces an impossible task – and the results are often seriously second-rate.

But scribe videos – they’re judged differently.
We've found that quality scribes produced on a low budget compare very well with more conventional forms of messaging.

Or rather, they don’t compare. They are judged in a category all of their own. Scribes are so different, such a departure from the norm, that viewers tend to accept whiteboard animation for what it is.

There’s something mesmerising about a drawing coming to life. People are drawn to scribe videos like a crowd gathering around a portrait artist at the fair.

And when scribe videos work – in over 180 countries around the world – they amplify a message and make a big difference to the people who need it.
Chapter 5

SCRIBING AND MEMORY
(Or how the studies and stories buddy up)

“An amazingly intuitive tool – the missing link for professional marketers who don’t have the time to learn all the ins and outs of video production.” - Sean James, via email

When Sean James proposed a scribe video for his client’s homepage, he was taking a risk. He didn’t know about the research behind whiteboard animation. He’d never used VideoScribe before.

Running a small media company, Sean’s margins were tight, and any new technology needed to pay for itself – yesterday. But he decided it was worth a shot.

Even in his most optimistic mood, he could not have predicted the result.

Simply adding a scribe video to the client’s landing page lowered the bounce rate by a third.
The scribe increased the average time that visitors stayed on the page by 50%.

But that wasn’t the best part.

By adding the scribe video, Sean managed to double his client’s revenue to $200,000.

One video. $100,000.

One happy client.
The psychology behind the pizazz

Sean James didn’t know it, but the research backs him up.

Not only do 96% of US adults find videos helpful in making purchase decisions, but 73% are actually more likely to spend having watched an explainer video. Also, 77% of those surveyed stated that businesses with online videos are more engaged with customers.

Video is not just an essential part of making a sale – it’s also a way to build meaningful relationships with your audience.

The power of online video is well known – much better known than the particular benefits of scribe videos.

That is, until Richard Mayer came along.
In twenty years of research, cognitive psychologist Richard E. Mayer and his colleagues found combining graphics with a voiceover to be far and away the most effective way of communicating information.

In fact, Mayer concluded that multisensory learning improves problem solving by 50-75%.

Say, for example, you divide a class in three. The first group of students are taught using hearing alone. The second set are taught the same information, but using only their sight. The third set are taught using both hearing and sight.
Who learns the most? Who learns the best? Each time Mayer ran this experiment, the students taught in multisensory environments outperformed their peers. They had more accurate recall, their recall had better resolution, and they retained the information for longer.

Mayer also discovered that people learn:

- best when corresponding words and pictures are presented closely together
- better from animation and narration than from animation and on-screen text
- better when extraneous material is excluded – i.e. the simpler the better

As you’ll notice, these are pretty much the central tenets of video scribing.
Scribes are multisensory

Watching a scribe is a multisensory experience, which results in much better understanding and retention. A scribe reveals information gradually, sparking your curiosity and allowing you to process the information bit by bit.

The viewer completion effect kicks in. You process the message at a deeper level and, crucially, you're more likely to remember it – and to respond.

That’s what Sean James discovered to his amazement.

But if all the research shows that scribe videos improve learning, what do they do to the human brain that makes them so effective?
Chapter 6

SCRIBING AND RETENTION
(Or how to get into a fight with a Swedish politician)

“She’s become somewhat of a celebrity in the school realm.” – Karl Kataoka, Sparkol blog

Karin Berg was just your average teacher – passionate about her students, desperate to give them the attention they deserved, but stretched to her very limits.

Then her government in Sweden proposed changes to the education system – changes that would ramp up her workload and strip away what little time she did have.

Karin was exhausted. But she was game for a fight.

She made a short, quirky scribe expressing her frustration. A virtual placard. An online grrrr. It was no masterpiece but, in no time at all, her protest went viral in Sweden.

Karin was invited to debate the proposals with the Minister for Education – live on national television. She gave him both barrels.

Later, in a 75-minute private meeting, they discussed the changes at length.
Karin’s follow-up video was aimed directly at members of parliament in the Riksdag.

Karin’s videos are compelling viewing even if you don’t know a word of Swedish.

But why? How could a single scribe video be so effective?

Ask the expert

Dr Richard Wiseman knows.

He’s a scientific-award-winning professor of psychology whose research has been widely published. He often talks about psychology on the TV, radio programmes and in the papers. He’s written ten books and amassed millions of views on YouTube. He even discovered the world’s funniest joke. Seriously.

Dr Wiseman is the kind of scientist we’d love to ask about whiteboard videos. About why they outperform ordinary videos in memory tests, problem solving, share-ability and overall impact.

But we never will ask him. Why?

Because he’s done that research already.
‘Absolutely massive’ increase in memory

In 2012 Dr Wiseman filmed a video of himself talking and created a scribed version using exactly the same script. He tested viewers’ memory after they watched one or the other, to see which one helped them learn the best.

He was astounded by the results. Overall, there was a 15% rise in recall across the memory questions for those who had watched the scribe video. He said:

“Anyone involved in education or research will know that is absolutely massive. Normally you have to work incredibly hard to get 5, maybe 10% increase in any kind of behavioural measure like that. Simply by animation you’re seeing a 15% increase.”
On one of the questions in Dr Wiseman’s research, 92% of scribe viewers recalled the answer correctly – 22% more than those who had watched the ordinary video.

But what could explain this ‘massive’ increase?

**Scribe videos gain and hold attention**

‘Simply because people are more engaged in the process,’ says Wiseman.

‘If you haven’t got people’s attention, you’re not going to get the information in. I think what the animations do is hold that attention. They hold it in an incredibly engaging way.’

We’ve all been there. The bored faces might be colleagues, delegates, or students, but the question is the same – how can I win the attention of the people in front of me?

Dr Wiseman has given us the answer – use whiteboard videos. They grab attention. They hold attention. They make sure that the information sinks in.
People learn better when something is fun

The second reason Dr Wiseman gives is that scribe videos are fun.

Can that really make a difference?

‘You do anything better when you’re in a good mood... creativity, productivity, learning... One thing [whiteboard animation] does is make me laugh, and it puts me in a good mood... Suddenly, it’s not so much work. It not only makes them have a better time, more importantly it means the information is just going in.’

Let’s face it – your colleagues would rather not sit through yet another PowerPoint presentation. Your website visitors are getting tired of reading all that text. Your students would rather be watching a video.

If all whiteboard videos did was put people in a better mood – they would be worth it.
But add the increase in information retention and memory – and you’ve got a winning combination.

Fun works.

Getting and holding attention, putting people in a good mood and triggering pleasure chemicals through surprise – all of these help account for the incredible performance boost that people get from watching scribes.

But could a simple scribe really outperform a professional talking head video? Sparkol decided to find out.
Chapter 7

SCRIBE VIDEOS VERSUS TALKING HEADS

(Or how the closing bell was only the start for one US worker)

Sparkol, makers of whiteboard animation software VideoScribe, decided to put whiteboard animation to the test. They pit it against a talking head video. Straight up, gloves off, no funny business.

Sparkol sent 2,000 viewers either a talking head video or a scribe at random in a blind A/B test.

In both videos, the same business coach made the same pitch for new clients. Two videos – one talking head, one scribe. But exactly the same script, exactly the same length and exactly the same pitch. You’d expect a similar impact, right?
Wrong.

After watching the video, the participants answered a set of questions about what they had seen, testing their comprehension, retention of information, enjoyment, and how likely they were to respond.

Sparkol suspected that the scribe video would have the edge.

But it didn’t.

It had the whole shebang.
The hard facts of scribing

The scribe video outperformed the talking head video at every level.

- Those who had seen the scribe performed better in 4 out of 5 memory tests
- The scribe video was three times more likely to be shared
- The scribe video was over twice as likely to be recommended
- 4 out of 10 scribe viewers would have bought the service described in the video – twice as many as the talking head viewers

Full infographic available on the Sparkol Blog
The scribe video came out on top in all age brackets and for both sexes.

Beyond the power of video, beyond the effect of multimedia presentation, there is something about whiteboard-style animation that gets through to people.

Sparkol regularly hears from people who have won competitions with scribe videos. Winners like Mark Lawler, whose elevator pitch scribe was chosen from hundreds of entrants to promote Infoblox. It won him an all-expenses-paid trip to ring the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange.

Mark is a convert. He now has his own YouTube channel, where he publishes regular scribe videos.
It’s over to you

Scribing is bigger than ever and being used in every sector you can think of. When popular tech blog Mashable told the history of Facebook to mark the social network’s tenth birthday.

Illustrators use it to showcase their work. Schools use it to make exciting, educational resources, flip classrooms and stimulate the next generation of IT-literate students. Corporations use it to speak to their employees in a way that entertains and informs, and small businesses use it to get their voices heard in the crowd.

People the world over are discovering that scribing gives a voice to the thoughts and ideas that might not otherwise be heard.
It can turn your scribbled thoughts into a powerful message and write it in the sky.

Business people can do it. Charity workers can do it. Ten-year-olds can do it.

So can you.

Where once we drew pictures on the cave wall for our tribe folk, we now have the whole world just a few clicks and shares away.

The question is – what will you scribe?
So you’ve got the know-how, and you’ve seen just a little of video scribing’s endless potential.

Now it’s your turn.

To make your own whiteboard animations, visit www.videoscribe.co for a free no-obligation seven-day trial of VideoScribe. It’s easy to use and comes packed with images and music that you can use commercially.

There’s also VideoScribe Anywhere, a free-to-download mobile app that lets you carry the power of scribing in your pocket.

The VideoScribe blog – blog.videoscribe.co – has tonnes of tutorials, tips and inspiration for making your own scribes.
For a wide choice of professional animated video makers, visit www.animole.com.

For hand-drawn video services, you’ll discover a wealth of ideas and mesmerizing professional videos at www.truscribe.com.

We hope you’ve enjoyed this tour of the ever-expanding video scribing universe.

We’re excited to hear your stories and to see your scribes emblazoned across the world.

Chat with us on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.
Authors

Jon Air, Sparkol CEO

Jon established Sparkol in 2008 to empower people to engage their audience through simple tools. VideoScribe embodies this ethos.

VideoScribe users are able to create engaging scribe video animations quickly and easily without the need for technical ability or design know-how. With over 100,000 scribes made each month, VideoScribe is helping its users produce incredible content worldwide.

www.videoscribe.co   |   www.sparkol.com

Eric Oakland, CIO at Truscribe

Since launching its first scribe video in January 2011, TruScribe has looked to its Scribology™ method of video scribing to guide the use of style, medium and technology to present clients’ messages clearly.

Based in principles of neuroscience, Scribology™ seeks to improve the efficiency of knowledge transfer and depth of retention. Everything TruScribe does is scrutinised through this lens to maintain standards of quality over hundreds of hand-drawn videos.

www.truscribe.com
Chipp Walters, communications expert

With a background in industrial design, Chipp’s passion for communication and problem-solving has served him well.

Chipp has led a number of design companies and worked on the design for many of the first computers, including IBM, Dell, and Apple. He also headed the team that designed the first Initial Lunar Habitat for NASA, followed by a Mars Habitat concept.

Critical to the success of all those projects was the ability to communicate his ideas succinctly, a skill that has proved useful with his independent scribing business.

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