Business of Story Podcast with Margot Leitman – Business Story Strategy from a Moth Master

Park: Hello everyone, and welcome back to another exceptional program on Business of Story.

I'm so excited about our guest today, because as you know, here at the Business of Story we are always trying to find that intersection of connecting business marketing minds and communicators and content marketers with story artists. People that lay it out there on the line every day, from authors to screenwriters to actors and actresses, stand-up comedians.

Today we have all of that wrapped up in one really cool bundle. Margot Leitman

I literally first heard about Margot Leitman last week. I was perusing through articles on story, storytelling in business, and Fast Company had a terrific piece on their six rules for great storytelling from a Moth-approved master of the form.

So we're going to find out what the Moth-approved master means. But Margot's been right in the middle of this for many years. She's a storyteller, comedienne, writer, and teacher. Originally from, and I may blow this, Matawan, New Jersey.

Margot: Yeah.

Park: She's the author of the new book out, "Long Story Short: The Only Storytelling Guide You Will Ever Need" from Sasquatch Books and Random House.

She also has another book, "Gawky: Tales of an Extra-Long Awkward Phase." I did get a chance to look at the book last night for a little bit, and some this morning, of the "Long Story Short," and it's hysterical and it is absolutely filled with wonderful, wonderful content for all of us storytellers in business, whether we're online or off.

Also Margot has done a lot of work in television. She's written for NBC, the Hallmark Channel, and the Pixel Network, which I'm not quite sure what that is. But I think most importantly, at least what really intrigues me, is her work with the Moth Program, and the fact that she is a story slam artist.

So without further ado, I would like to turn the stage over to our guest today, Margot Leitman. Welcome, Margot.

Margot: Thank you for having me.

Park: This is so great. We were just mentioning that I'm always scouring the planet for great story artists, talent, and literally you came to my attention I think on Thursday last week, and looking at that Fast Company article. I quickly jumped on your website, read about the book, and your agent sent one out right away.

So thank you for putting us into your schedule to get us, on the Business of Story.

Margot: Not a problem at all. I'm having a lot of fun with how busy it's getting after that article came out.

Park: Well, tell us about the book. This just came out, you just got back from Seattle, and what's the book tour looking like?

Margot: It's packed. The total of it was 8 cities, 14 appearances in 5 weeks. And that was the initial schedule, and I think it's gotten bigger than that. That was the last time I counted. I thought if I count anymore of this, I'm going to feel overwhelmed. I just want to feel excited about it instead.

So it's going great, yeah.

Park: And what I loved about your book, what I was able to get through in the last 12 hours basically, is your journey of going from aspiring actress to stand-up comedian to, just threw yourself into the world of storytelling and figured that you would figure out how to make a business out of it.

Can you take us through your journey a little bit? How you found yourself in LA today?

Margot: Yeah. I don't know that I initially thought I would make a business out of it. I just knew that I was loving it, and that's all I wanted to do. Then the business of it came very, very quickly. And it's funny, because I always say I don't think of myself as a businessperson, but when I look at it, I'm actually a pretty successful businessperson.

But I've never, I didn't set out that way. So the journey essentially started with, I was doing stand-up for years, and then I eventually found myself becoming a little tired of it and not excited about it. It didn't feel right.

So I started sneaking in telling stories in my stand-up sets, and that felt very, very natural to me. Then after I did that, I was looking for other ways to tell stories in shows, and I didn't really have opportunities for that. I thought okay, I'm a person if it's not there, then create it. So I just started storytelling shows with another wonderful friend, Julia Rozi, who also was having the same desire to tell stories.

Then from that, I eventually had a storytelling practice that eventually, not eventually, very quickly took off of my teaching, which helped me gain a lot of more storytellers in the world. Because people would take my class, and they would go and start their own show, and then that helped form the scene in New York.

Then after I thought I really couldn't take that much further, I, after a brief stop in Australia for a while, bringing some storytelling there, I transported everything to Los Angeles. So then that became a combination of live performing, teaching, and writing to compose an entire living of it now.

It's been an interesting and quick, quicker than I thought, path.

Park: And what is it about storytelling that attracted you? I mean, you were already in the story world with your acting work, your stand-up comedy work. But why storytelling specifically?

Margot: It felt very authentic, and I think stand-up felt very inauthentic to me. I just wanted to be myself, not a funnier version of myself, or an exaggerated version of myself. I just wanted to tell true things. I didn't want to worry about jokes anymore.

I didn't care about how many laughs I got. I just wanted the audience to feel something, and it just didn't feel right in that regard for me. I remember being at an old boyfriend's house, and they were watching somebody's stand-up special, and I wasn't paying attention.

I remember his friend said, "Isn't this what you do? Don't you watch stand-up specials all the time?" It's like no, I don't. That must not be what I really want to do.

I thought, I never watch this. Then I thought about how many memoirs I had read, how I was constantly reading people's true stories. That's the research I was doing.

So it's interesting. I have a lot of friends that it's their true love, but I don't think it was mine, stand-up. So it took a little while to break up with it, but I eventually did.

Park: Well, you were a five time winner of the Moth Story Slam. So first and foremost, what is the Moth, and what is the Moth Story Slam?

Margot: The Moth is a non-profit storytelling organization that is . . . I don't even know how many divisions it has internationally now. It started in New York, and then

it moved all . . . they have branches all around the country, and now they've moved internationally.

They give a topic beforehand. You can look it up on the website. Something such as fathers, let's say. And then you can prepare a five minute story on that topic, and then you go, you put your name in a hat, and they choose 10 people to tell stories.

And those 10 people are scored, and then a winner is chosen. And then the winner of that goes on to compete in the Moth Grand Slam in that same city, where they compete against the past 10 winners of the story slams. And then there's one winner from that.

So I won the smaller story slams five times, I guess, between the two coasts. Then I won the entire thing, the grand slam, once out of those five wins.

Park: Well, the stories that you tell are very funny.

Margot: Thank you.

Park: One of my particular favorites was, I think it's titled "Getting Dangerously Close to a Very Tiny Grown-up."

Margot: Right. It's just called "A Very Tiny Grown-up," but I like your version as well. Yeah. That's the one I won with the entire thing, with the grand slam.

Park: Okay. Yeah, my wife was traveling last week, and she got home and we were having coffee this morning, and I mentioned to her that we were doing this interview. And I said, "You have to watch this Moth presentation on YouTube." I told her the story, and she just died laughing, and that was me telling it to her, third party.

Margot: That's great.

Park: I think she actually went down and checked it out. So if you want to get to know Margot right away, after this podcast, pull up YouTube and look for the Moth, I don't know where I got that title. I thought it was on YouTube, but . . .

Margot: No, it's just called "A Very Tiny Grown-up."

Park: Oh yeah. It's really, really funny. So you're teaching story now. What is your audience, what is your class make-up of it? Is it folks that just want to become better storytellers, or do you get businesspeople in there that say "Man, I want to bring more humanity to what I do"?

Margot: Yes, I get all types of people. I mean, every age, every job. I also now work at businesses that have hired me individually to come in and specifically work with their employees. But the people that take my classes, I mean, name a job, I've had a person that's done it.

I've had people that worked for NASA, I've had people that are doctors, I've had very, very well-known actors and actresses. I mean, there was an adult film actress that went to these conventions and didn't know how to speak to people when she went to the conventions. I've had everything. It really is for everyone.

Park: That's interesting. I just did a workshop myself here today with some professional services firms. We had a lot of business coaches in here, and a law firm, and a CPA. And this seems like the question that I get all the time, is do I really have permission to tell stories in a business environment?

They seem like they feel like they have to lead with data, charts, and graphs all the time. Do you have that experience? Or what do you coach?

Margot: Yeah. Well, because I work with businesspeople a lot. And when I say, I don't mean just the businesspeople that come in and are in a class full of all different types of people. I mean, I've specifically been hired by a number of businesses who, the employees feel that quite a bit.

And what I don't understand is as you say, here's a . . . these are the numbers and data from our insurance, and this is what you can get, this is what could happen to you and this is what will happen if you have our insurance. Rather than telling a specific story of someone.

It could even be a fictional person, but I mean, something with a narrative that says, "So-and-so didn't have insurance. This is what happened to them, this is what their life became. So-and-so did. This is what happened to them. This is what their life became. Who do you want to be like?"

I just think that's so much easier than showing hard numbers, because at least you can attach the person and a story to that. I mean, even better than that, than making that story, is putting real people and real stories that you know in there, and then starting that narrative.

I just don't know why a person would stay away from hard numbers and data. I mean, I guess I'm not a person that responds well to that anyway. Maybe there are. It's hard for me to wrap my mind around that there would be, that a person would prefer to have the spreadsheet in front of them than a true story. I don't know why people assume that.

Park: Yeah. I think they're just educated into that. I talk with our groups here, saying, "You're at the top of your storytelling game when you're in kindergarten." Then it gets silenced as you move through life, unless you're like me and you keep pushing back, and then your grades show that, and somehow you wake up that I guess I better make a living at story, because the data side just isn't working for me.

But I think that they're just simply, it's educated and pounded into them, and their storyteller gets silenced in that process.

Margot: Yeah. I mean, I don't know if you've gotten to the end of the book, but I talk about how a lot of the things, products that we buy or the movies we buy tickets to, etcetera, are because we feel like we are part of the story.

We always talk about JK Rowling, and how she was on the British equivalent of welfare before the "Harry Potter" books. And I do think every time a person busy a ticket to her movie or reads one of her books and buys it, that they feel like they're contributing to getting that former single mom off of welfare, in a weird way. I really think that we believe that.

So I think that we're buying into her story almost more than . . . I know that people loved those books and those products, but I'm just saying that I do think that subconsciously, that's what we're doing.

Park: Yeah, we live vicariously through the heroes in those stories. So we get to try on trouble without getting hurt ourselves, but we figure out what we would do in case it happens to us. Interesting.

Margot: Yeah.

Park: In your article, you give six different ideas around story. I'd like to see if we could cover a couple of those. The six rules for great storytelling.

Margot: I want you to know, first of all, I didn't know he was going to ask me that, and I . . . It was really hard for me to narrow it down to six, because I didn't know that was what he was going to be asking me. I just thought he had some prepared questions, and then he launched into that, and I had to mentally whittle all of these amazing rules I have and just think on the spot.

And I can't believe the article came out the way it did. I cannot.

Park: Well, it's great.

Margot: Yeah.

Park: Then what I need to do is put you on the spot and say okay, forget those six, give me the next six rules of storytelling. But your first one I liked a lot, and I'd like to have you go into it, even if you've got an example, but make people root for you. What do you mean?

Margot: Yeah. I just mean that you have to be a likeable underdog person that we want you to see success. And if we don't root for you, it's really hard for us to be invested in your story.

But I think that once we root for you, and it's really something you can do in the first sentence or two of your story, we'll be on board for the rest of the time that you talk. So it's so essential you do it right at the top. Because if we're not rooting for you, we're not going to listen to what you have to say.

And anything that you like or you respond to well in terms of a story that you hear or a TV show that you watch, it's usually because you're rooting for somebody so badly. And maybe that character gets killed off or something like that, you might stop watching the show, because now you're not rooting for anybody.

Or that person shows bad intentions, that character changes, and you're no longer rooting for them. You'll probably stop watching. So I do think that it's vital for us to root for you, because that's what keeps us interested in the story.

Park: Then you also coach folks to have a few stories at the ready. That if you're out in a business setting or something, you don't want to be that wallflower. How can we do that?

Margot: Well, I mean, the thing that I ask at the beginning of every class is a really simple one, which is tell me something odd, interesting, unique, strange, weird about you. I say don't tell me something so personal you should only tell a therapist, but also don't tell me something so bland you're going to bore the whole room.

I say that second part, because if I don't say that, then I think people are going to be like, "My weird thing is that I love to eat." It's like uninteresting, you know? And that's what I think people in business settings tend to do. They play it so safe, because they don't want to ruffle any feathers, that they end up being completely unmemorable.

So I'm not saying that you need to talk about your divorce in that statement, but I'm just saying, what makes you interesting? What's something that you're willing to put out there that's a little bit unique about you? And have that story of that ready to go. Because even if it's a sentence, there's a story behind it, like I've lived in three continents. Except I haven't, I was making that up. There's

a story behind that. What's the story behind it? It makes people want to ask more.

If they want to ask more, know more about you, I mean, don't you want to hire the person that you're interested in and think you could spend 40 plus hours a week with? I do.

Park: What do you say to those folks that tell you, "Margot, I don't have any interesting stories. I'm just a regular person."

Margot: Everybody's just a regular person. To me, when a person walks into a classroom to me and says "Oh, I took this class because everybody says I have the craziest stories," those people usually are the most boring people in the class.

And the people that think they have nothing are fascinating, and they don't realize it. Because they're just numb to their own experiences. Everybody has interesting stories to tell. Everybody. And if you're just a normal person, that's, yeah, so am I. I'm a married . . .

If I really look at the surface, I'm a married woman in her 30s with a child. I mean, that's really, that's not very interesting. But I really dig deeper than that, and I think about, I give prompts in the book to help you unlock some stories in your memory that you may have forgotten about. But we're all interesting. I don't buy it for a second.

I think the less interesting you think you are, probably the more stories you have. It's those cocky people that end up being quite boring. I mean it.

Park: I hear you. Listen, we need to break for a story from our wonderful sponsors, but when we get back, Margot, can you give us some ideas of where we can go and find stories? I know we've all lived some, but what can we actually do in our day-to-day life to go out and become story-making machines in our own lives?

Answer that question when we come back, right after this.

Park:

Welcome back to the Business of Story, and our wonderful guest today, Margot Leitman, the author of the brand new book, "Long Story Short: The Only Storytelling Guide You Will Ever Need."

And I can tell you, it's wonderful how you've put it together, because you've written and you've given lots of great concepts, but it's also very visual. You had a lot of fun with the graphics in there. Can you tell us a little bit about the graphical approach to this book? Or maybe the overall approach to the book?

Margot: Well first of all, I did not do the graphics. We can only be good at so many things, and that was a very talented artist, Joyce, I'm forgetting her last name, from Sasquatch Books, that did it.

But my intention was, when I pitched the book, to have it like that. And to tell you the truth, I was offered, I had a few offers on the book. And one of the places wanted me to write it as a textbook and very business-centric, and I had to turn that one down, because it wasn't what I wanted to do.

I thought that people would respond better to this method and be more excited by it. And it would be something that you could pick up off the shelf and flip through, and say "Okay, I'm going to get this." And hopefully in the future there'll be some accompanying workbooks and such to go with the book if it sells well enough.

So I felt that that would be a smarter move, so I had to turn down the people that didn't want to do it that way. [inaudible 00:20:30] the art.

Park: The format's great, though. I really like it because you'll give an anecdote and share a tip, but then you have that art that backs it up. I think it's a really, really brilliant way to put a book out about storytelling.

Margot: Thank you. Yeah, well art is a story as well. There's stories in everything.

Park: You had mentioned in the book, I was reading through, I think it was towards the end of it, the business . . . anyway, it's about how do people get off their butts and get out in the world and create stories for themselves. I thought that was really interesting because I think we so often just think about the stories that have happened to us, and that's all we share. We don't actually intentionally go out and raise some ruckus.

Margot: No, and I'm not saying to manufacture stories, but I'm saying you have to lead a story-worthy life, and saying yes to things and going places and trying new things throughout your life. I don't go out and go, "Okay, here, I'm going to focus on stories now on my red eye flight to Nebraska."

I don't think that. But if I don't get on that plane, how is anything going to happen? So I just keep thinking, like I didn't go out to the bar that I met my husband in with the intention of, "I'm going to go out tonight and meet my husband." I went out, but had I not gone to that bar in the first place, I wouldn't have met him. You see what I mean?

It's a matter of, going out there, saying yes to things. Getting off your phones at all times. Not at all times, but the fact that you shouldn't be on it at all times,

drives me crazy. I find so much entertainment looking around, engaging with people, being a person that you can talk to.

Just asking people questions. I was out the other night, and my friend's husband worked in the furniture business, and all I did was ask him for stories about his job, because I found it fascinating. I just think you can learn anything from people that aren't like you.

I think we're really predisposed to be scared of talking to people that aren't like us. And we're really scared of doing anything besides our rigid schedules, and we're really scared of saying yes. And I find that if you do the opposite, you invite more story-worthy experiences to happen to you.

Park: One of the tips you give in the book, and I've got it in front of me right now, it's one of these great graphics. I like this idea, had not thought about it before, but I was wondering if you could share some examples. And your tip is, "Find the reoccurring theme in your life, then look for the extremes." What do you mean by that?

Margot: Well, I mean, that's what my first book was. "Gawky: Tales of an Extra-Long Awkward Phase." It was actually someone else, my agent that pointed that out to me. She goes, "You keep telling stories about this growth spurt when you were a kid."

Even that story that you watched. She goes, "you seem to have been really affected by being so tall so young. And you have so many stories from that. What if that's the overarching theme to your memoir?"

Then I went back, and I looked at a lot of stories, and a lot of them did have to do with size. So I think that it's a matter of, what's your story of your life, and what are, what's the overarching themes to it. Then once you look at that, you can go "Oh, I have 10 stories on the topic of being bad at dating," now that I've identified that. Or I have 12 stories on the topic of can't hold down a job. Hopefully you don't, but if you do, it's story-worthy.

So if you look at those things, and you find these themes, you can go back and realize how many stories you have about that. And also I think people get excited to hear . . . I mean, you look at these wonderful storytellers that are around right now, someone like Mike Birbiglia, I think he's found this wonderful reoccurring theme in him that he's such a nice guy that he's almost too nice, and the world just crumbles down around him constantly for it.

And I find that he's telling that story in various different ways, and he's doing it really well. I know what to expect when I hear one of his stories. I'm not going to hear a story about womanizing and getting in a bar fight from him.

But I was going to hear a story like that when I read Charles Bukowski, and I was excited to read that story over and over again. So you realize that these artists that you love have figured out what their story is, and they tell it in many different ways. I find this very essential.

Park: Would you agree that that's common in all of us? Because you just mentioned these artists do this, and again, people say "Well, I'm not an artist so I can't really pull that off," but these themes seem to be central in all of our lives. It's just a matter of recognizing them for what they are. As you say, explore the extreme, and then find the really funny or different or wild stories associated with that. Share them in a group and see where it takes you.

Margot: Yeah. Yeah.

Park: Is that fair enough?

Margot: I think that's very fair. I didn't know if there was a question there. I think that's, I agree.

Park: Yeah. And you say that in one of your other tips, too. Stories are about how you felt. And I think that's interesting, because so often you get connected with someone who's trying to tell you a story, but all they're telling you is an event. And this happened and this happened and this happened. But it seems to lose its . . .

How do you bring more feeling into it? Or talking about how you felt?

Margot: I think you have to react to what you're saying, and react with the strongest emotion that you felt at the time, not a watered down version of it. So I mean, because also, we have very strong emotions sometimes with things we wouldn't expect to have emotions towards, and that is also where fascinating stories lie.

So if you wonder, why does it make so . . . something like, for example, why did it make me so sad when my friend moved away? Why was I crying all the time? And then you look at the story deeper and you realize you were in love with that person all along. It was the emotion that really got you to have that discovery, not what happened.

So I just find that I'm not interested in a story unless I know how the person feels about it, good or bad. And I'm not really interested in a recounting of events. I can look at a timeline in an elementary school that a kid made, and I could get a recounting of events that happened. It's the emotions behind them that makes it interesting.

Park: And in those emotions, since you're looking for those emotions in the person telling the story to you, could be a stranger, could be a good friend, is that where you start finding these universal themes that you talk about, that your story needs to have a universal theme to it?

Margot: I mean, I think the way you could find a universal theme is . . . Because ultimately, we're all pretty selfish and thinking about ourselves most of the time. So to me, I'm the first to admit that. So if someone's telling a story, and unless I can somehow relate it to my own life, sometimes I'm half paying attention.

I mean socially, if someone's talking about their . . . For example, a friend of mine who's in a different economic bracket than me was talking about this dinner that he went to, and how it was $600 for the two of them, and the service was terrible. And I was like "I don't know if I can relate to this story."

And then went into, "and then we got food poisoning, and then we were up all night, and then I called to try to get our money back," and it's like oh, okay. Vomiting in the night, I can get. I've been there. But I hadn't been there on a $600 bill for two people, but I had been there on the getting food poisoning. You can get food poisoning from all meals that cost any amount.

Park: Right.

Margot: There are universal things in it like, you know what, sometimes . . . And I think essentially what he's trying to say is sometimes the fanciest things aren't really worth it. And in the beginning of the story, I thought that he was going a different direction. In the end he was saying something quite universal, which is he probably should've gone to Chipotle and been a lot happier.

I did relate in the end. But if he had just kept it on that instead of the food poisoning, I don't know that I would've even remembered that story, to be honest with you.

Park: Well, and adding insult to injury, barfing up a $600 meal, that doesn't help either.

Margot: And fighting to get your money back. I love a refund, so.

Park: You have another tip here that I like. If you can laugh now about the last time you "lost it," chances are your audience will find it funny too. Do you have an example of that for us?

Margot: Well, what I mean is I always say the humor, again, in the extremes. So I often ask people to challenge themselves and think of a time where they really lost it

emotionally, and tell everyone about it. And if you can laugh, then there's humor.

What I find, the crazy part, is that a lot of people say "Oh, I've never lost it." They're liars. All lying. They go, "I'm a really even keeled person. I never lose it." I was like, I don't know how you got . . . Some of these people have children, even, and they say this. I don't buy it for a second.

The moment where you've lost it, I think the great . . . It is such a great story. If you can laugh at the fact that you snapped in a certain way . . . The example I use in the book about this woman, just speaking to a luggage carousel at Newark Airport because her bag wasn't coming in, just legitimately having a conversation with the carousel as the bag came out.

She found it very funny. I don't think the day of she did, but now she did. And it was a great story, and it was a moment of extreme snapping and losing it.

Then I have people telling stories of losing it in another way, in a positive way. I love stories about completely snapping because you're so happy over something that you didn't expect to be so happy about.

Like I tell this story about having, when I was an actor, and I booked a commercial ad campaign that was all, it was dancing. And everyone in the commercial that was cast except for me was in a Broadway show at the time, except for me, and I couldn't . . .

I tell the whole story about how I always thought I was a halfway decent dancer, but I never had any proof. And then I get this commercial and I get to the set, and everyone's talking about how they have to race back to work the next day. And I think they work in a restaurant or a temp job, and they're like "Oh, I'm in a chorus line," or "I'm in 'Wicked,'" and I'm like what?

I lost it in a good way in that story. But there's humor to that. There's nothing really that funny about booking a commercial. What's funny is the extreme emotion I had about it.

Park: And you proved to yourself that you were a halfway decent dancer.

Margot: I did, which is a relatable . . . I'm an underdog in the story as well, because I think I'm okay, but I have no verification for that. But I've always believed this, and now somebody else believed it enough too, to put me in something. Yeah.

Park: Yeah. You also have a tip in here, and I think this is interesting, because actually I was just reviewing this with the folks we were working with today. My

approach, our approach to business storytelling I think is quite a bit different than yours. You cover a lot of ground, and you've been on stage, I haven't.

Mine is much more around brand, content development, and trying to humanize these B2B brands through story. And you say in here, there's absolutely no need to tell us the moral of your story. We get it.

And I think that's true when you're on stage, and you're at the cocktail party, and you've really got your act together. But I find with our business executives that I have to get them to actually write down the moral of the story, because sometimes they will just bounce right over it and leave it up to the audience to create the meaning out of the story.

So I find that now I want them to be very intentional about what is the moral of this business story you're trying to tell me right now.

Margot: Yeah, I can see that.

Park: Yeah. I'm curious if you could share with me, coach me a little bit, what's the difference in how, when you're working with your folks, and you don't need to spell it out. People get it. And actually when you spell it out, I take from this that you're kind of destroying the connection that you're giving to your audience.

Margot: Yeah. I mean, I think about that . . . There's no other form, usually, I mean aside from children's books that spell out the moral of the story at the end of it. A movie doesn't tell you the moral of the story, and a song doesn't often tell you the moral of the song, and TV doesn't tell you that.

So I'm not sure why when someone tells a live story, that at the end they have a desire to go, "Did you get it? I don't think you got it." I'm just not sure why an audience wants to do it. It's almost as if they don't trust that they've done a good enough job.

And the other thought is, what if they don't take your moral, but they take something? And I understand in business, what you're saying is we need this audience to understand why they need this product, and they need to understand that specific thing. Then if they don't understand that, then you have not done your job.

And I understand that. And I'm not, as I joke, I'm not a businessperson, but I am talking from a creative standpoint. For me, on the flip side of that, for the stage, does it really matter if one audience member takes from this story "Always believe in yourself," and the audience member next to you takes from the story, "Work hard and you'll reap rewards"?

Let's say those two audience members took two different things from your story. They've both taken something. They both were affected by it, and they both were moved, and they both will remember it, and they both enjoyed it. So you've done your job, and it's okay.

I don't think that life is going to be much better or much worse if every audience member doesn't get your very specific point. And we could talk about movies and books that we've read that we both took a different message from, and we both enjoyed it. That's what I think. But I do understand your point, that if they don't understand the message behind what you are pitching in a business presentation, then perhaps that's not going the way you want it. I understand what you're saying.

Park: Yeah. Who do you think is doing . . . final question here. Who do you think is doing a good job with their brand storytelling? Or do you pay much attention to that side of it? Is yours more really about performance?

Margot: Well, I'm going to be biased, because I do workshops at a certain media company.

Park: Oh, okay. Besides them.

Margot: Gosh. What media companies, or what specific commercials you mean have I seen, or?

Park: Yeah, or even just brands that you interact with or you watch that you think, "You know, they really have their stories straight, and they seem to do a really nice job of sharing it with the world, getting people engaged in it."

Margot: I mean, not to be cliché, but Apple does. It makes you feel like you're ahead of the curve. They do a really good job of making feel like you are . . . it's accessible, but yet you are hip, and that you are on trend, and that you are moving forward with the world with that product.

And they're doing a fantastic job of that, I think. I also was watching a Folger's commercial the other day and I thought, "These commercials are a little bit odd," all of them. All of these commercials, they have a weird, there's a little long pauses in them and silence, and the relationships in them seem so intimate.

I thought, and they're all . . . then I thought about all the other Folger's commercials I've seen in my life, and how there's a joke that people have cried at them. I thought, this has been really consistent for a long time. I guess it's working. Have I ever bought Folger's? No, but I know a Folger's ad when I see

one. Because it's usually two people in their pajamas who seem to have known each other for their entire lives, drinking coffee.

That is what they do, every time.

Park: That's their theme, huh?

Margot: Yes. I would say they're telling a story. But trying to think of anyone else, companies that I think are doing a really good job of it. I'm not sure.

Park: Yeah. Well, that's okay. I mean it's interesting, for me anyways, Patagonia I speak about a lot, because they really understand their origin story from the very beginning, and they have not swayed from it. They do a very nice job.

Of course, Volkswagen's kind of blown up their story, so they've got quite a bit of story repair going on there.

Margot: Absolutely.

Park: How can people learn more about you? Where can they get your book, "Long Story Short: The Only Storytelling Guide You Will Ever Need"? And what about taking one of your courses? How does that go about?

Margot: Okay, so my website is margotleitman.com. Www.margot, M-A-R-G-O-T, L-E-I-T-M-A-N.com. And you can find information on everything there.

On Twitter, I'm @MargotLeitman. My Facebook is Margot Leitman, Instagram is Margot Leitman as well.

I'm on the road currently. My tour schedule is up on my site. I'll be on the road through Thanksgiving promoting "Long Story Short: The Only Storytelling Guide You Will Ever Need," and you can purchase that, available from Sasquatch Books. You can get it at any bookstore or online at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or any independent bookseller.

And in terms of taking a workshop, inquiries can be directed via my site. I am based out of Los Angeles. I travel all over the place to do workshops. That's part of the reason I was in Seattle this weekend.

Like I said, I've gone as far as Australia to teach, so I am for hire. You can find me on the site, and I can give you more info.

Park: Very cool. Well thank you so much for taking the time to be here on Business of Story. I've got to ask you, do you have the one go-to storytelling tip that we could all use immediately?

Margot: Yeah. I would say lose the fear. Just tell it. Your life is going to go on if you tell something personal about yourself. It's not going to end, and it's certainly not going to change drastically for the better either.

I always say if you get out there and you tell your story, if it goes great, your life will be pretty much the same. If it goes terribly, your life will be pretty much the same. You have nothing to lose. You might as well just get up there and talk about it.

Park: And what do you have to gain?

Margot: Everything. Because it's just doing it the first time that your life will be exactly the same. But then once you keep doing it, your life will change. So many people will listen and research and read the book and never get up there and tell their story, and I want to say get past the fear and get up there and tell it.

Your life will be . . . it will be okay if it goes badly the first time. You can get up there and do it again another time. And if it goes tremendously well, you're still going to have to go to your job tomorrow. But you can work at it, and your life will eventually change for the better as mine has.

I don't know why people make such a big deal about that first time you get on stage. Lose the fear. You're going to be okay. Just do it.

Park: Awesome. Well thank you very much, Margot. We really appreciate your time today on Business of Story, and for all of you listeners out there, I hope you've enjoyed this show. If so, please head over to iTunes and give us your rating and let us know what you liked.

If you didn't like something, that's cool too. Send me that note. We're always trying to create programming that means the most to you business marketers out there, of how to be able to craft and tell truly compelling stories that humanize your brand and move people to action.

Of course we have a number of storytelling tools on our website, businessofstory.com. And we've got a free tool, a new free tool there. They're all free, actually, which takes you through the 10 step story cycle process, and you can work through your story, your personal story, your business story, whatever story you have, using our 10 step cycle. So feel free to visit businessofstory.com.

You can also reach me there through my email at businessofstory.com with any input you have on the show. So thank you again for listening, and until next time, I'm Park Howell with Business of Story.