



S2:E6 – Simon Arrowsmith | Telling Your Story

Please note this is an automated transcription with minor editing & may contain errors.

[00:00:00] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the Work Joy Jam podcast. I'm your host, Beth Stallwood, founder of Create Work Joy. In this episode, I talked to the brilliant Simon Arrowsmith and Simon is a story, coach story, color story producer. He lives and breathes the world of stories. And I don't know about you, but I can't move anywhere online or talk to anybody without talking about stories, it is so in the minds of people about how do we capture a new stories to help engage people, to help us understand ourselves, to help us connect with other people. And I've asked Simon to come on today to talk about his background. And he's got a really interesting career as well, which is great.

[00:01:17] And do you forgive me when I go off and get excited and also Simon about 300 questions in one, go and then have to start again and asking every single question. I just go a bit too over excited and Simon's approach to storytelling, to some really practical stuff in here that you can really think about.

[00:01:33] So I really hope you enjoy this episode.

[00:01:50] Hello, and welcome to the Work Joy Jam. I am joined by the fabulous Simon Arrowsmith, and I have been looking forward to this [00:02:00] conversation for ages. So I'm really pleased to introduce Simon. Simon will introduce himself way better than I could say Simon, over to you. Tell us a bit about you, your story, how you got to, where you are today.

[00:02:13] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:02:13] Oh, well, first off, thanks for having me on the podcast. I've been listening to them. Well, I've been slightly more than listening to them, but more about that later intriguing. Ye. So, my story, well, I should be really good at telling my story, but I think like ironically, I'm not that good at I'm good at helping other people tell that story, but when it comes to my own, I sort of go, oh, no,

[00:02:40] So I am, I guess a professional storyteller, although I don't like that word storyteller or storytelling for me, it doesn't seem to work for me because I think there are lots of different ways that stories come into our lives. And so that's what I'm really, I'm a story shaper. I'm a story coach. I'm a story consultant.

So, I'll tell you a little bit about how, how that came to that. I started my career, as I believe other people on this podcast right now did too in the world of theater, but I wasn't really, cutout for the

acting life, I wasn't very good. You know, people say you want to be when you grow up. And I always thought I wanted to be an actor and it turns out I was really terrible at acting.

[00:03:28] So that's sort of out the window. So I turned to writing and I did a lot of, written work and my degrees are sort of in contemporary art. So it was all this sort of mixed media stuff. So I've always had this fascination with how stories work, but also that the sort of technical way that stories are pulled together from different and disparate parts of media.

[00:03:52] So, That's how I started. Uh, I did work in west end theater for a couple of years, on the sort of backstage side but then I got, you know, I liked, I liked eating and I liked food and I liked having, having a life. And I wasn't one of those lucky few that could make a particularly good life out of theater.

[00:04:12] So I went and got a real job and it just so happened that my real job, managed to get me into the world of comms and learning and development. And so I kind of brought the story world with me, although it took me, I'd say about 10 years to really, really bring that story training and story world into my communications and development world.

[00:04:35] And then 10 years. I started a company called Growing People. Uh, we set up initially as a training company and to train people into how to use stories in their, in their work. And after about five years, more and more, our clients were sort of saying, well, could you come and help us and consult on this and help with our third party clients to actually do the story.

[00:04:57] So we ended up doing live events, copywriting content, all story led and consultancy, all story led. And so I ended up being much more of a story, traditional story teller, I guess then I'd set out to be, so I think full circle I'm, I'm, I'm kind of achieved what I wanted to achieve in terms of suddenly finding myself as a story person.

[00:05:21] So that's a very roundabout and not very good way of telling you can tell you my story.

[00:05:25] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:05:25] I know, but where do you start to saying about, oh yeah, I should be able to do this. I'm training people to do it. I just said that thinking again, how hard it is to take our own advice sometimes

[00:05:35] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:05:35] I can sit and listen and prompt and coach and, and help someone and listen. And you know, when I'm hearing someone tell their story, I go, yeah, that, bit's not interesting but that bit is really, really good. You want to put, but when someone's asked me, a bit dull.

[00:05:53] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:05:53] It's so interesting. Isn't it? Because, well, there's so many things to dive into here and, I'm going to dive into all of them. We're going to [00:06:00] find time to make it happen, but that's the first thing I just really want to reflect on that is so many people I talk to think that their stories are already boring. And I think everyone else's story is amazing and it really interesting.

[00:06:10] And I have yet to meet anybody and I speak to thousands of people every year. I have yet to meet anyone who has a story that I am not in some way fascinated by.

[00:06:20] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:06:20] I mean, I completely agree. And, and, and well, what's fascinating you know, you and I met whilst doing well for a sort of third party company.

[00:06:29] And we were in that, that company that women had worked with athletes a lot, and I was coaching those athletes on their story and these are, and then they would come and go. "But my story is not very interesting." And I would go "I beg your pardon?" And it's true. It's true. It doesn't, and I don't think it really matters unless you're some mad ego-driven, you know, uh, actor, performer, or even like, you know, uh, entrepreneurial business person.

[00:06:56] I think most people are sort of self-effacing about their story. I'm not that [00:07:00] interesting, but scratch beneath the surface. I think everyone is.

[00:07:04] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:07:04] And I think that's a really interesting point to start on is around the importance of stories and how we talk about ourselves and how actually, and maybe we can dive into this and that.

[00:07:13] And the theory of work joy is one of the things that I really think about it. To get joy at work. We need to understand our story and where joy fits into it and who we are and how, how we do things and what some of that history and our background and our story really means to us. So talk to me a little bit, if you can, around when people are thinking about this about, I've got a really boring story they're in that zone or that, oh ye. No, my one is always wondering why would anyone be interested in that? It's like ancient history, some of the stuff I talk about, and I just really am interested from you to think about what are some of the benefits or why are stories so important in the world of work?

[00:07:55] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:07:55] Well, I guess, to, to come as your first point about that, that, that, , why, why aren't we perhaps, [00:08:00] why don't we believe on our own story? I think we feel is that curse of knowledge, isn't it? We feel like because we know it, no one else is going to be interesting. So it's like, I've played that over in my head before and so therefore it's not that interesting, but we don't have the same outside perspective and we don't have the same experiences as someone else. So I think it's often, often the case that we are looking at it from our own point of view and that's not helpful and mix into that, the fact that the brain is this incredible storyteller.

[00:08:32] I mean, it's just churning all the time making stuff up. And if there are gaps in our knowledge or experience, we'll just fill them with stories. And so if we're telling ourselves a negative story that I'm not that interesting. Well, guess what? You're probably your story becomes not that interesting when you tell it, you know, it, it is, it is quite reinforcing, so. I would say that that's the first thing to think about is about what, what self stories are you telling [00:09:00] us? What self stories, what stories are you telling yourself? What are those there? That self dialogue that's going on and how is that impacting and affecting both the story you believe about yourself, but also the, when you're projecting out into the world and then to come your other point about why, why is story, why is it important for business? I mean, I just think it's because it's such a pervasive part of who we are as human beings. If, if your business is human led and it's a human based business. So I guess you could probably argue, even if it isn't, if it's some sort of algorithm, you probably probably use story as well. But if it's human, if it's, if it involves humana, it involves stories because that's the way we think and see the world.

[00:09:43] So if you're not paying attention to the stories in your business, the stories that your people tell about your business and about themselves, I think you're really missing on not just a trick, but, something quite fundamental about your people and your business and brand.

[00:10:03] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:10:03] Yeah. And it's really interesting that you talk about brands.

[00:10:06] So I'm going to pick up on this one because I think it's, it's, it's so relevant to businesses now is if you have a great brand. But the people don't talk about it or talk about the story of the brand in the right way or connect their story to the brand. It somehow doesn't have the same impact as if you have those things joined together.

[00:10:27] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:10:27] I think it's kind of like that whole self thing, isn't it? That, you know, when we bring our whole selves to work, we are much more able to achieve great things at work. It's the same with the brand. Doesn't connect to me as a human being, but allow me to have my place within my own story I think there's a, there's a disconnect. And that means that the brand isn't as being as effective as it could be. And therefore you don't get sort of brand advocacy from your employees. And if your employees don't want to talk about your business, why [00:11:00] should anyone else?

[00:11:05] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:11:05] Did I answer that question?

[00:11:10] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:11:10] And I think into this, the point about stories and the stories that are in our head, and I'm really interested about the stories that are in head versus the truth, more versus another perspective. So I know that there's lots of things that I tell myself that are a slightly again, we talked about this at the beginning.

[00:11:29] You know, you come from a bit of a drama background. I come from a bit of a drama background. Sometimes they are an overdramatized version of what's really going on in the world. And when that happens in my head, things get out of hand, I can't deal with things well, so there's something there about how do we recognize that and what can we do about that?

[00:11:51] Because that, for me is something that can lead to a lot of work gloom rather than a lot of work joy is when we're in that position.

[00:12:00] [00:12:00] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:12:00] Ask that question again?

[00:12:01] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:12:01] I know that question was like the most random, how many questions are in that question? You can say, let me, let me re work it into something that actually makes sense.

[00:12:15] I think I got lost in my head, which happens a lot in my own story. So the stories in our head vs the facts or the truth or facts and truth are always from a different perspective. How can we, if you, I mean, you might not have an answer to this, but if you do, how can we help ourselves determine the difference between the truth and the story that goes on in our head?

[00:12:39] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:12:39] Okay. Well, I think it's the same as how we determine whether a news report is fake news or realism, and you have to validate it. You have to verify, you know, if you are...it's that feedback loop. Isn't it. It's that whole thing about, do you, are you getting, regular and frequent feedback about not just your performance, but about, about your self?

[00:13:01] If you have this inflated sense of self or deflated sense of self, is that what other people experienced? Cause we can't see ourselves, the thing is that with, with the, uh, with the, with the story engine that we've got going in our brain, we are experiencing ourselves as a kind of a central character in this narrative.

[00:13:23] But unfortunately we've been programmed, I guess is the only way I can describe it with, it sounds quite sinister, but you know, we we've got this, we've got the story route. There's that sort of constantly playing in our head, this, this, almost three act structure that we're we're, we're running through that we've learned through school that we've been is reinforced by culture and society, and probably is partly to do with the way that our brains is wired for story. So we're, we're sort of seeking for these dramatic moments and, and, and, and looking for, conflicts, tensions, and experiences. Therefore, it's very difficult to tell what is real and what isn't because, , fiction and factor so carefully intertwined, I would say. So yeah if you are unsure about your story and unsure about the story you're telling yourself and whether through you have to get, you might be an unreliable narrator and someone you can't trust.

[00:14:24] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:14:24] Ye. That's a really interesting thing isn't it? To, and I love the idea of getting the feedback on that to verify, to check it out and often I do. I asked somebody like I would phone up you and go, am I going crazy? Or is this what's going on? Is what's going on in my mind, actually happening? If you get that sense. So someone can either talk you down from the ledge of like going into some overthinking nightmare or say to you, I think there probably is some truth in that, but do you need to work on it?

[00:14:51] You know, there's different things that you can do, but the worst bit is leaving it in your head.

[00:14:57] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:14:57] Well, absolutely, because if you leave it in your head, it's got [00:15:00] room to create and room to just make stuff up. You know, this whole idea that if we don't have enough information, he brain defaults to negatives and, you know, that's the same, you know, could be reading body language and you're not getting a full signal you're going to going, oh, I don't trust that person.

[00:15:17] I don't, you know, it's the same in the story world. If there's a gap in information, we want to close that gap. Our brain just wants to go. Right. That's closing generally. We'll just close it with negative stuff because that's who we are. We're lovely. And this is about joy, right? Okay. Yeah, we do go into work gloom.

But it, it comes back to you think about those Olympians. I was talking about, you know, they, I I've, I've sat down with them and listen to their story and they not just, not just that generic. Oh, my story is not that interesting, but they'll gloss over certain parts of their life and your whoa, whoa, hold on, hold on, hold on.

[00:15:54] Tell me a little bit more about that struggle or that moment. And they just don't because they're so used to it. And because for example, [00:16:00] these are elite athletes, so they're working at a certain level and training to them routine I'm sitting there going no, a real person. It doesn't go through that. I'll do that.

[00:16:12] Let's, let's, let's set in that for a moment because your audience, the people around you listening, won't have experienced that and won't know what that's like, and we'll find that fascinating.

[00:16:22] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:16:22] Yeah. And I see so many people beyond off, there's just loads of people going really quickly over some of the biggest, most exciting bits of their story.

[00:16:31] And it's interesting because I've been through this process myself and I, you know, you know what I do, I do a lot facilitation, a lot of coaching and kind of keynotey things I love to be standing on a stage, talking to people. And I, for many years, didn't tell a massive part of my story. I just didn't talk about it at all.

[00:16:49] And that was the stuff that I started my life kind of in the acting world and the theater and music and that kind of stuff, because, because I transferred into the professional world into kind of corporate [00:17:00] world, I thought that story wasn't relevant. And it's really interesting now because when I tell people that, and now they go oh, now I get you! That was the bit of the jigsaw that I didn't understand about you, Beth. And I'm like, oh, I deliberately for like 15 years didn't say anything about that

[00:17:19] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:17:19] I think that's ... I think what's happened is. I don't know if this is true, but it feels like, sort of brand consultants for want of a better word.

[00:17:27] People have told you, well, you know, you stick to the professional stuff. If you do this out of work, don't talk about that because it's not really relevant. Well, nonsense. It doesn't matter what you've done or what you do out of life. It's all part and parcel of who you are. And this separation between work self, home self is, is not any, you know, stupid it's I think it's dangerous.

[00:17:44] Cause it, and as someone who's been through it and has actually got to the point where the separation caused a snap. It's, it's unhealthy. So actually your, your past and your training and your experiences in the theater are all incredibly [00:18:00] valid. I mean, it's so naive to think that those tools wouldn't be useful in other places.

[00:18:06] I mean, I've, I've, I have worked with, individuals who were previously, professional theater makers, stage managers, performers, and watched them in action. And for all their, all their gorgeous faults. I mean, there's less, it's not, it's not a perfect world. There is a discipline that comes out of working in theater, because there is a date. There is a date when the curtain is going to go up and no matter what you have to hit that date, otherwise it's, it's, it's a ridiculous amount of money, so there's no moving away. And so that's a project. But also everyone knows their role. You might, you know, help a little bit out with other people. We know what we're, we know what we're about.

[00:18:52] We sort of feel comfortable in theater. Everybody has to everybody, but it doesn't, you're not working in isolation. So I think there are, there are certain things from, [00:19:00] you know, a past and I've gone to a theater trip now. That's very easy, isn't it? I think there are certain things about our past and it doesn't matter what, what that is. There's always going to be transferable skill. Or transferable knowledge or behaviors that are relevant to our current story that we tell.

[00:19:20] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:19:20] And, and, and owning that and being able to talk about that, it can be really powerful.

[00:19:25] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:19:25] Ye. And I think, that's, that's where I, I think I've come in is because I help people see the bits that are worth telling or that are interesting to a wider audience quite often with clients if I'm working on the, in the one-to-one space on how to, how to shape your story and how to share your story. It's all about, well, what is the event you're sharing? You're sharing this out or what is the site's website? Is it a website? Is it a blog posts? Is it a video? Is it a conference? Okay. What's the narrative.

[00:19:55] What's the message that you're trying to drive home in this moment. And therefore the parts of your story that are relevant to that message will be the bits that we mine and bring to the fore that, you know, it, the other stuff doesn't disappear, but it's just not as important as those key moments.

[00:20:15] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:20:15] So let's go into that cause I think this is where people get really interested is how I, and it's really hard because obviously if you're working one-to-one with someone you go really deep into understanding their background.

[00:20:25] I'm just wondering, do you have some suggestions for if people are looking at. Having a story that they're ready to tell if people are there wanting to go and do a bit of a presentation or get really good at introducing themselves, which I know loads of people, just that whole, when they get, you know, the dreaded to go around the table, introduce yourselves, what do you actually say?

[00:20:44] And I always ended up saying something stupid and trying to make people laugh. I'm like, why did I do that? But what are some of the tips or techniques you could suggest that will help people understand which bits to pick out?

[00:20:56] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:20:56] Well, the clean up, the bits that I started this podcast is that [00:21:00] I didn't really show don't tell what I didn't do that practice, what you preach.

[00:21:05] No, didn't do that, but if I was working with someone else, I would say that, it's actually incredibly simple and what's, what's fascinating to me is that we. Almost educated ourselves out of storytelling because the place, because the workplace feels like it doesn't, they don't belong there.

[00:21:26] When in fact they are just part and parcel. So, you know, the whole thing about beginning, middle, and end, they are, they are in a, in a good story, a story that sort of is compelling and draws us in each one of those has a specific function. So a beginning is generally about context setting and about background, but also about perhaps, I was going to say unrequited love, but no, an unfulfilled desire, [00:22:00] something that's missing, uh, a challenge or something that was a lack.

[00:22:04] We want to create a gap in that moment. So that the middle of the story where we talk about, getting through the journey, the struggle, the challenge, uh, through this moment, , we can sort of talk about how we try to bridge the gap that was created by that lack. And then the end of the story is all about the resolution.

[00:22:23] Where are you now? How far have you come? Was it indeed that the gap you thought it was, or was it something else? So if you were going to introduce yourself, you might talk about, I always thought I wanted to be an actor. My struggle was I wasn't very good at acting but actually my end result is I took some of those skills and use them in a different way.

[00:22:43] I took the thing, the things that theater gave me, which was a really strong understanding of how stories work and how they're shared with an audience, an audience of, you know, potentially thousands and how you can distill that through, [00:23:00] presence through structure. Through, the sort of art of finding the right details and I've applied that to a world.

[00:23:10] So it's very simple, you know, beginning, middle end challenge, struggle resolution. But what I'm doing is, uh, distilling the very kind of key points out but I think the starting, but if you will know which, which key points do, which was your question, wasn't it. Well, which key points to find, or how to find the key points, you need to find that gap to begin.

[00:23:30] Cause if you find that gap or a perceived gap, that's, you know, you can, you can create that, that immediately hooks your audience in and it makes them go, oh, I wonder what's going to happen now. I wonder what happened. I wonder how they got to this point or whether they fulfill that or not.

[00:23:46] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:23:46] I love that.

[00:23:47] And that's really interesting, isn't it? Because I didn't know that that's what you were going to say. I thought you were going to say, find out what the resolution is and, you know, work back from there, but actually working out what the gap, pause, and then the story around it.

[00:24:00] I can see how that would be more compelling because people love a story of like a struggle or, you know, I think about all films I've ever watched at some kind of struggle in it.

[00:24:09] If you think about, you know, great stories, great books, you're waiting to find out how they're going to overcome this massive challenge or something that you can see coming. So I love that. That's really interesting.

[00:24:21] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:24:21] I think the other thing too, to your point, there it is the how, or it is the why it's very rarely the what that we're looking for in a story.

[00:24:28] Ye. We know, because we've been programmed by Hollywood and Broadway west end theaters, all the rest of it. There's generally this pattern that, that happens. And we, we sort of know where it's all going. It doesn't really matter. So even when it's a twist, we still know that, oh, he's like, there's going to be a twist.

[00:24:45] That's that's a convention. It's a trick. What we're really interested in is, well, why did the twist happen? Or why did, why did the person, uh, end up where they ended up on how, what was the journey to get there? They, you know, to talk about it. Don't, don't, don't, don't worry about who [00:25:00] done it. We are interested in who done it.

[00:25:02] We're interested in why done it or how done it. Those are far more compelling reasons in this day and age, because we're so used to this pattern of stories and story telling.

[00:25:12] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:25:12] Okay. So we need to think more like a Hollywood director of her own story.

[00:25:16] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:25:16] Ye, I think so. Or you don't have to be Hollywood. It can be independent if that's your, if that floats your boat. I don't think, I don't think I would, as much as I

love him. I don't think everybody else should communicate like David Lynch. I think it might be a bit kind of difficult.

[00:25:36] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:25:36] That much joy that to be hard. But, but it, I mean, it just, while I talk about joy for a minute, because a little while ago you mentioned, oh, we're going down the nego path slightly around what happens in our brains.

[00:25:47] And one thing I'm really keen that we don't gloss over when we're talking about work joy is that to be able to have work joy, that will be the other end. There will be work gloom. We are not in the zone of trying to get rid of that stuff because sometimes you need [00:26:00] to feel that stuff to really feel the joy.

[00:26:03] It's about understanding what that is and being able to maybe manage it a bit better or to just know that that's what's happening. So when I know that my brain is overreacting about stuff and filling in the gaps and being dramatic, what's my coping mechanism. What are the things that I'm going to do and act on to make sure it doesn't go down a massive spiral of decline, but that doesn't mean I don't feel it, or I don't feel the work gloom.

[00:26:26] It just means then what do I do to almost get myself back to neutral so I can then work on feelings and joy.

[00:26:32] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:26:32] Well, if you think about some of the advice from, you know, Dr. Steve Peters, or even the stuff around Brene Brown, which we're talking about, uh, Brene Brown is talking about vulnerability, making yourself vulnerable actually as a superpower.

But you know, Steve Peters talks about, the idea of talking out to, to, , for the, you know, the, the Chimp paradox to really keep, keep talking it out, to exhaust the Chimp until you get to a point where. Actually, I don't [00:27:00] need to talk about this anymore. And actually, if you're telling a story whilst you're doing the, I believe, oh, I found for personally, it's much more powerful because you're sharing this journey and you re you recognize the highs and lows, and you're not glossing over one of the things I always talk to when I'm talking to clients about presentations, for example, or pitches.

[00:27:20] They always leave out the conflict. They always leave out this. They always leave out the, the meat of the story. Cause they don't want to admit that, anything's wrong or has been wrong or it's been difficult to achieve certain things. They want to make it look all, you know, wonderful and easy. And I'm like, well, that's not interesting, it's more interesting to a potential client say you were pitching for some work. It's more interesting. To know that you have overcome barriers and difficulty and that you did it successfully rather than to just gloss over and go, yeah, everything was brilliant. We're a fantastic organization. Or I'm a fantastic individual that, that conflict is the heart of story.

[00:27:55] It's what moves things forward. So if we ignore that in ourselves, of course, [00:28:00] we're going to get into work gloom because we're sort of in this cycle. But if you acknowledge, I believe if you acknowledge the difficulty, if you acknowledge the conflict. You can start to do something about it.

[00:28:12] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:28:12] Yeah, I totally agree.

[00:28:14] And that thing, I also, if you are in that situation where you are pitching or doing something, and it seems like everything was shiny, I think as a customer of that pitch. I'd be saying the thing you are, they're a bit lightweight. They understand the complexities of our organization or the challenge of working with all these different stakeholders.

[00:28:31] So it could actually be a negative against you versus the positive of seeing how you would overcome some of these things. So I totally get that.

[00:28:38] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:28:38] It's the trusting as well. I think it's a trust thing. I think I, you know, I don't trust someone. Who's perfect. I don't trust an event that's perfect.

[00:28:47] You know, I like, I like to know a bit of vulnerability. I like to know that right. There's something, something behind it. And I think if something is, I, I have to talk about it that nobody likes a lottery winner. Cause they got it too [00:29:00] easy. We don't, we want, we want our millionaire/rich people to have grafted to have earned it.

[00:29:11] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:29:11] This is really interesting because it's one of the things that I was thinking about when creating the Work Joy Jam podcast is people ask me, oh, do you edit them afterwards? And I say, no, we add on, my introduction in my end. But unless something disastrous happened, like, which has had to happen a couple of times, the whole thing's cut out.

[00:29:29] We've had to redo it and piece two bits together. The conversations come out as they happen, because I believe, and you know, different people have different opinions on this, but I believe that perfection isn't all that interesting. So editing it to its little bit. So I love the fact that we talk over each other occasionally and we laugh and you go back.

[00:29:47] I don't understand the question you just asked me because that's how conversations happen in real life.

[00:29:50] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:29:50] Human beings being humans. Wow. Crikey, what's that got to do with work?

[00:29:59] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:29:59] I do think, and we're going to go off a totally different level and I will bring us back in about two minutes, but let me go here first.

[00:30:05] Okay. Is the shiny world of social media, often pitches this like kind of perfect view of life as in "aw look, what I've achieved, what I've done" but you only ever see the end of the story on social media. You don't see the hours and hours of hard graft that go into it but I think it convinces us all that everyone else has got it easy and we're the only ones struggling.

[00:30:26] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:30:26], I know. It's so one of our, clients who's who we helped, you know, like their website and do their social media, he's a personal trainer. He, he was my personal trainer. It's not, they didn't do a very good job. I wasn't very good at being trained, just so just, just to, I'm not the, I'm not the chiseled specimen or anything like that. But, he revealed to me a secret about himself that [00:31:00] he's only just recently put on social media. He was trying to do everything perfect on his social media. And we were trying to encourage him to tell more of his story. And one of his, a big part of his story was he's an ex offender.

[00:31:10] He did something very stupid when he was young and he went away for a very short amount of time, went to prison, but has reformed has gone now, studying for his PhD. He's a, you know, a brilliant, trainer he know into food nutrition and has made a real success in his life. And it just, he has finally put that out there.

[00:31:30] And that's the post that everyone is talking about, that everyone is focused on their, like how brave of you to do that. I'm so glad you shared that. This is exactly what, you know, the system should be doing. It should be reforming people and helping them to move forward if he'd have chosen to try and be perfect all the time.

[00:31:47] And hide that, you know he would, he would constantly be feeling, oh, someone's going to find out about this. Someone's going to find it city several clicks away. It's only information instead he's used in. So, no, this is [00:32:00] part of my whole story. This is actually the, this is the conflict of my story. I could have had a very, very different path, but I didn't.

[00:32:09] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:32:09] And like I'm already intrigued and fascinated and want to find out more about them. Like I want to go and find out because that's such, sorry to say, cause it's like, it sounds like I'm being super cheesy, but it's a great story.

[00:32:20] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:32:20] It is. And it's what, what, why it's a good story as well is because it has, it has a happy ending.

[00:32:27] It has an ending where the individual recognize something about themselves and to try it. And he really tried to battle through it. And you know, he went through difficulties and it has come out the other end, but it wasn't easy. It was difficult, but he, he is now not shying away from. That's, you know, that's, that's hide that part of myself.

[00:32:48] It's like you with your theater. You're not hiding it anymore. You're telling, you're sharing it with us.

[00:32:53] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:32:53] I know and now when I say that, I'm like, why on earth? Wouldn't I have talked about that! I'm still, I'm still, and, and, and what's interesting. 20 years into my career now in a more, well, not corporate now, but I do work with a lot of corporates.

I now looking at it in reverse understand how important that part of my story is for what I do now. So like, hello, when I stand on a stage in front of 2000 people in present to them, uh, did the 15 years at drama school helped me to do that. Well, duh, maybe.

[00:33:33] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:33:33] You were at drama school for 15 years?

[00:33:37] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:33:37] I know. I'm still not that good. [00:33:45] Ye. Well, uh, and I think these are the things is sometimes we don't understand our story or the impact of it until we really take some time to look at it and to understand that. And one of the things that I talk about now is like, what are your superpowers? And where did they come from? [00:34:00] I say it to some people, sometimes I share it.

[00:34:02] I think one of my super powers is that when I'm on it, when I'm on the stage or when I'm in front of a group of people, I can do what I call thinking and talking at the same time. And when

you're a facilitator, that's a really useful skill to have, but I didn't develop it in anywhere of my corporate roles.

[00:34:19] I developed that from when I started off, when I was like five years old. Learning scripts and learning to improvise and all of those things that you have to do when you do drama things, but you would never say to a corporate person who works in L and D as a trainer or facilitator, what you need to go is to go and do some really basic drama school lessons, although it would be massively helpful,

[00:34:43] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:34:43] It would, it would. [00:34:44] I think it, I think it would be helpful for anyone to be honest with you. So it's, you know, improv in particular, I'm a big fan of, I, I took. Uh, improv lessons. Not, not that long ago. I decided that I needed, I went through a bit of a, crisis of confidence in terms of just standing up in front of people, [00:35:00] that sort of stuff, and sort of about six, seven years ago and went and did an eight week 10 week improv course. And it was the most liberating thing. And nobody there wants to be an improv performer. They were all doing it to boost their confidence or improve their presentation skills. And I was like, this is it. It's really, really helpful.

[00:35:18] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:35:18] I love that. I would totally go and do something like that.

[00:35:20] It'd be amazing. Just bringing it back to another point, which I had written down and circled before. Cause you mentioned it around vulnerability. And I think the example of the person you're working with that your client is an amazing version of how do you get vulnerable and how that really helps people connect with your story.

[00:35:37] And I too am a big fan of kind of Brene's work on vulnerability and how it's something that we really admire when we see it in other people. And we're really hooked and, love it. But when we think about it for ourselves, we see it as a weakness. And it's one of those, I think we've got some stuff wrong in our brains about that.

[00:35:54] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:35:54]. I do agree. I think, I think, [00:36:00] It's shame, isn't it, it comes back to the stuff around shame is that, you know, we, that the stuff that we perceive as shameful, other people just go, it, it isn't, it's something you've lived through. It's something you had to struggle with. And so I think there's a, there's a shame.

[00:36:19] There's also relevance. I mean, I do kind of take the point that, you know, you know, it's not gonna be the first thing you blurt out. Oh ye. You know, my son, my name is Simon. I was abused at You know, something, something terrible like that. It's, it's not the first thing you want to mention, but what, what, what I think I would encourage people is to.

[00:36:37] How do you use those, moments of vulnerability to make you not pay a more rounded, just be more rounded, you know, to, to be more human.

[00:36:48] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:36:48] And that's it, isn't it. It's all about if you come back to it, it's basically how do people connect? How do humans connect with other humans and take it right back to that?

[00:36:59] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:36:59] I think that's, it is absolutely how do we connect to other humans? And we do that through. Either sharing stories or kind of emitting stories often talk about the fact that, uh, stories being told, whether you are telling it or not. So if you, if you turn up somewhere, stand on the stage, and you've got a slide behind you that is data, data, data and you've got a monotone voice and, you know, you're just reading off facts.

[00:37:27] Well, your audience is telling a story. They're telling a story about your performance, but they're also telling a story about your facts because you're leaving them out there without actually shaping them or sharing them in a way that engages and also drive someone towards a specific, answer. So stories are the people's brains are being, this is always been a story is always, always being told is whether you are telling it as the person speaking or whether the listener is telling you.

[00:37:55] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:37:55] think, so it says a whole podcast just on that. You've just blown my [00:38:00] mind slightly,

[00:38:00] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:38:00] But again, that that's why for businesses, if they don't well, their brand story or their employer brand story effectively, then, you know, the competition will, as you think about, , when someone has a choice of going to work somewhere.

[00:38:18] They're not just looking about always this job, right. It's about the story that's being told about that organization. So yeah, they can go on. What's that website. You go on to, to look at... Glassdoor! That said you can look on Glassdoor, but you can read through all those reviews. They are part of the components that will tell a story about that organization, but also the, the website will tell the story. The branding will tell the story. The section on diversity inclusion will tell a story it's all there. And so if the employer isn't shaping that story effectively and going, this is what we are as an employer, and this is how we stand and this is how that reacts and impacts our employees. And [00:39:00] it's all sort of, we're all singing from the same hymn sheet. You know what I mean? If, if the employer, if, if. So in the, in the work I've done around employer branding and storytelling and employer, brand employer, brand storytelling, some people will just want to tell the story straight away.

[00:39:20] We've got this story. We want to know how to tell it. And you scratch the surface and you find that actually they haven't done any of the work with their employees to understand is that actually the story of the brand story of the organization, because the employee's experience is very different. And then you get this kind of conflict between the story that's being told by the organization that this very glossy lovely brand. And then on Glassdoor, you know, 10 negative reviews because management were horrible. It's all got to be holistic. I don't know why I got onto that subject.

[00:39:54] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:39:54] I think I couldn't ask the question because my mind would just totally blown by the, [00:40:00] your, either telling the story or someone is making up the story in their head because you haven't told it in the right way.

It was just a, it's just a really interesting thing is if you don't tell your story, someone will fill in the blanks. So it's surely it's better that you narrate your own story in the right way, then someone else to fill in the blanks about you.

[00:40:19] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:40:19] Yeah, absolutely.

[00:40:22] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:40:22] Oh, love it. Love it. Just a couple of thoughts, again, just reflecting back on some of the things you talked about.

[00:40:29] I think loads of people around the vulnerability factor will totally feel that. So I know I felt it. And also I love the fact that you talked about as a professional storyteller, as somebody who has worked in this world, but you had a crisis of confidence and didn't feel like you could go and do it. And I love that your able to be open and vulnerable about that, because I think people always asse that because you do this kind of job or because I do the kind of job I do, we don't feel that stuff sometimes.

[00:40:54] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:40:54] Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I, it wasn't, it wasn't as bad as I say it was seven or eight years ago now I just didn't want to be in front of large groups of people. I was quite happy in a small workshop setting and then I did this improv thing, which again was I said was, was quite helpful because it kind of freed me up to go, oh, hold on. We're all just making up all the time. It doesn't matter. Don't get so... about it all.... and then I kind of reeducated myself and, and reeducated my brain and retrained my brain to tell a different story, to think about things about that the story I've been telling myself about that number, you know, or groups of 15, not above that. I don't want to do that. That was a story that I hooked into and started to believe. So, I rewrote that story and started going well, actually, what are the, what's the positive side of talking to larger groups of people.

[00:41:43] Well, if there's a room full of 500 people, social convention generally means they're not going to shout at you, or question, so you can just say anything. And all of a sudden they sort of unlocked something. I don't remember being at an event. I think it was, at the Guildhall and there were, there were, uh, you know, hundreds of people there and everyone was all the speakers running, you know, being very, very nervous.

[00:42:06] And I just sort of sat again. Ye. All right. Why, why do you look so Zen and calm? Because there's nothing I can do about it now I can either leave, leave and not go on stage, or I can go on stage and talk and just be fine with the fact that that's, that's the number of people, but that was all about me rewriting that story definitely.

[00:42:25] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:42:25] And it it's that thing I think is really important. It's like the stories, it's the stories we tell ourselves again, isn't it. It's like, what is the internal narrative and how is that influencing what you do or how you feel, and is that what you want it to continue to do? Because if you don't, you have to take some action with it.

[00:42:42] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:42:42] Yeah, absolutely. I agree.

[00:42:49] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:42:49] I thought you're going to come up with some amazing points.

[00:42:53] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:42:53] It's interesting to me, cause this, this subject is obviously my world and it's what, what I do, but I, cause you [00:43:00] it's because you use the word narrative and I was like, oh, that reminds me about the fact that we've got these terms, narrative story, and storytelling, and we use them interchangeably and I'm like, I'm not sure they're the same thing you know, I don't think they are the same thing. And in fact, I would encourage people to think of them

differently. So I think where you use narrative then was, was right it was about the narrative. Is that sort of overarching story in your head, the shape of the story, the destination of the story, and you had that sort of puts you on a trajectory. The story is the shape of it. It's the structure. It's the way we actually shape our communications and the way we connect to people.

[00:43:36] And then storytelling is the, how it's the, it's the, it's the language we use. It's the physicality, it's the, it's the way we, engage an audience. And those three things are becoming blurred. So I've been, you know, I hear a lot of people talk about those three things. And then, and then calling something that isn't storytelling, storytelling, quite often, it just infuriates me because you go, no, no, storytelling isn't for every occasion storytelling isn't for for every occasion, the fire in the building. No. Don't want to know any story about it or about it's personal history and relationship? No, I don't want to get on some metaphorical thick note, just exits and out. That's it. So it's not it isn't for every occasion, but I do think that that language is important.

[00:44:21] We are, we are in danger of, in business of thinking that storytelling is a fad or a stories or a fad, or indeed narrative is a fad because, cause we are calling things a story when it's not, you know what I'm saying? Let's talk about the narratives. When those things are actually narratives and we're using everything, it was great storytelling again.

[00:44:42] Well, it wasn't really, it was just two dots on a screen. I don't, I think it was great storytelling from the audience because they made the story in their brain. But actually you could have worked harder on that and really made it great story time, for example. So I just, I'm, I'm a big passionate believer that we should start thinking [00:45:00] about these things slightly different and being careful around our language.

[00:45:07] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:45:07] Because I made you basically one of these. Interested in is how things change based on what we label them. And I think labels are really interesting and I love the way that you just broke that down for me, because I'm going to really think about that, around what's the narrative, what's the story and what's story telling - because I agree I think a lot of people use it interchangeably and I also hear a lot of the. "Oh, we're talking about stories again" but actually we might not be it. Storytelling might be the way we get the message across, but we're not talking about storytelling. We're talking about business strategy or we're not talking about storytelling, we're talking about our plans.

[00:45:43] So there are that, that for me has been really super helpful. And on that point, I think due to timing. Although I, we could obviously continue this conversation forever. I'm not sure if one would want to listen to her forever and we put people continuous conversation afterwards, and I would just love if it's okay with [00:46:00] you to move you to some fire questions, if you're up for it.

[00:46:04] Okay. Are you ready? Not really. The story I'm telling myself now is the story I'm telling you is? Yes. Yes. Correct. Don't worry. They're not too complicated. Okay. Okay. First question is for you personally, what is always guaranteed to bring you a little bit of work joy?

[00:46:26] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:46:26] I think it has to be surprising and delighting, someone I work with a client.

[00:46:35] So if, if they come with an expectation, for example, I run an event and they're kind of, oh, you know, it wants to be like that. And then I do something really extra and they go, oh, that was amazing. If they're pleased and delighted by it, that really brings me joy. So some lighting, somebody else's eyes up.

[00:46:52] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:46:52] Love that. And I can tell you that you've, you've actually made that happen for me. So I'll give you a little story here. So, so [00:47:00] those are, you don't know. And in fact, why would anyone know, although you alluded to at the beginning of the podcast is Simon is the amazing producer of the Work Joy Jam and composed the little ditty. But that for me, I was so excited to have a newly composed, hopefully special, really joyful theme for the Work Joy Jam. And so you've definitely given me that. So hopefully that gives you a little bit of work joy back again. And loads of people, comments on it as well, because it is really joyful that little bit of music. Thank you for that and amazing composition skills. You see, that's something you haven't even talked about, your composer as well. We haven't got time to talk. We haven't got time for that.

[00:47:52] We'll do that another day. Okay. Cool. Question two, what book are you currently reading?

[00:47:57] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:47:57], I've normally got about three on the go. [00:48:00] So, I've just, I've just finished a book called Anything Goes, which is a history of the musical on Broadway and it's, but it's actually the history of the musical full stop. It starts back in the seventeen hundreds talking about, uh, oh gosh, what's it called? Oh, I forgot it. So I've just, I've just been, but the book I'm reading now is a novel. It's called, The Swan to Fifth Avenue by Melanie Benjamin. And it's about the group of women, and it's actually the second book I read on this subject in the last year, and a half maybe. The other one was called Swan Song. It's about a group of women that surrounded Truman Capote in the 1950s and sixties and, and into the seventies and how he kind of betrayed them all. I'm fascinated by the subject. It's really the first book I [00:49:00] read it was called Swan Song. I can't remember who wrote that. I'm so, so sorry so I'm reading another one to see if this is the same story, but different, a different take.

[00:49:07] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:49:07] Amazing. It sounds really interesting. You know, obviously as a fellow theatre nerd, I don't know Anything Goes, I could totally....

Question three. What in your life have you had like a really great bit of advice that someone has given you that you always find yourself coming back to?

[00:49:28] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:49:28] This is easy, cause it's a bit, it's a piece of advice I pass on all the time, all the time to other people and it sounds awful. But it's not meant to sound awful.

[00:49:37] And the, a piece of advice is, is, Care Less, uh, which is, uh, you know, and it it's difficult to do because we, you know, we, we put, we put these stakes in the ground and we build things up to be far, far more serious than they are. Care less about that thing. Care more about something that's more important and care less is [00:50:00] often to speakers or people who are trying to structure a story.

[00:50:04] And they're sort of saying, we know I get very nervous in front of a crowd. I said it was because you're, you're worrying too much about your performance care, less about that care, less about this thing and, and, you know, care more about, getting your story across. So, yeah Care Less.

[00:50:19] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:50:19] Love that

[00:50:23] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:50:23] It's not, it's not meant to be, it's meant to be really, really positive. And I found it incredibly positive, which is the kind of like, oh, why are you worrying about that care less about.

[00:50:34] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:50:34] Care less, less care, less about the stuff that isn't important stuff that won't actually really make a difference.

[00:50:39] All the stuff that's worrying you, but it's just the story in your head. And final, quick fire questions for me is what's better, really super practical, easy to do advice could you give to our listeners that could help them today, tomorrow the next day, get a bit more work joy in their lives.

[00:51:01] [00:51:00] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:51:01] I think it is don't ignore the stories, don't ignore the story that is, I'm going to edit this bit, you know..

[00:51:18] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:51:18] Don't, because we don't edit

[00:51:20] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:51:20] What I'm trying to say is don't ignore the stories around you and, within, I know we talked a little bit about how do you reconcile sometimes if you're, if you're hearing a story, but you know, it might not be the, it might not be a true story that you're hearing or true story that you're seeing in front of you, but, don't, don't ignore them, pay attention to them and question them, approach a story as a, as a kind of, something to be curious about quite often, as I, as I said, no, I'm changing my mind now.

[00:51:58] I'm not really expanding upon it [00:52:00] quite often is kind of related to the care. Last thing is if we don't have enough information about something, we ask our brain, our storytelling brain we'll make something up. We'll try and close that open-ended loop in our brain to go. I must make sense. This, I must create order of this.

[00:52:15] If you recognize that if you recognize that's what your storytelling. Is doing so recognize when your brain is telling you a story about what's going on around you and your brain is telling your story about what the stories you're telling yourself that is incredibly powerful, because otherwise you can slip into the gloom by making rubbish up and telling a disaster story.

[00:52:35] When actually there's no story to tell at all. Cause no, one's really thinking about, you know, that the situation you're in, you're probably just placing a lot of on that yourself. That was a very rambling way of saying something quite simple.

[00:52:49] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:52:49] It's actually a really simple thing. I think it's really hard to do.

[00:52:54] I think it's one of those that it is simple yet difficult. So it's just really learning [00:53:00] to recognize that within yourself and to stop and challenge and think about it. It also totally relates to something. I talk to a lot of people about when I'm coaching people, is this idea that you're still worrying about this for the other person in that situation so you think maybe even thought about it?

Since that situation and I reckon 80 to 90% of the time people go, well, no, they probably have it. It's like, okay. So why are we still worrying? It probably fits in with your care less thing. Why am I so worrying about this?

[00:53:29] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:53:29] I agree with that completely. And I think the thing for me is that knowing how your brain works with story and understanding. The brains relationships, relationship to stories and storytelling as techniques and methods within our brain can help us do that because as soon as we recognize that, oh, this thing in my brain is an incredibly powerful storyteller.

[00:53:51] It's making all this stuff up. As soon as we recognize that we can go, okay, that's just the storyteller. You know, see Peters is just the Chimp. This is just the storyteller going, [00:54:00] trying to make these connections where they are.

[00:54:03] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:54:03] Love it. Thank you so much, Simon. Thank you for being a guest and obviously being a wonderful producer. Where can people find out more about you and your work and how to get in touch?

[00:54:16] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:54:16] So I, I said at the beginning of the podcast that I started, the company Growing People 10 years ago that company no longer exists. It's now called, I should probably tell you that, we are called, Iambic Creative and you can find us at Iambic.Agency online and on most of the usual social places.

[00:54:38] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:54:38] Brilliant. And I love it cause I am back because it just makes me think of Iambic Pentameter – which is a poetry type isn't it. But it's just a wonderful thing to say.

[00:54:49] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:54:49] An Iamb is a meter of time. So a da dum da dum and Iambic pentameter is five of those meters. Yes.

[00:55:00] [00:54:59] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:54:59] See we've totally just nerded out at the end of the podcast. Thank you, Simon. It's been wonderful to talk to you. You give me lots of work joy and having the conversation great to be here.

[00:55:11] **Simon Arrowsmith:** [00:55:11] Great to be here. Thanks for having me on.

[00:55:14] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:55:14] Thank you all for listening to that episode with Simon and thank you to Simon for being one of my wonderful guests.

[00:55:20] And as we said that for being the person who makes the podcast really work through his amazing production and composition, there are so many things I could take away and talk about in some of the conversation, but a couple of things that really stood out for me. Was the first one with actually pretty defining the difference between a narrative, a story and stories having.

[00:55:45] And that's really helped me in my head when I'm thinking about helping organizations and how they communicate things. When I'm thinking about. Things myself when I'm doing presentations or keynotes or whatever it is. So I'm really loving the idea that the [00:56:00] narrative is this overarching story. The story itself is the shape.

[00:56:04] It's the structure and the storytelling. That is how we tell that story, how we engage the audience with it. And that structure in my mind has really helped. I always say love the idea that humans love the struggle. They love the conflict. And how do we talk about that more? Because I don't know about you, but I'm one of these people who I tend to brush over those things and work to the solution or where we've got to all the positive stuff.

[00:56:30] And actually the conflict is often where the real magic has. So being a bit more open. To that, and this idea that the more vulnerable we get more open, we are the easier it is for our audiences to engage with us. I really hope you enjoyed this episode of the Work Joy Jam with Simon Arrowsmith, I know I really enjoyed recording it for you.

[00:56:51] If you do want to find more about Simon. Ye. His links are going to be in the show notes and in the bottom of our social media posts. So you click on those to find out more about Simon and [00:57:00] his work at Imabic. If you want to find out more about create work joy, head over to our website, www.createworkjoy.com where you can find out more about what we do and our programs like my Work Joy Way, 16 week coaching program, enabling the people who come on it to really deeply create and cultivate some more joy in their work.

[00:57:23] And also Club Work Joy a growing community of people who really want to do the same things about joy and getting that in their working lives too. That one's coming soon, but go and have a look and sign up to the waiting list. Thank you all for listening. I hope you enjoyed it. Do you go and have a listen to some of the other podcasts and follow us on social media at create work joy, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Thank you. [00:58:00]