

## Better Communicator Series #1: Using Storytelling

Let's face it – many times, our presentations even bore ourselves! Whether leading a meeting, presenting information to a committee, or worst of all, the weekly sermon, how often do you get the sinking feeling you audience is sinking right before your eyes – figuratively, if not literally?

Communication to individuals, to teams, and to large groups is one of the core foundations of the leader's skill set. And yet, most leaders feel inadequate at times, feeling they are just not connecting.

On top of that, our media-saturated society has an attention span that is growing smaller and smaller, making it difficult to connect, much less persuade, our audience.

Intuitively, as a leader, you know that connecting in person can yield powerful outcomes. Many times it isn't until you speak to people in person – with one or one hundred or one thousand – that you can establish a visceral connection that motivates them to adopt your idea.

### Use Storytelling – connect you with your audience

#### THE QUICK SUMMARY

*What's your story?* It's a question human beings have been asking each other since we first gathered around a campfire. Millennia later, this human need for storytelling hasn't changed. We communicate most effectively through our personal stories?and our professional success depends on it.

This groundbreaking guide shows you how to tap into the timeless power of storytelling to transform your business.

You'll learn the proven three-step method Murray's firm, Narativ, uses with its clients, ranging from Fortune 500 companies to nonprofits. First, you excavate your personal memories and experiences to generate story ideas that suit your particular needs. Second, you craft and shape these elements into a classic story structure that really connects with audiences. Third, you present your story to your business audience using simple performance techniques that anyone can master. A fundamental element of this method is a focus on listening: the ability to hear yourself, as well as the feedback provided by a given audience?because it is your audience's listening that shapes your telling.

Everyone needs to communicate well to succeed in business. And everyone has a story to tell. *Powered by Storytelling* shows you how to tell your story, connect with your audience, and achieve results.

#### A SIMPLE SOLUTION

The human race traces its earliest forms of communication to an oral tradition – stories. Can

you picture groups of people around a fire, communicating simple but important lessons to each other? Before writing developed, the passing of stories from one generation to the next was the only way to convey information.

Over time, the stories became much more than just information needed for life. We innately realized that information is static, but stories are dynamic. Stories can help your audience visualize what you do or what you believe.

As noted communication expert Nancy Duarte says,

*Stories link one person's heart to another. Values, beliefs, and norms become intertwined. When this happens, your idea can more readily manifest as reality in their minds.*

Stories are the most powerful delivery tool for information – more powerful and enduring than any other art form.

*The effectiveness of your communication is commensurate with the depth of your connection. And nothing makes that connection better than the story you tell.*

The seven basic principles of the Narativ storytelling method form the process of excavating, crafting, and presenting your story.

**Humans are hardwired for story.** We used stories to teach one another how to live. And where we shared these stories, community was formed.

**Everyone has a story.** Whether you think your story is not important or urgent enough, I can tell you without hesitation that something has happened in your life that would make a great story.

**Everyone can learn to tell his or her story better.** By performing your stories, your storytelling abilities will improve with time and practice.

**Everyone's story will evolve.** A good story evolves naturally, reflecting the reciprocal, mutually influential relationship of listening and telling.

**Storytelling is every person's access to creativity.** Storytelling is the most democratic form of creativity because every human being has access to it.

**There is a reciprocal relationship between listening and telling.** We often think that storytelling is mainly about presentation skills, but these skills are only one part of it. Listening is of equal if not greater importance.

Murray Nossel, *Powered by Storytelling*

## A NEXT STEP

The author's Narativ storytelling method creates stories in three phases:

1. **Excavating** – Generating your own story ideas.
2. **Crafting** – Shaping your story elements into a classic story structure.
3. **Presenting** – Performing your story for an audience.

Write the three words above on a flip chart to serve as a guide for the remainder of this exercise – creating a story to use.

Keeping the seven principles of the Narativ storytelling method in mind, reflect on the following questions and comments for the three phases, and jot down words and phrases that come to mind.

### **Excavating**

- In which past event or series of events is your story located?
- Think of, and express ideas, without any concern for their value, feasibility, or significance. Give free rein to your creative brain.

### **Crafting**

- Bring the power of critical thinking to bear, honing in on the ideas listed above.
- Shape the ideas into the classic story structure of beginning, ending, and an emotional turning point in between.
- Ask the question, "What happened?" to continue to shape your story and uncover new parts to it.

### **Presenting**

- Learn to tell your story without referring to notes or visuals.
- Know your ending, giving you confidence in where your story is going.
- Engage your whole being in the telling of the story.

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