

Want to Increase Your Presence? Start by Telling One of These Stories

Leading business schools, from Stanford to Wharton, teach storytelling as a business communication strategy. The ability to tell an engaging, compelling, and persuasive story is a hallmark of effective leadership and executive presence.

Stories are a powerful way for leaders to engage customers, increase sales, rally the troops, sell ideas internally and externally, recruit talented staff, and share the key messages about you and your company that you want both your internal and external stakeholders to hear.

A good story isn't just entertaining -- it's scientifically proven to be more effective in helping people remember critical information. According to marketing professor Jennifer Aaker at Stanford's Graduate School of Business, stories are remembered up to 22 times more than facts alone.

In other words, if you have a message that you want people to remember, wrap it in a story. In Chip and Dan Heath's book *The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences have Extraordinary Impact*, the authors write that "we remember the peaks, the pits and the transitions". They also describe a defining moment as "a short experience that is both memorable and meaningful."

They reference the level of:

- **Elevation:** moments that rise above the everyday.
- **Insight:** moments that rewire our understanding of ourselves or the world or create significant confusion.
- **Pride:** moments that capture us at our best, like achievement or courage.
- **Connection:** moments that are social; strengthened because we share them with others.

Despite the focus on elevation, defining moments aren't always when we are at the top of our games. Many of our most memorable moments occur when we've struggled, felt like we weren't enough, wrestled with a challenge, overcame an obstacle, or had a major setback -- personally or professionally.

Leaders can invigorate the impression they make, increase the impact they have, and intensify their influence on others by mastering the art and science of telling the right story at the right time.

Here are 20 peaks, pits, transitions and more to get you started on your storytelling journey:

1. A conversation that changed my life.
2. How I got to be where I am/who I am now.
3. How our company was founded.
4. What we stand for as a team or company (and what we won't stand for, either).

5. The best/worst team I've been a part of.
6. The biggest lesson I've learned about myself (perhaps the hard way).
7. Where I've struggled, or a challenge I overcame.
8. How I came to understand my core values.
9. A time when I lost confidence in myself.
10. Who we are here to serve -- and why.
11. How the competition is nipping at our heels.
12. What I learned from a jerk in my life -- and what I have to thank them for.
13. A skeptical customer we won over.
14. A team that wrestled, then succeeded.
15. A hard but necessary change I/we made.
16. Our very best work, and how we made that happen.
17. Our biggest misstep and how we recovered.
18. What I'm/we're proudest of.
19. Who I can always count on, and why.
20. Something that never should have worked--but did.