



## TIPS &amp; TECHNIQUES

## Storytelling: The Larry Chair

Storytelling is a highly efficient form of information sharing because it communicates data, contextual rules, and subtleties of behavior that may be difficult to state explicitly. For example, instead of simply having a rule for the hostess of a restaurant to “seat obese people in the special chairs,” employees of the Olive Tree restaurant chain are introduced to proper rules and etiquette through the story of the Larry chair. As the story goes, some time ago Larry, a rather rotund patron of one of the restaurants, complained to management that the chairs, all of which had arms, were too confining. As a result of the complaint, senior management decided that every restaurant in the chain would be equipped with at least two chairs without armrests to accommodate heavier patrons. When girth-challenged patrons enter one of the Olive Tree restaurants, they are discreetly directed to a table with one or more of the special chairs—affectionately referred to as the “Larry chairs.”

By relating the story to new employees, management creates a memorable set of expectations. The wait staff understands the purpose of the chairs as well as the need for discretion and the importance of proactively doing whatever it takes to make patrons feel like valued guests.

- *Storytelling.* Otherwise known as the case-based method of teaching, storytelling is a way of communicating corporate values and other implicit forms of knowledge.
- *Training and development.* The traditional method of dispersing explicit knowledge. However, in Knowledge Management, training and development normally involves internal experts from different disciplines, as opposed to professional trainers.