

Activity: Know When to Use Data and Stories

“Stories are just data with soul.” - Dr. Brene Brown

- If your listener is already bought in, either a story or data will work.
- If your listener is clearly a hard “no”, neither a story nor data will work.
- If your listener is in the “moveable middle”, tell a story.

So, what is your story about? It’s about an **insight**, which Author Gary Klein defines as “*an unexpected shift in the way we understand things.*”

For example:

1. We thought _____, but discovered _____ to be true instead.
2. We believed _____, but it is actually _____.
3. We assumed _____ was caused by _____, but it was really caused by _____.
4. We tried _____, but it turned out that _____ was a better approach.
5. _____ is how we’ve done it until now, but we’re going to need to do _____ moving forward.

“The “story zone” is for hard insights that have high potential value for your listeners, the team, the company or the industry.” Brent Dykes, *Effective Data Storytelling: How to drive change with data, narrative and visuals*

An easy insight is something that’s intuitive, expected, safe, or simple. A hard insight is:

- **Unpleasant:** “Our current way of converting prospects into customers isn’t working.”
- **Disruptive:** “We need to eliminate some old beliefs and habits.”
- **Unexpected:** “Nothing indicated this communication problem would ever occur.”
- **Complex:** “Our new marketing approach has 10 different tactics.”
- **Risky:** “We could lose headcount if we can’t fix this problem.”
- **Costly:** “This workaround solution will cost \$25 million.”
- **Counterintuitive:** “Losing our biggest client was actually good for us.”

If you have any of these hard, high value insights, tell a compelling story about the data. Your listeners will thank you for it, and so will your company!