# Proposition 91 Storytelling

**In a Word** Storytelling is the use of stories or narratives as a communication tool to value, share, and capitalize on the knowledge of individuals.



#### Definition

Storytelling is the vivid description of ideas, beliefs, personal experiences, and life-lessons through stories or narratives that evoke powerful emotions and insights.

# **Advantages**

Storytelling has advantages over the communication techniques commonly used in organizations, be they electronic mail, reports, or formal speeches. First, it enables articulation of emotional aspects as well as factual content, allowing expression of tacit knowledge (that is always difficult to convey). Second, by providing the broader context in which knowledge arises, it increases the potential for meaningful knowledge-sharing. Third, by grounding facts in a narrative structure, it augments the likelihood that learning will take place and be passed on. Purposeful storytelling

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can deliver results that conventional, abstract modes of communications such as those mentioned earlier cannot. Anyone can use it and become better at using it to reach many rapidly.

## **Communicating Naturally**

The age-old practice of storytelling is one of the most effective tools that people can use. Storytellers communicate naturally: analysis might excite the mind but it does not offer an easy route to the heart, which is where one must go to motivate people. Working with stories is one of the best ways to

- Communicate complex messages simply
- Help connect people and ideas
- Create sense, coherence, and meaning
- Operate effectively in networks
- Develop valuable descriptions of situations in which knowledge is applied and solutions are found
- Examine organizational values and culture
- Give breathing space and allow different perspectives to emerge
- Inspire imagination and motivate action
- Drive change

Table. Storytelling template for use in workshops

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### **Applications**

Storytelling is used to identify and exchange learning episodes, explore values, and inspire people toward the possibility of change, enrich quantitative information with qualitative evidence, make out connections and create common purpose, and improve the effectiveness of strategic decisions.

Potential applications of stories include

- Oral histories
- Team or community-building exercises
- Workshop warm-ups
- Back-to-office reports
- Activity or project reviews
- Monitoring and evaluation systems
- Recreation

### **Elements of a Good Story**

Good stories are generally interesting, unusual, provocative, serious, controversial, surprising, intriguing, or inspiring. They

- Respond to demand.
- Exploit a specific opportunity.
- Include personal and human elements of experience.
- Present the point of view of someone who has been directly involved.
- Use a variety of narrative patterns for different aims.
- Achieve a balance between words from persons and statements from organizations.
- Recount a successful intervention.
- Describe an unsuccessful intervention.
- Provide a solution to both immediate and broader problems.
- Play to what is already in people's minds.
- Target people with the authority to make decisions and change things.

#### Caveats

Storytelling is not suitable for every situation and there may be instances when they are not the right choice. That is when the audience does not want one, when analysis would be better, when the story is not ready, or when a story would be deceptive. In some working contexts, they will also need patience and management backing for a long time.

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