

Title:

Storytelling For High Concept And High Touch

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Summary:

After hearing Daniel Pink speak about his new book A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age for the fourth time, I finally read it cover to cover (less than a day). I finally got what he's talking about when he says jobs that are high touch are here to stay. That is, jobs that builds relationships between business and client whether it's B2B or B2C. To that end, he advocates that we incorporate more storytelling into our relationships, that we m...

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Article Body:

After hearing Daniel Pink speak about his new book A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age for the fourth time, I finally read it cover to cover (less than a day). I finally got what he's talking about when he says jobs that are high touch are here to stay. That is, jobs that builds relationships between business and client whether it's B2B or B2C. To that end, he advocates that we incorporate more storytelling into our relationships, that we make a point with a story, not just facts which everyone knows they need but still find boring. The reason is that stories are easier to remember. He goes on to list some of our contemporary characteristics distinguishing stories from facts:

Facts illuminate.....Stories amuse

Facts reveal.....Stories divert

Facts are for real.....Stories are for cover

With the easy access to facts however, facts have become ubiquitous, available at the speed of light because of the internet and search engines like Google. So each fact becomes less valuable. What becomes more valuable is the ability to place these facts in context and deliver them with emotional impact. Stories exist where high concept and high touch intersect. This need is spawning the

nascent movement called organizational storytelling at World Bank, NASA, even Xerox. It is even being used in branding advertisement on TV.

And as Mark Turner says in his book *The Literary Mind*, "Most of our experience, our knowledge and our thinking are organized as stories".

Why am I telling you? Here's Daniel Pink's answer: "Story is having another important impact on business. Like design, it is becoming a key way for individuals and entrepreneurs to distinguish their goods and services in a crowded marketplace."

So I wanted to share with you a story I heard last week. I like this story for three reasons: 1. it's a story out of Wal-Mart's success. 2. we can each apply it as a mini-self-assessment. 3. it's inspirational. I hope you like it too.

At Wal-Mart, in the beginning, everyone would start as a bagger, bagging the customer's purchases. Employees were monitored on a number of criteria. They were assessed on their attitude toward the job, attitude toward the customers, when they arrived for work, when they left, their enthusiasm for the job, contribution to the company and the company mission, etc. Sam Walton came up with a system for ranking all baggers. You were a 1 bagger, a 2 bagger or a 3 bagger.

The way Wal-Mart stores are designed; being a bagger is a key entry level job. The job of a bagger is to bag purchases for customers on two registers. A bagger is supposed to be able to keep up with two lines. However, there are some baggers who can only keep up with one register line, some who handle two lines and some who can handle three or maybe more lines.

One Baggers arrive at work on time, do the job to the best of their ability and leave on time, no matter what. They can only handle one register line. They don't see what needs to be done beyond their assigned tasks and don't concern themselves with anything else.

Two Baggers are very similar. They arrive on time, leave on time, and do the job of bagging for two register lines very competently. While on the job, they do what needs to be done very thoroughly. In time, they can rise into supervisory and middle management roles.

Now Three Baggers are a whole different animal - hard to tame, harder to contain.

Three Baggers come in early, leave late, look for extra work that needs to be

done, put the job first even at quitting time. They make sure that all the lines have baggers and will stay late until the replacement shows up. They pitch in, in a pinch or a crisis, without being asked. They love their job and the company. They are your cheerleaders, your enthusiasts. These stars are going someplace. Don't hold them back. If you can, use those star qualities to advance your business.

After reading those three job descriptions: are you a One-bagger, a Two-bagger or a Three-bagger? And working for you, do you have One-baggers, Two-baggers or Three-baggers? And who do you want in those positions?

Now isn't it easier to remember the distinctions between these skill sets/character sets from a story than antiquated job descriptions? Try using stories and metaphors to make your point this week.

From Basics to Mastery

For all of us, emotional intelligence encompasses five basic areas of mastery. They are:

- * Knowing your feelings and using them to make life decisions you can live with.
- * Being able to manage your emotional life without being hijacked by it -- not being paralyzed by depression or worry, or swept away by anger.
- * Persisting in the face of setbacks and channeling your impulses in order to pursue your goals.
- * Empathy -- reading other people's emotions without their having to tell you what they are feeling.
- * Handling feelings in relationships with skill and harmony -- being able to articulate the unspoken pulse of a group, for example.

The scope of these skills means there is indeed room for all of us to learn, grow, and improve. There is a lot to learn here. Learning about emotional intelligence, learning about the tools for energy efficiency; that's only the beginning. It's like reading all the books on sailing and small boat sailing. You then have the theory mastered, but you have no hands-on practice. It's only with practice that we gain mastery of anything. That's true of our feelings and emotions too!

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How do you address so many broad areas?

- Assessment tools are a great way to learn to identify your emotions
- Energy efficiency tools are invaluable in helping you tap into inner wisdom and resources to manage your emotions and understand what the best choices are when you are making life decisions.
- Persistence can be learned. In fact, providing challenges and hardships to children, to give them an opportunity to develop persistence and stick-to-itiveness, is intrinsic in many cultures. Goal-setting and the 6 Most-Important-Things List are just two tools you can apply immediately.
- Developing empathy is powerful in critical business situations like a sales call, a closing, your management style, etc. Using your energy efficiency tools will allow you to pay attention to your instincts in this area instead of second-guessing yourself.
- Once you learn to be the manager of your feelings, it becomes an easy habit to apply in any business or personal relationship.

Mastery of all the basics does not occur overnight. But with practice it comes very quickly - just like learning to ride a bicycle. Once you experience how it's 'supposed to work', how energy efficiency is 'supposed to feel', it's easier and easier to reestablish in a variety of circumstances. That's where mastery is achieved. That's where you and everyone in your business benefit from your mastery.