

Presenting – How to powerfully communicate through a story

From early history, fables, parables, stories, anecdotes, metaphors have been used to inform and persuade. Today, the most successful persuaders are excellent storytellers. They have discovered that to explain a point and to show its meaning, there is no better way than to give an example, a case study, use an analogy, or indeed to tell a story.

When and how do stories help?

- You want to engage with the audience and allow them to experience, feel the emotion and better understand a key message that you are delivering.
- You feel that your personal authority is not established sufficiently, so you prefer to avoid overt persuasion and introduce a neutral 3rd party perspective to your message.
- You anticipate resistance perhaps rejection and you want to camouflage your message in an analogy. Allowing the audience to adapt the “generic” message and discover parallels with their own situation. To then encourage self-analysis and ownership of conclusions.
- You foresee a critically questioning response and so want to steer away from left-brain logic and reasoning and tap into right-brain imagination and creativity to encourage acceptance of the bigger picture and what is possible.
- You particularly want to embed a lasting message by using the enduring quality of stories.

How to tell a compelling story:

- Keep a list of stories to tell and possible analogies to use. Scan the web and media and find one a day.
- Adapt your story to suit your audience.
- Tell it with sensory language like “drum beat” “soaring” “icy reception.” And metaphors like “built on quicksand” to visually embed key phrases.
- Learn your story and practice it so that you can narrate it and act it with enjoyment and passion.
- For great effect begin with a preamble story that seems unconnected with your main story but is reintroduced as part of your moral or conclusion.
- Have a central character or hero and describe them in detail and with characteristics that the audience can see and empathize with.
- Have a definite time reference like “last week...” or “2 years ago” to add context and help listener association.
- Describe the environment or setting. Create vivid images, sounds, and feelings that appeal to all the senses and further embed the story in the mind.
- Have a plot! The challenge, the adversity the particular difficulties that confronted the hero.
- Have solutions and a clear outcome or point to the story. Look to include a twist or something unexpected or a way of linking back to your opening story.
- Have a moral or lessons learnt or a clear “call to arms” arising out of the story.

Stories are a fantastic way of communicating a message. Once learnt they are pretty much impossible to forget...a great situation for you to be in when you step out onto a stage. Once heard they are pretty much impossible to forget...a great outcome to achieve with your audience.

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