



The Importance of Storytelling in Business

Description

‘The fish is the last to discover the water’ – African Proverb

We swim in a sea of stories: we learn, dream, plan in stories; we are moved and inspired by stories; we believe, hope and love in stories. It is through stories that we make sense and give meaning to ourselves and the world around us. And yet, so often we ignore the role of the story in the workplace. We can spend hours refining a slide deck but no time at all thinking about the story we want to tell; data and detail is presented as if it simply speaks for itself; briefings and pitches are reduced to a series of bullet points that say more about the author’s grasp of current business speak than their ability to tell a story that engages and inspires their audience.

Telling the Stories that Engage and Empower

Increasingly, businesses are recognizing the importance of storytelling as a leadership and management skill. In a time when employees desire a greater sense of purpose and meaning from work, the stories a business tells – where it’s been, where it is going, what its challenges are – are not only elegant ways in which to communicate facts, they are an opportunity to engage and empower employees.

This is a key business challenge of our times. Gallup’s global survey reported that the bulk of employees (63%) are “not engaged” – that they lack motivation and are less likely to invest discretionary effort in organizational goals or outcomes. Worse, 24% are “actively disengaged,” indicating they are unhappy and unproductive at work and liable to their spread negativity around.

The Gallup Report identified practical steps we can take to engage employees. We can help our colleagues make the best of their strengths in the workplace and create a working environment that promotes well-being. We can also create a more engaging and satisfying common understanding of what it means to be part of our organization, and what this means for each of us. All of these steps depend on how well we can tell a story.

As a leader relates a story, they are not only helping make sense of issues for their team, they are also imbuing them with meaning – sharing what’s important, what the business priorities are and what these mean at a personal level to the team and their leader. Contrast that to the mechanical run through of PowerPoint slides, which often seems more about the speaker getting through their material than engaging with the audience.

Thankfully storytelling is a skill that can be taught. We can teach leaders and managers what makes a compelling story – how to use the key elements of environment and character, how to build a narrative that had both intellectual and emotional appeal. We can teach them how to have greater personal presence and impact – how to command a room, how to use their body and voice to support their message, how to harness the potency of language, and how to connect authentically and ‘in the moment’.

A Core Professional skill

We incorporate storytelling into most of our leadership and management programs. It’s an essential skill – not only as important as the ability to plan, to delegate, to make decisions; it is the means through which we plan, delegate and make decisions. This is not only a vital skill for leaders and managers – it is a poor salesperson who cannot tell a story, but it is also a thoughtless change manager who doesn’t harness the power of narrative to set out a series of unfolding events.

Our formal sessions can be one or two days and either run as stand-alone programs or as part of modular development programs – for example, it makes up a large element of our Sales Negotiation Workshops and of our Change Management programs. Whatever the level or the purpose, our practical workshops cover: **Personal Impact, Presence and Authenticity, Personal Narratives, Influence and Persuasion, Story Telling Tools** and, most of all **Practice, Practice, Practice** – our sessions involve a lot of practical work and use the relevant tools and insights to create stories that address a range of common workplace challenges.

If you’d like to know more about how we can help your people improve their storytelling skills, do contact us.

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