

The Story Factor

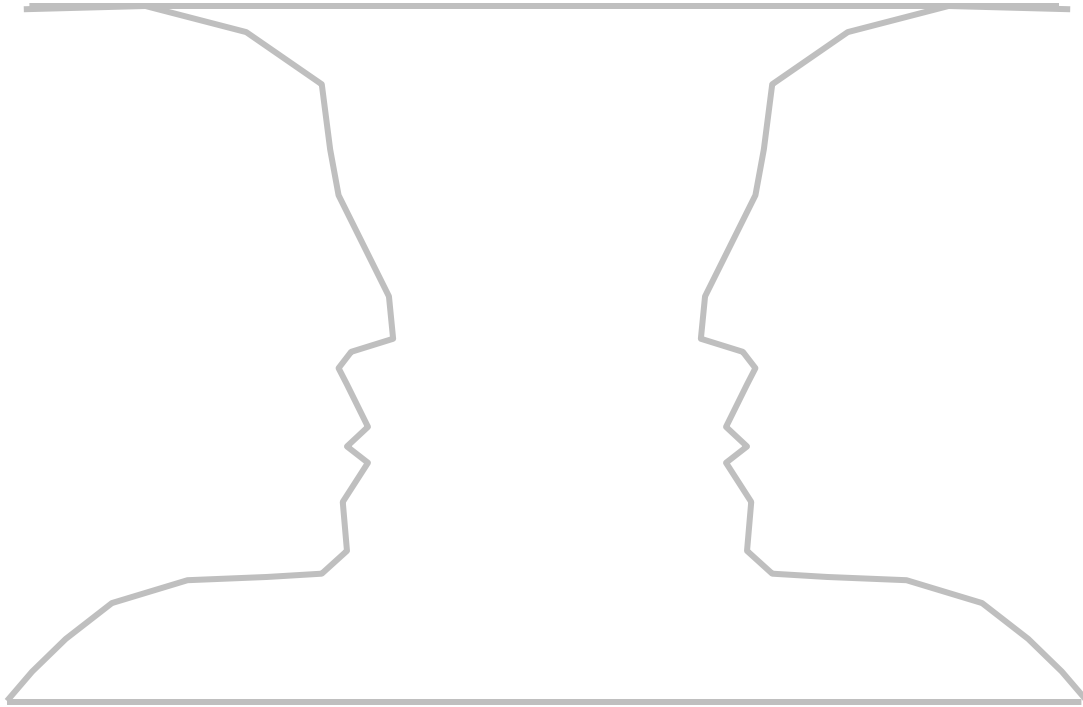
Finding good stories and
telling them well.
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Embrace the Subjective

Climb out on a limb to
find the best stories

Story: a significant emotional experience replayed in a way that feels real and significant.

Perceptual Agility



Objective (Outside/In)	Subjective (Inside/Out)
Facts	Feelings
Be Right	Do the Right Thing
Linear	Non-linear
Data, Information	Experience
Measurements and Numbers	Story, Music, Art
Goal: Accuracy, Standards	Goal: “E – motion” = Action
Removes inconsistency	Ambiguity of human condition
99.6% Probability if you do it exactly as you are told in exact same circumstances	“75%” Chance of Success yet possibility of exponential return...
“truth”	“Truth”
Focus, ignore distractions	Use senses to interpret cues

The Six Stories You Need to Know How To Tell

1. Who I Am

- What qualities earn you the right to influence your audience? Provide evidence of you demonstrating those qualities. Make it authentic (personal). Who are you, as a person?

2. Why I Am Here

- If you seek someone's attention without explaining your positive intent, chances are they will make up a story to protect themselves. Share your authentic intentions and bridge the gap.

3. Vision

- An exciting view of the future can reframe current obstacles and frustrations as "worth it." Meaningless frustration kills motivation. Avoid overpromising.

4. Value-in-Action

- Values are subjective. Integrity can mean you speak up, or it can mean you stay silent depending on the situation. Tell a story that shows people what that value looks like (to you) in action.

5. Teaching

- Experience is the best teacher. Story is second best. Certain lessons even need to be learned over and over. Lessons like patience, kindness, managing time. Tell a story that makes it fresh again.

6. "I know what you are thinking."

- People may have already decided your message is not for them. But, if you tell a story that validates their objections and overcomes them - before they dig their heels in - you bring them to your point of view before they did in their heels.

Developing a “Who I Am/Why I am here” Story

Step One:

What personal qualities do you have that earn you the right to influence others? What quality makes your contribution valuable? (i.e. compassion, reliability, diplomacy, honesty, humor)

Step Two:

If you truly have these qualities, you will find evidence of them in your past experiences and memories. Below are four wells to dip your bucket into and find a story.

- Shined: A time in your life when this quality was tested. It cost you something.

- Blew it: A time when you failed your own standards and decided to never let it happen again

- Mentor: A person/event in your life that taught you the importance of this quality

- Book/Movie: A movie/story/media event that exemplifies this quality for you.

Choose one and begin to write your story “stream of consciousness” style. DO NOT edit for telling. Simply “download” memory in whatever order it comes to you. Ask your mind to recall what you saw, heard, felt, smelled or tasted (or sounds, scene detail, and dialogue from the movie). Write for five minutes.

The Six Principles of Storytelling

1. Developmental.

- Instead of reporting your conclusion "E"... a story walks your listeners through a sequence of events, A, then B, then C and D, so they come to their own conclusion that "E" is true. People value their own conclusions more than they value yours.

2. Oral Language

- When you tell a story in person, your body, eyes, gestures, facial expressions, words, tone and timing communicate across multiple channels that cannot be replicated with technology.

3. Intention

- Different channels can tell different stories. Ensure tone matches words. Resolve any internal conflicts about the story/audience so all channels of communication can be congruent.

4. Imagery

- Vibrancy dramatically increases retention and attention. Build the world of the story with scenes, sights, sounds, dialogue, smells, tastes, and touch. Vivid pictures in your mind create equally vivid pictures in listener's minds. Different, but perfect for them...

5. Participation vs. Control

- In order to entice listeners to participate with your story, leave space for them to paint on your canvas. If you try to control their conclusions, they are less likely to participate.

6. Listener is the Beneficiary

- If your story is how you process your feelings or because you need a witness, your story isn't ready yet. Storytelling is a gift to your listeners. Make sure your needs have been met before you tell it.

Story Gathering Ideas

1. Slow down and shift into “subjective mode.” Tell a who/why story that explains your presence. Gather 4 or 5 people at a round table with a drink or a snack.

“I’m working on a project and I need your help. Could you join us for a bit?”

2. Establish trust. Offer confidentiality and the opportunity to back out.

“The best stories are personal experiences, so this is just between us. I always ask permission before I share someone’s story.

3. Don’t ask for a story. Create an engaging conversation.

“Tell me about a time when…” “Have you ever had an experience when…”

“What does XXX mean to you? Can you tell me about a time you saw XXX in action? or realized XXX was missing? Or how you learned about XXX?”

“What do you do best? How did you find out?”

“Who do you most admire? Tell me more!”

4. Listen with delight. Let silence do its job. Don’t interrupt. Save questions for after. Trade your undivided attention and validation in return for stories.

5. Tell back your basic understanding of the story to invite corrections and more detail. Describe before. Describe event. Describe afterwards.

Ask for sensory details to fill in blanks. Follow the emotions.

Who else was there? What year was this?

Can you describe the place(s) where this happened? Offer prompts.

How old were you in?

Where were you living at this time?

Do you remember the words she/he used?

What happened next?

What was going on just before this happened?

Was anyone else affected by this event?

What changed? What stayed the same?

Create a storytelling culture

Use storytelling to manage the things we can't measure: values, vision, depth, emotions, morale, faith, ethics and meaning.

Accumulate case stories about before and after events. Include failure stories. List strengths and weaknesses and find a story for each. Illustrate the tough conflicts (good/good or bad/bad). Gather "snapshots" of daily experiences. When a problem is solved turn it into a story about the people involved. Find stories that answer the questions: Why now? Why us? Why this and not something else?

Stimulate imagination by creating a time/place for stories. Embrace contrast and deviations from normal. Forgive mistakes and share risk.

Create a storytelling routine. Set aside staff meetings to share stories: wins/losses, pride stories, funny stories, moments of connection, use a theme.

Dedicate a wall to pictures, drawings and stories from several sources.

Establish an annual award for the best story about values/mission/human interest.

Talk in stories. Compliment other people when they use stories. Be inclusive.

Help people tell their own stories in an editorial or video. Teach storytelling.

Develop the habit of starting every presentation with a story.

De-emphasize "appropriate, relevant, professional" in favor of "connected, shared, interesting."

Encourage distinctive storytelling styles with idiosyncrasies intact.

Discourage critiques based on what "other people *might* think." Speak personally.