

HARNESSING THE POWER OF STORIES

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

KEY POINTS

Our brains are wired to remember stories.

Stories are up to 22 times more memorable than facts or figures alone. Stories are an effective tool to advocate for your ideas, especially when you can weave facts and figures into your story.

Stories are important for three reasons.

1. **Stories shape how others see you.** The stories people tell about you influence how they see you: whether they would hire you, buy from you, or like you. The stories people tell about you also influence how you feel.
2. **Stories are tools of power.** When you tell a story, your audience slows down to listen. Sharing a story lets people hear your insights more effectively.
3. **Stories persuade.** Story can move people to action. You can persuade others by taking them on an engaging journey.

There are four elements of successful stories.

1. **A goal.** Why are you telling the story? Your goal should clarify what you want the audience to think, feel, or do at the end of the story. An effective goal considers where the audience starts and the journey to the endpoint.
2. **Grab attention.** Why would people want to listen to your story? Use a hook to reel the listener into the story. Hooks can be surprising truths, visual effects, or an unusual approach.

3. **Engage.** Why would someone care about your story? There are three elements that make a story relatable, engaging, and compelling.
 - The story has a protagonist, or main character. The protagonist does not have to be the storyteller. He or she can be a member of your team, or even the customer.
 - Something must be at stake for the protagonist. They need a clear challenge.
 - The story has an arc. What does the main character have to go through to reach the goal?
4. **Enable.** If your story is shareable, people will spread your ideas more broadly. Why would someone want to share your story? Make your story memorable and easy to retell.

Test your stories on others.

Try telling your stories to others. Ask whether you've changed their perspective with your story. Did the story resonate? What were their "ah ha" moments? What didn't make sense?

Personal Inventory

First 5 minutes: Fill out this inventory.

When you introduce yourself, what do you say? What story do you share with people about yourself?

When your friends or colleagues introduce you, what do they say about you? What story do they share about you?

➔ **Share with your Circle.** *2 minutes each. 20 minutes total. Share one.*

1. How do you typically introduce yourself? What is your favorite story to share about yourself?
2. How do your friends and/or colleagues introduce you? What stories do they share about you regularly?
3. Share an example from the past month of a story you told or one that was told about you. What happened?

Practicing Skills

This has two parts, so make sure you stick to the time allotted in order for everyone to get a turn.

First 6 minutes:

Break into pairs. Share with your partner a goal you have had this week, month, or year. Craft a story that helps bring others along on this journey with you.

- What is the goal of your story?
 - 0 Where is your audience now in relationship to you and your goal?
 - 0 What grabs the attention of your audience?
 - 0 How will you make your story engaging? Who is the protagonist? What is at stake for the main character? What is her journey?
- Practice telling the story to your partner. What were her “ah ha” moments?

After 6 minutes: Switch and let your partner share.

For the final 13 minutes, each person share 1 minute with your Circle.

➔ Share with your Circle.

1. How will you use your story to achieve your goals?
2. Who needs to hear your stories?

This concludes the meeting.

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One Action

In the next week, create one new story and tell it.

Share with your Circle your One Action in your next meeting.

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Bringing It Home

Craft a vision story.

Where do you see yourself going? Where do others see you going? Is there a gap in these perceptions?
What is the goal of your story?

To whom are you telling this story? What is your hook to engage your listener?

Write your story. Include a protagonist, what is at stake, and the arc of the journey.

Test out your story. Then tell your story so you bring others along your journey.