



Lead with a Story: A Guide to Crafting Business Narratives That Captivate, Convince, and Inspire

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Storytelling has come of age in the business world. Today, many of the most successful companies use storytelling as a leadership tool. At Nike, all senior executives are designated "corporate storytellers." 3M banned bullet points years ago and replaced them with a process of writing "strategic narratives." Procter & Gamble hired Hollywood directors to teach its executives storytelling techniques. Some forward-thinking business schools have even added storytelling courses to their management curriculum. The reason for this is simple: Stories have the ability to engage an audience the way logic and bullet points alone never could. Whether you are trying to communicate a vision, sell an idea, or inspire commitment, storytelling is a powerful business tool that can mean the difference between mediocre results and phenomenal success. "Lead with a Story" contains both ready-to-use stories and how-to guidance for readers looking to craft their own. Designed for a wide variety of business challenges, the book shows how narrative can help: - Define culture and values - Engender creativity and innovation - Foster collaboration and build relationships - Provide coaching and feedback - Lead change - And more Whether in a speech or a memo, communicated to one person or a thousand, storytelling is an essential skill for success. Complete with examples from companies like Kellogg's, Merrill-Lynch, Procter & Gamble, National Car Rental, Wal-Mart, Pizza Hut, and more, this practical resource gives readers the guidance they need to deliver stories to stunning effect.

Lead with a Story: A Guide to Crafting Business Narratives That Captivate, Convince, and Inspire Details

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Jay Hennessey says

This book was super close to earning a 5 star rating - I am just trying to be a bit more discerning with my ratings. Overall, I REALLY enjoyed this book. I did the Kindle / Audio combo - for anyone who has not done this, it is a great way to move through content. Additionally, this was a great book to listen to - super easy to follow, even at 1.5 speed.

The author does a great job of demonstrating the power of telling stories for leaders at all levels. He also provides prescriptive structure for leaders to craft and tell their stories. Finally, he provides a ton of stories and examples for a wide range of leadership challenges.

One additional area that prevented this book from earning 5 stars from me was the Proctor and Gamble (P&G) drumbeat that got a bit old by the end - it was a bit like hearing "...one time....at Band Camp...", over and over.

One other tension that I found in the book was what I would call the gap in the delivery or public speaking side of story telling. I appreciated the How-To perspective on structure; and I was convinced before reading the book on the power of story telling; however, I am not sure that the reader is left fully prepared for the variety of environments that the story could be told - from a departmental meeting to a key note speech, the reader has a bit of work to do in order to figure out the best way to deliver.

Overall, I HIGHLY recommend this book to leaders at all levels.

Alanoud says

Very interesting book!

I always knew that stories are the best means to win people, but what I learned from this book is that stories can be well integrated into business practices and its daily operations, for example when giving employees feedback during performance reviews, when communicating policies & procedures, and when trying to create stronger relations amongst colleagues/team members

The book was an eye-opener for me!

Trung Nguyen Dang says

The book is about how well-told stories (with actual stories) in the right context/settings can be magic to

lead, to motivate, to gain respect, to communicate an idea or to inspire. A lot of those stories can be used by us/retold ... easily.

A quick/easy inspiring and educational read.

Dovie says

I loved the set-up of this book; starting each chapter with a story illustrative of the chapter's topic. And the closing pages that index type of story (sometimes including examples, where they have been provided) matched with the intent of its use. This is a good resource for any leader or communicator, which means anyone who EVER has to engage with others and get them to see, appreciate, or adopt a particular point of view.

Karen says

I consider storytelling to be a critical business / job skill. This book does a great job of describing story elements and providing examples of compelling (business) stories.

?Misericordia? ~ The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?????? ✨*♥♥* says

Not inspiring. Not memorable. Already spoken about in length in various media and self-help and business courses and... pretty much anywhere else.

And here goes my rant:

I wish people would consider being concise in whatever they say (and write!), since the other side of storytelling is WASTING MY AWESOME TIME blabbering about some story I don't give a rat's ass about and which I've already heard and read, like a bunch of times!!! People, have you ever really considered that other people might read more than you do and know all the freaking stories you so much insist on retelling and recycling and reusing again and again???

I'm so sick of people retelling me things I already know and have read elsewhere and heard elsewhere and already know!!!

Be concise.

Respect other people's time.

Let other people go and read whatever stories they want instead of listening to your inane ones!

Scott says

This is a great leadership book that provides multiple lessons for the reader, but most importantly techniques for how to develop and tell a great story.

Albeit the examples are heavily P&G related, if you look past that, which is the authors experience, you get

to the centre of the key messages for each chapter; all valuable for any employee and leader.

Thoroughly recommend this book and will be one I read again and again.

Ron Quartel says

I'd recommend starting with "The Leader's Guide to Storytelling" by Steve Denning before reading this book. This makes for a great follow-up. It will give you ideas and stories that you can borrow/use in your own situations.

James Perkins says

I bought this book thinking it would help and inspire me with my work in copywriting. That was my mistake, as I hadn't noticed that the title was a play on words - "lead" as in "begin a piece of text", or "lead" as in "head an organisation". But I didn't let that bother me. As somebody who writes corporate narratives for part of my living, perhaps I could get some inspiration on how to tell them better. Some of it even covers writing, although in general, it's angled more towards speaking.

There are some good bits: the idea that stories help you connect with others more deeply is an excellent premise, and very true in my own personal experience. Smith explains some useful techniques, including how to start well, how to use dialogue, repetition and metaphor. He provides lots of examples - by his count, an even one hundred. At the back there is even a handy story matrix to help you find the right story for your purpose, and a story template to help you devise your own stories. So far, so good.

Unfortunately, that's about all the praise I can give this book, because it has a lot of problems. To begin with, it doesn't follow its own advice - be simple and concise - despite the fact that Smith believes he is exactly that, even citing samples of his own writing in the chapter on style to prove it. The book's text could do with some heavy editing - much of it is so unnecessarily repetitive that his learning points are often buried in dense prose. This makes the stories unengaging, so by the time you finish the book, you can't remember any of them. He appears to give a summary at the end of each chapter, but it's a "summary and exercises" list mixed together which is both illogical and confusing, and does not aid memory. He works at Procter and Gamble, and liberally peppers his book with stories from there, but because each one is a glowing example of how well P&G does everything right, it comes across less like a business case and more like a corporate advertisement. Of course, he does have examples from other organisations, but he was a bit sloppy in his research, as some of them are not timely. For example, the Nokia story is way out of date - even at the time of publishing, the former mobile phone giant was already very publicly falling apart, only to be snapped up by Microsoft for a song the very next year - not exactly a story for touting "success". And what about some cross-cultural examples? Nokia is Finnish, and there is one German example, but these are European, and American culture derives from Europe. P&G is a huge international company; if most of the author's experience comes from there, surely he could find a more evenly balanced selection of stories from all over the world within his own organisation? That would give more credibility to his thesis, and make his book more relevant to readers globally.

A little piece of advice for author Paul Smith: follow your own recommendations. If you do, you will come across as more honest and your book will have a lot more power. Your basic idea is good and some of the

stories are brilliant. I think this could be a lot better if it was edited properly for a new edition, but there is too much wrong with it at the moment. Right now, it looks like a well-written draft.

Shubham Bansal says

Ironically, The way this book is written shows how not to tell a story itself. Boring at times, I actually did not finish this book because I got better books in the similar field.

- 1) Influence by Robert Cialdini
- 2) Never split the difference by Chris Voss
- 3) A tool learned in a course by Landmark.

This book is good if you are starting with story telling learning but it does not give you the idea of the fundamental things why a certain way of communication works. I would have given it a much better rating if I have not gone through above-mentioned things.

Bob Selden says

As I read this book, it put me in mind of so many stories I've heard and experienced in my own management career. In short, I was hooked with the stories penned by Paul Smith, which led me to think about my own stories. It also started me thinking about how I could use more stories in my own work. But wait, I'm getting ahead of myself.

In "Lead With a Story", Smith sets out with the aim of having the reader "start crafting, collecting, and telling stories today". All the stories are about particular aspects of leadership and how stories can assist the manager navigate successfully through various leadership challenges.

The stories are grouped into five areas of leadership - Envision Success, Create an Environment for Winning, Energize the Team, Educate People and Empower Others - the five "Es". I'm not sure that this structure is useful, but some readers may find this a convenient way to go quickly to their category of interest. I personally think it's a bit of a stretch trying to massage subjects into a catchy structure. However, that does not take away from the richness and usefulness of the book.

Each chapter is almost completely taken up with two, three or more stories to illustrate the author's point which is put simply and succinctly. Smith models what he is asking us to do by letting the stories do the talking. Very impressive.

Chapters also conclude with "Summaries and Exercises". I found these useful as a chapter summary, yet light-on as either self or team exercises. If there is one aspect where this book could be improved, this would be it.

As you would expect, there's also a chapter on how to craft your own stories and numerous suggestions throughout on how to use or adapt the stories presented in the book.

At the time of reviewing this book, I had a colleague ask me for some advice about a particularly challenging session he was about to facilitate on work pressures and burnout, with a somewhat sceptical audience. Smith's points about stories and how they bring people into your way of thinking immediately sprung to mind. I challenged my colleague to find a story he could relate. My colleague went away and thought about his session. He came back with a brilliant story about how a pilot on an international flight had recently saved a near disaster when a door blew out in mid-flight. The pilot went on to talk about the way this event had affected him at the time and subsequently. My colleague's session went really well as the participants discussed the pilot's experience and how similar it was to their own situation. Hooked!

I think this book should be essential reading for every manager. Apart from the impact the book will have on the way managers communicate, as Smith points out in the introduction "Some (stories) will make you laugh, some might make you cry (I did!), most will make you think. More important, I hope this book make you do something". Me too!

Bharath says

You can do a lot with stories. You can build better teams, relations, drive home a point, reinforce values and achieve many more things.

This book does well to tell you how you can use stories. It does not burden you with a whole lot of theory and procedure and gets straight to examples and impact. While the stories in the book can also be used, it goes further with outlining how you can build a story repository and how you can put it to good use.

A recommended read..

Tama says

Hoped to pick up a few tips to help with program marketing. This book did talk about stories, but also seemed like it was written to be partially in the business strategy realm (in addition to the stories). I didn't find the business strategies to be especially helpful. Did pick up a few tips. I understood the importance of using a story before I read the book, but this book reinforced that. The author suggests opening meetings with, "What's on your mind?" I wrote that down, but in writing this a few weeks after I read the book, cannot remember why that strategy was important. (Not remembering the rationale makes me wonder about why I thought that was important.)

Sue Cartwright says

This book is a must not only for leaders in a corporate environment but for anyone who manages, trains or coaches people. It is also a must for business owners and blog writers who want to 'move' people through 'strategic narratives'.

Organised into 5 leadership themes: Envision Success, Create an Environment for Winning, Energise the Team, Educate People and Empower Others, Paul is not only a master storyteller but also a master coach and expert in how to find stories, metaphors and analogies from every kind of situation you can imagine in work,

business and life and general. The key is to shape these findings into stories that can inspire, teach and motivate others to excel.

My favourite take out from this brilliant book is the idea of creating a 'story portfolio' and actually writing stories as you find them from your own experiences, observing others and other means, so that you can draw on them whenever you need them.

Discovering and writing stories is an art that can be learned and this book provides all the ideas and resources you need to do just that.

Amelia C says

Tedious, repetitive and dull (maybe this guy needs better stories).

I hate books that could frankly be a flyer and this is one of them. Perhaps there will be some gem of knowledge in there after I slog through 300 pages which could have been put in one bullet point

* A story is more interesting than powerpoint. the END

Finished the book and never found that gem.
