

A Narrative Approach to Business Communication

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Why do we often find pleasure or solace in watching a movie or reading a book? It is probably because of the interesting and compelling stories they tell. Stories have the ability to help us relate to the experiences of others, escape our own reality, or teach us valuable life lessons. However, stories are often associated with more pleasurable pursuits, but what if they had a place in professional settings as well?

Storytelling as a Form of Business Communication

When presenting data about the efficiency of a product or sharing the numbers of business's rise in revenue, people might focus most of their energy on ensuring the accuracy of their data and the value of their information; nonetheless, it's delivery is just as, if not more important. It is the gateway to get people interested in the information you would like to communicate with them. Without an effective delivery method, an audience will not be receptive to the information you would like them to grasp.

Thus, a story can be an effective way of communicating ideas because even though they might not be the method that comes to mind when sharing ideas or data at work, their strength should not be underestimated. As a matter of fact, stories can be one of the most effective ways to get your point across and be remembered. Science shows that stories are remembered about 22 more times compared to just facts. This is because unlike raw data or facts, a captivating story is able to activate the brain and deliver intricate ideas in a way that is memorable and applicable to our lives (Boris, 2025).

Stories also allow for a type of learning and engagement that can reach multiple types of people rather than just a single demographic of learners. Many people may learn best through visuals while others may grasp an idea better when it is accompanied by physical activity.

However, stories contain a multitude of elements that connect with all these different types of people as the emotions felt during a touching or inspirational story can be remembered by kinesthetic learners, while visual learners can gain better understanding through the mental pictures conjured in their minds (Boris, 2025). Through a well-executed story, people can better understand the idea or data being conveyed and may even be persuaded to believe whatever assertion is being made.



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Source: Boris, V. (2025). Harvard Business Impact.

How Storytelling Gives Communicators a Leg Up

However, what is it about storytelling that grabs people's attention? First of all, stories provide a clear structure that cannot be replicated by pure data. If someone is simply talking about facts or data, people may feel like they are being bombarded with information with no way to make sense of it. However, in a well-structured story where the audience is brought on a journey of someone who faces a struggle, but finds a way to conquer it, the audience receives the information in a coherent structure of ideas. This structure not only organizes and links all the information together, but it also does so in a way that is similar to how our brain retains information on a day-to-day basis. Upon digesting the information, we are also able to look back on our extensive past experiences to find some relatability to the stories we hear, which further helps in engaging with and remembering a story (Boris, 2018).

The emotions elicited from a story can also be just as, if not more powerful, in capturing both one's attention and compassion. When it comes to engagement and memory, stories that bring about a positive emotional reaction help in releasing dopamine, which can increase the ability to retrieve and recall memories. The simple act of stimulating emotions can also help improve memory. This is because feeling the emotions that come from hearing a story becomes an experience in itself, making the story even more memorable. However, stories do more than strengthen our memory. They can be a catalyst for a response in our own lives. A story allows us to understand a character or person and become invested in them emotionally. This causes us to empathize with their experiences; thus, we are inclined to follow a call to action if provided or apply the lessons it taught in our own lives (Singh, 2024).

Crafting a Story to Remember

Engaging an audience, evoking an emotional response, and embedding ideas into an audience's memory make storytelling sound like the ideal approach to communicating ideas. However, not just any storytelling will be able to do the trick. A compelling story should target the audience it is trying to reach because if a story does not relate to or address its audience, they will not be able to connect to the story in the way that you might have envisioned. The audience will dictate many parts of your story. Not just the message of the story, but also its length, tone, and formality. For example, when speaking in a meeting with superiors, a bolder yet polite tone is needed to convey confidence and respect. On the other hand, speaking to a team you are leading might require a more casual yet still confident touch to prepare them for projects to come (Baker Sr., 2024). Just like using storytelling to convey a message because it is the most effective method to communicate ideas, adapt a story to consider the audience's needs to give them the best chance of engaging with it.

The structure of a story also determines its effectiveness. A story with obscure or no structure defeats the purpose of crafting a story in the first place as there is no organization of the information shared that the audience can make sense of. Thus, it is crucial that a story has a beginning, middle, and end, including a compelling conflict. The conflict not only provides a captivating element to the story, but is also used to show a dynamic journey and how it can relate to the problems in the audience's lives. It allows them to see how they could use the lessons learned to deal with their own struggles or how the audience could work with the speaker to overcome a shared obstacle. Once a defined structure is made, it is important not to add too many details and keep the story as simple as possible. Details might be interesting to you, but they could be irrelevant to your audiences, so only include the details essential to making your point. A simple story with a solid structure provides an optimal approach, so an audience can easily follow and connect with a story with minimal chances of distraction or disengagement (MacArthur, 2024).

Lastly, making your story as genuine and personal as possible is a great way to help the story hit home with the audience. If a story is too perfect or too embellished, the audience may be able to sense that it is not genuine. An authentic story has a much better chance of relating to its audience and making them feel the emotional weight of the challenges and resolutions in the story. It is the genuine and sometimes messy stories that audiences can better relate to because they can sense the authenticity, relate to the story, and be more willing to establish a profound and genuine connection (Singh, 2024).

Looking Ahead to a Future of Stories

Stories have unlimited potential to deliver an impactful and memorable message, so why confine them to just our leisure activities? Stories that are clear, concise, personal, and targeted have the capability to capture an audience’s attention and gain their trust and understanding no matter the setting.

It is a delivery method well-suited for the business world, making numbers and data, which may seem mundane, into a form that can stimulate active engagement rather than simply being processed. Whether it is giving a data-driven presentation to superiors, interviewing for a position in a corporate organization, or conducting a training session for fellow colleagues, stories can pique the interest of all types of audiences in a business environment, if properly geared toward their needs. It is time that we invest not only in the content of the information we share, but also in the way that it is communicated, to create a delivery mechanism best suited to leave a lasting impression on our audiences.

Written by:

Natasha Eugenia Halim Widjaya
Marketing and Communications



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For service enquiries please contact us at
bd@id.gt.com

Grant Thornton Indonesia

Sampoerna Strategic Square
South Tower Level 25
Jalan Jend. Sudirman Kav. 45-46
Jakarta Selatan 12930
Indonesia
T +62 21 5795 2700
W www.grantthornton.co.id

