



**THE POWER OF  
STORYTELLING  
IN BUSINESS**

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## Using the Power of Storytelling in Business

Humans like stories. Since the beginning of time, humans have related to each other through stories. From fables to fairy tales, metaphors to manuscripts, stories are the ties that bind us. While we are all familiar with storytelling on an entertainment level, there are key benefits to using storytelling in a business setting. These benefits are felt across the organization and beyond, because storytelling can be used internally and externally to help drive your company's mission and message home.

What makes storytelling so naturally appealing to us? Quite frankly, our brains. We are wired to process and share information in a story format. In fact, many of us tell and process stories everyday without even realizing it. Even more powerful is that when you use it with intention, you can accomplish pretty incredible things.

## Why is storytelling so effective in knowledge transfer?

Stories make it easier for our brains to store data for later retrieval, and emotions are a signal to the brain that whatever we are experiencing is important. As a result, the brain pays much more attention to a story, and saves the information that is charged with emotion into deeper parts such as the cerebellum. Beyond the logic behind these storytelling selling points, let's talk data: The London School of Business found that people retain 65 to 70 percent of information shared via a story versus only 5 to 10 percent of information conveyed through statistics. In a separate study by Stanford University, it was found that the brain recalls stories 22 times better than simple facts.



## Storytelling with video for effective information sharing

Video storytelling takes this one step further, because the brain activates mirror neurons. According to [Harvard Business Review](#), this means we put ourselves in the shoes of the person going through the story. Often unconsciously, we then mirror these actions or emotions. This enables us to emotionally bond with a story and interpret it in a way that inspires action.

Novelty also increases recall of information, simply because the brain has to pay more attention to retain new information, it is more likely to remember data presented in a novel manner rather than in standard ways. So, if you typically send PDFs or slides, a series of explainer videos could be a key way to attach your message to your audience's brain.

## Business Storytelling Who is it for?

All types of businesses, and all departments within a company can reap the benefits of storytelling. Here are some examples of storytelling in an organization:

### Storytelling in Leadership and Management

Leadership roles in an organization can weave stories into their interactions with peers and team members. Storytelling helps leaders change the way their teams think, which is a critical step in shifting the way employees act.

The unique component to leadership storytelling is that it does not berate employees or tell them what to do or change. In fact, it takes an opposite approach. Leaders that use storytelling often refer to examples, or stories, to reframe a problem in a new light. By doing this, leaders are able to take the spotlight off the audience and show them information in an unbiased way. By doing this, leaders can inspire their teams to act in desired ways and behaviors without explicitly saying so.

While all humans are born storytellers, sometimes it takes effort to tap into those abilities in a business setting.

Large companies use storytelling of past scenarios that went right (or wrong) to communicate to the team what behavior is expected of them.



**“The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. The storyteller sets the vision, values, and agenda of an entire generation that is to come.”**

*Steve Jobs*

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### Storytelling in Sales and Marketing

To convince people to buy your products, you'd be wise to tell them a story. This method of sales and marketing is how companies are able to elicit interest from consumers, retain loyal customers, and at times, show their values and beliefs. Sales and marketing professionals frequently rely on stories of past and current happy customers to make their sales pitch relatable to prospects. When people love a brand story, or what a company stands for, they become a customer for life.

Not sure where to start? Use behavior data to shape your content strategy. What blogs, webinars, videos have helped you move through the sales process? The data exists, you just need to leverage it to create a story. Remember--stories do not have to be long. In fact, in oral storytelling, you can tell a powerful story in 45 seconds.



### Storytelling in Training and Human Resources



Some people think that storytelling is reserved for creative professions, or leadership roles. Human resources and training teams have unlimited use for storytelling applications in their profession. You can use storytelling to give context to actions, like a recruitment process. You can use it for onboarding to tell the company story, vision, goals, and founding principles. Storytelling can increase employee engagement by having higher participation, a well-informed staff, and a more productive workforce.

Not all storytelling needs to be positive, either. Training and other departments can use stories of “what not to do” to help guide employees onto the right path of behavioral expectations. This is an area where the metaphor, a popular storytelling technique, is useful.

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## In conclusion, Storytelling is rooted in simplicity, and psychology

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Like many things, simplicity is key for a story to be effective. If you have too many things going on, you distract your audience's attention from your message, meaning it will likely be missed or forgotten. Keep it simple and remove anything that distracts from your story's one main goal.

The first thing you should ask yourself is the following set of questions:

*“Who is my audience and what do they care about?”*

*“What is the message I want to them to understand?”*

All good stories start with something enticing for the audience, something that reels them in. This could be a question, a promise, or an information gap. That's because according to George Loewenstein's information gap theory of curiosity, we know that our brains need to find the answer when we feel a gap between what we know and what we want to know. It's the same theory that some of our favorite television shows use to make us emotionally invested in what happens to characters we have never even met, who sometimes aren't even based on real people. Don't worry, you don't need a team of screenwriters and a production house to tell a convincing story--you can do it yourself!

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