



Storytelling for Success

Every leader must know how to tell a story. There is no better way to inspire followers and get a key point across. But the story has to be built around the integrity of the storyteller and somehow, get listeners to see themselves as being involved in the story.

If your management thinks of this as frosting or fluff, step back and rethink:

We live in an age of dreams and emotions. We've gone way past the Information Era. Simply reciting statistics and automating periodic interaction is old hat. The bottom line is boring, a mere commodity in itself. Today's customer wants to be aroused, inspired and entertained. A great way to do that is to tell a great story about your company, a story that is memorable and emotional.

A good corporate story conveys the fundamental reason why you're better than the competitor down the street or across the globe. Creating a story that gets past the brain and into the gut is a challenge. Telling it effectively is almost as difficult.

In a nutshell, here's how it's done:

1. Look at your culture in a fresh way. What books are being passed around? What stories are told in the halls? What do people say to each other in passing when things are going particularly good or especially bad? These are ripe clues to your corporate story.
2. Go back to the origin of the company. Dive into the details. Who did what? Was it humorous or unusual or particularly intense? What gave the founders the confidence to proceed? What was going on around them at that time? Capture and glamorize these mundane moments to make them magical.



3. Find a trend that can be connected to your company. The movements toward customization, teamwork, intrapreneurship, environmental sensitivity and network interactivity provide lots of examples. This is the big picture story-making strategy. One example: a cable music TV station says, “We were country before country was cool.”

4. Tell the story at the right time. The advertising people can bring it up initially to attract attention and clear the way for a sales call. The salesperson can mention it when the prospect opens the right door - a moment of cautious hesitation, for instance. The story should reinforce a positive point about superiority or commitment. It may reassure after the close. Don’t force it into the conversation until the time is right.

5. The corporate story should have an innocuous set up, a plot twist and a surprising ‘reveal.’ Most salespeople are not as good at this as they think. They often unleash the punch-line before sufficient tension has been created, for instance. Remember, the corporate story should be a mini-movie with a genuine plot and a satisfying ‘resolution.’ The listener should think to himself, “Now I understand what makes these people tick.”

6. A good corporate story should reflect a cause beyond self. There should be a bigger reason than to simply glorify the storyteller or brag about the company. A good storyteller should evoke emotions and infuse his story with meaning. Remember, people are desperate to believe in something that is bigger than themselves, even in this cynical age. They’re looking for a vision or an emotional arc. To be a storyteller, you must project passion. You must really believe in the mission.

Omegapoint’s Lynn Hinderaker can train your team in the powerful art of corporate story telling. It’s a big idea. Be inspired by it. Act on it. **Call 402-884-2031**