

STORYTELLING



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Storytelling

Your Creative Process for Gaining Insights
and Connecting with Yourself, Colleagues and Clients

We tell the same stories over and over again because they help us know who we are, and that's universal. But when you tell a story, what's most important is you have to bring your full self, because your DNA is the only time it happens in the world.
MacArthur Award winner and playwright, Tarell Alvin McCraney.

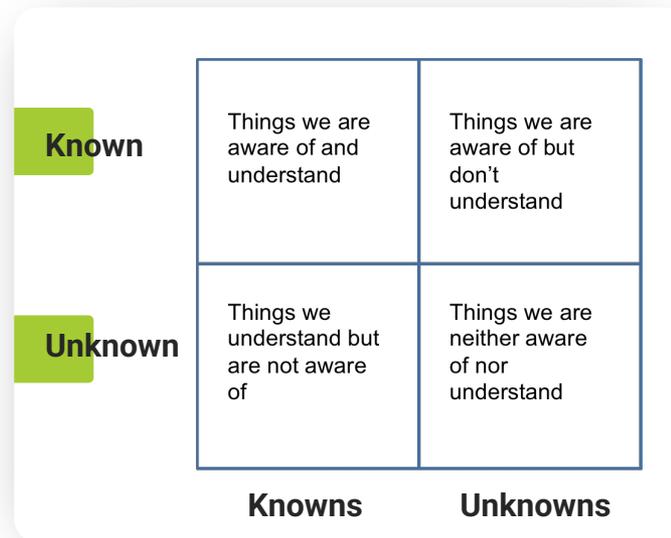
Why include **storytelling** in your work?

- Effective, Efficient and Fun
 - Message and content easier to remember than facts
 - **How** something evolves more quickly captured
 - Humor and playfulness can be more naturally included
 - Empathy is developed
 - Provides opportunities for variety and originality



Additional opportunities embedded in Storytelling

Storytelling Helps Capture Understanding and
Knowledge Indirectly
(can avoid conventional telling and selling)



Tacet knowledge = Tribal, experiential and know-how can be embedded in stories



Direct benefits of Storytelling

• Benefits to yourself of telling stories

- Hearing and listening to yourself
- Capturing new insights
- Appreciating yourself
- Trying out varieties of approaches
- Engage others in your work with fresh ways



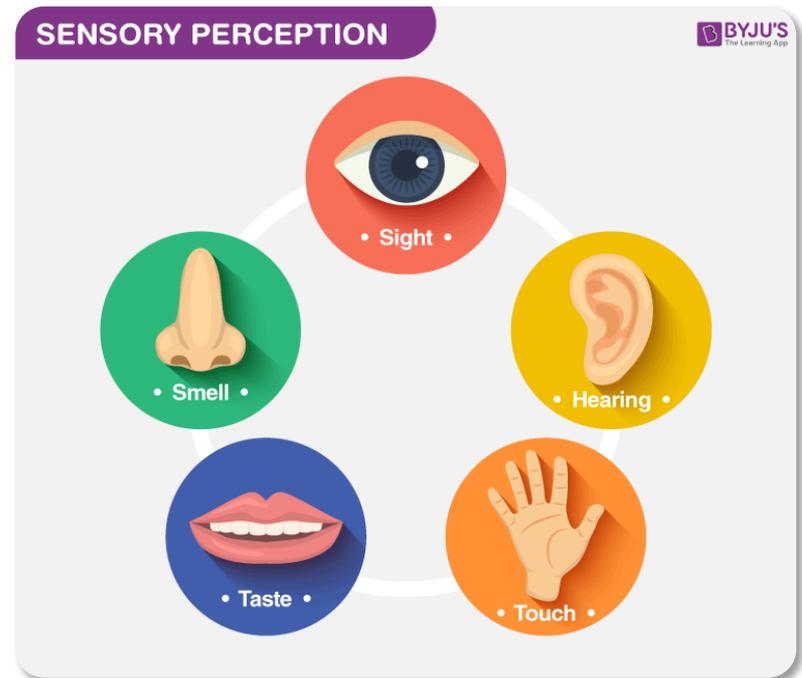
• Benefits to others

- Encourages and inspires
- Provides information for choices, possible actions
- Transcends barrage of information/facts
- Offers unexpected insights into self and others
- Adventures into the known and unknown



Layers and depths of Storytelling

- Offers wide choices through availability of stories
- Adds comfort of familiar process (started with fairy tales and the bible)
- Accesses power of emotions (as important for decision making as reasoning – neuroscientist Antonio Damasio)
- Suggests range of the senses through images and imagination – sight/vision hearing, smell, taste, touch.
- Evokes senses through descriptions in your stories



(For your exploration when you get the slides: 16-minute video: excursion into the senses and memory.
If you listen and imagine with this link, what emerges for you?)

[Listen Now!](#)



Criteria for choosing and telling your stories

- Relevance, usefulness for situation and listeners
- Clarity of message
- Time involved
- Juiciness v. privacy aspects (what do you want to expose?)
- Engagement factors (examples: suspense, surprise, humor)

Three story examples: (*Listen for the underlying lesson/theme in relation to criteria*)

- How my ignorance got me into the Foreign Service
- How I avoided losing one of my best, yet least-wanted, assignment
- How I finally figured out my dissertation topic after ten years of avoidance (a vision)



What to avoid in creating / telling your **stories**

- Overly complex
- Uninteresting
- Irrelevant
- Essence, meaning unclear
- Self-absorbed



- **Tell your story – For breakout experience**
- **Volunteer group leader for guiding conversation, if necessary**
- **Feedback from group members**
 - *What was effective and engaging?*
 - *What could improve it?*



Story Design – varies – no one best way

From Ruth's 7th book, 4th chapter in Happiness and Joy in Work: Preparing for Your Future:
One version per Professor Daniel T. Willingham who teaches cognitive psychology and neuroscience at the University of Virginia):



- **Causality: Linking one event to another – something happens because of something else**
- **Conflict: Central character's goal thwarted by obstacles**
- **Complications: New problems emerge caused by the character's effort to remove obstacles**
- **Characters: Interesting ones whose qualities are apparent through actions**

Other aspects: Linear, nonlinear, combination, suspense/surprise, clarity of structure



Going deeper

(If time permits or for your own follow up and reinforcement)

Tapping your possibilities within

Opportunity to become the hero, as you define it, of your own story

Learn more...

- Define what being a hero means to you
- Encounter and notice new ways to see oneself in positive ways
- Bring variety, authenticity, and playfulness into your work

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