

Presentation Mastery

Persuade, Inform and Inspire



By Cindy Tonkin

Stories – for high stakes communication

Stories are like slowed down bullets in the Matrix film¹⁹ they slow the action down so we can *see decisions as they get made*, instead of just the *results* of the decision

In one sense, storytelling is simply giving an example²⁰.

Because information is free (Google, the web, etc), it's **story** which **connects the information and is valuable**. A picture paints 1000 words, a metaphor paints 1000 pictures²¹.

We have more wisdom than we use. We don't need more facts – we need help finding our wisdom.

Use story for *high stakes* communications:

- Conferences
- face-to-face
- unit meetings
- presentations
- webinars
- web-based stories

Use story to communicate things like:

- leadership
- strategic selling
- motivating people
- corporate strategy
- ethics
- coaching
- feedback
- teamwork
- negotiating
- client delight
- business acumen
- process changes
- systems implementation
- new employee orientation²².



Facts are neutral until human beings add their own meaning to those facts.... The meaning they add to facts depends on their current story.

People stick with their story even when presented with facts that don't fit. They simply interpret or discount the facts to fit their story.

This is why facts are not terribly useful in influencing others.

People don't need new facts – they need a new story

Annette Simmons *The Story Factor*



¹⁹ Craig Wortmann, *What's your story?* – page 44

²⁰ Stephen Denning *The Leader's Guide to Storytelling*

²¹ Dan Pink *A Whole New Mind*

²² Wortmann, page 52

The structure of a story

When you tell stories it's useful to use one or the other of these to check the story is finished before you bridge to the reason why you are telling the story.

Tony the Carpenter bought a Holden Rodeo 12 months ago. On the way home from a job last week, another driver went through a red light and totalled the Rodeo. His insurance company is going to pay him \$22,000 for the market value and his payout figure is \$33,000. Fortunately, Tony bought GAP cover.

Good stories have certain things in common. They have a *once upon a time* where a *hero* (Tony) *starts out* (he bought a Rodeo) then *suddenly* something happens (he had a crash) then *luckily* something else happens (he had gap cover) so he lives *happily ever after*.

Sometimes of course the ending isn't a happy one. When this is true, there is usually a *lesson* instead of a *luckily* as the happily ever after:

I got really busy at the end of the last quarter, and I left the board report till the last minute. When I finally got to it I discovered that there was a lot of data which needed more consultation. I was extremely frustrated. My boss was annoyed too. So now I make time at least one week before the report is due to look over what is involved.

Once upon a time a hero (me) *starts out* (wasn't proactive about the board report) then *suddenly* something happens (I discover there's a problem and my boss and I are frustrated). In this case there is no *luckily*, but there is a *lesson* learned (so I pay attention long before it's due) which means we learn something and live "*happily ever after*".

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Who says: "you are never going to believe the power point presentation I just saw!!"

Craig Wortmann
What's your Story?

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The Once Upon A Time story formula²³

Once upon a time

Who was involved? Who is the “hero” or protagonist (you, the customer, the boss, someone else?)

How did things start?

Suddenly

What happened?

What was the problem or question?

Luckily (or unfortunately)

How did you solve it (or not)?

Happily ever after (or a lesson)

So what did we learn?

If it wasn't happy, how will it never happen again?

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I said to my wife, “Olena, let’s bet that no matter what question is asked I can always answer it with the same story.”
That week I answered 7 different questions with the same story

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Stories are shortcuts we use because we’re too overwhelmed by data to discover all the details

Seth Godin *All Marketers are Liars*

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²³ The Story Formula comes from Lori Silverman, *Wake me Up when the Data is Over*, Jossey Bass 2006



Make yourself a Story Matrix²⁴

when you are first starting to tell stories it is useful to codify what you know. Here is a story matrix. It is filled with some of my favourite stories to tell.

You can change the names of the columns to suit your themes.

Because you can link anything to anything, when you have a story you can tell it in many contexts.

<i>New ways of thinking</i>	<i>Questions and meta-programs</i>	<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Using it</i>	<i>Rapport</i>
Mother cat	Mendelssohn's grandfather	don't look at the wall	Diamond Island	Ronda's bed
Many answers	know-it-all Melbourne	beta-blocker man	gather rocks	Michelle's daughter
Solid booster rockets	merchant's daughter	Craig from Georgia on stage	Emperor Hirohito	Matt's boss
You might be the Messiah		My swish story Parramatta	what's the name of the restaurant	Watermelon
		Bandler giant		Chips in bed

Stories can be real things that happened to you. They can be movie or novel plots. Even fairy stories (Goldilocks, Rapunzel, Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Snow White, Beauty and the Beast). Stories can also be case studies from work.

See the section on mapping shallow and deep metaphors to existing situation to create meaningful stories (see page 63).

Depending on what a story needs to do, story can build your credibility (it can be a way to legitimately name-drop or cite your credentials ("when I was studying with Tal Ben-Shahar at Harvard").

²⁴ Adapted from Craig Wortmann *What's Your Story*



Finding good stories to tell

You want your stories to have impact. The more the stories align and reflect the values of the audience, what they think is important, the more impact they will have.

When looking for stories to tell, consider these types of stories²⁵.

- occasions where you faced adversity
- times when 2 values conflicted (usually this means I couldn't decide between two important things: do I take a job which pays better but it less interesting or fulfilling, or do I take a job which pays less, but is really interesting or fulfilling?)
- what you find most satisfying in working with your company
- something that showed you what your organisation is really good at
- the worst thing that ever happened to you in your organisation
- how a client or customer was badly treated but it eventually turned out well
- your happiest day at work
- something that your organisation is good at but few people know about
- something that showed you what you have to do to get ahead in your organisation

Or tell a story about someone you admire:

- someone you knew when you were growing up
- someone in the organisation who has meant a lot to you
- the person you admire most in your organisation
- the person who is closest to you at work
- someone who did better in the organisation than anyone expected
- someone who really taught you the ropes

You can gather these stories in a matrix like the one of the previous page. Once you do this for the first time you will have a store to pull on where ever you are on stage. This can be useful when answering questions.



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"No story is innocent. Stories have effects on the teller, the listener and on organisational systems"

Karen Dietz *Ethics of organisational narrative work*
Polaris-associates.com

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²⁵ This section is adapted from *Leader's Guide to Storytelling – Mastering the art and discipline of business narrative*, by Stephen Denning (2005) p 144

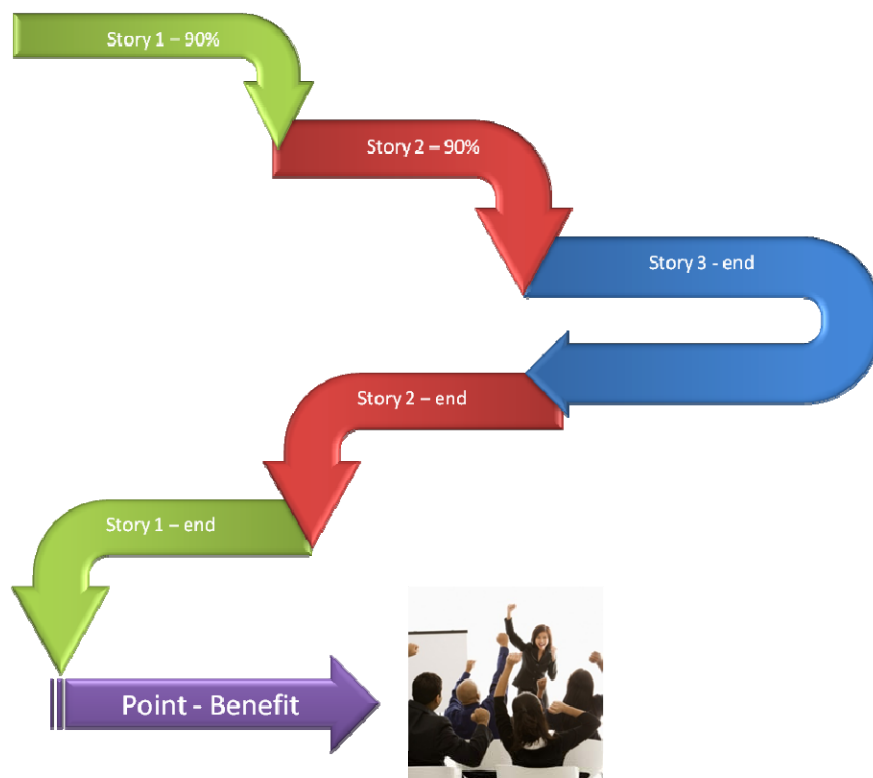
Nested Stories

If you would like to tickle your audience's brains and make them go **ahah!** try a nested story!

Kurt Lewin noticed how his waiter only remembered the details of an open tab. As soon as someone paid their tab the waiter forgot what his customers had eaten or drunk, or when. Before that he could say what they had ordered and when. And he retained the information over days and weeks. Bluma Zeigarnik, one of Lewin's students studied this effect, and today we call it the Zeigarnik effect.

Things which are unfinished stay in our mind. This is why movies and books use "cliffhanger" endings. In a learning environment, it means taking a break in the middle of a session (with the intention to return) could be useful.

Using nested stories is another way to use the Zeigarnik effect. They create an "ahah" effect in the audience. Stories are themselves entertaining and make the audience feel good; nested stories are even more delightful - pay attention to good stand up comedians, and discover how many nested stories they use. Ross Noble the comedian nests multiple stories over a 90 minute show. In the personal



development sphere Anthony Robbins is famous for opening (and finally closing) up to 7 nested stories. In television, nested loops are similar to story arcs, they keep people interested.

The diagram below shows the "theory" of nesting a story – begin one story, take it to a point of almost completing... and transition to the second story. When the

second story is almost complete, go into the third story, and complete it. Then return to the end of the second story, and finally the end of the first story. Finish off with a point/benefit, and notice your audience around you going “aha”! You can, of course have more than 3 nested stories going (and you remember to complete them!!)

With an ST audience, you need to be clear that you will return (and do).

Using metaphor in training

Here are some reasons to use metaphor:

- give people an outsider's perspective on their own situation
- talk with and directionalise the unconscious mind while entertaining and distracting the conscious mind
- install strategies
- reframe a situation
- anchor desired states
- future pace
- collapse negative anchors
- pace and lead them to a desired state



If metaphor is a false moustache, to disguise explanation and clarification, deep metaphor is a full disguise that very few people see through, and allows you even more subtlety.

John Grinder suggests when you are three metaphors deep your words go directly to the unconscious mind. People are more likely to take it in without thinking critically about it. This means you can lead much more strongly without pacing first, once you are three metaphors deep.

Creating a metaphor

To create a metaphor²⁶,

- list features of the present state
- list features of the desired state
- design a metaphor/story with the same features
- get the audience to identify with the protagonist of the story
- pace the audience's present situation with similar relationships between characters / figures / environment
- tell the story which adds resources (as the protagonist grows / learns, so do the audience)
- finish the story in a way where the protagonists resolve the present state and achieve a desired state.

²⁶ Genie Laborde - *Influencing with Integrity*



Try building your own deep metaphor that will lead people to

- learn easily, effortlessly, and enjoyably
- listen attentively in a meeting
- be open to new ideas
- be open to healing conflict in the workplace
- want to trust you.

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if you want to make your story engaging and memorable just increase the amount of dialogue in it. Dialogue is what turns an okay speech into an outstanding one.

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Delivery variables for deep metaphors

To deliver a deep metaphor:

- speak at one third of normal pace
- low, soft voice
- emphasis at top/bottom of breathing cycle
- use a positive description (so people want to identify with it)
- incorporate whatever happens
- embed stories

Deep and shallow metaphors

Shallow Metaphor	Deep metaphor
Definition	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more like an analogy - the heart is (like) a pump because it pumps, and that is where the similarity ends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extended comparison - similarities between two situations are extended • not always explicit • the mind is left to work out the meaning of the metaphor, and create its own meanings • invites people to make sense of the information at different levels (sometimes even at levels which the speaker did not even intend)
Examples	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the heart is a pump • the training room is a laboratory • your career is like a bicycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • magic formula stories where metaphor is never fully explained e.g. learning as a Star Trek journey through space and time, encountering new races, species, people, examining new ways of being, boldly going etc • means stories need to be evaluated for their metaphoric content as well as their “point and benefit” • would include embedded commands, analog marking, and other Milton Model patterns to induce the desired state



Shallow Metaphor

Deep metaphor

How to Construct

- define the feature of the new element you want to highlight, find another thing which has those properties
- define the features of the present and desired state (there may be several of these), design a story with the same features.
- Genie Laborde's METAPHOR mnemonic²⁷:
 - M**atch
 - E**lements
 - T**hat
 - A**pply to
 - P**resent/Desired State
 - H**ide them in a story
 - O**rganised around outcomes for
 - R**eceptive Response

Application

- make something strange and new easier to understand
- help people understand information at a conscious level
- move the unconscious mind towards a desired state without necessarily involving the conscious mind.

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if the audience members see that you are indifferent, they will become bored and indifferent, just like you... audience also judges your speech based on what you do on stage while you are thinking or speaking

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²⁷ Genie Laborde, *Fine Tune your Brain*, p 90

