

Storytelling for Leadership Success

Workshop for 2021 VCE Winter In-Service

Facilitated by
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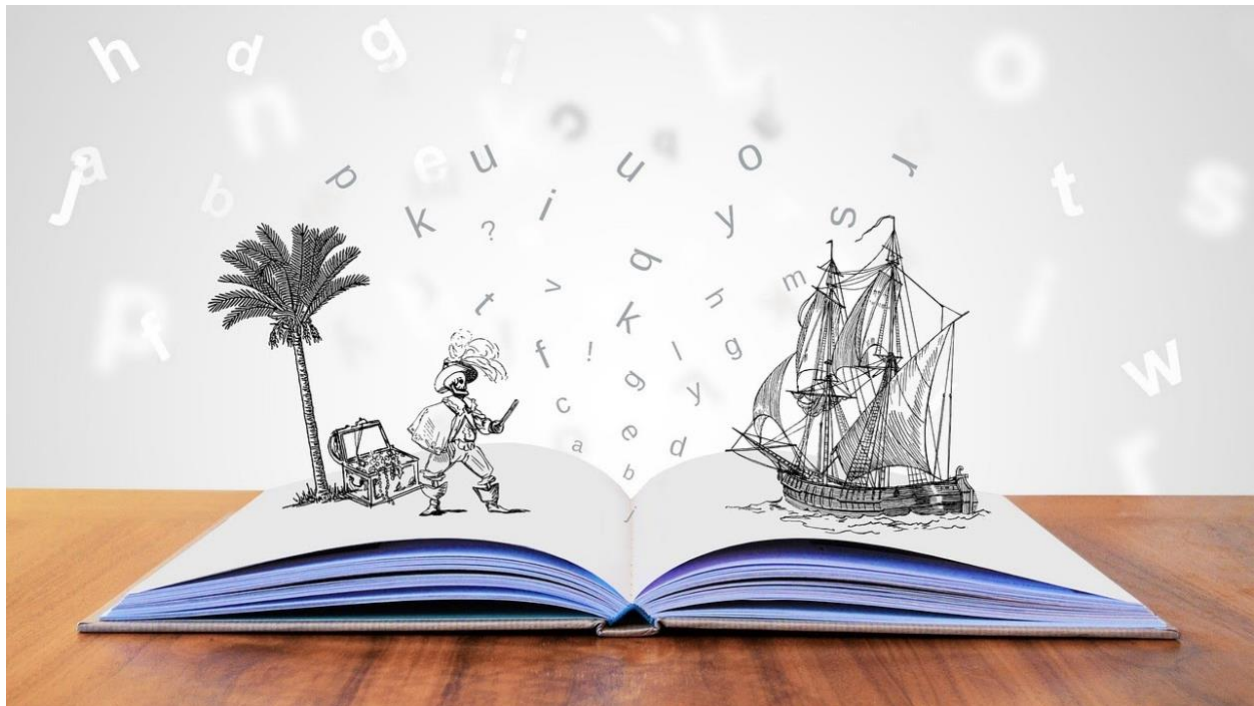
Summary

Stories are a powerful tool for leadership. This session will highlight reasons for telling stories, explain the potential for various types of stories, and help participants develop or refine a story in support of an Extension initiative. Additional attention will be given to resources that support public impact communication.

Learning Outcomes

- Identify specific reasons leaders tell stories.
- Explain the potential uses for different types of stories.
- Develop or refine a story in support of an Extension initiative.

What's your story?



Storytelling Can Make or Break Your Leadership

by Jeff Gothelf

Harvard Business Review, October 19, 2020

<https://hbr.org/2020/10/storytelling-can-make-or-break-your-leadership>



Ferdinand Henke/EyeEm/Getty Images

Summary: Telling a compelling story is how you build credibility for yourself and your ideas. In this piece, the author draws on his experience as a speaker, publisher, and author to illustrate five characteristics of effective storytelling. He suggests that strong stories must be audience-specific, clearly contextualized, human-centric, action-oriented, and humble. Whether you're winning over a colleague, a recruiter, or an entire conference audience, making sure you stick to these guidelines will help you convey care and compassion when presenting even the most daunting of ideas.

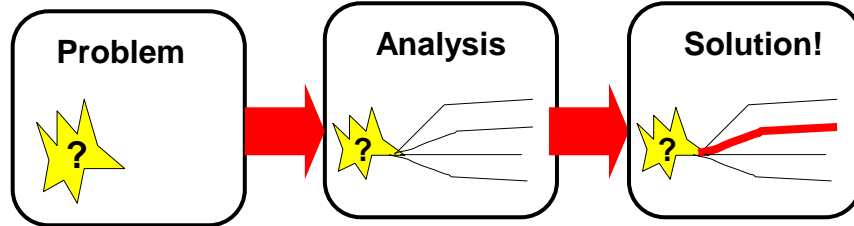
Checklist for characteristics of effective stories:

- Be audience-specific.
- Contextualize your story.
- Humanize your story.
- Make it action-oriented.
- Keep it humble.

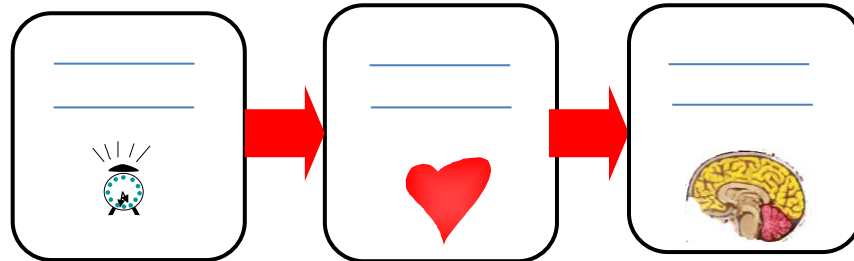
The Secret Language of Leadership

(Steve Denning)

The western intellectual tradition



Effective presentation to get action



“Good storytelling is a hallmark of effective leadership.”

–Daniel Goleman

Criteria for Springboard Stories (Denning, 2000):

1. Must be _____
2. Must be _____
3. Must be _____

Opportunity for Application

Identify a story to develop or evaluate. In the context of Extension, consider a story that highlights Extension's Brand Promise:

*Extension provides practical education you can trust,
To help people, businesses, and communities
Solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.*

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE CHANGING LIVES

If you are struggling to identify your own story within Extension, consider stories already published online that convey the potential of Extension. The following sites may spark ideas:

- <https://www.agency229.cals.vt.edu/impact.html>
- <https://landgrantimpacts.org/>
- <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/community-stories>
- <https://www.loveyourbrain.com/community-stories>
- <https://www.everyday-democracy.org/stories>
- <https://www.cnn.com/specials/cnn-heroes>
- <https://time.com/collection/next-generation-leaders/>

What the focus of the story you have identified?

Who needs to hear this story? Why would they benefit?



Types of Stories*

(Simmons, 2019)

“Who I Am” Stories

A “Who I Am” story is often personal and helps the listener see who you are. A funny or humorous story may help people relax so they can listen to what you want to tell them. However, you don’t always have to tell a personal. You may use a fable, a parable, a current event, a historical tale, or a story you heard from a friend.

“Why I Am Here” Stories

When you are marketing or advocating for Extension, people want to know, what is in it for **you** before you tell them what is in it for **them**. A “Why I Am Here” story allows you to explain your goals in a way that makes sense to the listener. This type of story provides a believable reason for your good intentions.

“My Vision” Stories

To truly influence a listener, they must understand what is in it for them. What do you want from them and what will they get out of it? What is your vision? Tell a story that paints a picture for the listener. This story may be the most difficult story to tell.

“Teaching” Stories

This type of story addresses “what” and “how” to do something, such as learning a new skill. If you tell a story about the best volunteer you know or a best Extension practice in action it may allow the listener to think about what they might do or how they might do something in a similar situation. A “teaching” story allows a listener to think about how they might use a new skill.

“Values in Action” Stories

The best way to teach is by example, and people learn best from experience. When you can provide neither an example nor an experience, a story may be the next most. Tell a story about your personal experience that expresses your values and demonstrates your credibility.

“I Know What You Are Thinking” Stories

When you do your homework on a group or person you would like to influence, you have the opportunity to identify any concerns they may have regarding your message. If you can name their concerns first or let them know that “I know what you are thinking,” you may be able to win them over or diffuse their concerns before you get to your main message.

* Adapted from Strengthening Extension Advisory Leaders curriculum on “Advocating Extension Through Storytelling,” available at <https://campus.extension.org/mod/page/view.php?id=26520>



My Stories*

Developing Ideas for My Stories

My “Who I Am” Story

My “Why I Am Here” Story

My “Vision” Story

My “Teaching” Story

My “Values in Action” Story

My “I Know What You Are Thinking” Story

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Storytelling Worksheet*

Story Title _____

What type of story will you tell?

- Who I am story
- Why I am here story
- My vision story
- Teaching story
- Values in action story
- I know what you are thinking story

How does your story begin?

What problem has to be solved or what is the purpose of the story?

List the sequence of events in outline form.

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Describe the most exciting part of the story.

How does your end?

Are there any repeated words or phrases that are important to memorize?

What will the listener take away from the story?

What will you say to end the story?



Storytelling Criteria*

Some of the criteria that may help you develop a meaningful story include:

- Tell something about you or your organization that the listeners' may not know
- Have a clear and persuasive message
- Avoid content that is arrogant or self-serving
- Avoid sarcasm and negative comments
- Avoid preaching
- Include an identifiable concept
- Relate to a current issue
- Communicate empathy or understanding
- Start a conversation
- Include humor

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Storytelling Tips*

- Tell the stories you already love to tell.
- Tell a story you heard from a friend or colleague. Give credit to the original storyteller.
- Books, fables, fairy tales, parables, current events or historical tales are good material for storytelling.
- Be honest when you tell a story.
- Be sincere about feelings and emotions.
- A good story has three parts – the beginning, the middle, and the end.
- Visualize your story and tell it as you see it.
- Incorporate the five senses into your story – sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch.
- Make eye contact with your listeners and gesture naturally.
- Pauses are powerful.
- Speak clearly, but loudly enough to be heard. Breathe normally.
- Practice telling your story out loud.
- Use a story only when it is appropriate.
- Use your story to create a bridge to the main message.

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Marketing Cooperative Extension Organizations and Extension Local Foods Educational Programs:

A Review of Online Practices Used Across the South*

[Reprinted from <http://srdc.msstate.edu/foods/online-marketing.html>.]

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

This study examined online marketing of Extension as an organization and Extension programs specifically aimed at local food system development across the Southern Region. Some evidence suggests that low online engagement on Twitter and Facebook could be enhanced with increased marketing clarity and frequency. From a review of Facebook, Twitter, and website data, we found several areas that, if strengthened, would significantly improve access to Extension clientele in every state. What are the key steps to strengthen Extension's branding and online marketing? Four steps could be taken:

- ✓ **Step One: Make Extension clientele the hero of the story in all marketing collateral;** focus on their problems instead of showcasing only programs and those who deliver them;
- ✓ **Step Two: Connect with Extension clientele with marketing messages that are clearly focused on showing empathy and authority;** empathy and authority build trust;
- ✓ **Step Three: Market Extension programs as solutions to Extension clientele problems;** solving client problems improves participation in Extension programs;
- ✓ **Step Four: Market Extension programs as solutions that transform Extension clientele's lives into better lives, and show what both of those look like, clearly;** use more social proof on websites, social media, and email marketing campaigns.

Nonprofit Storytelling 101

(from The Modern Nonprofit, <https://themodernnonprofit.com/storytelling-101-for-nonprofits/>)

- Tell stories about your cause and who you are helping rather than your organization.
- Keep your message simple.
- Make some element of your message positive, evoking amusement or inspiration.
- In your conclusion, convey urgency and a clear call-to-action
- Include photos and videos!
- Share simply and meaningfully on Pinterest and Instagram
- Allow your supporters to tell their own stories.

More Tips from The Modern Nonprofit

(reprinted from <https://themodernnonprofit.com/community-stories/>)

1. **Set clear goals:** know why you're sharing stories from your community and define how the effort will advance your mission and goals.
2. **Stay flexible:** you'll learn more over time about works and what doesn't work when it comes to storytelling in your community. Stay open to new formats and ideas, as long as they still help advance your main goal.
3. **Ask if your stories pass the 'so-what' test:** imagine what your audience will do when they see your story in their feed. Will they be interested in what it's about, or will they think, 'so what?' and move on? If it falls into the second category, you should think twice before sharing.
4. **Make it easy for people to participate:** people might be busy, but will usually take time out of a packed schedule to participate if you make them feel good about it. Making it simple and fun for people to share their stories is an important part of any storytelling initiative.

STORYTELLING

Immendorf, M., Griffin, A. and Geith, C., (2020). *Impact Collaborative Innovation Skill-Building Experience Workbook*. Kansas City: eXtension Foundation. ISBN: 978-1-7340417-5-0.

Telling Stories

The most effective way to tell express your idea is to tell it as a story, not a sequence of dull slides. Your story should be personal and compelling. It's the journey of your innovation project/program from idea to your next steps and future. It's about painting a picture of the potential impacts and change that you are co-creating with your community.

What are you asking for?

You need to attract team members. You need to attract stakeholders. You need to attract support in the form of the 4-Ts: Time, Talent, Treasure, and Ties. Your passion and your personal commitment will only take you so far. Keep in mind, the African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Ideally, you'd have all the time in the world to tell your team's story but in reality, you may only have a very brief opportunity to sell the change you seek with your team's project idea. You need to be able to seize those chance opportunities like a shared elevator ride or a chance encounter in your community. For those really brief opportunities, you should have a 1-minute pitch to achieve your "attraction" goal.

Practice Makes the Perfect Pitch

Sample 1-minute pitch:

Who you are	:5 sec
The Challenge, Issue, or Opportunity	:15 sec
Your Idea	:15 sec
Who benefits and how do they benefit (potential community impact)	:10 sec
Partners (potential or on-board)	:10 sec
The Ask	:5 sec

Depending on your audience, you may want to tweak your Ask - what action/support you desire. For example, if you want the person (or group) listening to join your team - let them know!

You also may have an opportunity to schedule a time to meet and you have a little more time to make your pitch. After honing your 1-minute pitch, a 3 or 5-minute pitch will seem downright luxurious!

Sample 3-minute Pitch

Who you are	:10 sec
The Challenge, Issue, or Opportunity	:30 sec
Why Statement	:10 sec
Your Idea	:30 sec
Who benefits and how do they benefit (potential community impact)-short term	:15 sec
Potential community impact -medium term	:15 sec
Partners (potential or on-board)	:10 sec
Validation data to support your idea (results from pilots, surveys, sign-ups, focus groups, interviews, etc.)	:30 sec
The Wow!	:20 sec
The Ask	:10 sec

For a 3-minute pitch, you could add your Why statement - the ultimate goal/condition change your team seeks. Be sure to share how your project/program idea will contribute to the long-term change. You can also share more potential local community impacts as well as the data to support your idea that you gathered through pilots, surveys, sign-ups, prototypes, etc. Right before your Ask, you can also wow your listener(s) with the compelling, unique features that will make them say, "Wow!"

NOTES:

STORYTELLING

Sample 5-minute Pitch

Who you are	:10 sec
The Challenge, Issue, or Opportunity	:30 sec
Why Statement	:15 sec
Your Idea	:60 sec
Who benefits and how do they benefit (potential community impact)-short term	:20 sec
Potential community impact -medium term	:20 sec
Partners (potential or on-board)	:15 sec
Validation data to support your idea (results from pilots, surveys, sign-ups, focus groups, interviews, etc.)	:60 sec
The Wow!	20 sec
Key unknowns	:30 sec
The Ask	:10 sec

The 5-minute pitch adds time to give more details as well as sharing your project idea's key unknowns that you would like help with or have plans to explore.

NOTES:

Whether you have 1, 3, or 5 minutes, these pitch outlines give general guidance on how to use the time you have. All will require discipline to be sure to cover enough to get your Ask, but also be interesting and compelling to spark conversation and growth. Your listener(s) will likely be listening for these pitch characteristics:

- Is the story compelling?
- Is the issue clearly stated?
- Is there a need?
- Is the idea clearly stated?
- Is the diversity of the community represented (through team membership and/or partners)?
- Is the Ask realistic?

Activity: Pitches

Objective: Create a 1-5 minute pitch for your project/program.

1. Prepare a timed pitch (1, 3, or 5 minutes) as needed. Use the Pitch outline and your Innovation Canvas as your guide and inspiration.
2. Share your pitch as directed by your workshop facilitators.
3. Incorporate feedback to help with future pitches.

Actions:

- Prepare a 1, 3, or 5 -minute pitch
- Review and practice your presentation with trusted, knowledgeable people so that you will have a very short, compelling pitch ready at any time.

Extra Resources

[1-min Pitch Playlist](#)



[3-min Pitch Playlist](#)

