

STORY-TELLING TO BECOME CHANGE MANAGEMENT MASTERS

While we are all bombarded with more information than we can possibly process, it makes the power of the story ever more compelling. People will remember a powerful visual, how music made them feel, strong scents, and the memorable story of what happened. It's why every serial drama leaves the tale incomplete until the next episode.

Our anticipated future must be so compelling that our customers, boards, employees, and families are willing to go on the journey. To facilitate change – which is all that a journey is – requires master story-telling capabilities. Leaders who can paint a word picture that people carry with them later will be able to recite where we're going, why we're going there, what must be left behind, and what must be figured out without needing a script. What remains unknown is how we will be changed as a result of the journey we experience.

Four Stories You Must Know

Steve Denning identified ["The Four Stories You Must Know"](#) in order to be change masters. In abbreviated format they are:

The Past



Why the Past Won't Work Anymore



The Future



The Bridging Story



These four stories can be used whether you are working on a personnel issue or whether you are communicating the grand vision for a company or organization's future.

The Past: Always honor from whence you have come and contributions from those upon which you stand – those who founded, contributed, and envisioned where you are now, and have been emotionally, financially, leadership, and time donors. Just because you may be leaving certain facets of your operation, culture, work methods, and so forth behind does not mean that they weren't the exact right things for the moments in which they were conceived and executed. Arrogance never looks good on leaders. *Honor and praise!*

Why The Past Won't Work Anymore: It is important for us to have backup for why things must change. Facts, research, and input from those affected (customers and employees), help shape the reasoning behind the story we are telling. This phase appeals to the rational and the emotional. So if the numbers tell us a startling truth about our reality if we don't change, we can share those facts, and then we must tie that to the emotion of a core value that we all want our company to have so we can thrive and exist in the new reality. Appeal to the values and emotions using the facts as your underpinning. *Disclose and expose!*

The Future: Paint with words and show them where we are going and the positive impact of the new direction, and then be sure to tell them where their home is in the changed reality. Everyone wants to matter. Everyone wants to know they fit. Remove the fear. Asking people to step up and do more is not where the greatest resistance comes from, it's being afraid they won't be invited

to the party. Even those who are your greatest detractors, and who may still want it to be like it was, desire to be a cog in the wheel. ***Reassure and explain!***

The Bridge Between the Past and the Future: Outlining a new reality or a significant change can be compelling, both in the grandeur of being part of something bigger than ourselves and making a contribution, as well as the willingness to participate to avert a crisis. However, everyone needs to know the practical steps of how we will get from our current state, individually and as an organization, to the future state. Address both. In an announcement, cover all the ground that you possibly can to remove questions in advance. With the specifics of individual roles, get to everyone as a priority as fast as you can so no one is left wondering. Be clear and specific about what we're going to do, who is going to do it, and when it begins. ***Invite and enlist!***

Identification of Champions

In every new scenario, there are early adopters. Find them, and enroll them as your champions. Yes, you will feel like a broken record, declaring the same new reality, the same plan, and the same journey milestones over and over and over again. People will need to hear it from you in order to trust that this is in fact the change that is really under way and not something else that is not transparent. Your travel along the change curve will move faster to acceptance and new confidence the larger the number of people are who are carrying the story in a positive manner. ***Recruit and deploy!***

Transform through Words

Everyone's greatest power to transform, lead, and assist others through change comes through their choice of words. Painting compelling futures with your words, praise, understanding, and shepherding allows others to step into an exciting future with you, while letting go of a past that no longer serves them well with greater ease. Practice becoming a change management master by authoring stories that relate to each of the audiences to which your message will be delivered. Commonalties should exist with regards to the central message, and yet, your choice of words should also be selected to match how each recipient will best hear, receive, process, and act upon the story's premise. Watch others step into transformation and become champions of a new future, as you master story-telling.