

STORYTELLING

FOR TRUST, TRUTH, AND PROFIT

Ivan Illich, the Austrian philosopher, was once asked what is the most powerful way to change society. He said, "Neither revolution nor reformation can ultimately change a society, rather you must tell a new powerful tale, one so persuasive that it sweeps away the old myths and becomes the preferred story." If a story can do that for a culture, imagine what it can do for our relationships and business. Yet, we rely on PowerPoint and bullet-points to convince our clients to work with us. We build trust the slooooooow way — over years, because we don't know how to tell a powerful, personal story. Storytelling is a hack to trust, truth, and profit. And it may just be the most powerful tool in your leadership toolbox...that you've never used. So how do you tell a story in 20 seconds or less? Welcome to the 1-2-1 Story Formula: 1 point, 2 halves, and 1 unforgettable detail. It's the simplest way to tell a personal or business story.

1

POINT

Does it serve your audience?

"Experience is the best teacher. A compelling story is a close second." - Paul Smith

A story is not entertainment. It's service. If your story does not serve your audience, you're doing it wrong. (You may even be one of "those people" who tell stories that people aren't interested in.) Stories teach. Stories build trust. Stories have a point. Find out what that point is and build your story around it. Not three points. One point. Eliminate all the bunny-trails that pull attention away from your point. Remember, "the more you leave out, the more you highlight what you leave in" (Henry Green).

2

HALVES

Does it have a before and after?

"There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories." - Ursula K. LeGuin

All great stories have one thing in common: change! If nothing changes in your story, you don't have a story; you have monotony. But it's not that complicated to turn monotony into a story. Just ask yourself, "What is the before state? And what is the after state?" This is the structure to your story. That's it! This is not a 9-part formula or 13-point formula (trust me, they actually exist). It's just two halves. E.g. "We expected X to happen, but instead Y happened!" Or "This was the problem, and now this is our solution!" Try it out. Almost anything can become a story when you remember two halves.

1

UNFORGETTABLE DETAIL

Specifics make the story

"The highest compliment that I ever received as a storyteller was: 'Your stories are so specific that they are universal.'" - Solomon Davis

Specifics make the story. Think of all your favourite movies. One unforgettable detail will always come to mind — an image or a line. E.g. "You can take my life but you'll never take my FREEEEDOM!" from Braveheart, "Get busy living or get busy dying" from The Shawshank Redemption, Kramer's hair from Seinfeld. The details tell the story in a nutshell. Now, you don't need to write movies to be able to do this. The easiest way to do this is to include a dialogue in your story. If there's no dialogue, describe exactly what you were thinking when the UN-THINKABLE happened.