

Why Storytelling Skills Make You a Better Business Leader



A guest post by Laura Montgomery originally published on [The Economist Education Navigator](#)

“Storytelling” has become a ubiquitous buzzword in the business world as the marketers’ pursuit to weave the most creative and compelling narratives about their brands and products races on. Let’s take a look at why this has become such a hot topic, and what you can do to become a stronger storyteller yourself.

Why businesses need powerful narratives

Storytelling is being increasingly utilized for building customer loyalty externally, as well as for motivating internal stakeholders and developing stronger connections among employees internally.

Why are stories the chosen tool to achieve these aims? Because they serve as emotional “handholds” for communicating the

complex information that we seek, explains storytelling expert Frank Rose. “You can memorise data, but to have it change opinion and behaviour you need story,” says Rose, who co-teaches an executive-education course at Columbia Business School on storytelling strategy.

The art of storytelling in a digital world

Here’s a quick, well, *story* to illustrate Rose’s view on storytelling strategy: Back in 2006, as a journalist for Wired magazine, Rose interviewed director James Cameron, who was filming Avatar at the time. “He told me the best way to think about the story was as a fractal experience,” recalls Rose. “The casual viewer could enjoy the movie on a basic level. But for the more intense fan, the meaning could unfold in unlimited powers of ten, all within a unified experience.”

Rose likens Cameron’s approach to cinematic storytelling to contemporary media – a fragmented yet unified universe where we can tell stories that allow greater or lesser degrees of involvement.

Key ingredients of successful storytelling

You can find stories almost anywhere you look in a company – an earnings chart, a corporate timeline, a client testimonial. The real challenge is to develop stories that are true, interesting and engaging to your unique audience. Whether the end destination is on billboards or in boardrooms, Rose highlights four key qualities of compelling stories:

1. Originality

Do an honest inventory to discover what is unique about your brand or company – its founding, evolution and vision for changing the world.

2. Authenticity

What does your company stand for? How do leaders and employees feel about the business? Try to focus on real people and genuine emotions.

3. Empathy

Even when a story is about your company or product, the customer should always be the focal point. How does who and what you are translate into customer benefits?

4. Consistency

Finally, it's crucial to define a singular voice and tone you will use to tell your story across various media and platforms.

The only question that remains is: What stories could *you* be telling?



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