



STORYTELLING

Pocketbook

A pocketful of tips,
techniques and tools
on how to use stories
to inspire and persuade
people

Roger E. Jones

THE STORYTELLING POCKETBOOK

By Roger E. Jones

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

"We live in the participation economy. A time when stories and conversations are what count; marketing has changed forever, moving from creating awareness and demand to inviting the audience to join a movement. And all movements are based on a great story. This book will help you become the best storyteller you can be. And it's fun too!"

Kevin Roberts, Worldwide CEO, Saatchi & Saatchi

"Good stories have impact. This helpful book gives you a practical guide on how to create, shape and deliver yours."

**Rob Goffee, Professor of Organisational Behaviour, London Business School
and joint author of *Why Should Anyone Be Led by You?***

"The art of storytelling has become key to successful leadership and organisation change. Roger Jones' *how to* pocketbook gives today's managers the know-how to develop this art to make a real and practical difference to their leadership effectiveness."

Professor Frank Horwitz, Director, Cranfield School of Management

Praise for the Storytelling Pocketbook

"In a constantly changing world, leading and influencing change is a necessity for anyone in business. This book provides an enjoyable and practical guide to how to use storytelling to engage your audience and increase your chances for success. Unless you are a hermit, living on a desert island, this book will be of use to you."

**Frank Douglas, Executive Vice President, Group Human Resources Director,
Misys plc**

"I used to love stories as a child but never realised their power in business until I went to one of Roger's seminars. This book brings the power of the story to life in real and practical terms. It leaves the reader with a real sense of why stories matter, from the cooking (up a plot) stage, to the *when, how* and *where* of delivery. It's not just a must read for those engaged in engaging others, it's also an entertaining one."

Simon Levine, Global Practice Group Leader, DLA Piper UK LLP

"I've always admired people who tell great stories and have been intrigued by how they do it. This book demystifies the art of storytelling and gives many practical pointers for using stories in different contexts. I will definitely be using the tips and techniques in the book to build my story library and become a more effective storyteller."

Sarah Henbrey, Director of Organisational Development, Three UK

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WHY STORIES MATTER

WHY STORIES MATTER



HOW THE AUTHOR DISCOVERED THE POWER OF STORYTELLING IN BUSINESS

In November 1996 I worked for a multinational technology firm with responsibility for their key global customers. I had been asked to deliver our company's presentation at one of our industry's global conferences in Mexico. I prepared diligently: gathered lots of statistics and graphs, described product features and thought of ways to tell the audience why we were the best. I had a modest 50 PowerPoint slides.

In no time at all, there I was in the bland hotel conference room, walking up on stage to deliver my talk. The audience looked moderately interested. And I must confess I walked off the stage feeling a little smug, thinking I had done a pretty good job. I even received a warm ripple of applause.

My talk was followed by a coffee break, and I saw the next speaker, the CEO of a large US firm, getting ready to give his presentation. I must confess I thought: there's no way he's going to be as good as me.

WHY STORIES MATTER



HOW THE AUTHOR DISCOVERED THE POWER OF STORYTELLING IN BUSINESS

He walked on stage but didn't stand at the podium as I had done, didn't use any prompt notes as I had done and didn't show any PowerPoint slides as I had done.

Standing at the front of the stage he told a whole series of stories, with just a few facts sprinkled in here and there. He told a change management story about how, as a wayward teenager, he had changed after talking to a policeman; when talking about sales growth, he didn't use graphs but talked about his blossoming garden; on leadership, rather than the usual examples of great generals and leaders from history, he talked about a teacher and the leadership lessons he learnt from her.

When he walked off stage, he didn't receive a warm ripple of applause as I had done – he got a standing ovation. My heart sank as I recognised what a poor job I had done, as a leader, in trying to inspire the audience with my logic. It was then that I realised that great leaders are invariably great storytellers.

It was then that I realised that storytelling solves the problem I had faced in the past – how to get your message to 'stick' and inspire people to take action. It was that experience that turned me into a storytelling advocate.

WHY STORIES MATTER

SO WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?



This pocketbook is for anyone who wants to use pragmatic storytelling to help them achieve results in their day-to-day work. For example:

- Supervisors who want to have more productive team meetings
- Consultants who want to make the complex simple to understand
- Salespeople who want to engage customers on an emotional level
- Managers who want to increase their confidence levels
- HR professionals who want to engage employees
- Advertising executives who want to tell compelling stories for their clients
- Trainers who want their teaching messages to stick
- Executive coaches looking for a new tool
- Companies wanting to encourage innovation
- Company directors who want to get buy-in for their strategy
- Managers wanting to keep and harness the knowledge in their organisation
- Entrepreneurs wanting to excite people with their ideas
- Leaders who want to be more authentic and less remote...

WHY STORIES MATTER

WHY WE NEED TO TELL STORIES



Everyday we are bombarded with information and our business world grows in complexity. At the same time we need a better way to persuade people, get our messages to stick and inspire action. PowerPoint presentations make audiences doze off, facts and figures are often dull and traditional change management techniques rarely convince.

We know anecdotally that stories are memorable, just from those we recall friends recounting. Yet few managers and leaders use storytelling as a strategic tool to communicate their organisations' values, get their people to embrace change and inspire even higher levels of performance.

Robin Dunbar, anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist, estimates that around two-thirds of our conversations are about who is doing what and with whom, ie stories. So storytelling is second nature to us all. Developing our innate storytelling skills helps us harness a natural activity – to tell stories – but in a purposeful authentic way with a clear business aim.

In this pocketbook we are going to explore how you can use storytelling in a pragmatic way to achieve results. So let's first look at some things stories can do, that facts, figures and logic can't.

WHY STORIES MATTER

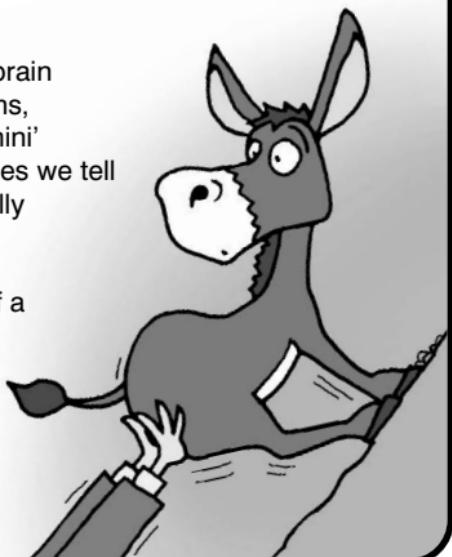
WHERE STORIES BEAT FACTS



Stories are memorable. We are 20 times more likely to remember a fact if it is wrapped in a story.

Stories support how the mind works. Although we use left brain 'logical' thinking when, for example, we are solving problems, much of our thinking time comprises us telling ourselves 'mini' stories. Psychologists call this 'narrative thinking' – the stories we tell ourselves connect our thoughts, create tension and hopefully satisfy us.

Stories pull us towards the storyteller's conclusion. Think of a story as a bit like Aikido, a form of martial art that works by using another person's own momentum to propel him or her where you want. A story does the same. Whereas using facts is a push persuasion strategy, just like pushing a resistant donkey uphill.



WHY STORIES MATTER

WHERE STORIES BEAT FACTS



Stories convey emotions effectively and bring energy to our communication. We remember what we feel. And it's our emotions that inspire us to take action, **not** facts.

Stories spark our interest and have the ability to transport us imaginatively to places where we can visualise the events being recounted.

Stories help prevent what psychologists call 'confirmation bias'. It's the tendency for people to favour information that confirms their preconceptions, regardless of whether the information is true. As a result, people gather evidence and recall information from memory selectively, and interpret it in a biased way. So if someone tries to convince us to change our minds with facts and figures, we often dig our heels in and resist.

Confirmation bias occurs in change management initiatives, sales situations, when implementing strategies or making financial decisions, in politics and in our personal beliefs. But stories gently guide the listener, without proposing opposing facts, to **our** conclusions.

WHY STORIES MATTER

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO STORYTELLING



Now at this point you may be thinking, '*Hmm...I can see how these stories 'might' be useful, but is it really a good idea to tell stories in business? After all...*'

- '*No one else uses them.*' – Not true. You will see in the next chapter that companies around the world use stories to achieve business aims
- '*Stories are just 'fluff'!*' – They can be, but they don't have to be. We are going to focus on pragmatic storytelling
- '*I won't be able to find good stories.*' – It's much easier than you think to find good stories, as you will discover in the 'where to find stories' chapter
- '*Telling stories will make me appear to be an actor.*' – You may be a budding actor, but you certainly don't have to be. This book will show you how to tell stories in everyday business situations by being yourself

WHY STORIES MATTER

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO STORYTELLING



- '*Stories will make me appear boring.*' – Only if you repeat the same one over and over again. This pocketbook will show you how to develop and tell stories so you appear more authentic and confident
- '*Stories will never replace facts.*' – This is true in some situations, for example when it comes to sharing critical skills. You certainly wouldn't want a pilot to learn their job by listening to or reading stories. And there are times when only facts are appropriate, for example when you are presenting your financial results to shareholders
- '*Stories are not a panacea for all business problems.*' – This is true, but as you will discover when you read this book, stories can help you overcome your key business challenges
- '*Telling a good story is difficult.*' – Later in this book you will discover that storytelling is easier than learning to ride a bike
- '*The word 'story' will switch people off.*' – Yes that can happen, especially in professions based on logic like accountancy and engineering. In such cases, just use the term 'narrative' or 'narrative case study' instead

WHY STORIES MATTER



EXERCISE

Become a story detective:

- Listen to how your colleagues and customers use stories in their daily conversations
- Find out who in your organisation is a natural storyteller. Listen to how and when they tell stories. What can you learn from them?
- When you read a daily newspaper or watch the TV news, observe how journalists craft their stories
- Look at websites, charity mailings, promotional literature – stories are everywhere

Enjoy your storytelling journey and remember...
...you don't need an MBA to be a great storyteller.

About the Author

Roger E. Jones

In his early career Roger was an oil exploration geologist in West Africa. After gaining an MBA degree at Cranfield School of Management he then worked around the world, in marketing, business development and general management roles.

In 1996, he discovered the power of storytelling after seeing a CEO deliver a truly inspiring conference speech, using simple stories. This experience ignited his interest into researching how storytelling could be employed to persuade, inspire action and make change happen.

Roger started his own business in 2001, to help business people harness the power of storytelling. The *Financial Times* and *The Sunday Times* have featured his storytelling workshops and *Forbes* reviewed his last book. He enjoys delivering 'pragmatic storytelling' coaching programmes, workshops and conference speeches, to leaders and managers in companies across all business sectors, throughout Europe, Asia and the USA.

The Leaders' Storytelling Network provides regular new resources you might find of interest, for more information and to join, please visit: www.RogerEdwardJones.com

Contact

Roger would be happy to have a 'no obligation' conversation with you to discuss how his 'pragmatic storytelling' services might help you and your company achieve your goals.

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