



Module 27 – STORYTELLING FOR LEADERS

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The Leadership Academy is a learning and action programme for mayors, senior officials and elected representatives of local government.

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1 CONTENT

2	MODULE OVERVIEW	3
2.1	BACKGROUND	3
2.2	AIM OF THE MODULE.....	3
2.3	PLANNED OUTCOMES:	3
2.4	DURATION	3
3	MODULE STRUCTURE	4
3.1	ACTIVITY – INTRODUCTION TO STORYTELLING	4
3.2	ACTIVITY – IDENTITY STORY EXERCISE	4
3.3	ACTIVITY – JUMP START EXERCISE	4
3.4	ACTIVITY – SPRING BOARD STORY EXERCISE	5
3.5	ACTIVITY – ORGANIZATIONAL STORY AUDIT	5
4	WORKING DEFINITIONS.....	6
4.1	STORY.....	6
4.2	STORYTELLING	6
4.3	IDENTITY STORY	6
4.4	SPRINGBOARD STORY.....	6
5	KEY CONCEPTS	7
5.1	THE PURPOSE OF STORYTELLING IN LEADERSHIP	7
5.2	THE CHALLENGE OF STORY TELLING	7
5.3	THE OPERATING LEVELS OF STORIES.....	7
5.4	FUNCTIONS OF STORIES IN LEADERSHIP.....	8
5.5	COMPONENTS OF THE ART OF STORYTELLING.....	8
6	EXERCISE HANDOUTS	9
6.1	HANDOUT 1: IDENTITY STORIES	9
6.2	HANDOUT 2: STORYTELLING IN LEADERSHIP	12
6.3	HANDOUT 3: JUMPSTART TO COLLABORATION WITH STORYTELLING.....	15
6.4	HANDOUT 4: SPRING BOARD STORIES TO IGNITE ACTION AND IMPLEMENT CHANGE	17
6.5	HANDOUT 5: ORGANIZATIONAL STORY AUDIT	19
	RELEVANT BOOKS AND PAPERS FOR FURTHER READING.....	21

2 MODULE OVERVIEW

2.1 BACKGROUND

Storytelling is part of human experience. When people share their stories, listeners naturally focus their attention, engaging in the teller's experience. Connection and synch emerges between the teller and listeners.

Storytelling is a powerful tool in leaders' communication. Leaders who master the art and discipline of Storytelling can communicate who they are and what they stand for, connect to stakeholders, enable them to imagine new perspectives, transmit complex messages and ignite action. Stories are also essential part of effective management discourse. They help to communicate ideas, build values and trust, and persuade the hesitant or sceptical.

Storytelling is a complementary tool to rational, factual communication because stories operate beyond the rational, they appeal to feelings, emotions and shape sense making of people. Stories can win heart and mind of stakeholders for collaboration.

Everyone can tell stories but the competence to create persuasive narratives can be substantially enhanced by insights into how stories impact followers and guidance to the construction and telling of stories. The purpose of the module is, on the one hand, to offer models for effective narratives, opportunity to practice storytelling and to receive feedback, and on the other hand to support leaders to develop their own portfolio of stories.

2.2 AIM OF THE MODULE

Help participants:

- to understand the role of narratives in leadership communication and the purposes of storytelling
- to learn to construct effective narratives for specific leadership challenges
- to improve skills to tell the story right, that is achieving high impact
- to create a Portfolio of Stories for different contexts and purposes

2.3 PLANNED OUTCOMES:

Participants:

- become aware of the potentials of storytelling in their leadership practice
- understand the principles of creating strong narratives
- develop skills to create effective stories for different purposes
- have their first stories and have received feedback from peers
- know how to develop their own portfolio of stories

As a result, participants will be better prepared to effectively use stories in their work with stakeholders, partners and their staff.

2.4 DURATION

- 270 minutes

3 MODULE STRUCTURE

Storytelling is an essential instrument in state-of-the-art leadership communication. Leaders need to learn to create different stories for different purposes and master the art of performing their stories. Although storytelling is presented here as a module, this fact does not imply that the activities should be presented in consecutive teaching blocks. The activities work much better if presented at times when the key function of the type of story is connected to the actual LAP teaching objectives. In this manner, participants gain deeper experience and understanding of the impact of stories. In order to help trainers to schedule the activities, suggestions are given in the description of each exercise.

3.1 ACTIVITY – INTRODUCTION TO STORYTELLING

The module starts with a short plenary discussion on storytelling. The trainer captures what participants think about storytelling on a flipchart, then, connecting to the list of participants' ideas, introduces the iceberg model¹ and explains the operating levels of stories and the main functions of storytelling in leadership.

3.2 ACTIVITY – IDENTITY STORY EXERCISE

The trainer explains how identity stories can help leaders to establish trustful relation with followers and partners, and to present the leader as the person the community needs.

Then, the trainer gives guidance to the participants how to construct identity stories and distributes Handout 1 on Identity Stories. Participants have 10 minutes to prepare their

identity stories. Stories are told in a plenary session with participants sitting in a circle. After all participants have shared their stories, the group reflects on the experience of storytelling and listening, and on the impact of stories on their relation and group formation. They discuss the role of stories in building connectedness, trust and creating space for open communication. At the end, the trainer captures the key messages on using stories as leadership instruments and distributes Handout 2 on Storytelling in Leadership for later recollection of the ideas discussed.

Activity 1 and 2 make a perfect start for Stage 1 because they offer an unexpected and practical tool for leaders, and at the same time, establish personal connections among group members and a space for the further work where all feel safe and open.

3.3 ACTIVITY – JUMP START EXERCISE²

The Jump start exercise is an excellent first activity for Stage 2 because it gives a good frame for the group to share experiences how they used LAP learning between Stage 1 and 2. At the same time, this activity gives a practical tool for starting meetings engaging participants, and for creating a collaborative space.

The trainer explains the process described in Handout 3, divides participants in groups of 5, and then, lets the groups to organize themselves. After the first round of stories, the trainer invites participants to form new groups and repeat the storytelling process. After the second (or a third round) the trainer asks participants to choose the story that was strongest for them by putting their hands on the shoulder of the storyteller. The best stories are shared in plenary.

The trainer closes the exercise by explaining that the same tool can be effectively used in opening collaborative meetings or public forums, or for

¹ see explanation in part 6.2

² Seth Kahan: The Power of Storytelling to JumpStart Collaboration. [https://visionaryleadership.com/wp-](https://visionaryleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Kahan_JumpStart_Storytelling_JQP.pdf)

[content/uploads/2019/10/Kahan_JumpStart_Storytelling_JQP.pdf](https://visionaryleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Kahan_JumpStart_Storytelling_JQP.pdf)

starting a session of a collaborative process when it is expected that participants arrive either with diverging ideas or with many experiences that they want to share. Finally, the trainer distributes Handout 3 JumpStart to Collaboration with Storytelling so as participants can apply the tool in their communities.

3.4 ACTIVITY – SPRING BOARD STORY EXERCISE

The Springboard story exercise can be connected to the Strategic management, Organizational Culture or Participation module or any other module where the subject is connected to stakeholder collaboration.

At the start of the exercise, the group discusses the difficulty of changing people’s mind, ease fears of change and involving people in the implementation of new strategies. The trainer introduces the Springboard story as a tool for creating buy in and persuading the hesitant. Then, distributes Handout 4 that includes the guidelines for the construction of Springboard stories. Participants create Springboard stories for challenges they face in their own communities. They tell their stories in small groups, mutually comment the stories and present only the best ones in plenary.

3.5 ACTIVITY – ORGANIZATIONAL STORY AUDIT³

This activity should come towards the end of the stage where the topics related to organizational management are presented. It can be an excellent summary for the learning on organizational management.

The trainer recalls the Storytelling iceberg from Stage 1, and in the frame of a plenary session, the group recollects the five levels where stories operate. The trainer distributes Handout 5 and explains the Story Audit Score Card⁴. Participants work individually on the score card. After participants have completed all three tasks on the worksheet, they share experiences in small groups focusing on results where they see big differences in their self-assessment. In case they find such elements, those participants who assessed themselves strong in the given aspect share their practice, i.e. how could they achieve so good results. If there are no substantive differences in the self-assessments, group members should discuss roots of weaknesses and possibilities for improvements. The closing plenary session, if possible, should concentrate on sharing good experiences.

³ Terrence Gargiulo – Patrick Lambe:
Organizational Story Audit Tool.

<http://makingstories.net/documents/storyaudit/viewdocument>

⁴ see card in Handout 5

4 WORKING DEFINITIONS

4.1 STORY

A short narrative account of a set of events that are casually related. In this module, we discuss stories purposefully constructed for supporting leadership activities.

4.2 STORYTELLING

Storytelling is the activity of sharing narrative content in the form of stories. In this module, we focus on oral storytelling. The constructing and performing of leadership stories.

4.3 IDENTITY STORY

The identity story is a short story created to present yourself to an audience. It shows who you are, that is, what is your identity. In leadership, identity stories are key to persuade people that your identity matches the challenge they face.

4.4 SPRINGBOARD STORY

A Springboard story is constructed for helping people to grasp the idea of change the leader is propagating, make followers buying in and energize them to implement the change.

5 KEY CONCEPTS

5.1 THE PURPOSE OF STORYTELLING IN LEADERSHIP

Leaders have to be able to connect to followers and stakeholders and help others to connect to them. They have to be able to establish trustful relation, influence stakeholders and ignite collaboration and action.

A story is personal and it gives some context and detail in order to encourage the imagination of and build connection to the listener. It can touch not only the mind of listeners but their heart as well. It allows them to enter emotionally in the world of the storyteller.

Storytelling differs from objective, explicit, factual communication. Stories reveal their message implicitly through the event. This allows the listeners to come to their own conclusions. This implicit nature, that activates the listener, is key to making a strong impact. And, last but not least! Storytelling is a performance. A performance that taps into the minds and hearts of people who listen.

5.2 THE CHALLENGE OF STORY TELLING⁵

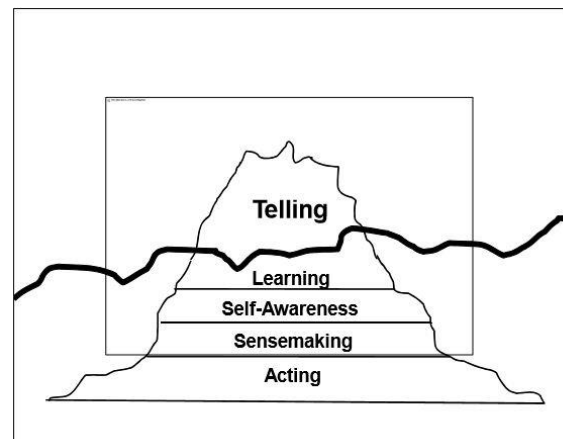
Terrence Gargiulo identifies three key challenges storytellers face: informing, connecting to and emoting the audience.

- The storyteller's need to inform the audience. For this he/she needs to know the audience, determine the needs and share the information in a memorable format.

- The storyteller's need to connect to the audience. For this, he/she needs to think from the audience's perspective, draw upon the things they already know, and "build a bridge of shared meaning".
- The storyteller's need to emote the audience painting pictures that evoke emotions, tap into people's imagination and touch their hearts.

5.3 THE OPERATING LEVELS OF STORIES⁶

Terrence Gargiulo and Patrick Lambe have visualized the operating levels of stories in the form of an Iceberg.



Telling the story is above the water. This is the activity we see and hear. The other levels are depicted under the water because they happen in the mind and heart of the listener.

⁵ Terrence Gargiulo: Intro to the Power of Storytelling. 2013.

<http://makingstories.net/documents/intro-to-the-power-of-storytelling/viewdocument>

⁶ Explanation of the layers of the iceberg in Terrence Gargiulo – Patrick Lambe: Organizational

Story Audit Tool.
<http://makingstories.net/documents/storyaudit/viewdocument>

Stories can communicate complex ideas and make connections between events comprehensible. The learning level is reached when the listeners understand the story. We not only learn from stories, we also connect what we hear to our own experiences. This develops our self-awareness. When a coherent story is crafted from events, observations, perceptions, beliefs and interpretations, one concept of reality is created. This is the sense making process. Finally, stories present templates for behaviors and support acting according to these templates.

A more detailed explanation of the layers of the iceberg is in Terrence Gargiulo – Patrick Lambe: Organizational Story Audit Tool. <http://makingstories.net/documents/storyaudit/viewdocument>

5.4 FUNCTIONS OF STORIES IN LEADERSHIP

Leaders do not use stories just to entertain their audience. They tell stories with purpose. They consciously construct and perform their stories so that they really fulfill their specific function. Many authors have listed the functions of leadership stories and created taxonomies. We take here one, Stephen Denning’s taxonomy published in his book on storytelling for leaders⁷.

- Motivate Others to Action: Using Narrative to Ignite Action and Implement New Ideas
- Build Trust in You: Using Narrative to Communicate Who You Are
- Build Trust in Your Organization: Using Narrative to Build Your Brand
- Transmit Your Values: Using Narrative to Instill Organizational Values
- Get Others Working Together: Using Narrative to Get Things Done Collaboratively

- Share Knowledge: Using Narrative to Transmit Knowledge and Understanding
- Tame the Grapevine: Using Narrative to Neutralize Gossip and Rumor
- Create and Share Your Vision: Using Narrative to Lead People into the Future

5.5 COMPONENTS OF THE ART OF STORYTELLING⁸

Leaders who developed a strong competence in story telling master not only how to tell a specific story but enter in an ongoing complex activity. Across their daily life, they observe and listen with a story perspective, connect to people and encourage them to share their own stories (eliciting). They are aware that what they understand and experience can be translated into their own stories. They think of stories, reflect how they could be used, and they gradually build up a portfolio of stories that contains some good stories for each different leadership challenge.

The flower below is the visual depiction of the components of the Art of Storytelling that was developed by Terrence Gargiulo.



⁷ Stephen Denning: Leaders’ guide to story telling. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2005

⁸ Terrence Gargiulo: Intro to the Power of Storytelling. 2013. <http://makingstories.net/documents/intro-to-the-power-of-storytelling/viewdocument>

6 EXERCISE HANDOUTS

6.1 HANDOUT 1: IDENTITY STORIES

Identity Stories – Build Trust in You by Communicating Who You Are

„Our fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definition is . . . telling stories, and more particularly concocting and controlling the story we tell others—and ourselves—about who we are.” —

Daniel Dennett

Leaders have to meet many people and often speak in groups. They have to be able to connect to their audience and help others to connect to them. They also have to be able to establish trustful relation with followers and partners. A good personal story is the best way to gain a face in others’ eyes and to initiate trusting relations. Through a story, you can give insight into who you are and what you stand for. By revealing some aspects of your personality, you can present yourself as the leader that your community needs, a leader who can help them to face the challenge they face.

The short story created to present yourself, is an ‘identity story’. It tells an event from your life that shows you possess all those personality traits that are necessary to be a good leader in the given context. An identity story is vivid, personal and it gives some context and detail in order to encourage imagination and connection. It also has drama that opens door for people to enter emotionally. At the same time, it does not spell out the message explicitly. It reveals the message implicitly through the event. This allows the listeners to feel the message and to feel that they have reached their own conclusions. Being implicit is key to making a strong impact. And, last but not least! When you tell your story, you make a performance. A performance that taps into the minds and hearts of people who listen.

Examples for Identity stories⁹

One good example of an identity story is the one of Michael Dell, founder and chairman of the Dell Computer Corporation, about something he did when he was twelve years old. We present it in the form cited by Stephen Denning in his book on storytelling for leaders:

“The father of my best friend was a pretty avid stamp collector, so now naturally my friend and I wanted to get into stamp collecting, too. To fund my interest in stamps, I got a job as a water boy in a Chinese restaurant two blocks from my house. I started reading stamp journals just for fun, and soon began noticing that prices were rising. Before long, my interest in stamps began to shift from the joy of collecting to the idea that there was something here that my mother, a stockbroker, would have termed “a commercial opportunity.” . . .

⁹ Both examples taken are from Stephen Denning: *Leaders’ guide to story telling*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2005

I was about to embark upon one of my very first business ventures. First, I got a bunch of people in the neighbourhood to consign their stamps to me. Then I advertised “Dell’s Stamps” in Linn’s Stamp Journal, the trade journal of the day. And then I typed, with one finger, a twelve-page catalogue . . . and mailed it out. Much to my surprise, I made \$2000. And I learned an early, powerful lesson about the rewards of eliminating the middleman. I also learned that if you’ve got a good idea, it pays to do something about it.”

Another great identity story, is the one of John Edwards, the Democratic candidate for vice president in 2004, cited from cited by Stephen Denning in his book on storytelling for leaders:

“I grew up in a small town in rural North Carolina. My father worked in a mill all his life, and I will never forget the men and women who worked with him. They had lint in their hair and grease on their faces. They worked hard and tried to put a little something away every week so their kids and their grandkids could have a better life. They are just like the auto workers, office workers, teachers, and shop keepers on Main Streets all across America.

My mother had a number of jobs. Her last job was working at the post office so my parents could have health care. And she owned her own small business—refinishing furniture to help pay for me to go to college.

I have had such incredible opportunities in my life, and I was blessed to be the first person in my family to go to college. I worked my way through, and I have had opportunities way beyond what I could have ever imagined.

And the heart of this campaign—your campaign—is to make sure that everyone has those same opportunities that I had growing up—no matter where you live, who your family is, or what the color of your skin is. This is the America we believe in.”

A Guide for Creating Identity Stories

Keep your story short! Identity stories should be short and strong so as they can keep the audience's attention. Your story should not be longer than 60 seconds!

1. Determine what is your message! Decide what personality trait(s) you want to convey with the message! You should identify personality traits that are most relevant to the leadership challenge that connects you and your constituency. Write the personality traits on the top of a paper! This is key to your story but it is a key you should never tell explicitly.
2. Select a story! Find an event from your life that reveals the aspect of your personality you selected during the first step! Write it up on a separate paper!
3. Select the key elements of the story and write key words about them under your targeted message:
 - a. the relevant elements of the time and context
 - b. the dramatic element/turning point and your role in it
 - c. the result – what has changed, what have you realized...
 - d. how you and/or others related, felt, reacted...
4. Construct the story!
 - a. keep the paper with your message and story points in front of you!
 - b. take another sheet of paper and start writing:
 - i. Introduce the story! Give indication of time and participants! - "I will tell you about....."
 - ii. Give context! Give a good description of the context! - "I was in/we were in..."
 - iii. Describe the situation / challenge! "I/we needed/wanted/wished to..."
 - iv. Describe the dramatic point! Elaborate on the challenge! - "But..."
 - v. Reveal the solution! Tell what did you do that made you the hero/s of the story! - "At this point, I/we..."
 - vi. Tell about the outcome! Tell what was the result and indicate how it impacted you and the others! - "And then, ..."
 - c. Do not explain you message in an explicit form! Trust your audience and leave them the freedom to understand you.
 - d. Keep in mind!
"Our job as story communicators is to unleash possibilities. The specifics of our message and their significance are decoded by receivers." (Terrence Gargiulo)
5. Practice to tell the story! Try to tell it to yourself, to friends or others, see how they react and seek advice!
6. Tell the story! When you are ready to tell the story, and you step in front of your audience, feel that you are in your story but at the same time concentrate to the audience! Try to feel the adequate speed and detail to take them with you in the journey of your story! But do not be long! Strong identity stories and short and sharp! Try to keep the 60 second time limit!

6.2 HANDOUT 2: STORYTELLING IN LEADERSHIP

A handout based on materials from: www.makingstories.net and books of Stephen Denning and Terrence Gargiulo

“The shortest distance between two people is a story...”

-Terrence Gargiulo

“The principal task of leadership is to create a new consensus about the goals to be pursued and how to achieve them. Leadership is essentially a task of persuasion—of winning people’s minds and hearts. Storytelling is thus inherently suited to the task of leadership.”

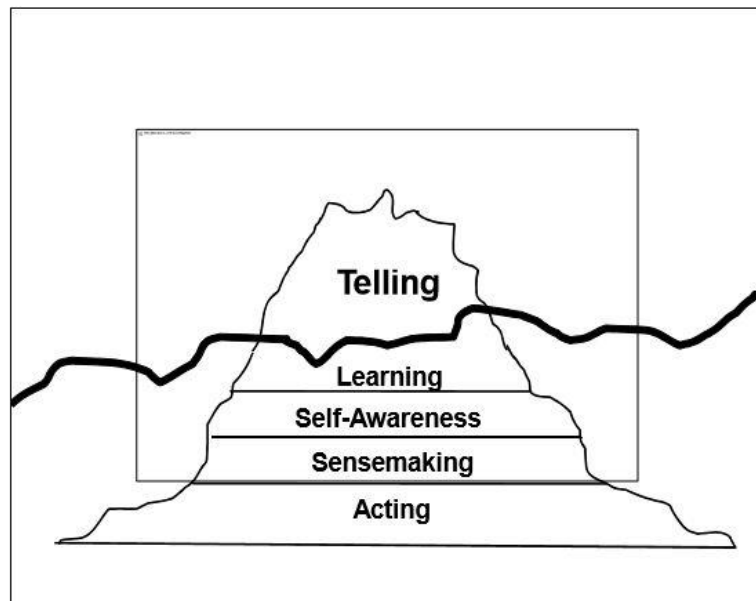
- Stephen Denning

The Challenge of Story Telling¹⁰

INFORM	CONNECT	EMOTE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your audience... • Determine what needs to be communicated... • Package information into memorable nuggets! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of the world from your audience’s perspective... • Draw upon the things that they know and that matter to them... • Build a bridge of shared meaning! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open up to your audience... • Paint a picture that evokes emotions... • Tap into people’s imaginations to touch their hearts!

¹⁰ Terrence Gargiulo: Intro to the Power of Storytelling. 2013. <http://makingstories.net/documents/intro-to-the-power-of-storytelling/viewdocument>

The operating levels of stories¹¹



Telling the story is above the water. This is the activity we see and hear. The other levels are depicted under the water because they happen in the mind and heart of the listener.

Stories can communicate complex ideas and make connections between events comprehensible. The learning level is reached when the listeners understands the story. We not only learn from stories; we also connect what we hear to our own experiences. This develops our self-awareness. When a coherent story is crafted from events, observations, perceptions, beliefs and interpretations, one concept of reality is created. This is the sense making process. Finally, stories present templates for behaviors and support acting according to these templates.

A more detailed explanation of the layers of the iceberg is in Terrence Gargiulo – Patrick Lambe: Organizational Story Audit Tool. <http://makingstories.net/documents/storyaudit/viewdocument>

Functions of Stories in Leadership

Leaders use many different kinds of stories for different purposes. The Taxonomy used by Stephen Denning¹² in his book *Leader’s Guide to Story Telling*:

- Motivate Others to Action: Using Narrative to Ignite Action and Implement New Ideas
- Build Trust in You: Using Narrative to Communicate Who You Are

¹¹ Explanation of the layers of the iceberg in Terrence Gargiulo – Patrick Lambe: Organizational Story Audit Tool. <http://makingstories.net/documents/storyaudit/viewdocument>

¹² Stephen Denning: *Leaders’ guide to story telling*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2005

- Build Trust in Your Organization: Using Narrative to Build Your Brand
- Transmit Your Values: Using Narrative to Instill Organizational Values
- Get Others Working Together: Using Narrative to Get Things Done Collaboratively
- Share Knowledge: Using Narrative to Transmit Knowledge and Understanding
- Tame the Grapevine: Using Narrative to Neutralize Gossip and Rumor
- Create and Share Your Vision: Using Narrative to Lead People into the Future

Components of the Art of Story Telling – taxonomy by Terrence Gargiulo¹³

published on <http://makingstories.net/documents/intro-to-the-power-of-storytelling/viewdocument>

Leaders who developed a strong competence in story telling master not only how to tell a specific story but enter in an ongoing complex activity. Across their daily life, they observe and listen with a story perspective, connect to people and encourage them to share their own stories (eliciting). They are aware that what they understand and experience can be translated into stories. They think of stories, reflect how they could be used and build up a portfolio of stories that contains some good stories for each different leadership challenge.

The flower below is the visual depiction of the components of the Art of Story Telling that was developed by Terrence Gargiulo.



¹³ Terrence Gargiulo: Intro to the Power of Storytelling. 2013. <http://makingstories.net/documents/intro-to-the-power-of-storytelling/viewdocument>

6.3 HANDOUT 3: JUMPSTART TO COLLABORATION WITH STORYTELLING¹⁴

In trainings and group processes often the first session is the toughest. People arrive with different personalities, aspirations, ideas and expectations. Often, they do not know anybody, or only a few others from the group. Many wish to share their ideas but fear that there will be little room for substantive interaction.

The JumpStart method is a great way to start a working session or interactive training. It creates space for sharing experiences, insights, knowledge and new ideas that the group members have collected between the work sessions. It enables the group to learn about each other and to see new perspectives. The stories create energy in the group and connection among group members and their experiences. Best way to initiate work in deep and connected dialogue and collaboration.

The process during the LAP training:

1. Tell everybody to think about one event when they could use what they learned during Stage 1.
2. Ask participants to make a short story (maximum 90 seconds long!) of the experience. Remind them what they have learned about story telling before, i.e. give background, explain the challenge, your response and what could you see as a result. And do all this in a manner that listeners can understand the connection to and the impact of the LAP learning/experience.
3. Divide the participants into groups of 5 persons. Within the groups, each participant tells his/her story to others. Groups should self-manage time, reminding the storyteller when 30 seconds are left.
4. When the first round is done, participants should look around the table, decide which story impacted them the most and remember the teller. (At this point they do not share their opinion with their peers.)
5. For the second round everyone has to find a new group and repeat the process with new participants. They have to tell the same story again!
6. If there is enough time, you can make a third run.
7. After the second or third round, ask everybody to recall the story that he/she found the most relevant to our work during LAP. Then they stand up and find the teller of the best story and put their right arm on his/her shoulder and keep it there.
8. After some seconds of chaotic movements, some story tellers will have more hands, some less, some none and a chain of impacts will form.
9. Ask those who have most of the hands on their shoulders to repeat their stories in plenary, so as all hear the most relevant stories.

You will experience that engagement has emerged in the room. A safe and trustful space evolved and the spirit of collaboration emerged because each person has been heard and felt having been listened to.

Every person:

- has established personal contact to 8 (or 12) others
- had voice, could tell his/her idea to many others and felt having been listened to
- feels that his/her perspective is part of the group knowledge
- has been part of an effective sharing of ideas

¹⁴ The handout was developed on the basis of my practice with groups and leaders and the paper of Seth Kahan: *The Power of Storytelling to JumpStart Collaboration*.

- feels engaged.

„The magic of JumpStart Storytelling occurs when participants tell and listen to each other’s stories, engaging the hearts and minds of their colleagues... Ideas cross-pollinate, and rapport increases. The entire meeting comes to life in a way that naturally and predictably focuses the audience’s collective enthusiasm on the business at hand through the participants’ personal stories. Storytelling is part of human experience. When people share their stories, listeners naturally focus their attention, engaging in the teller’s experience. The deliberate and effective use of storytelling establishes links between participants and sets the stage for high performance.” (Seth Kahan)

The fact that you have experienced this method working in a small group of 16-20 people, may enable you to apply it in your own work. You can apply it for starting workshops, meetings, or community forums where you want to initiate interaction, sharing and engaged collaboration of participants. You can “activate a “beehive” in which everyone is sharing, the conversation moves off the podium and out onto the floor. This form of storytelling has the effect of filling the room with relevant activity and enthusiasm.” (Seth Kahan)

6.4 HANDOUT 4: SPRING BOARD STORIES TO IGNITE ACTION AND IMPLEMENT CHANGE¹⁵

„ Leadership is essentially a task of persuasion—of winning people’s minds and hearts... Storytelling is thus inherently suited to the task of leadership.” — Stephen Denning

It is a core task of leaders to inspire people, communicate new ideas and ignite action to implement them. The purpose of a Spring Board Story is to help people to grasp the idea of change the leader is propagating, make followers buying in and energize them to implement the change. Spring Board stories are, as a rule, true and positive and they are told in a minimalist fashion. They are constructed on one change idea, describe the specific occasion when this idea worked, and possibly, from the angle of a protagonist who has some commonality with the audience. When the audience can identify with the protagonist while listening to the story, they can easily make the jump and feel they can also make a similar change happen.

Stephen Denning, an expert on storytelling describes the key elements of a SpringBoard Story in the following points:

- “The change idea behind the story is crystal clear.
- The story is based on an actual example where the change was successfully implemented—that is, it’s a true story.
- The story is told from the point of view of a single protagonist.
- The protagonist is typical of the audience.
- The story gives the date and place where it happened.
- The story makes clear what would have happened without the change idea.
- The story is told with little detail—it’s told in a minimalist fashion.
- The story has a positive tone—it has an authentically happy ending.
- The story is linked to the purpose to be achieved in telling it.”

¹⁵ based on Stephen Denning: Leaders’ guide to story telling. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2005

A Guide for Creating Identity Stories

1. Determine what is the change you intend to implement! A Spring Board story is a purposefully constructed story. A vehicle to ignite change. You need to have a clear idea what you want to achieve. Write it on the top of a paper and keep it in front of your eyes while you work on the story and tell the story!
2. Select a story! Find a case when this change idea was used, fully implemented and worked. Note the exact time and place, and include them into your story!
3. Select a protagonist! You need a protagonist for your story, the hero who has implemented or contributed to the change successfully. Best is if the protagonist has similarities with the members of the audience so as they can identify with the hero of the story. Include the name of the protagonist into your story because factual details make the story more credible.
4. Review the story and take out all details that are not necessary! You need to keep the story short and focused on the change idea giving minimal necessary context. All elements that could divert the attention of the audience make the Spring Board story weaker.
5. Find a good closing for your performance! You can invite your audience to reflect on the change. You can mention what would have happened without the change and finish your performance by inviting people to consider what would happen if they would embark on a similar process.
6. Tell the story! When you are ready to tell the story, and you step in front of your audience, keep the change idea in your mind and feel that you are in your story. At the same time, concentrate to the audience! Try to feel the adequate speed and detail to take them with you in the journey of your story! But do not be long! You need to energize people.

6.5 HANDOUT 5: ORGANIZATIONAL STORY AUDIT¹⁶

Stories are essential part of an effective management discourse. They help to engage people, communicate ideas, build values and trust, and persuade the hesitant or sceptical that new ideas and strategies can work. They can unite people and even turn around people's mind and because they operate beyond the rational, they appeal to feelings, emotions and shape sense making of people. They can inspire, engage, guide action. Terrence Gargiulo and Patrick Lambe have developed a tool, The Story Audit Score Card, to promote awareness and conversation around the role of story work in organizations.

The X axis characterizes five different levels of how stories operate within an organization:

1. Telling
2. Learning
3. Self-Awareness
4. Sense-making
5. Acting

Moving from left to right you can think of these levels as representing a maturity model. A well-developed organizational story culture will exhibit behaviours representative of all of these levels.

The Y axis describes four domains that encapsulate organizational activities:

1. Influencing People
2. Decision Making
3. Implementing Strategy
4. Preparing for the Future

The tool invites you to assess Pro-Story and Anti-Story behaviours in your organization. Pro-Story behaviours are ones that build and encourage the cultivation of a story culture. Anti-story behaviours are ones that undermine the flourishing of a story culture.

More detailed explanation of these terms are available in the referenced material.

¹⁶ Terrence Gargiulo – Patrick Lambe: Organizational Story Audit Tool.
<http://makingstories.net/documents/storyaudit/viewdocument>. The material is used with the permission of the authors.

Story Audit Score Card - Audit Your Organization's Story Habits

	Telling	Learning	Self Awareness	Sensemaking	Acting
Influencing People	<p>New initiatives are communicated supporting stories that resonate with people's experience, crystallise the business case, illustrate the value of the change and engage support.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Stories are embedded into learning events as examples, and as learning case studies designed to stimulate reflection, discussion and sharing.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>People in the organization constantly explain and share their views with reference to their personal and organizational experiences that helped them form those views.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Teams reflect on their shared experiences in a dynamic back and forth dialogue in order to form a common understanding of their current situation.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Examples of positive behaviors and practices are constantly shared and the use of stories supports the spread of these behaviors.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>
Decision Making	<p>Decisions are typically explained by reference to the experiences and reflections that guided those decisions. The context and rationale of the decisions are well understood.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Learning reviews are used to reflect on significant events during project and work activities, and they provide learning feedback to modify plans, avoid errors or identify better practices.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Before major decisions are made, participants use their involvement in past decisions and plans to explain and discuss their different perspectives and possible biases.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Group decisions are made using well-designed use-cases as focal points for a dialog to explore and prioritize the risks and opportunities of different alternatives and reach a collective conclusion.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Leaders are known for walking the talk. It is expected that major decisions will be consistently backed up with actions.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>
Implementing Strategy	<p>Leaders paint memorable and infectious word pictures of the strategy by telling the "strategic story" of where the organization has come from, the opportunities it faces and where it is going.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Example stories are collected from the field about how the strategy works in action. They are used as a feedback loop to encourage reflection, understanding, and to improve implementation.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Employees can tell stories about their work priorities and ways of working. These stories illustrate how the employees contribute to the organization's strategy and values.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>The organization's "strategic story" helps employees understand the big picture. People have working metaphors to describe the strategy and their role in it.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Employees feel enabled and empowered to act in concert with the strategic story.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>
Preparing for the Future	<p>"What if" scenarios and compelling narratives are used by the organization's leadership and planning teams to help people envision and explore options for the future.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Learning and training activities use simulations, with special focus on unusual and challenging cases, in order to build the sensitivity, versatility and resilience of employees and teams.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Experienced employees are encouraged to reflect on the challenges they have met in their roles, and to communicate the lessons and tricks of the trade that they learned through those experiences.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Environmental scanning and scenario based planning are widely used and discussed by employees to anticipate emerging trends and prepare for them.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>The organization makes sure its employees are exposed to novel situations to build their adaptive capabilities. The use of preparedness drills and simulations is common.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>
Influencing People	<p>Stories used in support of change management are barely disguised propaganda or "moral tales" without real-world "richness or credibility."</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>When case studies are used in learning events they are used didactically to illustrate fixed learning points and not as a basis for reflective conversations.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>People use a rigid repertoire of stories of their experiences to reinforce narrow perspectives. They use their stories as weapons to push their point of view.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>In group discussions, story listening and sharing is very limited. Power relationships determine which explanatory stories get the most airtime.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>When changes are introduced, the organization promotes examples of "model" behaviors and seeks to measure these behaviors. These are considered "stories" of the change.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>
Decision Making	<p>Stories are used to illustrate how significant decisions got made but they tend to stress the importance and skill of the decision makers. They don't communicate the context or rationale for the decisions.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>A fixed repertoire of stories and examples is used to reinforce and support decisions made. Stories are not used to question, explore or adapt those decisions.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Only supporting stories are used to justify and explain decisions. Counter examples are dismissed, ignored or denied. Examples illustrating alternative perspectives are excluded.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>People do not trust each other sufficiently to engage in group interpretations of events and experiences to form a new collective understanding. Decisions are taken in silos.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>The stories that are used to explain or justify decisions do not describe realistic, commonly encountered behaviors in the organization. They are inconsistent with how things actually get done.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>
Implementing Strategy	<p>Stories are used to express the strategy, but they are not rooted in the organization's identity and history. They are imported from outside and feel "alien".</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Stories are used only to "teach" the strategy and not to reflect on the strategy or provide feedback loops for organizational learning.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Formal and informal conversations about the strategy are lacking personal stories, anecdotes, and examples. Only "official" stories are told if at all.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>The stories different teams tell about their work don't connect with each other, or with the organization's strategy.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Stories that are used to explain the organization's strategy seem abstract and difficult to translate into concrete actions.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>
Preparing for the Future	<p>Stories are used to paint a picture of the future but they do not connect with the experience of employees, and generate skepticism or apathy.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>Scenarios are used in training but the insights generated by the scenarios are not followed through in practical capability building.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>The organization prefers to use the "best practice" stories from other organizations and tends to engage the expertise of outside consultants even if there is relevant internal expertise.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>There is only one dominant story of the future. There is no process for employees to reflect together on the challenges and external forces encountered, or to form new interpretations of what the future looks like.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>	<p>The organization is very reactive. It meets new challenges primarily by firing and hiring. The stories of meeting major change are primarily "hero" stories about strong leaders and constant restructuring.</p> <p>☆☆☆☆</p>

Making Stories was founded by Terrence Gargiulo and is an organizational development firm specializing in using stories to galvanize the organization.

Straits Knowledge was co-founded by Patrick Lambe and is a knowledge management consulting firm focused on helping organizations leverage their tacit knowledge.

How to Use this Scorecard:

1. Check the number of stars that accurately represents your organization's current habits.
 - ☆☆☆☆ Extremely widespread
 - ☆☆☆☆ Often true
 - ☆☆☆☆ Sometimes true
 - ☆☆☆☆ Very rare
2. Review and discuss your "hotspots" for pro-story habits and anti-story habits along the vertical columns - a "hotspot" is where you have checked three or four stars. Can you see relationships between your hotspots? Are there particular kinds of capability that you need to develop?
3. Review and discuss your "hotspots" along the horizontal rows - they represent the organizational purposes that story can support. Which areas do you want to see improvement in?

RELEVANT BOOKS AND PAPERS FOR FURTHER READING

Terrence L. Gargiulo: Once Upon a Time. Using Story-Based Activities to Develop Breakthrough Communication Skills. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2007

Stephen Denning: Leaders' guide to story telling. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2005

Seth Kahan: The Power of Storytelling to JumpStart Collaboration. downloaded on 09.02.2020 from https://visionaryleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Kahan_JumpStart_Storytelling_JQP.pdf

Terrence Gargiulo: Intro to the Power of Storytelling. 2013. downloaded on 09.02.2020 from: <http://makingstories.net/documents/intro-to-the-power-of-storytelling/viewdocument>

Terrence Gargiulo – Patrick Lambe: Organizational Story Audit Tool. downloaded on 09.02.2020 from <http://makingstories.net/documents/storyaudit/viewdocument>