

Basic rules of Storytelling

By Svend-Erik Engh,

Business Narrator og Certified Practioner Steve Denning´s Leadership Storytelling

When you listen to a story, you know that you´re having a constant influence on it.

It may not be something you notice consciously, but just the feeling of eye contact, the direct and clear communication between two people is enough for you as listener to feel that you are important in determining the direction the story will take.

Each of the people listening to a story affects how the story develops.

It is a strong feeling to transform into the real world: You helped shape the story - now go out and shape reality.

You have to experience it to understand it completely, how the almost hypnotic state a story can put a person in can stimulate action.

Dario Fo, from Italy, the winner of the 1997 Nobel Prize for Literature and a wonderful storyteller: "*The audience has always been my litmus paper, every second. Are you able to listen to them, does the audience conduct you like a conductor of a major orchestra?*"

<i>K</i>	<p>King and servant As a storyteller, you interact with your audience You swift between the most powerful King (K) and the most humble Servant (S).</p>	<i>S</i>
<i>i</i>	<p>S: Before you start telling your story you have to consider: Are the listeners comfortable?</p>	<i>r</i>
<i>n</i>	<p>K: Your beginning is crucial. Go straight to the story.</p>	<i>v</i>
<i>g</i>	<p>S: In the silence you invite us into the world of your story.</p> <p>K + S: Tell us your story both as a king and as the most humble servant. It is a complementary movement between opposites.</p> <p>K: When you finish your story, you are the king again. Did the story inspire action?</p>	<p><i>a</i></p> <p><i>n</i></p> <p><i>t</i></p>

The key word is interaction.

Interacting means a different approach to a lot of things in your daily life, not just concerning communication.

If you interact in your organization it means that

- your company enters into an ethical, social and environmental interaction with the society of which it is a part
- your company is in dialogue with your costumers and consumers
- your company is open about new products before the new products are released
- your leader offers concrete stories showing future opportunities and starts behaving according to these
- you and your colleagues must act in accordance with the values that are accepted in the company

The organizational tree

There are basically three kinds of stories you tell in your organization

- *Future stories – the canopy and the fruits on the tree:*

Visions of what the immediate and long-term future will bring to the organization. The Springboard Stories are told in a minimalistic way.

- *We stories - the trunk of the tree:*

Stories that create identity. Values become alive in these stories.

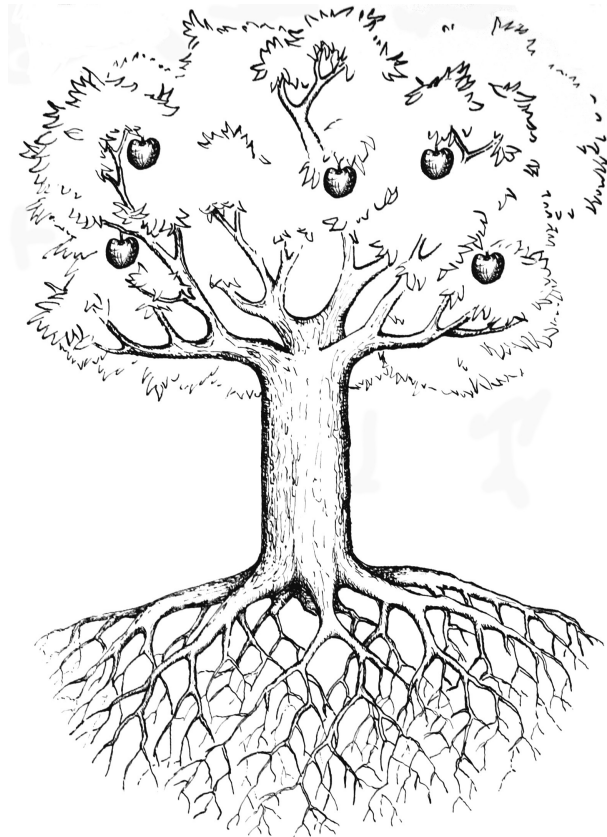
Pattern of these stories:

Home – challenge – new home

- *I - stories – the roots of the tree:*

Every person in the organization is important and every voice should be heard. Some of these stories should stay hidden under the surface.

Often with details and some senses activated.



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When you as a manager prepare a presentation for a group of employees, think of these three elements, connected to the I -, We – and Future - stories:

- Have you created trust by telling a personal story? Nobody wants to be lead by 'another suit'.
- Is there a element in your talk that involves a 'We'? Can you tell what the group have done in a positive way? If not, can you use a negative story to establish a desire for change?
- The last part of your presentation is crucial to the outcome of your encounter with your audience – do you leave them with hope? Is the vision understandable for the group? Is it desirable?

Future

A vision for the organization in the future is that its members are independent individuals able to make complex and far-reaching decisions. Networks form, bloom and are transformed into new networks. One of the prerequisites for a lively and chaotic system such as this being able to function is knowledge about and actual experience with stories that are told.

Svend-Erik Engh - born in Copenhagen in 1957 - started his career as a Storytelling teacher at the Borups School for adults in 1993. He teaches storytelling at Gotland University and The Copenhagen Business School.

His clients counts major international companies like Novo Nordisk, Maersk Container Industry and Microsoft Denmark.

He organizes seminars, workshops and other events.

The book Tell a Story, Be Heard, Be Understood, Create Action is widely recognized as the Storytellers guide into the business world.

Svend- Erik lives north of Copenhagen with his wife and three children. See more on www.historier.dk

