



Storytelling

OV WEBINAR SERIES

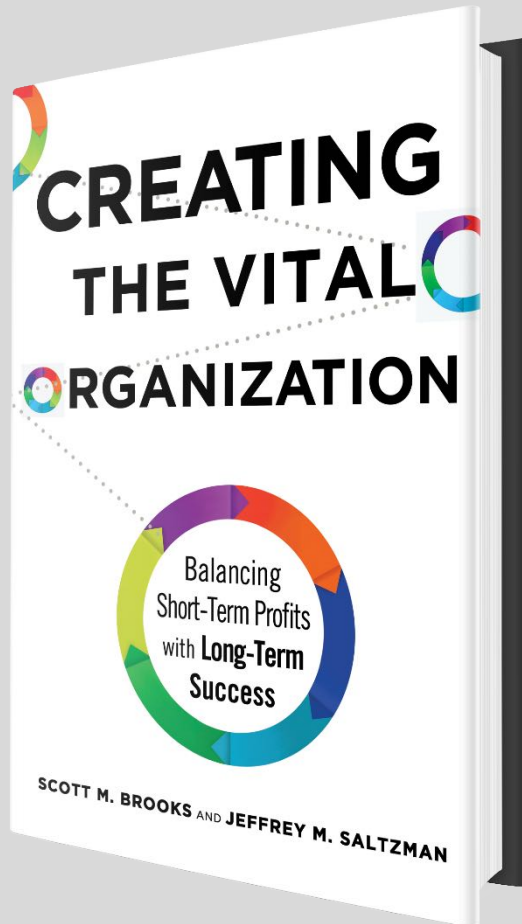
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The Presenter

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Ph.D. in Organizational Psychology
25 years of consulting experience
SIOP Fellow
Coauthor: *Creating the Vital Organization*





For a complete suite of free online assessments to gauge your organization's Vitality, visit OV-CVO.com.

“This book is a highly practical and detailed guide for executives and HR leaders.

– *Anna Tavis, HRPS People & Strategy Journal Book Review, Fall 2016*

“A must read for every start-up entrepreneur to every Fortune 500 board of directors member.”

– *Mark B. Segall, Founder and CEO, Kidron Corporate Advisors LLC*

“A compelling read, this book provides a commonsense approach to creating the vital organization.”

– *Upinder Dhillon, Dean School of Management, Binghamton University*

What is the power of a story?

The First Wearable Pacemaker



A

“We think in generalities, but
we live in detail.”

Alfred North Whitehead

Two Parts to Best Superhero Origin Stories

What makes them “Super”?

How they got powers

What makes them “Heroes”?

Why they do good



Two Parts to Best Organization Origin Stories

What makes them “Super”?

How they succeed

What makes them “Heroes”?

Why they do what they do



The Discipline of Storytelling

“Stories happen to those
who can tell them.”

Ascribed to Ira Glass, *This American Life*

Stories Often Told in Business

- Origin Stories
- The Nature of our Challenge
- The Striving-to-Improve Story
- Coming Together
- Performance Tales
- How the Organization Took Care of Employees
- Where We Are Going

Four “Truths” for Effective Organizational Stories

1. Truth to the Teller

Storyteller’s “tongue, feet, and wallet must move in the same direction.”

2. Truth to the Audience

Compelling stories start with what audience values and cares about, not the top leaders

3. Truth to the Moment

Not verbatim from a script or a regurgitated reflex, but powered by passion genuine in that moment.

4. Truth to the Mission

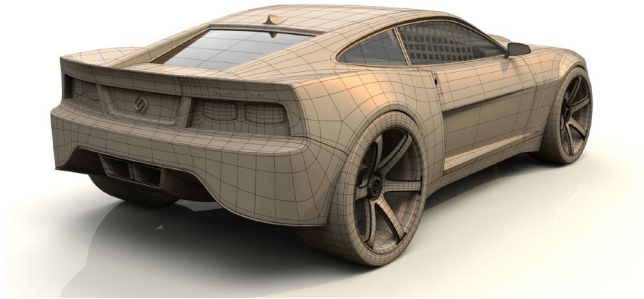
The story must echo something larger than one story or one storyteller.



“Stories” Are Not
Just Grand,
Sweeping
Narratives



Change is like New Year's Resolutions.



Engagement is like gas in the tank.



HR is like a personal trainer.

Suspense, Melodrama, and Character Arc

Suspense...

... We'll come back to this one

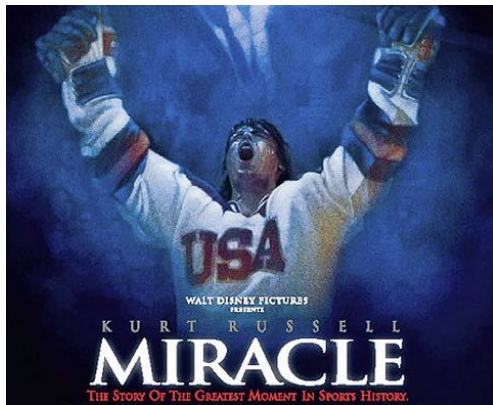
Melodrama

Everything is urgent, critical, a “must win”, or “burning platform”

Manufactured urgency from fear, rather than compelling opportunity

Avoiding Melodrama

Ignite passions, join together by articulate compelling, audacious goals



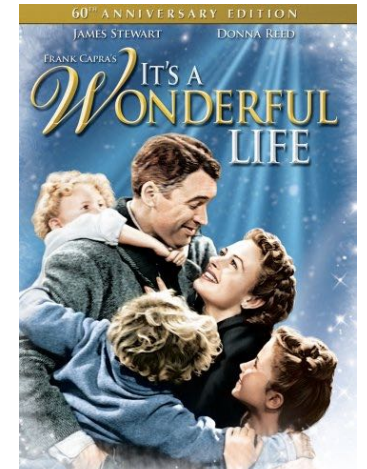
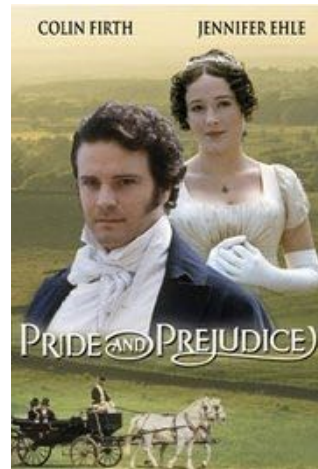
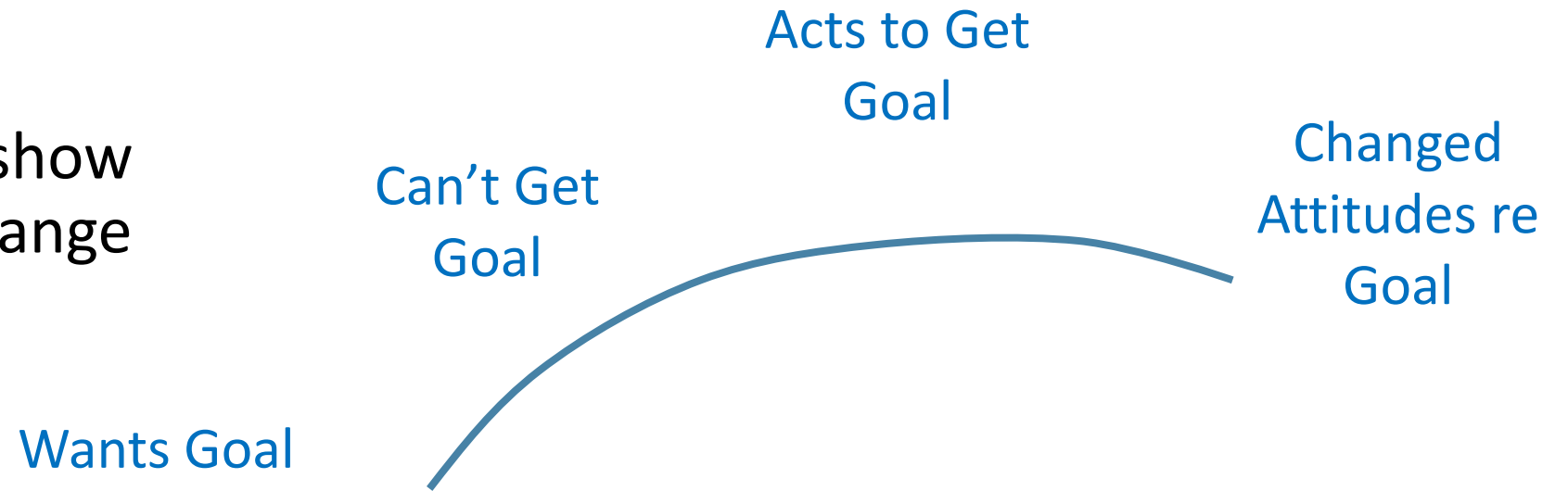
“You were
meant to be
here tonight”



“Individuals at this
company have
agreed to become
part of something
important”

Share the Character Arc

Our favorite stories show how protagonists change



Suspense

- Do not annoy people with artificially inefficient communication
- However, building anticipation, excitement can help the message
- Consider two “stories”

The executive said, “We made four million dollars on that deal.”

The executive, his worn leather chair creaking as he leans forward, recounted how how he narrowly missed his flight home and was stuck overnight in China...

- Notice, convey details that make imagery more memorable to transport listener into the story

You will want to tell your own stories.

The real impact is in the stories others tell when you are not in the room.

The Stories Others Tell

- People who tell stories are more committed to the organization
Suggests that stories told tend to be more pro- than anti-organization
Also suggests you can help those employees to tell their own stories
- Develop storytelling discipline within your organization
- Encourage, listen, repeat stories your employees have to tell
- Practice!

Creating Events That Spawn Their Own Stories

- **Lame Duck Award**
Rewards grand failures in innovation
- **Coffin at Town Hall Meeting**
Top executives inscribed scraps of paper with practices they themselves and others around them were pledging to stop, ceremoniously thrown into a coffin
- **Blitz Day**
Health care organization approached every employee who came to work in single day, instructing them to come up with an idea to improve patient care or customer service
- **Tehran Prison Rescue**
In 1978 after two EDS executives taken hostage by Iranian government, Ross Perot tasked retired Colonel Bull Simons to assemble a team of Vietnam veterans from EDS's own workforce to rescue his people

“With great power comes
great responsibility.”

Uncle Ben

Paradox of stories

- “The lie that tells a truth.”
- Authenticity is emotional, not factual
- Stories work with, not against cognitive biases, heuristics



Telling Stories based in Data: A Primer

- Know what you believe
Create conclusions as if to defend to a panel of critical peers
- What convinces you may not be what convinces your audience
Consider different kinds of evidence
- Start with a relatable message
Don't start at the logical beginning
- Draw upon evidence beyond the current project
Your audience will not make decisions in a vacuum
- Drive your audience toward action
Science is probabilistic; action is all-or-none
- Deliver an engaging narrative
Facts, figures make you smart; stories make you compelling

Go get a book, listen to podcasts, or watch some YouTubes on data visualization.



What will people remember once you leave the room?

Evaluating Storytelling

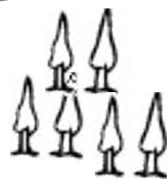
- ☐ Organizational stories, examples, or metaphors come easily to mind.
- ☐ Stories are told, retold about Current Performance – streamlining, cost control, other improvements.
- ☐ Stories are told, retold about Future Potential – exploration, developing new capabilities.
- ☐ People retell stories they hear from leadership, with similar messages being emphasized.
- ☐ Stories told by leadership are credible and resonate with the audience.
- ☐ I look for, develop stories that relate to organizational effectiveness.
- ☐ I actively cultivate the storytelling discipline within myself.
- ☐ I foster storytelling by improving the discipline in others.

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Message



General Forest of
Detailed Trees

Metaphoric
Fork in Road



Burning Bog of
Melodrama

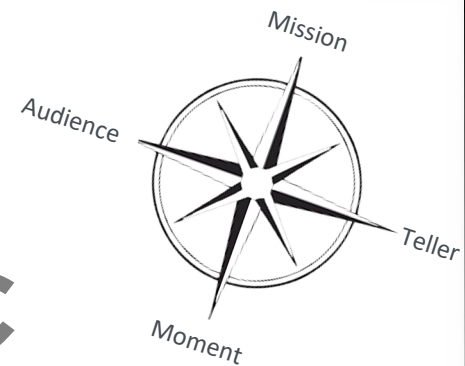
Retelling
Meandering
Creek



Rubicon of
Character Arc



Audience



Compass of 4
Truths

How Will You Foster Storytelling?



Next OV Webinars



Empowering HR to Drive Business Success: Measuring and Growing HR Value

Tuesday March 24

12:30 PM EST, 9:30 AM PST

More webinars coming in the 2020 Series

Managing the Employee Lifecycle
Organizational Change
Innovation

Why Engagement Is Not Strategic
Nudging
D&I Culture

OrgVitality is pleased to cosponsor again

Psychology Day at the United Nations May 27

Multilateralism: Psychological Contributions to Building Bridges Between and Within Nations

We help individuals and organizations thrive

At OrgVitality, we are experts in designing projects that are linked to **strategy**, generate useful **insight**, and drive positive **action**.



- Strategic Employee Surveys
- Engagement/Lifecycle Surveys
- 360/180 Assessments
- Organizational Metrics & Strategy
- AI-Driven Organizational Change

