

Making Everything Easier!™

Business Storytelling

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Learn to:

- Translate data, facts, and figures into rich, captivating messages
- Harness the power of good storytelling to influence and motivate employees
- Effectively convey messages to buyers and funders
- Connect with your audience and drive your business to new heights

Karen Dietz, PhD

Just Story It!

Lori L. Silverman

Partners for Progress





by Karen Dietz, PhD and Lori L. Silverman

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Business Storytelling For Dummies®

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Business Storytelling For Dummies®

Visit

www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/businessstorytelling to view this book's cheat sheet.

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Introduction

Welcome to *Business Storytelling For Dummies*! We guarantee if you choose to read this book, your work life will change for the better.

What makes us say this? We believe that business storytelling is the most critical skill set to hit the business arena in ages. You're probably asking, "Well, if that's the case, why isn't everybody doing it already?" Ah. What looks really simple on first blush isn't. That's why you now have this resource in your hands. Although it takes a little time to put the strategies, tools, and techniques of story into action, the results are striking.

We'd love to give you a magic wand and have everything you touch turn into golden stories but alas, that talented we are not — yet! What we *can* do is remind you that you already tell stories, and with this book in hand you can become an awesome business storyteller. Then you can dazzle your co-workers, stand out in your career, and run rings around your competition. Woo-hoo!

About This Book

For years, we've wanted to write a pragmatic book on business storytelling. And voila! We now have this book to share with you. We didn't want you to just grasp concepts associated with storytelling; we wanted you to be able to take action after reading each chapter. So we've spent a lot of time documenting "how-to" steps. This was hard for us. Storytelling is as much an art form as it is a science. It's not linear. We know those who are advanced in the subject will appreciate the value of reducing complex topics to a series of step-by-step bullet

points that cover the basics. At the same time, we recognize that there's more than one way to skin a cat. Yet we wanted to give you a clear-cut place to start. We hope those new to storytelling will benefit from our efforts.

We also had a personal agenda. We wanted to give you the latest, greatest information and tips we had on the subject. This means there are topics here that you may not find anywhere else.

There are two different audience slants for this book. The first has to do with your role. The second has to do with the type of organization you're affiliated with. With that in mind, this book is for you if

- ✔ You're an individual who needs to make a compelling point in a presentation or a meeting in order to get people to take action.
- ✔ You're an account manager or sales professional wanting to enhance customer relationships and increase your closing rate.
- ✔ You're a supervisor who needs to get your staff on board with changes and motivate them to continually produce high-quality work.
- ✔ You're a project or program manager who needs to garner commitment, communicate progress more effectively, and capture best practices.
- ✔ You're a mid-level manager who needs to build a collaborative work environment and drive innovation and creativity.
- ✔ You're a senior leader who needs to rally and align large groups of people around a common vision to achieve new goals.

- ✓ You're an entrepreneur who wants to grow your business in unique and cost-effective ways.

We did our best to cover these organizational types throughout the book. You'll find the content valuable if you

- ✓ Work in a startup that's looking for more funding and visibility in the marketplace.
- ✓ Are a small or microbusiness that wants to use stories to attract and retain customers and expand into new markets.
- ✓ Are attached to a nonprofit seeking to build a community and spread your cause.
- ✓ Are in a creative field and want to bring storytelling into your design and production work.
- ✓ Are employed in a public sector organization seeking cost-effective ways to effectively communicate with employees and constituents and shift their thinking and behaviors.
- ✓ Work for a privately held or publicly owned enterprise that desires increased brand awareness, more market share, and more compelling corporate communications.

What was our overall goal for this book? To get you to benefit from the active use of storytelling techniques and processes in your daily work and your daily life. *Business Storytelling For Dummies* shows you how to drive your organization to new heights and become a force for change yourself.

We used the following conventions throughout the book:

- ✓ Websites appear in monofont to help them stand out — like this: www.dummies.com. Some addresses may need

to break across two lines. Just type exactly what you see in this book, pretending the line break doesn't exist.

- ✓ Any information that's helpful or interesting but not essential to the topic at hand appears in *sidebars*, which are the gray-shaded boxes sprinkled throughout the book.
- ✓ Whenever we introduce a new term, it's italicized.

You'll see three additional conventions in the book:

- ✓ Any time a story or other type of narrative example is used, we indented it so you can easily identify it.
- ✓ We've put several stories that we reference into the Appendix.
- ✓ We've noted cross-references throughout the chapters so you can easily find information.

We made several assumptions about you:

- ✓ You want practical advice. We provide our own personal experiences and those of others — as well as steps for doing whatever we suggest.
- ✓ You want examples of what we consider to be well-constructed, compelling stories. So we give you several.
- ✓ You want to read more than what's here. We provide numerous links to articles, blog postings, books, and other resources we've found to be of interest.
- ✓ You most likely define *story* differently than we do. We make sure that every story we present or refer to is consistent with our definition. When it isn't, we mention that.
- ✓ We use the words *storytelling*, *storifying*, and *story work* in this book to include finding stories, evoking

them from others, digging into them for meaning, crafting them, using story triggers as memory devices, and telling them.

Throughout this book are a variety of examples of story use and actual stories that people gave us permission to use. Please respect the copyright notices in the front matter of this book.

Icons Used in This Book

Look for the following symbols to find valuable information in the book:



This icon indicates helpful advice, tips, how-tos, and steps to doing whatever we encourage you to do.



This icon points out pitfalls and mistakes to avoid. Read them!



This icon points out important information you should try to remember and details we want to embed in your brain.



This icon links you to a website, book, blog posting, video, audio, or article that we encourage you to check out.



This icon highlights what we and/or others have done related to the discussion point. To the best of our knowledge, these real-life examples are valid.

Beyond the Book

You'll find free articles and a cheat sheet for the book on the Dummies website

(www.dummies.com/extras/businessstorytelling/). One article gives advice on how to title a story. Because we know how hard it is to turn data into a story, the second article provides another example of how to successfully do so. Two additional articles discuss how to use stories with virtual teams and ten things you should always do when working with stories (the opposite of [Chapter 17](#)).

We've created three cheat sheets to help you use the content in this book. First, we summarize beyond [Chapter 4](#) all the types of stories we mention in the book. The second cheat sheet is about crafting a storyboard. The final one summarizes all the story structures we present in the book.

Where to Go from Here

If you want help in a specific subject area, search for it either in the table of contents or the index. If we want you to know something prior to this material, we provide a cross-reference to this information. Feel free to jump to any topic of the book and get what you need right when you need it. Or take a more traditional approach and start with [Chapter 1](#).

Take the time to delve more deeply into various topics by going online to check out the links we provide

throughout the book. This extra information will help take you to the next level. It certainly has expanded our thinking.

We hope this book empowers you to do more than you've ever thought possible — to get your voice heard, get people to take action based on what you share, and achieve results you thought were out of reach. Story on!

Part I

Getting Started with Business Storytelling



For Dummies can help you get started with lots of subjects. Visit www.dummies.com to learn more.

In this part . . .

- ✓ Highlight the role of storytelling in business and its impact on individuals.
- ✓ Identify the ultimate goal of business storytelling and the results that can come through its use in organizations.
- ✓ Identify the core elements of a story and what distinguishes it from anecdotes, case studies, examples, and other forms of narrative.
- ✓ Outline seven types of personal and organizational stories to have in your hip pocket at all times.
- ✓ Evoke, listen to, and capture stories from others in a way that empowers and honors these individuals.

Chapter 1

The Scoop on Business Storytelling

In This Chapter

- ▶ Highlighting the role of story in the new economy
 - ▶ Identifying the best definition of a story
 - ▶ Connecting story to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual
-

Is storytelling a tool, a technique, or a core competence and a business strategy? We believe it's all of the above. More and more businesses are recognizing that storytelling is more than giving presentation skills to managers and staff. They're acknowledging it's a critical capability in effectively leading an organization. That working with stories requires an overall strategy that addresses *why* and *what*, in addition to building skills that speak to *how*. That storytelling in marketing, branding, and sales is about engagement, listening, and creating storied experiences to sustain customer loyalty and profits. That stories provide deep, rich, and meaningful experiences for people if crafted and told well. And that stories can be the wellspring for change and help unite a community around an organization.

Storytelling's Role in Business



For years, businesses have realized that story can mean big money. In the 1995 article, "One Quarter of GDP Is Persuasion," economists Deirdre McClosky and Arjo Klamer calculated that persuasion activities (advertising, public relations, sales, editing, writing, art making, and so on) accounted for 25 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product (*American Economic Review*, vol. 85, No. 2). Author Steven Denning, formerly of the World Bank, conjectures in *The Leader's Guide To Storytelling: Mastering the Art and Discipline of Business Narrative* (Jossey-Bass, 2011), that if half of that amount is devoted to story, then storytelling is worth \$2.25 trillion annually (www.stevedenning.com/Documents/Leader-Foreword.pdf). A 2013 review of literature relating to McClosky and Klamer's research suggests this persuasion number is closer to 30 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product, which equates to \$4.5 trillion annually (www.treasury.gov.au/PublicationsAndMedia/Publications/2013/Economic-Roundup-Issue-1/Report/Persuasion-is-now-30-per-cent-of-US-GDP). These numbers alone are enough to pay attention to storytelling!

Getting in on the storytelling action



How does this mountain of money that's being spent on persuasive communications — which could be devoted to business storytelling — translate to organizational work? Dan Pink, the author of the *New York Times* best-seller *A Whole New Mind: Why Right Brainers Will Rule the Future* (Berkley Publishing Group, 2006) says business is entering a new age marked by the need to do the following: