

## Telling Your Story, Selling Yourself

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By Pascoe Sawyers

Effective storytelling is a crucial leadership trait and an essential tool that will help you reach your personal goals by bringing other people in to support you.

Just like any company or organisation worth its salt will have a marketing or communication department, you need to have a part of you that generates, controls, and promotes your personal brand in order for the story of what you're all about to be told and sold. You need to quite deliberately position yourself and what you have to offer in the best light so your stake holders – your manager, people in your network, your family, etc. – are clear about what they can expect from you and its value to them. And although we are focusing on the telling of that personal brand story, it is critically important to remember that a major part of that story is about how you deliver on what the story promises.

So, what's your story? Being clear about the answer to this question is a key success principle. You need to be able to describe yourself, your values, your experience, your skills, your uniqueness, your aims and how you intend to achieve them. And you need to relate these things through compelling stories that will help you and others to better understand you, and why you're worth buying into.

Not only that, these stories are also an essential part of your wider marketing strategy, because good stories will be passed on from stakeholder to potential stakeholder, and from customer to potential customer, opening new avenues of opportunity for you.

Until the lions have their own historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter. – African proverb

Learning how to tell your own story gives you control over how that story is told. By taking charge of your message, you can use it to effectively communicate your ideas and interests, and learn about what others might have to contribute to the ongoing work of developing yourself. The power of the story is a mighty tool – learn to use it wisely!

### The One-Minute Story

There you are, getting on the lift to the top floor of the building, and who should step in just before the doors close: the one person who can make an immediate, positive impact on your life – if they only knew it. So what are you going to say? You have a captive audience for the minute or so it will take for the lift to reach the top floor, and a perfect opportunity to make your presentation without any distractions. You need a concise, appealing, and captivating script that tells your story and draws the listener's interest. Do you have your story ready?

Speakers who talk about what life has taught them never fail to keep the attention of their listeners. – Dale Carnegie, sales pioneer

What kind of stories do we need to tell to create this communication, this connection with the other person? The best storytellers begin by thinking about the needs of the listener. Focus on your audience, and not on your subject matter. You'll always gain more dividends for your personal life business by being an authority on your audience than you will for being an authority on any given subject.

Prepare for telling your story by first understanding who will be listening to it. Keep in mind the kinds of questions people will have in their head when deciding whether or not they want to do business with you. It might seem obvious, but it's much harder to come up with the answers if you don't know what the questions are going to be!

To be a person is to have a story to tell. – Isak Dinesen, author

### Five Tips For Expert Storytelling

**Keep It Brief.** Keep whatever you have to say as short and simple as reasonably possible. While it's not true to say that a short story is better than a long one, it is true that most people are more likely to be engaged by a compact story than one that is filled with superfluous information. If you have the opportunity to prepare a speech or presentation, it's always best to write it out, and then go over it cutting out all of the extra words.

**Study Your Audience.** It's important to know what makes people tick. Find out about the things that interest young people and old people, men and women, willing people and lazy people – all of the people potentially in your audience. Running your leadership business effectively will inevitably

involve communicating with a whole range of people, and in many cases, getting them to work together.

**Be Aware Of Body Talk.** Actions speak louder than words, and effective non-verbal communication can make all the difference, whether you are telling your story to one person or one thousand people. The body language and gestures you use are vitally important. Make it your business to be aware of how you use these to add spice, consistency, and sincerity to your communication with others, and be sensitive as to how others use these non-verbal methods with you.

**Listen And Learn.** Being a good listener will enhance your ability to build rapport and trust between yourself and the range of people you have to work with. It will make you more open to creative and productive solutions to problems and challenges, and it will minimise the possibility that you'll make mistakes due to miscommunication.

**Practice, Practice, Practice.** Take every opportunity you can to hone your communication skills by talking to people. Remember, making a presentation doesn't always involve handouts and a PowerPoint display. Every time you explain something to someone, or seek to persuade a work colleague, a friend, or a family member to take a particular course of action, you are in effect making a presentation. Whenever you have the opportunity to do this – and if you pay attention, you'll realise you're making presentations all the time – think about the language (verbal and non-verbal), examples, and stories you use to illustrate your point.

There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside of you. – Maya Angelou, author

For more information about the art of storytelling go to: <http://www.mylifeismybusiness.co.uk>

## About the Author

Pascoe Sawyers is the author of MePLC: Your Life Is Your Business. For more information, including a 20 minute audio interview with the author, go to <http://www.meplc.co.uk>.

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