

# THE STORYSELLING METHOD

## BONUS CHAPTER: EDUCATIONAL STORIES

You've likely heard some version of the following:

"You have to put the customer first."

"You have to ask the right questions."

"The best sellers are great listeners."

If you're the manager of a team and share these tips, that's awesome. But do you think your team remembers these tips one week, one month, or one year later?

Chances are they forget about it. Humans are great at forgetting things that don't have emotional value to us. If you want your employees to remember and act upon whatever wisdom you're sharing, back it up with a story.

Educational Stories are stories that teach an important lesson. These are stories that make any claim come to life and be memorable.

Let's look at two examples:

### EXAMPLE 1

Storyteller: Mark Hunter, author of *High-Profit Prospecting*.

Point: He uses this story to show the importance of not making concessions too quickly.

A few years ago I got a phone call by the CEO of an industrial goods company. The first thing he said was, "Mark, your fees are too high. How much will you lower them?"

My jaw dropped.

A week earlier, we had spoken with the VP of Sales of that same company and he said that the deal was confirmed and that legal only needed to sign off on it. But clearly, it wasn't done. And now here was the CEO, whom I had never met before, calling out of the blue, asking me to cut my prices.

Taking a big breath, I tried to say in a very calm voice, 'We won't lower our fees. If you want to pay less, we have to reduce the value. By the way, how much business do you expect to lose next year from your competitor?'

I had done quite a bit of research on that company before and I knew that a competitor was coming into the marketplace. If they didn't change anything, they'd lose a lot of money.

Silence.

After what felt like two hours, the CEO came back on and said, "Mark, you weren't our first choice."

Again, a long pause.

"But a few days ago I asked the other provider the same question I asked you. Within 5 minutes, that other provider had cut his price in half. When he did that, I realized that I don't want a person who gives in that easily to train my people. We want to work with you. You are hired."

What I learned from that experience is that you shouldn't surrender too easily. It will undermine your authority and your success in any role.

## EXAMPLE 2

**Storyteller:** Winter Morrisson, Global Sales Director at Wyndham Hotels.

**Point:** She uses that story to show the importance of tailoring your style to your customer.

In 2001, I started my new role to expand the training business for Crown Plaza in Dallas. The role was created specifically for me and didn't exist previously. So, there was lots of pressure on me to prove myself.

Two years into my role, Tammy from Southwest Airlines invited us to submit our RFP. She was looking for a hotel to host all new employees going through training. They were flying in hundreds of people every few weeks to stay in Dallas for two weeks.

The moment I read that RFP, my heart started to pound. Closing that deal was a gigantic opportunity. We'd fill up all the rooms in a second.

So I set up a meeting with Tammy and her team. Quickly, I started to get a sense of their culture.

Play hard, work hard. That was Southwest. They had these theme parties where everyone would dress up. People loved to have fun at Southwest.

So, I thought, 'Let's do something with that. Let's do something a little crazy, fun, something out of the box'.

So we did. The Wednesday before Thanksgiving, we put on outfits.

I dressed up like a turkey and two teammates like pilgrims.

In our weird outfits and tons of goodies we went to the Southwest headquarters.

I still remember the look on Tammy's face when she saw us. She looked at me with this big smile on her face, probably thinking, 'What the heck are these Crown Plaza folks doing in our office in turkey outfits?'

But then she approached us with this big smile and asked if she could take a picture with us. She even then took us around to the different departments. They loved it.

After that event and still quite energized from that experience, I asked myself 'What else can we do to stand out?'

After some brainstorming with my team, I thought 'screw the paper RFP. We're gonna take a different approach. We're gonna submit a video RFP.'

Note that this was 2001. There were no smartphones. Taking a video back then was a major undertaking. So we hired a professional camera crew to come in for a full day to record the RFP. In the video, we explained what to expect working with us, but again we tried to have fun with the video.

Right on time, we submitted our video RFP.

For 3 months we didn't hear anything. I actually thought we had lost it.

But then I got a call from Tammy who said: 'Winter, we liked your hotel, the amenities, and the events you hosted. They're good, but honestly also very similar to the other hotels. But you know, we loved your people. We loved how you went out of your way to do these real special things for us. We want to work with you.'

## HOW TO FIND EDUCATIONAL STORIES

Think about a claim that you'd like to make or a lesson you want to communicate. Something that you'd like your team to really understand. For instance, to "Always follow-up 5x with a buyer" or "You should do 20% talking, 80% listening".

Now, try to find evidence to back up that claim: Evidence could be any specific moments from your past that illustrate that claim. They can come from your time in your current role or even from outside of work. For instance, for the claim above, "always follow up with a buyer"

your story could be the one time a client ignored you for four times, but then responded on the fifth time and then turned into the company's largest account.

## HOW TO DELIVER EDUCATIONAL STORIES

*Use for important claims:* Try to use stories for your most important lessons. Not every claim needs to be backed up with a story. Use stories strategically to help bring your most important claims to life.

*Be open about failure:* Like every person on earth, you have probably made quite a few mistakes in your career. Help your team avoid the mistakes you've made, by being open and vulnerable. Most people are more motivated by avoiding failure than by achieving success.

## EXERCISES

- Identify a claim that you want to make or behavior that you'd like your team to exhibit (e.g. "Never pitch your product prior to understanding the concrete pain point" or "Every 'No' will bring you closer to a 'Yes'")
- Identify a moment (/ story) that supports that claim or lesson

## SUMMARY

- Educational stories are stories that teach your team an important lesson
- The goal is to make your team understand the importance of any claim, help them remember it, and then live it