

# 16 STORYTELLING TIPS

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## ATTENTION

1. **SURPRISE: Do something unexpected.** The most basic way to get attention is to break a pattern; By breaking a pattern, we help people 'tune back in' and take notice. This change of 'the norm' gets our brains to release cortisol, which helps to maintain attention and increase awareness.
2. **SUSPENSE: Keep them guessing.** Highlighting 'knowledge gaps' tease your audience to want to learn more and ultimately solve the mystery. Providing small rewards for continued attention encourages the production of dopamine which helps us learn.
3. **SIMILE: Talk their language.** Metaphors, similes and analogies are a quick way to promote proper understanding. The fastest way to make someone care is to make a connection between something they don't yet understand or care about, with something they do.

## CONNECTION

4. **SHARED EXPERIENCE: Help your listener identify with your experience.** Highlighting what we share with our audience encourages the release of oxytocin, promoting empathy, and trust.
5. **SERVE YOUR AUDIENCE: It's not about what YOU know, it's about what THEY know.** Understand them, don't shame them. Show your audience you get them and what they're dealing with. Be mindful of 'The Curse of Knowledge'. Get to know your audience so you can pinpoint barriers to understanding and quick ways to connect with them.
6. **START WITH WHY: "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it"** Simon Sinek, 2009. It's easier to get your audience onside with your values, than the detail.
7. **SHOW UP: Reduce doubt, by showing who you are.** Authentic people make others feel comfortable, safe and respected. Think of three things that will make your true self shine through.
8. **SMILE: Get a laugh.** People trust funny people... only if it's appropriate. Humour creates a 'feel good' response and helps us trust, learn, work and engage.

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## CONVERSION

9. **SIMPLE: Don't overcomplicate it.** Often the best stories are made up of a simple, relatable example with a profound statement to match. Simple stories can be told in minutes but contemplated for a lifetime. Create proverbs, not novels.
10. **SINGLE EVENT: Tell a story about one thing.** It could be 'one event', 'one moment' or 'one person'. We are more generous when we hear stories about 'identifiable victims', even in the absence of analytical or rational thought.
11. **SUCCINCT: Leave out irrelevant details and corporate jargon.** Everything you leave in needs to be about your message or your audience; otherwise, your storytelling becomes about you, not your listener.
12. **SPECIFIC DETAILS: If they can't picture it, they won't remember it.** Use concrete details so people can picture what you're saying.
13. **STRUCTURE: Every story needs a beginning, middle and end.**
  - Beginning: Who, when, where
  - Middle: Share a simple story, using concrete details
  - Bridge: Make a linking statement: "What I learned from that was"
  - End: Your message. Make it simple, clear, and say what you mean.
14. **STUDY: Stories captivate, studies validate.** Provide a credible source to back up your story. You can refer to research, an article, a quote, or a policy. This gives depth to your knowledge and allows people to justify their responses.
15. **SUGGESTION: Give them a job.** You've likely just shifted their thinking, now make it easy for them to take the next step.
16. **SHIFT: Set your mindset to 'shift'.** Stories shift people's thinking incrementally, not in one go. By allowing people to walk in another's shoes, they get a mental rehearsal of an experience and perspective they'd not considered. Be comfortable as they contemplate a new way of thinking.