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Storytelling As A Unifier

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Storytelling doesn't just help people understand and remember information - it acts as a powerful unifier.

In business we are often faced with the challenge of communicating and engaging people from across many different disciplines in corporate strategy and vision. Companies are made up of hundreds of different departments, functions, business units, skills and disciplines, but the end user is the same - the customer. Yet it is often difficult to get different people to share the same vision, understanding how their individual contribution fits with those of their colleagues who may work in a completely different part of the business.

According to Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein ('Better Together: Restoring The American Community') storytelling can play a powerful role here, because it helps people achieve a common understanding. Mark Dominiak from Insight Garden sums it up beautifully:

'Even if backgrounds, viewpoints or agendas differ, the neurology and 'language' (for lack of a better word) of storytelling help people find common ground. Through stories, people can reconstruct perceptions of others and points of view perhaps much better than they would via straightforward rationale.



Marcus Hayes

Director, Story & Programme Planning



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Whenever people try to convince others of their point of view, discussions become competitive. They concern what people want, not who people really are. When storytelling is used as a catalyst in interactions, people learn more about each other; from the roles others have in stories to the emotions and resolutions of situations contained therein.

When people are able to better understand the people behind points of view, they are more likely to give attentive thought to that point of view. Further, when people have better understanding of others as individuals, they are more likely to treat those people with respect and compassion. Interactions stop being competitive and become cooperative.”

In essence, storytelling leads to competitive discussions which lead to problem-solving ideas. Which in turn helps others to learn about their colleagues, their desires and frustrations, not to mention pride, energy and greater productivity on all fronts.

posted by **Marcus Hayes**
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