

Five Stories Every Leader Needs to Know How to Tell

Stories help build trust in leaders and their organizations. When a story is effective and compelling, listeners conclude they can trust the storyteller and the message they offer.

The five stories are:

1. **Who I Am Stories**
2. **Why Am I Here Stories**
3. **My Vision Stories**
4. **My Lesson Learned Stories**
5. **I Know what you are Thinking Stories**



"Who I Am" Stories

Help others learn about who a leader is as an individual and gain insight about his or her life experiences and preferences. Personal stories reveal leader traits that may otherwise be invisible and help shape the opinions of others. "Who I Am" stories also give a context for leader behavior across various personal and professional settings.

"Why Am I Here" Stories

Help explain why a leader is in front of a particular group and/or person. Personal stories help others understand what motivates a leader's involvement, why he/she was invited or how the individual was led to the situation. "Why I Am Here" stories often let listeners know what's in it for the leader, before explaining what's in it for the audience.

"My Vision" Stories

Help leaders express what they want to see and/or want to achieve in the future. A vision story helps provide the purpose and meaning for moving forward. These stories often paint a picture to help others see how they fit into a leader's vision, inspire listeners to action and reinforce values to build engagement/commitment.

"My Lesson Learned" Stories

When told from a leader's perspective, help others learn from what the leader has experienced in life and work. These personal stories teach others how to develop new skills, navigate complex situations, integrate best practices and/or face life's challenges. Leaders often tell these stories to help others avoid mistakes they've made themselves.

"I Know What You're Thinking" Projection Stories

Demonstrate that a leader understands what others might be thinking or experiencing. A leader tells a story and predicts what he or she thinks others are thinking/feeling. With the impact of listeners wondering if a leader is reading their minds, these stories help listeners to feel understood because their perspectives are considered. As a result, stories can provide a safe way for sensitive issues to be raised.