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IS IT THE POWER OF STORIES OR THE POWER OF THE STORYLINE?



It seems the buzzword around presentation training these days is storytelling. There's a trend to involve actors and acting in the training mix so that people become animated in telling stories. These classes can be great fun and are a creative way to get a group to loosen up, but they don't solve the challenge of delivering effective presentations. While the story is a compelling part of a presentation, it is simply that, a part. When people ask me about the power of stories, I often ask the question above in return, "Was it the power of the story or the power of the storyline that made you act on the presentation?"

The truth is...it's both.

The storyline itself is the framework of communication or the flow of ideas. Stories are tied to specific points within the storyline. In order to drive action from a presentation, great presenters have to start with a message which includes measurable impact, and then develop a storyline that proves it out.

We talk about presentations as a journey, and we teach people to lead the listener to a defined destination. That destination is the outcome stated in a message. The message has to be compelling, and it has to align with a need or priority for the listener. But, the storyline itself is the glue that holds it all together. The storyline/framework helps stories link to points and then points prove out a message. In fact, it isn't just stories that make points memorable. Great presentations are a balance of data points and stories.

Finding the balance is hard. We've all sat through presentations that were entertaining. The presenters had wonderful energy and told great stories. But, in the end, we were more entertained than driven to action. We've also experienced the opposite: presentations with good data points, but way too many facts and figures. After a while, the points run together and confuse the takeaway.

Great stories can bring ideas to life, paint a clear picture of a vision and build understanding on a new direction. Proof points can validate outcomes, turn a hunch into fact and predict measurable results. Both are necessary components of buy-in for an audience.

In a great presentation, a listener gets both the proof points to validate an idea and the story elements to relate to it. Good data points align with the brain, and good stories align with the heart. Presenters who can engage both head and heart have a much greater chance of getting results.

If you want to improve your team's presentations, ask yourself the question above, "Is it the stories that drive your listeners to action or the storyline that proves an outcome?" We would tell you it's learning to start with a storyline and then weaving stories through it to help listeners gain context for your points. We help people become great storytellers, but we also help them drive measureable outcomes.

When you combine a strong storyline with compelling stories, great things begin to happen. Let us show you how to do it. And, we'll even throw in the acting exercises to show you how storytelling comes to life.

Call us when you need us!



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