

WHAT IS STORY TELLING?

The act of telling a story is a deceptively simple and familiar process, a way to evoke powerful emotions and insights. By contrast, working with stories in organisational settings – to aid reflection, build communities, transfer practical learning or capitalise experiences – is more complicated. The new **Story Guide** – available for download / order from www.sdc.admin.ch/knowledgemanagement – is available to SDC and partners.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Story telling energises us to connect with each other. Simple stories can illuminate complex patterns and deeper truths – one should never underestimate the power of the particular. The process of telling your story – and being heard and understood by others – can be empowering. Weaving narrative elements into more traditional reports captures the reader's attention while also signalling that many voices and perspectives are valued.



The storytelling tent created for the Dare to Share Fair in 2004. Visitors were invited to remove their shoes, entering as strangers and leaving as friends.

SHARING STORIES: “A MOMENT OF PRIDE”

Find someone you want to share a story with, grab a coffee, make yourselves comfortable and use the following guidance notes to assist you.

WHAT TO DO

1. Think of a moment when you felt proud to be part of a project or team.
2. Choose who will tell first and who will listen. Read the “Tips” section below briefly.
3. The listener should open by saying: “take me back to the beginning... how did this story start?”
4. The teller should respond by setting the scene and giving enough detail to help the listener picture themselves in the story.
5. When the storyteller has finished, take a minute for the listener to say what they learned from your story.
6. Repeat steps 2 – 5 by changing roles.
7. Take a few minutes to reflect on the experience using the prompt questions opposite.

TIPS

Tellers – speak as “I” not “we” – and from the heart as well as the head. Stick with your recollection of the events as they unfolded - don't jump into analysis. Try and paint pictures in your partner's mind and weave in small details to help them imagine themselves “in your shoes.”

Listeners – don't interrupt. Wait until they have finished to ask questions of clarification.

REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENCE

TELLERS

- How did it feel to tell your story?
- What did you find easy and what was more difficult?
- Did you find it difficult to remain in the story rather than jumping into analysis? Why was this?

LISTENERS

- How did it feel to listen without interrupting?
- What effect did the story have on you?
- Did you feel “inside” your partner's story? Could you imagine what it felt like to be “in their shoes”? If yes, why? If not, why not?
- What questions did the story raise?

TOGETHER

- How was this experience different from “business as usual”?
- How successful were you in communicating the learning point or message?



For more Information see the brochure:

“Story Guide: Building Bridges Using Narrative Techniques”

Orders: www.sdc.admin.ch/knowledgemanagement;

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For further information, feedback, and exchange:

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THE INSPIRING POT: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REPORT AND A STORY

Version A:



In our evaluation of a project in Bangladesh we noted a wide variance in the competence of individual villages to develop sustainable and effective solutions to problems encountered, for example developing low cost products. The lessons to be learned are that we should:

- work against over-dependence on donors;
- note and encourage entrepreneurial approaches to problems;
- identify existing and repeatable good practices;
- build and strengthen communication between villages to assist cross-fertilisation of ideas at the grassroots level.

Version B:

I was in a village last year working in water and sanitation. We were trying to promote the use of improved latrines, but could not produce concrete slabs and rings locally for a low cost. Somebody told me to visit the latrines of a lady in the village, so I went along and said, “Can I see your latrines?” She had made a latrine out of a clay pot with the bottom cut off. Then with a potter from the area she developed a small local production of bottomless pots, and they became the latrines. Ingenious.



A few weeks later I was in another village and saw a hand pump; it was broken, just a small piece missing. So I said to the villagers, “Why don’t you repair your pump?” And they said, “Oh, we just wait for another donor to bring a new pump.” So I said, “Why don’t you visit the lady in the village over there? She finds ways of getting things done for herself.”

NEED SOME FRESH IDEAS?

How about...

- ... recording stories in the field and playing them back to headquarters staff to bridge the gap?
- ... experimenting with fiction as a way of accessing deeper truths?
- ... creating interest in official documents by weaving in other voices and perspectives?
- ... widening the vision of your planning processes using imaginative techniques like Future Story?
- ... building lasting bonds in dispersed communities by sharing memories?
- ... designing learning moments that involve hearts and minds?



Story Telling

Building Bridges Using Narrative Techniques

