

## The 10 Stories Great Leaders Tell

### Narrating a story so compelling that everyone wants to join in

Does that mean how you tell a leadership story doesn't matter? Of course not. But if you tell an irrelevant, unimportant, or self-serving story, it doesn't matter how well you tell it. The story is more important than the delivery.

And although great leaders need hundreds of stories, not all stories are equally important. After interviewing hundreds of CEOs all around the world, one has reached certain conclusions Here's our conclusion about the most important 10 stories any leader needs to be able to tell at a moment's notice.

1. *Where we came from* (our founding story)—Nobody ever quit their job and started a company for a boring reason. Find that reason for your company's founder and tell that story. It will infect everyone with the same sense of purpose and passion.
2. *Why we can't stay here* (a case-for-change story)—Human beings are creatures of habit. Change is an unwelcome visitor. This story provides the rationale for why change is needed, and a real human reason to care.
3. *Where we're going* (a vision story)—A vision is a picture of the future so compelling that people want to go there with you. The best way to paint that picture is with a story about what that future will look like when you achieve it.
4. *How we're going to get there* (a strategy story)—Strategy is how you'll get from where you are now to where you want to be. In other words, strategy is a journey. And what better way to describe a journey than a story?
5. *What we believe* (a corporate-values story)—Values are only words on a piece of paper until they're tested. This is a story of one of those awkward or uncomfortable moments when one of your company values was put to the test.

6. *Whom we serve* (a customer story)—There's no substitute for getting out of the office and meeting your customer face to face. And for the majority in your organization who will never do that, this is a story you tell about one of your customer interactions so they'll know that customer as well as you do.
  7. *What we do for our customers* (a sales story)—A story about what you did for one of your customers that's so impressive other people will want to buy what you're selling as well.
  8. *How we're different from our competitors* (a marketing story)—You probably have a list of reasons why your product or service is better than your competition. Well, guess what? Nobody remembers your list. But they will remember the story you tell them that *shows* them those differences as they play out in a story.
  9. *Why I lead the way I do* (a leadership-philosophy story)—No series of buzzwords on a piece of paper could ever articulate the subtle, human, and complex nature of your personal leadership philosophy. If you want people to understand how you lead, you need to tell them a story about what shaped the leader you've become.
  10. *Why you should want to work here* (a recruiting story)—Every company claims it offers competitive pay and benefits, challenging work, and great advancement opportunities. If you really want to attract the best talent, you need real stories about why it's so awesome to work there.
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