

Meyer's Management Models

15. Storytelling Scripts

What types of stories can I tell to convince people to follow me?

Key Definitions

The work of managers is to communicate. When they *do* something, it is almost always a *speech act* – they get things done with words instead of with their hands or feet. They present, ask, tell and discuss, both verbally and in writing, in order to achieve their goals.

Much of this communication is factual, but to convince others, persuasion is often required. A key technique to win hearts and minds is *storytelling* – wrapping the message in a short tale to which listeners can more easily relate. *Storytelling scripts* are commonly used plot lines that appeal to people and sway them to embrace the underlying intention.

Conceptual Model

An effective story is simple to understand, has a straight-forward message and draws a clear parallel with the listeners' own situation. Typically, such a story is an *analogy* ('our situation is just like the Titanic') and/or uses *metaphor* ('we are a ship heading for an iceberg'). The *Storytelling Scripts* matrix suggests that there are five different types of stories, each conveying a different kind of message. The script of the stories can focus on the current or the future situation (horizontal axis) and on the problems or the possibilities being faced (vertical axis). This results in a 2X2 matrix with four basic forms and a fifth combining all the previous four.



Key Elements

The five generic storytelling scripts are the following:

1. **Burning Platform.** Stories that focus on the pressing need to act have a burning platform script. By emphasizing the magnitude of the current problems, these stories find a way to generate a sense of urgency in the listener and provoke them to quickly respond. Such a script is often required to counter a *warm nest* narrative, in which the current situation is portrayed as comfortable and predictable, and something you shouldn't want to give up.
2. **Strategic Vision.** Stories that focus on painting an inspiring picture of a potential future state have a strategic vision script. By highlighting the great possibilities lying ahead, these stories stir feelings of hope and expectation in the listener, making clear that the required investments and risks are worth the trouble. Such a script is often required to counter a *fata morgana* narrative, which suggests that the future possibilities are an illusion.
3. **Launch Pad.** Stories that focus on the tangible capabilities of a person or an organization to achieve results have a launch pad script. By underlining people's current potential to successfully take on challenges, these stories strengthen people's confidence to 'get on board and take off'. Such a script is often required to counter a *leaky ship* narrative, in which the current capability gaps need to be fixed first before anyone launches.
4. **Hero's Journey.** Stories that focus on the obstacles that a person or organization will need to overcome have a hero's journey script. By acknowledging the future problems that will be encountered, but expressing confidence that they can be surmounted, these stories appeal to people's sense of adventure and courage. Such a script is often required to counter a *march of folly* narrative, in which the path forward is a disaster waiting to happen.
5. **Reinvention.** Stories that combine all four previous elements have a reinvention script. Typically, they sketch how a transition from current problems to future possibilities is required, while acknowledging the obstacles ahead and yet expressing confidence in the capabilities to be successful. Such a script is the positive opposite of an *impending doom* narrative, in which the warm nest is left to pursue a *fata morgana*, whereby insurmountable obstacles will be encountered, while capabilities will be dangerously lacking.

Key Insights

- **Storytelling is key to persuasion.** In communicating a message, the way that facts and arguments are presented is as important as the facts and arguments themselves. Storytelling is a powerful way to frame a message in an accessible manner and get people to view issues in a particular light. As such, storytelling is key to persuading others.
- **Persuasive stories use analogy and metaphor.** Effective storytellers take a complex and/or controversial message and draw parallels with the accepted views and experiences of listeners. Such a parallel can be an analogy ('we should *be like* Columbus') or a metaphor ('we should *be* the antibodies of the organization') but needs to be recognizable.
- **Persuasive stories counter other people's stories.** Effective storytellers are aware of past stories that have framed issues in a certain way and tailor their stories to counter this interpretation. To persuade people is to reframe and get them to view issues differently.
- **There are four commonly used types of stories.** While each story is essentially unique, there are four generic plotlines that often used a template. These standard story scripts are the Burning Platform, the Strategic Vision, the Launch Pad and the Hero's Journey. Each focuses on a different key message – necessity, inspiration, capability and obstacles.
- **The fifth type combines elements of the other four.** Effective storytellers often combine various types of storylines into a more elaborate narrative, particularly where they need to persuade people to embrace a big change. This is called the Reinvention script.

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Publication Schedule

<i>July 2019</i>	<i>Mind the Gap Model</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2019</i>	<i>Digital Platform Map</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>September 2019</i>	<i>Interaction Pressure Gauge</i>	<i>Interpersonal Interaction</i>
<i>October 2019</i>	<i>Revenue Model Framework</i>	<i>Revenue Model Typology</i>
<i>November 2019</i>	<i>House of Engagement</i>	<i>Organizational Engagement</i>
<i>December 2019</i>	<i>Confidence Quotient</i>	<i>Trust Building</i>
<i>January 2020</i>	<i>Competition Tornado</i>	<i>Competitive Strategy</i>
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>11C Synergy Model</i>	<i>Corporate Synergy Management</i>
<i>March 2020</i>	<i>Leadership Fairness Model</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>April 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Agility Model</i>	<i>Strategy Process Approach</i>
<i>May 2020</i>	<i>Control Panel</i>	<i>Corporate Control Dimensions</i>
<i>June 2020</i>	<i>Rising Star Framework</i>	<i>Talent Management</i>
<i>July 2020</i>	<i>Strategy Development Cycle</i>	<i>Strategy Process Steps</i>
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>71 Roles of the Corporate Center</i>	<i>Corporate Organization</i>
<i>September 2020</i>	<i>Storytelling Scripts</i>	<i>Leadership Communication</i>
<i>October 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Bets Framework</i>	<i>Strategic Decision-Making</i>
<i>November 2020</i>	<i>Fruits & Nuts Matrix</i>	<i>Priority-Setting</i>
<i>December 2020</i>	<i>4C Leadership Levers</i>	<i>Leadership Competences</i>
<i>January 2021</i>	<i>Digital Business Model Dials</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>February 2021</i>	<i>Innovation Box</i>	<i>Innovation Approaches</i>
<i>March 2021</i>	<i>Empowerment Cycle</i>	<i>Employee Empowerment</i>
<i>April 2021</i>	<i>Corporate Value Creation Model</i>	<i>Corporate Level Strategy</i>
<i>May 2021</i>	<i>Team-Building Cycle</i>	<i>Team-Building Process</i>
<i>June 2021</i>	<i>Followership Cycle</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>July 2021</i>	<i>Partnership Distance Model</i>	<i>Interorganizational Relations</i>
<i>August 2021</i>	<i>Rebound Model of Resilience</i>	<i>Organizational Resilience</i>
<i>September 2021</i>	<i>Deft Dialogue Model</i>	<i>Interpersonal Communication</i>