

# Thaler Pekar & Partners

## Storytelling is Only Half the Story

It appears that nearly every conference for social entrepreneurs, management executives, or non-profit leaders features a workshop or keynote speaker on storytelling.

**Don't believe the hype.** Traditional storytelling will not make you a better leader, raise untold amounts of money for your cause, or establish your organization as the brand leader.

Yes, telling one's story is important for personal growth and development, for emotional healing, and for education and intercultural understanding. Wonderful, important work is being accomplished around the world through the use of personal narrative.

And nothing captivates the imagination and entertains like a good story. Watching WALL-E, or listening to a dinner companion's well-told yarns, can be delightful. By all means, if you are even somewhat good at it, tell a story to entertain.

But as a leader, you frequently desire to inspire an audience and **move people to action**. Your most effective communications are those that clearly understand your desired end goal: *what, exactly, do you want people to feel as a result of your communication? What do you want them to do? What can you do to help them take that action?*

My work and research has shown me that one of the best ways to connect with listeners and move them to action is to **share a story so as to evoke a story**. Our minds work in stories; our memories are stored as stories. Trigger a memory in the mind of your listener. Evoke in your listener's head an experience of their own. Activate, literally, a spot in your listener's brain to which they can connect your idea. [This is true niche marketing: you are actually connecting to a small part of your listener's brain.]

You cannot separate people from their experience. Nor should you. Rather, as an effective communicator, tap into the experiences that shape you, your attitudes, and your guiding values and share them with your listener – so that they can tap into theirs. *Why is your product or organization personally important to you?* If you tell me why something is important to you, then can I think about why it may be of significance to me.

By evoking a personal story, your listener creates personal meaning around your message. They recognize their part in the solution you are proposing, and they acknowledge and relate to the benefit you are offering. Once your listener is personally engaged, they are more likely to hear and process your message, and to take the action you wish them to take.

Telling a story is only half the story.

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Be heard