

SUMMER 2012

ISSUE

Solutions

PRACTICAL PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES TO HELP DEVELOP THE BEST IN YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM THE CENTER FOR MANAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INSIDE

Employees Who Take On Too Much

Page 2

The Faces of Innovation

Page 3

Being INDISPENSIBLE

Page 4

John Wooden's Path to Greatness

Page 5

Plan Your Week in 30 Minutes

Page 5

How to Manage with Questions

Page 5

7 Reasons to Tell Stories

Page 8

TECHNICAL JOURNAL
Microsoft Office Tips

Page 6

SPECIAL FEATURE
Dr. Alan Zimmerman

Page 7

For previous Issues of **Solutions** [Click here](#)

FEATURE ARTICLE

THE PAST AND FUTURE YOU

A short story from **Michael Bungay Stanier**, the founder and Senior Partner of **Box of Crayons**, a company that helps organizations do less good work and more **GREAT WORK!**

July 4th is *Box of Crayons* 10th birthday. It's got me thinking about how we're influenced by past and future versions of ourselves, in both good and limiting ways.

Drowning

The gun sounds, and with the crowd I surge forward down into the lake. The wetsuit is close and tight around me. It's neither reassuring or comfortable. I stop to wait for the people who can actually swim to get away before I kick out into the water.

It's my first triathlon in fifteen years and I know that the swimming leg is always my weakest. Which is a polite way of saying that I've always considered swimming an act of delayed drowning.

But how hard can it be? It's just 1500 meters, I'm wearing an outfit that makes it impossible to sink, the sun is shining and I'm a young, fit man....

Ghost of Myself Past

I did my first triathlon in 1986, early days for the sport. For that race and with the ten or so races that followed into the 90's, I never did much training.

My lifestyle of cycling to get everywhere, playing soccer and generally being active meant that I could always wing it. I knew I was never going to be competing to win, and the task was to get around the course and have some fun.

This time, with the rescue kayak coming out to get me from the middle of the lake, it was clear that my past "strategy" wasn't going to work. And as I'm unceremoniously draped over the bow and then dumped ashore, I can see and feel I'm no longer Michael 1992. I'm Michael NOW, and that's different.

This article concludes on the next page...

Smart people thinking out loud about the PAST and FUTURE you.

"The present was an egg laid by the past that had the future inside its shell."

Zora Neale Hurston, Writer

"The only thing I regret about my past is the length of it. If I had to live my life again I'd make all the same mistakes - only sooner."

Tallulah Bankhead, Actress

"Our past is a story existing only in our minds. Look, analyze, understand, and forgive. Then, as quickly as possible, chuck it."

Marianne Williamson, Activist

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THE PAST AND FUTURE YOU

Continued from Page 1

Ghost of Myself Future

When I took my first "proper" job, I said to myself: *"Be an apprentice now 'cos your job is to learn and be led. When you grow up and get wise, you'll take the lead."* When I took the next job and moved from the world of innovation and creativity to that of large scale change management, I said to myself: *"Learn the trade and play second fiddle. When you grow up and get wise, you'll take the reins."*

When I moved from that job to the third (and final) job I had in an organization, I said to myself: *"Just look and learn for now, and..."* you get the idea.

And even now, with my company older and with various books written and projects completed, there's a part of me that keeps muttering to myself: *"This is just the warm up for the real thing, for the person you need to become, you're still an amateur, don't go too big or too fast."*

Nourishing

When I look at these past and future visions of myself, I can see how they distracted me from the person I was at the moment and led me astray.

But I don't mean to say that there's no good to be found here. I think there's much to be gained looking back and looking forward.

If I look back, I can see my optimism, my boundless sense of "anything's possible" and my willingness to rock the boat. That might make me attempt to swim a little further than I should but it also can shake me out of the comfortable rut that so often comes with middle age.

If I look forward, I can see the person of (some) wisdom and (some) self-awareness, I'm hoping to become. And while I can see how I've got (quite) some way to go and I'm not yet the person I want to become, it's also useful to keep moving and keep traveling, with a destination in mind.

So who are you now?

I'm curious to know what you know to be true about yourself today. What are the gifts and what is the wisdom you bring to the world right now?

How might the version of *The Past You* nourish and fuel you today and onwards?

And how can the vision of *The Future You* provide a destination and a desire to keep you on your adventure?

Beware of Employees Who Take On Too Much

At first glance, they're your favorite employees—always ready to take on whatever needs doing. Yet somehow a lot of those tasks never get done. These folks are the "superagreeables." They genuinely want to help—and to win your approval they take on more than they can actually do. In the end, they can put you as far behind schedule as your worst complainers. Once you identify who these employees are, try these techniques to improve their sense of reality:

Ask for truth-tellers, not yes-people. Tell them that it's okay to express reservations about some ideas, pointing out problems, asking for help, and speaking up when they are overloaded.

Get to know them. Find out why they're so afraid of being frank. For example, these folks often use humor to get around saying "No." If you ask them to meet a difficult deadline, they may laugh and say something like, "Sure, one more task on top of the 100 I've already got won't be a problem." The trouble is, they may actually have way too many unfinished tasks. Your challenge is to listen well and know when to follow up.

Get beneath the surface. If they say "Sure," ask them: "What else have you got pending? How long will those tasks take? What procedures will you use for the new task? How long will that take?" And so on. You appreciate their willingness—but you want it tempered with reality.

Adapted from the report "Hot Employee Issues." M. Lee Smith Publishers



"Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil, and you're a thousand miles from the corn field."

Dwight D. Eisenhower,
September 11, 1956

Why It Was Easy To *Like* IKE

What made Dwight D. Eisenhower—who led the Allies to victory in World War II and won election as U.S. president in two landslides—such an inspirational leader? Former Eisenhower speechwriter James Humes tells this story:

One day during World War II, a woman lunched with Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Pacific commander of U.S. forces, and dined with Eisenhower. When asked the difference between the two commanders, she replied: "When I had lunch with MacArthur, I learned how great he was. When I had supper with Eisenhower, I learned how great I was."

Adapted from "Dwight D. Eisenhower on Leadership," Philip Ernest Schoenberg, www.presidentialexpert.com

The faces of innovation: Part 4

By Lori Gilmore,
Center for Management and Professional Development

In previous issues of Solutions (Fall 2010, Winter 2011, Summer 2011), we learned that promoting innovation as a way of life is vital to the success of almost any organization today. In fact, many organizations now realize that innovation is their best strategy to grow in a competitive world. However, to make this happen, it takes each individual contributor to make innovative strides on a regular basis. That's where all the gold is buried.

The book, *The 10 Faces of Innovation* by author Tom Kelley, upon which these articles are based, suggests that there are ten different "personas" that comprise today's innovative employee workforce, and that each persona has the ability to make a profound impact with the right encouragement. Mr. Kelley divided these personas into three distinct areas—**Learning, Organizing, and Building**.

This article concludes the exploration of those personas—focusing now on the four **Building Personas of The Experience Architect; The Set Designer; The Caregiver; and The Storyteller**.

The Building Personas apply insight from the learning roles and channel the empowerment from the organizing roles to make innovation happen. By adopting these roles, they stamp their mark on an organization—and often find themselves right at the heart of the action!

As you read more about the four Building Personas at the right, ask yourself:

Who are The Experience Architect, The Set Designer, The Caregiver and The Storyteller on your team—and how can you use their strengths to the fullest?



BUILDING PERSONA 1: The Experience Architect

The Experience Architect designs compelling experiences that go beyond mere functionality to connect at a deeper level with customers' needs. For example, when an ice cream shop turns the preparation of a frozen dessert into a fun, dramatic performance, it is designing a successful new customer experience. Too much time standing in one place is bad for your corporate health. Drive, run or walk to your customers with technology, information, and personalized service. An Experience Architect is the right person to remind your organization that the first step in becoming extraordinary is simply to stop being ordinary. To exceed the norm, you have to create remarkable experiences for customers, partners and employees. When The Experience Architects in your organization help you do that, the word will get out that there's something special about your team.

ORGANIZING PERSONA 2: The Set Designer

The Set Designer creates a stage on which innovative team members can do their best work, transforming physical environments into powerful tools to influence behavior and attitude. For example, reconfiguring walls and office space to create the right office environment can help nourish and sustain a creative culture. Organizations that tap into the power of the Set Designer can discover remarkable performance improvements that make all the space changes worthwhile.

In the original Star Trek television series, Captain James T. Kirk, commander of the starship Enterprise, introduced the show every week by reminding us that space was the "final frontier." While Captain Kirk spent his life in outer space, The Set Designer is committed to exploring "inner space"—the work environments where most of us spend the bulk of our time. So why would we consider office space the "final frontier"? Because although a carefully crafted work environment is essential to an innovative organizational culture, few grasp its importance. Unfortunately, space (and how it's used) is often the last thing a manager thinks about when trying to revitalize team attitudes and performance.

ORGANIZING PERSONA 3: The Caregiver

The Caregiver builds on the metaphor of a health care professional to deliver customer care in a manner that goes beyond mere service. Good Caregivers anticipate customer needs and are ready to look after them. When you see a service that is really in demand, there is usually a Caregiver at the heart of it.

"Think one customer at a time and take care of each one the best way you can."
GARY COMER, FOUNDER OF LANDS' END

ORGANIZING PERSONA 4: The Storyteller

The Storyteller builds both internal moral and external awareness through compelling narratives that communicate a fundamental human value to reinforce a specific cultural trait. Stories persuade in a way that facts, reports or statistics seldom do, because stories make an emotional connection. Who are the "legends" of your organization? What stories can you tell to inspire, support, and celebrate your products, culture, and organization? **Learn more about storytelling on Page 8.**

The Ten Faces of Innovation is designed to help you bring the human elements of innovation to the workings of your organization. They are about how people and teams put into practice methods and techniques that infuse a team with a continuous spirit of creative evolution. In giving innovation a face, you also give it a personality. We hope that this series of brief articles has paid tribute to the essential personas, approaches, and roles that nourish innovation. When a team's creative engine is running at top speed, the momentum and synergy can keep a company moving ahead through bad times and good.

Being Indispensable

By Mark Samuel

Mr. Samuel's comments were taken from the Center for Management and Professional Development's online learning system, [MyQuickCoach](#)

In these economic times, companies are dispensable and so are the people that work for them. We see it in the form of layoffs, downsizing, mergers, acquisitions and the like. So it is so important that each person not only does what he or she can to make themselves indispensable but also the organization they work for. But before we talk about what it means to be indispensable and some of the key attributes about being indispensable, let's clear up one of the main controversies and misunderstandings about being indispensable that I hear all the time.

Being indispensable has nothing to do with being irreplaceable. Being irreplaceable is about keeping your job because no one else can do it. This doesn't contribute to others and is often a manipulation in ego-oriented control for self-interest. In fact, that would be a prescription for being dispensable. Being indispensable is determined by the value you provide others and how you support others to develop other leaders and acknowledge others for their contributions. It is not the ego-based, self-centered attitude of someone who is trying to be irreplaceable.

Being indispensable makes you the go-to person that people want to have on their team because of your adaptability, positive attitude and contribution to others' success as well as your own. **The first attribute of someone indispensable is that they are of service to others.** They offer a helping hand, information and support to people around them without a condition of "what's in it for me." As such, people will go to them when they need assistance, making them indispensable.

The second attribute is that they are a problem-solver. While many people talk about problems, the indispensable person is trying to find solutions to make things better for everyone. It isn't the self-centered approach to solving problems based on what

is good for you, but we-centered, in thinking what would be better for others as well as yourself.

Third, commit yourself to personal and professional growth and learning.

Whether it is learning new technology, improving your communication with others, or gaining skills to become more effective and efficient, the only way to be indispensable is to continue developing your skills and abilities. I suggest personal growth as much as professional skill building because we all have emotional triggers that can undermine our relationships and ability to stay focused on our priorities. Addressing those and healing those barriers represent the highest form of development that leads directly to your sense of fulfillment, joy and inner peace.

Finally, **the fourth attribute of someone who is indispensable is that you are courageous.** You speak up at meetings, volunteer for taskforces and say no to directives that are not on purpose to achieving priorities. You challenge the status quo for the betterment of the organization and to better serve customers. You let others know when they aren't acting in a way that is safe for themselves or others—and you cooperatively adapt to change even when you are uncomfortable with the change.

Being indispensable means that you are consistently making the workplace a better place to be for others and yourself. You leave work feeling like you made a meaningful contribution. You feel fulfilled and have a sense of self-confidence that comes from knowing yourself, giving of yourself, and taking care of yourself all at the same time. And even more important, you feel gratitude for the gifts you have been given and the life you have where you can be indispensable at work and with your family.

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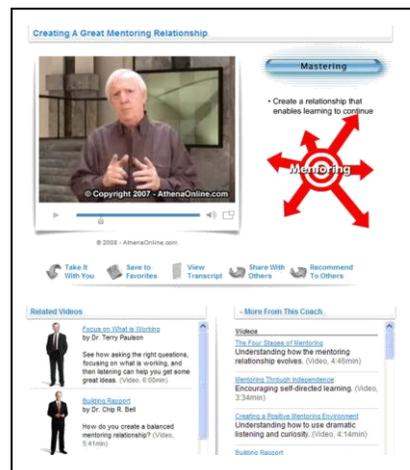
- Dr. Rick Kirschner



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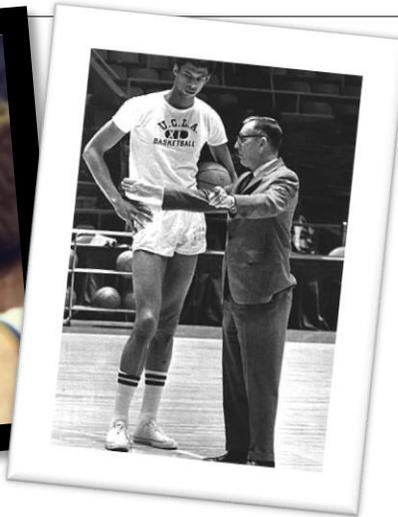
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Plan Your Week in 30 Minutes

Experts say that you need only 30 minutes to plan your entire week. How do you do it? Follow the OATS formula.

O: Objectives. What results do you want to see by the end of the week? Write them down and rank them.

A: Activities. What do you have to do to achieve those goals? List the necessary activities and put them in sequence.

T: Time. How much time will each activity require? To plan realistically, allow yourself more time than you think you will actually need. This gives you some flexibility if unexpected problems develop.

S: Schedule. Look at your calendar and decide when you can do each activity. Most people underestimate the power of a schedule, but you won't get anything accomplished if you don't schedule time to do it.

How to Manage with Questions

The art of management often involves asking questions—lots of them. Here's a list of 10 questions to ask as you travel throughout your organization or work team. If you begin to ask these questions as part of your regular routine, you'll send an important message to your people—**their opinions matter!**

- What made you mad today?
- What took too long?
- What caused complaints today?
- What was misunderstood today?
- What cost too much?
- What was wasted?
- What was too complicated?
- What was just plain silly?
- What job involved too many people?
- What job involved too many actions?

John Wooden's Path to Greatness

After his death in 2010 at age 99, accolades poured out for John Wooden, the greatest men's college basketball coach. Wooden had 10 national titles. Collectively, the four runners-up have 13 titles.

"What Coach Wooden did will never be touched," says one of them, Mike Krzyewski. You can have a pretty good argument about who is the second-greatest college coach of all time. There's absolutely no argument about who is the greatest. In 27 years at UCLA, Wooden sometimes won with more talent and sometimes with much less. Glimpses of his greatness:

ON SKILL

Wooden insisted on mastering details. He believed that "we are what we repeatedly do."

ON DISCIPLINE

Wooden might say, "You don't want to be late coming back." If the player was late, he'd be benched for the game. One star, Bill Walton, arrived for his final season with wild hair. Wooden said, "Bill, that's not short enough. We're sure going to miss you on this team." Walton rushed to the barber.

ON WINNING

He was a fierce competitor whom Walton called a "caged tiger." Before playing Duke in 1964, he asked his

team, "How many of you remember who finished second last year? They don't remember who finished second."

ON HUMILITY

If he lost, he never blamed players or officials. He "never pointed out how well he'd coached or how he had outsmarted the other guy. He just did it, smiled and moved on."

ON WORTH

Sports commentator John Feinstein tells a story from 1984 when Wooden wheeled around his ill wife, Nell, at their last final four together, visiting friends. As they were leaving the lobby together, they drew a spontaneous ovation.

Asked about it in 2006, Wooden said, "There is nothing like the respect of your peers." Feinstein shakes his head "As a coach, he had no peers. And he was a better man than he was a coach."

"Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

John Wooden

Microsoft Outlook Tips

From the Center for Management and Professional Development's
Computer and Technical Skills Training Team

Microsoft Outlook is the email client included with the Microsoft Office suite. It manages email, calendars, contacts, tasks, and to-do lists. Outlook helps you communicate through email, phone support, and group scheduling capabilities. By using public folders you can share information with others. Outlook lets you arrange information any way you want to see it.

Did you know you can...

Increase the Size of Your Reading Area.

Did you have to sacrifice your screen size for the sake of mobility? Quickly toggle the Outlook Navigation Pane on/off to increase the area of your Outlook Reading Pane by using the ALT+F1 (while holding the ALT key, press F1) key combination.

Arrange Mail By Conversation.

Have you ever responded to an email only to discover later that someone else had already replied to it? Did you know Outlook 2003 has the ability to 'arrange by conversation' so emails of the same thread are outlined by who replied to whom?

To start, Select View->Arrange->By Conversation.

If you have your Inbox in multi-line layout with a preview pane, it is more practical to select one email that you are interested in:

Right-click the Arrange By Column heading and select Conversation. You will see the conversation view with the thread of interest. When your view is arranged by conversation, please note the following:

1. The conversation remains collapsed until you click the arrow next to the conversation heading.
2. Messages without arrows are single item emails.
3. Messages are indented to show you who replied to whom and when they replied; this helps you keep track of the conversation or e-mail message thread.

Automatically Lookup Word Definitions:

Have you ever received an email and wished you had better English vocabulary? Outlook offers automatic definition lookup while you are reading an email. Here's how it works:

1. When you encounter a difficult word while reading your email, hold down the ALT key and click on the word. This ALT & Click combination automatically invokes a research pane with the definition of the word if you have an internet connection.
2. You should see a Research pane opened to the right of your Outlook window. Once the Research Pane is opened, you can continue clicking on other words in the email without using the ALT key.
Caveat: This additional feature, Auto Lookup (not holding down the ALT key), will only work when reading emails.

"If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving \$25 cars that got 1000 MPG."

Bill Gates

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Dr. Alan Zimmerman, author, national speaker and President of Zimmerman Communi-Care Network has spoken to more than a million people. The Center for Management and Professional Development is proud to offer Solutions readers the opportunity to benefit from Dr. Zimmerman's expertise and his solution-focused approach to leadership and personal enrichment.



DR. ZIMMERMAN'S COMMENT

If the word "average" means anything, it means that most people on your team are average. That's okay. There's nothing wrong with that. They're the doers.

Unfortunately, you may also have some underperforming or nonperforming employees on your team. What are you doing with them? Are you in the process of transforming them—or are you ignoring them, hoping they'll go away? I like the way Thomas Sowell puts it. He said, "We always hear about the haves and the have-nots. Why don't we hear about the doers and the do-nots?"

You may even be forced to write a recommendation for some of those "do-nots" who move on. Dr. Bev Smallwood, a clinical psychologist and professional speaker, gives these honest but tongue-in-cheek suggestions. For the employee who is chronically absent, you could write, "A person like him is hard to find" or "It seems like her career was just taking off." For the employee with no ambition, you could write, "In my opinion, you would be fortunate to get this person to work for you."

As a leader, your challenge is to get all your employees to do superior work. And thankfully it's quite possible. It's just a matter of doing the right things.

START BY GETTING YOUR EMPLOYEES TO THINK LIKE MANAGERS AND LEADERS.

In other words, get them to see and think beyond their jobs. Get them to see the bigger picture.

You could try the daily 5-minute Q&A. Meet with each of your employees for five minutes every day for a month. Ask them what they accomplished yesterday, and ask them what they have planned for today. They'll get used to planning their work, and they'll become more productive.

Then REINFORCE EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR THAT YOU LIKE.

Too many people reward the wrong behavior without realizing it. For instance, a pizza company focused its reward system on the on-time performance of its drivers, and in so doing inadvertently rewarded reckless driving. An insurance agency rewarded sales agents for the number of calls they made—and ended up with fewer sales and a larger telephone bill.

If you want superior performance from employees, you've got to be sure you're reinforcing the right behavior. Dr. Irene Kassorla learned that when she was doing her graduate work in London. She was assigned to work with Charlie, reputed to be "the sickest man in Britain." So she decided to use a reinforcement technique.

For over 30 years Charlie spent his days sitting in complete silence, talking to no one and doing nothing. Dr. Kassorla started by looking for a twitch of his nose, a grunt, or even a burp so she could start the process of encouraging healthy behavior with positive reinforcement. She knew the change would occur slowly, but she had to start somewhere.

When Charlie was mute or behaved in some bizarre way, Dr. Kassorla would turn her head for ten seconds. That was the extent of her negative punishment. Everything else was positive. She never shouted, got angry, unkind, or physical.

Whenever Charlie made a response she liked, Dr. Kassorla would say, "Good, Mr. Blake" or "I like that sound you're making." Within a month, Charlie Blake, who had been mute for 30 years, was talking, reading the newspaper aloud, and answering Dr. Kassorla's questions directly. By focusing on the behaviors she liked and reinforcing those behaviors, she transformed her patient in an astonishingly short time. You can do the same thing with your colleagues and employees.

You'll also need to **ENCOURAGE OWNERSHIP** if you want your employees to do superior work. The Romans learned that 2000 years ago. After building an arch, they would have the lead engineer stand beneath it as they removed the scaffolding. If the arch didn't hold, the engineer was the first to know.

Likewise, effective leaders let their employees have ownership for their situations. After all, if you continue to run in and lift the weight off your staff's shoulders, they're never going to build any muscle of their own. Every time you rescue your employee or pull a symbolic rabbit out of their business hat, you generate more dependency.

Of course, you may have some employees who resist ownership. They may whine that they can't do it or it's too hard. But don't despair. Most people have vast reserves of untapped talent. Just look at teenagers. Teenagers who can't seem to figure out how to run a vacuum cleaner or lawnmower can learn to drive a car in an amazingly short amount of time! It just takes the right kind of leader with the right kind of strategies to pull the talent out of people.

Whoever you have working for you—whatever you've got, if you're any kind of leader, you want to see them all improve.

Oliver Wendell Holmes spoke about that kind of improvement. He once mistook a mental institution for a college. When the gatekeeper informed him of his mistake, Holmes said with a smile, "Well I guess there isn't much difference between them anyhow." "There certainly is," replied the guard. "You must show a lot of improvement before you can get out of this place."

ACTION:

Look at the behaviors you are reinforcing in others. If you are reinforcing behaviors that you don't like, stop it. Then select five behaviors you like in your colleagues, and make sure you are reinforcing those behaviors so they keep doing them.

7 Reasons to Tell Stories

Why should organizations care about becoming better Storytellers? Roshi Givechi of IDEO (an innovative idea company) has given that question a lot of thought. Here are seven reasons she believes organizations should care about becoming better Storytellers.

1. Storytelling builds credibility.

We often tell stories about firsthand research during initial client meetings. Even though the client may have decades of experience and may already have a good idea what we're going to say, the immediacy of this first-person narrative (drawn from recent observations) offers credibility, even if—maybe especially if—it goes against the client's sense of what should happen. Passion and a fresh perspective demand respect. The client may know a particular aspect of the issue, but the Storyteller with an intriguing first-person narrative is the “world expert” on their own experiences.

2. Storytelling unleashes powerful emotions and helps teams bond.

Captivating stories trigger emotional responses that frequently spark valuable insights. As mentioned earlier, we'll often kick off a project by asking clients to tell stories about a good or bad experience centered around the issue at hand. By the time everyone's had a laugh or a nod of recognition, everyone is stronger and more focused. You'd be surprised. Even executives fond of left-brain, analytical approaches can get pretty fired up about a story that cuts to the essential human element of the issue on the table.

3. Stories give “permission” to explore uncomfortable topics.

Sometimes we invite team members to try a little show-and-tell: to bring in an object and tell us a story about it. In the context of telling a story and referring to the object, the person often became animated and shared ideas that he may not have normally discussed. Storytelling can act as a kind of Trojan horse, getting past our initial defenses or skepticism, enabling us to have an open discussion about a relevant idea.

4. Storytelling can sway a group's point of view.

Most of us aren't opposed to studying demographics and market trends. But facts alone provide little direction or inspiration for a new project. A compelling story, however, can serve as a parable that helps shape a group's perspective. Most great leaders have used storytelling as a part of their strategy for success—in ancient times around evening fires, and now using all of the modern communication options that are available to them.

5. Storytelling creates heroes.

The observations that inspire so much of our work are often grounded in the stories of real people—customers or stakeholders with needs that aren't always met by every product or service. These individuals give a name and often a face to the project or issue being addressed. You'll often hear a team member say, “Would that help Lisa with her issue?” Sometimes we'll combine elements of these real people and, as in the movies, create a composite embodying most of our objectives for a new product or service into one fictionalized character. These characters give us a hero—someone to innovate for.

6. Storytelling gives you a vocabulary of change.

Many of the best business books of the past twenty-five years have introduced new phraseology into the boardrooms and meeting rooms of the world. For example, Malcolm Gladwell popularized the phrase “tipping point” in the late 1990's, Clayton Christensen gave us “disruptive technology,” and Geoffrey Moore got people talking about “crossing the chasm.” Do you and your work teams occasionally use phrases and words that help to provide new frameworks for innovative ideas? While most of your everyday language may be self-explanatory, other expressions in your “stories” may be more obscure. These words, however, reinforce concepts and accelerate the use of innovation. Language is crystallization of thought, so the stories matter, and so do the words.

7. Good stories help make order out of chaos.

Each of us has too many items on our to-do list, too many voice-mail messages, and too many unread emails. We cope in part by developing a protective form of attention-deficit disorder that allows us to jump from subject to subject—to screen out, ignore, neglect, or actively forget what would otherwise overwhelm us. Good storytelling cuts through the clutter. Think back a few years—most likely you will have trouble remembering a specific e-mail or phone conversation. But I bet you can remember a good story told to you by your parents long ago, or by your first boss, or your best friend. Telling stories is one of the ways you begin building relationships—whether it's in life or business.

Good storytelling cuts through the clutter.