Carol Buckland, an award-winning veteran of the broadcast news industry, brings more than three decades of professional experience to The Communication Center. As a senior news writer at CNN, she specialized in political coverage and breaking news events. She also spent more than ten years as senior editorial producer for Larry King Live. An internationally published author of genre fiction, Carol has conducted numerous writers’ workshops and has been a guest lecturer at American University’s School of Communication. Carol received a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Connecticut and earned an M.I.A. in International Communications from Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs.

Michelle Henery is an accomplished television and newspaper journalist with a wealth of on-screen broadcasting experience and a background in reporting, editing, and writing. Michelle has worked for leading news organizations across Europe, including as a writer for Reuters in Paris, a reporter and editor for The Times of London, an on-camera correspondent for Al Jazeera English, and most recently as a presenter and news anchor for Germany’s international broadcaster, Deutsche Welle.

During her time abroad, she was awarded two journalism fellowships: the George Wiedenfeld Bursary in Berlin and the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University. Michelle holds a Bachelors degree from Georgetown University and a Masters in Journalism from Goldsmith College, University of London.
CORE CONCEPTS IN COMMUNICATION

 ► BE CLEAR
 You want to be understood, so make yourself understandable. Say exactly what you mean. Steer clear of complicated language and technical jargon.

 ► BE CONCISE
 Get right to the point.

 ► BE COMPELLING
 Be interesting to watch and listen to. Be energetic. Show and transmit your enthusiasm for your topic.

 ► BE CANDID
 Once lost, credibility is hard to recover. Never put it in jeopardy.

 ► BE COMFORTABLE
 Show your own personality and find your own voice. Be authentically you. Stay calm and collected even under pressure.
Stories: How We Connect

▶ “Tell me the facts and I’ll learn. Tell me the truth and I’ll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.”
   – Native American Proverb

▶ “If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten.”
   – Rudyard Kipling

▶ “Words are how we think; stories are how we link.”
   – Christina Baldwin

▶ “Storytelling is the essential human activity. The harder the situation, the more essential it is.”
   – Tim O’Brien

▶ “The power of storytelling is exactly this: to bridge the gaps where everything else has crumbled.”
   – Paulo Coelho

▶ “You can’t sell anything if you can’t tell anything.”
   – Beth Comstock

▶ “The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. The storyteller sets the vision, values and agenda of an entire generation that is to come.”
   – Steve Jobs
Examples and stories can make a presentation on almost any subject more interesting and enjoyable. But stories can do much more.

You are engaging your audience when you tell a story. Brain scans show that when audience members listen to a story their brains actually synchronize with that of the story teller, as if they are having the experience being described.

A story also gives concrete form to an abstract idea. Research tells us that when information is shared in the form of a story, it is retrieved more quickly, and remembered more accurately.

For all these reasons, stories are an effective way to spread ideas and knowledge.

The right story, well designed and well delivered, can change attitudes and opinions, create buy in, and spark change. It can “hook” audience, bolster an argument, and make a theoretical argument understandable.

- Keep members of your audience in mind. Understand the stories they are living. Be mindful of cultural differences. Will your story be relevant? Appropriate?

- Know your goal. Does your story support your purpose? You may be trying to win the confidence of your audience, persuade them, promote collaboration, or create a sense of mission or vision. Make sure your story meets your needs.

The most effective stories have an emotional impact. Reason and logic will get you only so far if people don’t connect with you and your ideas personally. They want to understand who you are, what makes you tick, and your priorities. They want to know how what you care about, how it connects to their lives, and why they should care.

- Be personal when you can. Nothing is more compelling than a personal story told with sincerity and conviction.

- Mine your memories and experiences to come up with a story that resonates.
EXAMPLES AND STORIES
Continued

- Keep your eye out for stories, and ask other people for theirs. Jot them down before you forget them.

- Keep a file of potential stories for possible future use.

- Literature, movies, folktales and news events can also provide examples that may perfectly illustrate some of your key points. If these are embedded in popular culture, so much the better.

Don’t be daunted at the prospect of recounting a story or using an example during a presentation. You do it all the time in conversation. You are a natural storyteller!

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

-Maya Angelou, author
While storytelling in some form is an integral part of nearly everyone’s life, telling stories well requires clear thinking and hard work.

Once you’ve committed to the idea of telling a story, take time to answer these strategic questions. The investment will pay off!

- **WHY** are you telling this story? (The purpose)
- **WHO** is the audience for your story?
- **WHO** is the protagonist of your story?
- **HOW** do your protagonist and purpose connect with your audience?
- **WHAT** is the best structure/approach for your story?
- Is your story in **ALIGNMENT** with your “brand” or that of your organization?
- If your audience only takes **ONE THING** away from your story, what should it be?
STORY FORMULA
A simple guide for adding a story to your presentation.

Select (Select a compelling story from your personal or professional life)

Tailor (Tailor it for your audience)

Offer (Offer useful content: a lesson, inspiration, etc.)

Relate (Relate it to the main message of your presentation)

Illustrate (Illustrate your point with unique details)

Edit (Edit fiercely to keep it clear and concise)

Seal (Seal the deal with a strong takeaway)
STORY FORMULA
WORKSHEET

Select __________________________________________

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Tailor __________________________________________

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Offer __________________________________________

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Relate __________________________________________

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Illustrate _______________________________________

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Edit ____________________________________________

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Seal ____________________________________________

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KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

A crucial consideration before giving a presentation is this: who do you want to reach and influence?

If you are going to have an impact on their thinking, it is important to understand who they are and what they care about.

Their perspective may be influenced by:

- **DEMOGRAPHICS.** What is their age, educational level, economic status, lifestyle, and nationality, for instance?

- **VALUES.** What do they care about most?

- **ATTITUDES.** Does your target audience already have an opinion about you, your organization, or your issue? Is it hostile, positive, or neutral?

- **KNOWLEDGE.** What do they already know about your topic? Are they familiar with key terms and concepts, or will you have to simplify your approach? You would, for instance, speak in a different style for a group of high school students than you would for a professional organization.

- **EXPECTATIONS.** What do they want to know? Do they expect you to provide information, argument, a policy position, recommendations, or inspiration?
THE WIIFM FACTOR

Every person in every audience is motivated by one simple phrase: “What’s In It For Me?”

Each audience has serious interests, needs, and concerns of its own. Analyze the perspectives of your key audiences and consider how they are likely to receive what you have to say.

Determine whether there are areas of mutual interest. Underline them. If you reframe your messages to better meet their expectations and values, you are more likely to make a connection and have an influence.

Understand their issues and concerns. Analyze why they should care about your ideas or your issues.

Critical tool to connect to target groups. Frame your messages from their points of view.

Get inside their minds and discover their interests and values. Then acknowledge them. Decide where you might have mutual benefits and point them out.

REMEMBER: The power of WIIFMs is to remind you of your audience’s immediate and long-term interests. Your most persuasive messages will address those interests and concerns foremost.
TYPES OF STORIES

Stories should be chosen with the mood, values, and interests of your audience in mind. Your speaking style, personal experiences, and purpose in telling the story must also be taken into account.

- **WHO AM I?** These stories reveal something about you. They can be a powerful tool for connecting with your audience.

- **TEACHING STORIES.** These can be an effective way to impart information about your organization/job and its impact. Recounting specifics about instances where things have gone well – or gone wrong – offers an opportunity to relay lessons learned to your audience.

- **VISION STORIES.** Forward-looking stories can inspire your audience and promote a sense of shared purpose and unity. Current challenges can be reframed to create an atmosphere of possibility and opportunity.

You should refine your stories for maximum impact. Some things to consider:

- **DETAILS.** Specifics will help distinguish your story from all others. Don’t default to generalities, clichés, or broad stroke descriptions.

- **SENSES.** Stories that evoke sights, sounds, tastes, and smells register more strongly with audiences.

- **SEQUENCE.** Would your story have more dramatic impact if you reordered the elements? Consider starting your story in the middle… or even at the end.

- **EDITING.** Stories can lose their effect when they are long and convoluted. Keep your stories tight and crisp. Don’t lose track of your purpose. Make certain every word counts.
STORY TEMPLATE

AN EFFECTIVE STORY REQUIRES:

► A relatable protagonist with a specific need or desire

► An inciting incident that starts the story action and impels the protagonist to seek fulfillment of his or her need/desire

► One or more obstacles the protagonist must try to overcome in pursuit of his or her need/desire

► A resolution

Andy Goodman, co-founder and director of The Goodman Center, is internationally known for his speeches and workshops on storytelling. He is author of *Storytelling as Best Practice* and publisher of the monthly journal *free-range thinking*, to promote best practices in public interest communication.

Goodman shares this story-structuring template inspired by the work of award-winning director, producer, and screenwriter Brian McDonald:

ONCE UPON A TIME

AND EVERY DAY

UNTIL ONE DAY

AND BECAUSE OF THIS

AND BECAUSE OF THIS

UNTIL FINALLY

AND EVER SINCE THAT DAY
SPEAKING FORMULAS

We all find ourselves in situations where we are called upon to deliver short presentations or speeches with little or no preparation time (during a meeting, for example). You may know your topic well and may have a core message, but otherwise you are speaking spontaneously.

If you can simply remember one of these two quick response organizational formulas, you will be able to gather your thoughts quickly and deliver an effective, off-the-cuff presentation.

THE “PREP” FORMULA
This formula works best for giving information.

P  Point  State your point or core message.
R  Reason  Share the reasons for the point and support with factual data.
E  Example  Use a memorable example or anecdote to illustrate the point.
P  Point  Repeat your point.

THE “ANSA” FORMULA
This formula is particularly good for presentations that call people to action.

A  Attention  Get the audience’s attention with humor, an alarming statistic or a question.
N  Need  Describe the need or problem.
S  Solution  Present the solution or solicit help developing a solution.
A  Action  Call for action from the audience in support of the solution.
FINDING AND REFINING STRATEGIC STORIES AND EXAMPLES

Hitting a dead end when you try to come up with a story? Ask yourself some questions.

► What experiences, good or bad, have taught you the most?
► Who, or what, has inspired you?
► What is the toughest problem you have faced?
► When have you had the strongest sense of purpose or belonging?
► When has your product or organization helped solve a problem?

Stories fall into seven basic categories: overcoming the monster, rebirth, quest, journey and return, rags to riches, tragedy, and comedy.

All of these have a beginning, middle and an end, but there are other important elements that can make your story more memorable, and give it additional impact.

► Have you grabbed your audience with a strong opening? Plunge them right into the action, rather than announcing you are going to tell them a story, and telling them why.
► Is there a protagonist? Strive to find someone or something that your audience can identify with. You want members of your audience to see relevance to their own lives or situations.
► Is there a challenge or problem to be overcome? This will propel the plot.
► Is there a resolution, or is the point of your story to illustrate the lack of an obvious solution?
► Have you given enough context to your story for it to be understandable?
► Have you given enough detail? Being specific and descriptive can make your stories more vibrant, but excessive and extraneous detail can bore or distract your audience.
► Are you sensory? Words and language that tap into sound, smell, taste, and touch are much more evocative, and create images that are more likely to be remembered.
FINDING AND REFINING STRATEGIC STORIES AND EXAMPLES

Continued

- Have you simplified and focused your story to give it maximum impact?
- Is there a surprise? This can draw in an audience.
- Is humor appropriate? Laughing creates a bond between storyteller and audience, particularly if the humor is self-deprecating.
- Is your closing effective? Does it reinforce your reason for telling the story?

Practice your stories out loud and experiment.

- Change the sequence.
- Change the point of view.
- Put your story in the here and now. Telling a story in the present tense gives it immediacy.
- Insert or delete some details to determine what makes your story most compelling.
- Divide your story, outlining the context and challenge at the outset of your talk, and the resolution at the end.
- Experiment with metaphors.
- Use dialogue.
- Time your story. In a business setting, the optimum length for a story is considered to be three minutes.

Be creative, but try to make sure that the final version of your story illustrates your point, reinforces your message, and has the desired impact.

“‘There is not much use in spinning a yarn, if your audience keeps losing the thread.’”

-PK Shaw, quote maker
MAXIMIZING THE IMPACT OF STORIES AND EXAMPLES

The purpose of using a story or example in a presentation is to create an emotional bond with your audience. Your delivery has a great deal to do with whether or not you succeed.

- Be yourself. A story gives you an opportunity to let your personality shine.
- Be expressive. Convey a feeling, idea, or mood by using a full range of facial expressions and body language.
- Use your voice effectively. Your tone can reinforce the meaning of your words and lend drama, warmth, and meaning to your story.
- Even if other parts of your remarks are structured and formal, a story will have more impact if you are conversational. Try to create a person-to-person bond with members of your audience.
- Although practicing out loud is essential to mastering your story, memorization is not your friend. If you sound rehearsed you risk coming off as phony and insincere. Retaining a sense of spontaneity will give you leeway to react to the audience, and adjust your narrative as necessary.
- If you are recounting a personal experience, try to put yourself back in that moment. Allow yourself to experience the same emotions. This will make your performance authentic and credible, and your audience will share your feelings…whether they are anger or joy, anxiety or relief.
- Show passion when appropriate.
- Experiment with your position on stage. Moving closer to the audience when telling a story creates intimacy and reinforces the sense of sharing.

Above all, be memorable. Give the audience an idea or experience that is so striking they will want to share it with others. If you succeed in doing this, your presentation will resonate far beyond the room where you are speaking.
STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

► SPEAK IN FIRST PERSON... AND/OR PRESENT TENSE

Speaking in the first person – telling a personal story – creates engagement through authenticity. Speaking in the present tense creates a sense of immediacy. Both strengthen engagement with the audience.

► SUPPLY AN EXPERIENCE

Don’t simply tell a story. Take your audience on an emotional journey that combines tension and release, uncertainty and resolution, trouble and triumph. It is crucial to push beyond empirical information and provide your audience with a visceral – albeit vicarious – experience they will remember on multiple levels.

► CREATE COMPELLING CIRCUMSTANCES AND CHARACTERS

Show, don’t tell. Bring your stories to life by evoking the situations in which they enfold and the characters who play them out. Distinguish each character with telling details. Use drawn-from-life dialogue.

► MAKE CERTAIN YOUR CHARACTERS ARE RELATABLE

Even if the settings of your stories are “alien”, the characters who inhabit them need to be people with whom listeners can identify – for good or ill. The audience needs to care what happens to these characters, to root for their success or their downfall.

► USE CONFLICT TO CONNECT

You want your listeners to lean forward and ask “What happens next?” The most effective way of doing this – of involving an audience by stirring their expectations – is to tell a story involving two opposing forces at work. These forces might be the classic “good guy versus bad guy,” or an individual versus a disease, or an entire nation struggling to overcome dire poverty.
A significant portion of work-related communication involves trying to persuade colleagues and/or clients to adopt a specific course of action or accept a specific point of view.

There are three main approaches to persuasion. They may be used individually or in combination.

- Using **REASON** to appeal to people’s intellect and logic.
- Using **EMOTION** to inspire an affirmative response from people.
- Using common **BELIEFS/VALUES** to connect with people.

**TIPS:**

- Clearly state the point of view or course of action you are advocating.
- Repeat your point – but in different ways.
- Be aware that different cultures have different norms when it comes to acceptable levels of directness. Adjust your approach accordingly.
- Embrace the power of the word “because.” People are more likely to agree with a point of view or accede to a request if provided with reasons why they – or those they represent – should do so.
- Use comparisons (similes, analogies, metaphors) to link your pitch to an opinion your colleagues and/or clients – or their peer groups -- already accept as valid or to an action they’ve taken previously.
- **FRAME WHAT YOU SAY IN TERMS OF YOUR COLLEAGUES’ AND/OR CLIENTS’ INTERESTS, GOALS, VIEWS AND EXPECTATIONS. THEY WANT TO KNOW “WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME?” IF THEY SUPPORT A PARTICULAR POINT OF VIEW OR COMPLY WITH A REQUEST.
BUILD YOUR STORY – Part #1

WHAT IS THE TOPIC OF YOUR STORY?

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR STORY?

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE FOR YOUR STORY?

GIVE YOUR STORY A TITLE
BUILD YOUR STORY – Part #2

WHO ARE THE KEY CHARACTERS OF YOUR STORY?

WHAT DOES YOUR AUDIENCE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THEM?

WHAT IS THE KEY CONFLICT IN YOUR STORY?

WHAT SENSORY DETAILS OR DIALOGUE WILL YOU INCLUDE?
FURTHER RESOURCES

TO VIEW THE COMPLETE TED TALKS PLAYED DURING THIS SESSION:

https://www.ted.com/talks/tomas_pueyo_why_stories_captivate
https://www.ted.com/talks/lisa_bu_how_books_can_open_your_mind
https://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_how_the_internet_will_one_day_transform_government
https://www.ted.com/talks/adam_grant_the_surprising_habits_of_original_thinkers

BOOKS:

Hooked: How Leaders Connect, Engage and Inspire with Storytelling by Gabrielle Dolan and Yamini Naidu.


Strategic Storytelling: How to Create Persuasive Business Presentations by Dave McKinsey.

The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion through the Art of Storytelling by Annette Simmons.

The Storyteller’s Secret: From TED Speakers to Business Legends, Why Some Ideas Catch On and Others Don’t by Carmine Gallo.

Storytelling as Best Practice by Andy Goodman.

TED Talks Storytelling: 23 Storytelling Techniques from the Best TED Talks by Akash Karia.
The Communication Center has been an internationally recognized leader in communication coaching and consulting since 1983. Our expert team of coaches and consultants deliver highly interactive, custom-designed sessions around the world. No matter how challenging the issue, the audience or the interview, let us help you become a compelling communicator.