**Before you Begin**

Hook

Context

Hook

Challenge

Conflict

Resolution

Action

Lesson

* Print or save a copy of this workbook.
* Start thinking of a story you’d like to work on improving during the course. It should be an actual narrative about a specific time and place where something meaningful happened to someone – not the talking points of a speech or the bullet points of a presentation.
* It could be a time when you learned an important but unexpected lesson at work or a mistake you’ve made that has shaped who you are as a leader.
* As you move through the course, use this workbook to complete the steps in the process to build a better story.

1. Identify the Stories You Need to Tell

* The story you tell is more important than how you tell it. Think about the most important *types* of stories you need to tell.
* Use the many types discussed in the course as a starting point to choose from
* For more options, see these lists of the most useful types of stories for [leadership](https://www.thoughtleadersllc.com/courses/storytelling-for-leaders/lessons/course-completion-sfl/topic/types-of-leadership-stories/) and [sales](https://www.thoughtleadersllc.com/courses/storytelling-for-leaders/lessons/course-completion-sfl/topic/types-of-sales-stories/)

List 3-5 of the most important types of stories you personally need to be a more effective leader.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

List 3-5 of the most important types of stories your organization needs to be more successful.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

This is your “wish list” of leadership stories you need to find and develop.

2. Choose the Right Story to Tell

Now that you have a list of the most important types of stories to tell, choose one of them to develop.

The type of story I will build is: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

With that story *type* in mind, select a specific event or situation around which to build an actual story. Start by answering the following:

1. Who is the audience you’ll likely be telling this story to? (Your employees? Your boss? Investors? The media? Customers?)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What is it you want them to *think*, *feel*, or *do* after hearing your story? This is your leadership objective in telling the story.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Think of a relevant *success*, *failure*, or *moment of clarity* around the objectives you listed – a time you’ve seen someone think, feel, or do whatever it is you want your audience to think, feel, or do, but do so:

* exceptionally well (a success),
* very badly (a failure), because we learn as much from mistakes as successes, or
* a moment of clarity – that moment you realized how important your objective was

List several specific story options and choose one of them for your story (e.g., “That time the CFO almost went to jail because the accounting firm botched the audit” or “That time we doubled our sales by changing the way we went to market”).

|  |
| --- |
|  |

3. Build Your Story Structure

Begin to build the outline of your story by answering the eight questions all leadership stories need to answer. Write your answers in bullet-point form. This is just the outline of your story, not the full script.

1. Why should your audience bother listening to this story? Answer that question and then turn it into a “hook” to get them interested in your story (e.g., “That’s a tough problem. Let me tell you what I did five years ago when I had your job and I ran into that problem…”).

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. Where and when did it take place?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. Who’s the main character and what did they want?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What was the problem or opportunity they ran into?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What did they do about it? (Remember – just bullet points for now)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. How did it turn out in the end?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

7) What lesson did you learn from that story? (i.e., the lesson you hope your audience learns)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What do you think your audience should do now? (This is your recommended action)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

4. Create Emotional Engagement

To be effective, stories need to evoke some kind of emotional response in the listener.

Step 1: Identify the points in your story with the most potential for emotional engagement. Go back to your answers to the eight questions in Section 3 above and circle 1-3 bullet points with the highest potential. Then jot down next to the circle the name of the emotion the characters are experiencing (e.g., anger, joy, disappointment, frustration, etc.).

Step 2: Brainstorm ideas to add to your story using the following four techniques. Use the space provided to capture your ideas.

**Add dialog** – What did your characters say that would indicate their emotional state?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**“Tell me” technique** – Name the emotion your characters felt. (e.g., “She was angry. . . He was sad”)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**“Show me” technique** – Describe the physical manifestations of the emotions your characters were feeling. Instead of saying “She was angry” say, “She started yelling.”

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Avoid the Stormtrooper Effect** – If your audience doesn’t know your characters, they won’t care when something happens to them. Let your audience get to know your main characters just a little before letting anything important happen to them.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

5. Use the Element of Surprise

Adding a surprise at the beginning of a story gets your audience to pay attention. A surprise at the end makes the story and the lesson more memorable. Use the techniques below to think of ways to add an element of the unexpected to your story.

**Lead with the most unusual event** – Put the most unexpected event at the beginning of your story and then use flashback to tell the rest of the story up to that point. (e.g., “The first time I met the CEO of the company was the day she fired me. Here’s what happened…”)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Set expectations then violate them** – Explain to your audience how great things were going before they fell apart, or how lousy a day it was before you got the promotion. Contrast creates surprise.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Create a surprise ending** – Take one or two details that belong at the beginning of your story and don't give them to your audience until the end of the story. (e.g. “…and I know this story so well because the guy in that story who got fired – that was me. I’ll never make that mistake again.”)

|  |
| --- |
|  |

6. Finalize Your Story

Pull together all of the elements of your story from the previous sections of this workbook: structure, emotion, and surprise. As you’re doing so, make adjustments based on what you learned in the course modules on Details, Accuracy, and Timing. Check off the concepts below once you’ve reflected them in your final story:

 Add details that explain the character’s motivations

 Replace general words with specific ones

 Use metaphors to explain complex ideas

 Use dialog, even if you have to paraphrase what was said

 Make sure the main facts in your story are accurate

 Make sure your story is between 1 and 3 minutes long (150 – 450 words)

How will you deliver your story?

* Verbally – in person, on the phone, in a video, etc.
* Written – in a memo, on a website, in a letter, etc.

If you’ll only be delivering your story verbally, you only need to summarize your story in bullet-point, outline form. Doing so will force you to remember only the basic details of the story and therefore deliver it in an extemporaneous, conversational manner – exactly how a story should be delivered.

If you’ll be delivering it in writing, obviously you’ll need to write it out as a full script.

Use the space below to write your story so it addresses all eight questions in the proper order from Section 3, with the elements of emotional engagement and surprise from Sections 4 and 5, along with the Details, Accuracy, and Timing considerations above. Check them off as you go.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Final story continued…

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Now you’re ready to share your story. Well done!