

# Tips: Effective Storytelling

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## Why Stories Work

When you hear an engaging story, it activates your brain in such a way that you become a participant in the story.

To make a story engaging:

- Help your listener see, taste, touch, hear, and smell. Describe the scene vividly. Include colors, textures, dialogue, movement, sound, and aromas.
- Include characters people know or who are like them in some way.
- Help your listener identify with the situation the characters are in and the choices they make.

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## Tell Relevant Stories

As a leader, you can communicate better if you learn to tell relevant stories.

Most people respond well to stories about:

- The team's victories
- Funny incidents within the team
- Praise from someone the organization has served
- Sacrifices team members have made to serve the vision
- How a team member's actions have personally affected you for the better

Get to know your team members and what types of topics would resonant best with them.

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## What Not to Do

- People don't like you to tell them how they should feel. Avoid saying things such as, "This story is so funny. You're going to love this." Instead, focus on telling the story well and letting people react naturally.
- Avoid ending a story with phrases such as, "The moral of the story is..." Instead, tell the story well enough that the point is evident.
- Avoid frequent superlatives. When you describe everything as awesome, then nothing is awesome. Save superlatives for special emphasis.

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## What to Do

- Concede the limits of your expertise. If you include a fact as part of your story, state it as your best understanding rather than an authoritative fact.
- Always rehearse your delivery. By practicing aloud several times, you will find ways to improve the phrasing and get the timing right.
- Keep the story short. It should illustrate and support the point you are making rather than be the main point itself.
- Remain humble. People tend to respond better to stories in which you demonstrate your flaws than those which cast you as a hero.