

Making Conversation Communications Tips

"Why do we remember stories? How can you make your strengths into persuasive examples which become memorable and get you hired?"

*"Stories have a unique power to persuade and motivate, because they appeal to our emotions and capacity for empathy....Story telling is one of the few human traits that are truly universal across culture and through all of known history."¹ We learn from stories because they have more texture than renditions of a factual nature. Effectively told, the listener can "be there" right with the teller. Transported into the story, the listener can identify with the details on a human, sensory basis. The story narrative is more than a rendition of facts; it has meaning because of the context. It has imagery, motivation of individuals, reactions and results, and links these components over a period of time. Stories are our social history; they are as old as the Bible and relate back, prior to any written language, to pictographs and stories told around a campfire to pass along knowledge and experience. Brain imaging studies have found that *"patterns for story processing differ from patterns for other related tasks like paying attention or stringing together sentences for language comprehension."**

Tell a good story and the listener becomes immersed in it, in a state psychologists call *"narrative transport."* Indeed the more empathetic the listener, the more able to attribute mental state to another and identify with the characters, the more likely they will be persuaded and remember the story. If you cry at a heart-tugging holiday commercial or cry just hearing the theme song of a tear-jerker film, you likely have the capacity to perceive emotions of other people and get involved in a story told to you, it need not even be well-told. Stories are inherently persuasive. Marketing Research Studies have shown that *"labeling information as a 'fact' increased critical analysis, whereas labeling information as 'fiction' had the opposite result."*

So when you want someone to understand your strengths in a job interview, think about what you want them to remember. Use visual, auditory or sensory imagery. It isn't just a project that you completed on a rainy day: the rain was crashing down in torrents! You did not complete the prototype; you completed on time and within budget a robin's egg blue whatchamacallit with a soft, fuzzy chocolate-colored covering. Can you see it, can you feel it, can you even taste it?

Make sure that whatever you say is said from the perspective of the other person. Is it relevant to what they want? If it is not something they need or want, make sure that you can tie it to something they do, if you want to tell the story. Be bright; be brief; be done. Keep it upbeat (don't dig too deep a hole or wallow in a ditch for the start of a story, make it clear and concise (use simple words), and end strong.

Follow **SOAR/STAR. Practice it. (Do not memorize) Hear what it sounds like an impartial, supportive listener**

Situation – Tell the situation using details-make sure it is personal and your story. You can remember things in three so consider providing three details. This is really your introductory statement, set the stage properly.

Obstacle or Task – Tell me and using descriptive words show me, again, using details,

Action – Involve me with you. Transport me. Keep me moving forward with you by my side.

Results - Always give the result. If you don't, the listener will wonder why not and perhaps assume it was negative. If it were a negative result; this gives you an opportunity to tell what you learned or did next to correct it! Quantify the results in \$ or time saved, tasks streamlined or customer benefit, if it is for a job where those matter

Then just like the shampoo ads – repeat or bring me back to your point. Sadly, many of our attention spans have decreased in recent years, so tell me what you are telling me, tell me and tell me what you told me.

Make your best impression. Understand your communication style. Identify their communication style, so you can adapt to and be "in sync" with others. Be authentically yourself while establishing rapport. Open more doors by winning with words. ***Making Conversation*** can assist you to communicate more effectively, with confidence and ease. Group Seminars and Individual Sessions are available.

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¹Jeremy Hsu, "The Secrets of Story Telling," *Scientific American Mind* (August/September 2008): all quotes *in italics* are from pages 46, 50, 48 and 51, respectively. See <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=the-secrets-of-storytelling>