

**Keynote Address
Pre-Conference Workshop - NSN
July, 2002**

Why organizations are recognizing the power of storytelling and what leaders need to know to use story effectively? (30 to 45 minutes)

THE GOLDEN FLEECE STORY

You might remember that about six months ago, maybe a year, that the best-selling book, *In Search of The Golden Fleece: Storytelling for Organizational Transformation in an Imperiled World*, hit the best-seller list. It just caught the imagination of people around the world, and the authors were the members of this little group, which began just a couple of years ago in Washington D.C. and it was with their vibrancy and their commitment to the search for the Golden Fleece.

We were reminded of the story of Jason and the Argonauts. Jason is going out. He knows that his world is imperiled, corrupt and whatever else, and he's out on a search for what can be brought back as a healing, as wisdom, back to his imperiled world. This story somehow captured the imagination of the entire group. We had discovered compelling ways to release the best of our stories within the group and then within our organizations. And that was the first part of the book.

Subsequent chapters were stories from those who read the first part, and contributed chapters of their own. So this was a book unlike any other book, because it was written organically in several stages. The first one was unfinished, and then it became this full book. And it excited so many people that something special was created, much like an artists' colony. But the way that this group envisioned it, it was more like a ship.

And that's what we're reporting on today because the ship has just docked in the marina. It's called *The Golden Fleece*. And it's embarking on a first journey, the people who were in the original group plus many people who had participated in the book. And others too, who were just curious, who had some yearning to be a part of this experience.

They're going to take off soon where there will be this contained experience and the artists' colony will be invited to be part of this. But by being on this wonderful (and sacred) ship, there is also the whole journey aspect. Sailing through waters a sea of emotions and a flow of light. There's the self-containment knowing that we must depend on one another for our well-being, for the relationship, and it's here where we can really reach for and reach toward our deepest knowing and share that in a mythic as well as a real way.



In three weeks, that group gets off, and another group gets on. Now the original group of people are seeded with these wonderful ideas and experiences. They will go out and tell their story to the world. That's the ship, the traveling experience, and it's our ship that is going to sail around the world -- bobbing along, on that flow of life, of opening, of space, for more and more people to experience the ferment of that, and the flow.

This is where I am coming from – as way of introduction.

But I have been asked to talk about Why organizations are recognizing the power of storytelling and what leaders need to know to use story effectively? (30 to 45 minutes)



Why is storytelling needed today as ever before?

ask the audience for why as well

Global nature of business –

cultural differences meet and either find a way to get along or destroy each other
how do you convey the different values to each other in a meaningful way while
establishing the values of the company?

The number of people in the room has grown –

management, employees, customers, partners, even competitors
how do they learn to trust one another?

M&A: Mergers and acquisitions –

need to create common values
need to build trust

e-revolution –

creating change where there was stability in the past
and talk about the number of people in the room being more!!

Market value is a key driver today

correlated with alignment around mission and values and intangibles

Values

Disney – imagination
World Bank – technical competence and global view
HP – innovation

Mission

Disney – creating imaginary real places
World Bank—alleviating poverty
HP – what?

Intangibles account for 80%+ of market value

intangibles resides in the people, the structure, and the relationships of a company.

People – Alice Waters

Structure – McDonalds

Relationships -- Cheers

“Ideas are capital. Everything else is just money.” Duetche Bank’s adv in WSJ

The old vault in JP Morgon is now a break out room for training.

Change

Constant change – need to be working from our **best**; need to be effective -- **Trust**

Constant change – need for **flexibility**; need to **create teams faster** and faster;

transmit **value and mission**



Looking at **problems** only focuses the mind on the past, on what doesn't work, creates an either/or mentality; little from the past will tell us how to create new ways of doing things which is essential today. Need vision stories to inspire.

Just in case you think things are not changing

21% of CEOs were fired in 2001, up from 13% in 2000. The master at the controls just doesn't work anymore.

CEO of Mattel lasted 37 months

Lucent 36 months

Campbell Soup 33 months

Coca-cola 28 months

Covad 28 months

Procter and Gamble 17 months

Maytag 15 months

Xerox 13 months

Power of story

Bureaucracy is not agile enough – depending on structure is not sufficient

(stovepipes/silos, trust, many more players)

How do you get information and knowledge to be shared for common ground – common values, common mission, etc.

Draw an org chart, add matrix organization

then draw an SNA chart with nodes – how different when people share information 'socially'

Values and mission

Conveying **values** and norms when creating a new entity (tell two stories about this – Middleton's group and Molly Smith)

Trust

It is the common thread mentioned when executives are asked how they build effective **teams**. (tell two stories about this – Fund Staff Association and Bob Allen's stories and Seth Kahan's suits)

Flexibility

Moving people to **action** requires the Springboard story (tell story about Steve Denning and the 29 word story)

Self-awareness instead of problem focus

Self-awareness instead of problem solving – hold up a mirror to the community (American Writing and Snowden's approach)



28% of GNP is about persuasion (law, public relations, psychology, marketing, management etc. Source; McCloskey American Economic Review 1995. Around 14% is storytelling.



What's the answer? – Story

Three approaches to storytelling in business

Research (Snowden) – lots and lots of anecdotes – understanding – action

OD (various folks) – many stories and anecdotes of all manner – understanding, stimulation, team building, healing – action

Process/strategy (Denning) – one Springboard story (see potential, relate to it themselves and they suddenly see themselves in the potential) told many times – stimulation/inspiration – action

What leaders need to know to use story effectively?

1. that storytelling and story listening work -- **belief**
2. that telling stories with **truth in them**
3. telling them **sincerely**
4. **listening** to other stories creates validity/learning/united action

What questions you would like to have answered today?

