



Question No. 4 to develop your safety excellence strategy

What's your story? Never forget most people remember stories and pictures, not facts and figures. Yet many companies, when trying to align people toward change, tend to provide just the business case to support the needed direction, accompanied by statistics.

Not having a story means people can't communicate what success looks like. Stories hold the power to inspire action.

Stories in the form of parables, myths, allegories and fables have communicated ideas, expectations and reasons since the dawn of time. Stories explain, influence and persuade. And they do that by engaging the listener's imagination. You see a story unfold in your mind's eye. A persuasive story talks to your head and heart. Every company today has existing stories told throughout the culture, especially to those new to the group.

How desirable are they, though, and who are the current influential storytellers?

Stories have the power to change thinking, which leads to a change in decisions and behaviors toward the desired direction or objective. They also have the power to cement beliefs and behaviors that are undesirable. Who has the loudest voice in your culture? Those perpetuating something that happened years ago, no longer reflective of today's realities or in opposition of the direction of change? Or is it those who are positive influencers and change agents, attempting to get others to believe in a better way? Whoever has the loudest voice and bigger audience influences.

Getting your story right is a high-stakes proposition. Stories have purpose. They can inspire individuals to great success or, in the case of enemy propaganda, seek to instill a sense of futility and inevitability. Stories can also clarify ideas and expectations. They can make rationales or complex ideas understandable by showing concrete examples.

In this framework, you have already been challenged to determine your customers, what data is needed to decide where to focus

efforts, how you will craft your vision of success, how to operationalize safety excellence so people can picture what it will look like following improvement, and how you will explain the results. You have been provided an overview of the importance of determining your rationale for advancement. Now it is time to craft your story, one that will take the decisions made thus far and move people, both emotionally and logically, in the direction you are trying to lead them.

These additional questions will help you establish your story: How can you express your vision and rationale quickly and clearly? Do you have a story or stories? Is your story still relevant? Are you telling the right stories? Are they understandable? Do they fit with the culture? What effect are you seeing from the stories you tell? How do new beliefs inspired by stories change behavior? Can people identify with the story? Can they see themselves as actors in it? How much investment will you make to communicate your story? What channels work best to get the story to your audience and customers? Who are the storytellers to best influence others within the culture?

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communicate what success looks like. Stories hold the power to inspire action. What's your existing narrative? Is it covert or overt? Which conversations add value and which don't? Does your story connect people emotionally, or are you just making a business case? What's your story?

Upcoming articles will continue to focus on the remaining questions that must be asked and answered to create your safety excellence strategy.

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