What We Believe vs. What We Know

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Storytellers, particularly those who are professional salespeople or thought leaders in a particular industry, routinely face a chasm that they must narrow if they are to achieve a level of unquestioned relevance with their audience. It is a chasm that exists at all times between provider and customer, a chasm that, if not addressed, will remain an un-crossable obstacle. That chasm is the wide gap that exists between *What the customer BELIEVES to be true* and *What we KNOW to be true.* This is a fundamentally important thing that, if dealt with, can position the storyteller very effectively.

Most people make decisions on the basis of what they think they know, not on what they actually do know. We all have blind spots, or *scatomas,* that we accept as fact because they've been part of our reality for so long that we simply accept them as true. Sometimes they're urban legends (the traveler who woke up in a bathtub full of ice, missing his kidneys, after having a drink with a stranger in a bar); sometimes they're the stuff of mind control (the people of North Korea believe that Kim Jong Un can fly and has the ability to make it rain on command); and sometimes they're the collective thinking of a group who reach a common conclusion about something because there's safety in numbers (Bring Your Own Device, or BYOD, is supremely bad and will have a negative effect on my business 100% of the time).

One of the responsibilities of an effective storyteller is to disrupt "status quo thinking." This is why we always make the observation that storytelling is about leadership – the fine art of showing the audience what COULD be, not what IS. If the storyteller can disrupt the way the listener thinks, they can plant seeds of doubt and begin the process of uncovering an alternative status quo based on what we know to be true rather than what is believed to be true.

Consider the example I mentioned earlier – about BYOD. This is an evolving and growing phenomenon in business today, the inexorable and unavoidable tendency of employees to bring

their own personal devices (mobile phones, tablets, laptops) to work because (1) they know how they work, (2) they are more capable than the "standardized" device provided by the company, (3) they have the apps on them that the employee needs to do their job, and (2) the employee is happier when using their own device. Those who have not taken the time to really dig into the facts (what we know to be true) about BYOD believe that BYOD poses an insurmountable and destructive threat to the IT organization because now the IT organization must manage a plethora of devices, apps, and operating systems instead of the standardized device and OS prescribed by the company. Furthermore, when employees use personal devices they introduce a security threat that is impossible to manage, because employees will now be leaving the building with personal devices that have sensitive information on them, and IT has no way to track, locate, or erase them should they be lost.

But let's look at the facts. First of all, the numbers don't lie. In 2012, 44% of large enterprises admitted that they had BYOD implementation strategies underway, and that number is expected to grow to 94% by the end of 2013. *BYOD is not an IF question – it's a WHEN question.* It's coming whether we like it or not. More BYOD studies than I can reasonably count have been done by respectable analyst firms, and they all say the same thing: That even in the most poorly-executed BYOD implementations (meaning, situations where management gives up and accepts BYOD as a reality), IT's cost structure increases by no more than 5% or so. And in companies where BYOD is embraced? Employee satisfaction and productivity go up, IT complexity goes down, IT cost goes down, and corporate productivity skyrockets. Why? Because employees are happier and because of a simple equation that underlies the reality of BYOD;

$$BYOD = BYOIT$$

In other words, when people bring their own iPhones to work they do so because those devices are configured around the requirements of their owner – stated another way, they adapt to the user, not the other way around. And if the device has problems, the owner doesn't typically call corporate IT for tech support; they (1) call their kids, (2) call their friends, and (3) go to Google. And as far as security is concerned, it's an easy task to configure a personal device as a "dumb terminal" so that it merely displays sensitive corporate information but doesn't store it. That way if it's lost or stolen, sensitive data isn't in jeopardy.

The point of this is that the act of closing the gap between "what the customer believes" and "what we know to be true" is a major step along the road to being a thought leader and trusted advisor to the customer. The more we think about storytelling's ability to narrow that gap, the better positioned storytellers are to influence the thinking of the audience.

Thanks for reading.