**UPGRADE.swiss**
organisationsentwicklungspartner

Highly Stimulating Stories thanks to "Story Telling Canvas"

Yordan Athanassov

Your new project or strategy is in the starting blocks. You do not have time to waste, results are expected soon. You urgently need to activate resources in order to execute your project / strategy.

You ask yourself how to make these resources want to be part of your project / strategy and contribute to it. One of your option is to tell a highly stimulating story.

We describe below the instrument "story telling canvas" allowing you to tell your project / strategy in a stimulating way in order to quickly activate the necessary resources.
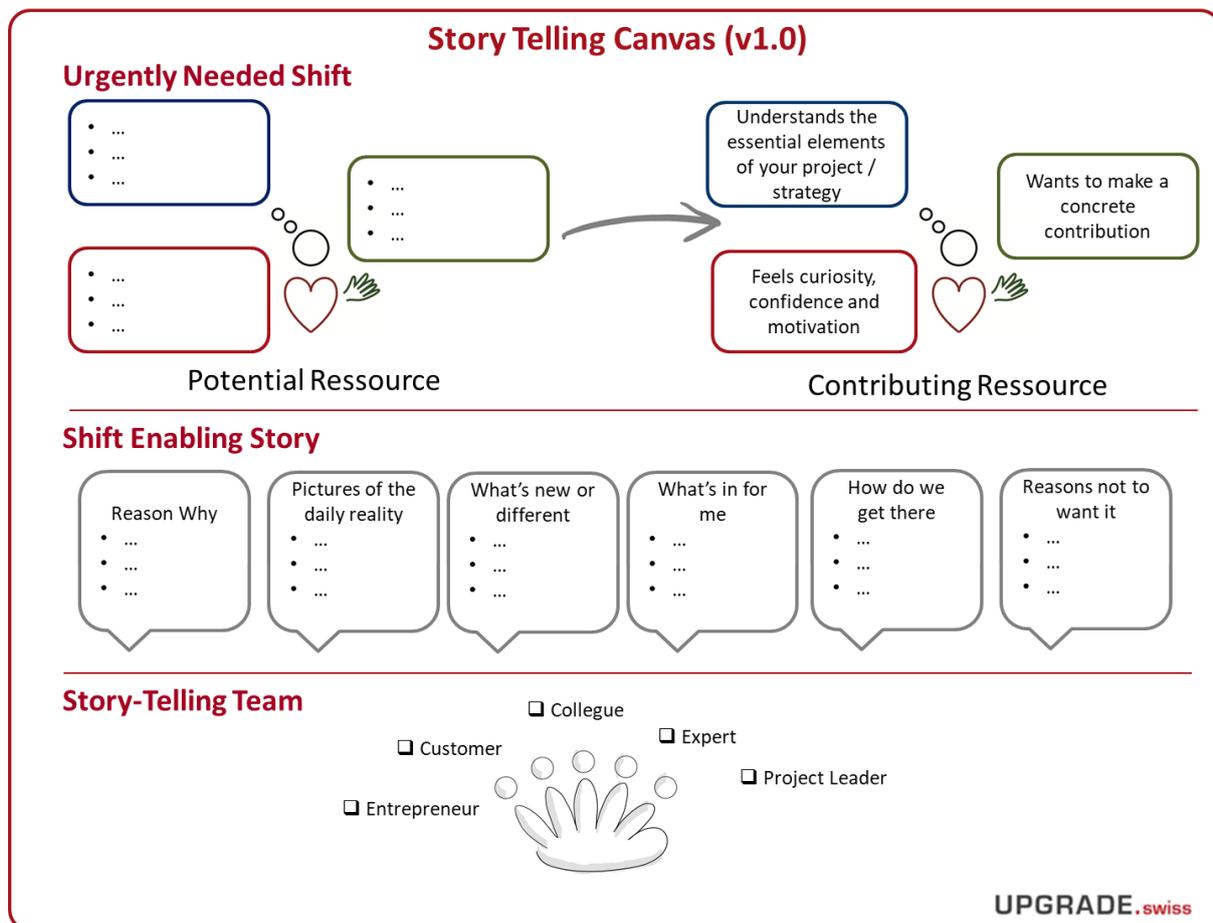
The canvas consists in 3 parts:

1. The "Urgently Needed Shift" which describes the necessary impact of your story on your potential resources so that they start to contribute.
2. The "Shift Enabling Story" that describes the contents needed in your story to achieve the "Urgently Needed Shift".
3. The "Story-Telling Team" outlining the speakers needed to convey the contents convincingly.

In order to create your story, you have to fill in the empty fields of the canvas. We describe below the different parts of the canvas.

Urgently Needed Shift

The ideal resource understands the essential elements of your project / strategy, feels curiosity, confidence and motivation and wants to make a concrete contribution. It is in this state that you want to bring your potential resource through your story.

The critical question is "where are your potential resources today? " or "where do you pick up your listeners? ". What have they already understood, what do they have to learn additionally? Do they already feel attracted, or are they neutral or worse skeptical - what are their hopes and fears? Do they have already taken an action, are they able to act, or are they passive? It is important to specifically answer these questions in order to:

1. Qualify the extent and nature of the shift that your story should make possible (or at least should contribute to).
2. Create the ground to identify the right arguments, to connect with your listener and get them moving.
3. Evaluate, if story telling is sufficient, or if other measures are necessary.

The shift enabling story

Essential contents that your story must have in order to insure the desired shift are listed below. This list does not pretend to be exhaustive. And it goes without saying that you have to adjust the "intensity" of your presentation according to your specific situation.

« Reason Why » (inspire)

Start with the "reason why". It is an important source of inspiration for your listener. It lets him/her see the possibility of participating in something important. The "reason why" should not be confused with the goals of the project / strategy. It consists in three parts:

1. The entrepreneurial ambitions you want to achieve, the opportunities you want to capitalize on.
2. The concrete problems (or threats) that you want to solve (counter) for the company, for the stakeholders, or for your customers.
3. An answer to the question "why now?". You should create the feeling "now is the right time, it's now or never".

Pictures of the daily reality (connect your project / strategy with the reality)

Avoid staying with overused phrases like "customer needs change faster than ever because of individualization, digitization and globalization". Be specific and use examples and illustrations that are connected with your listener's daily life. Especially moving are the situations in which your listener is himself/herself a customer of the company, or the issues for which your listener is personally challenged by his entourage.

What's new or different (make your project / strategy easy to understand)

Although the description of the vision or desired end state seem relevant, it is often easier for your listener to grasp "what will be different tomorrow compared to today". It is thus appropriate to describe concretely the main differences, in terms of products, processes, how to collaborate, etc. between the current state and the state after execution of the project / strategy. Do not try to be exhaustive but focus on the most impactful 5 – 10 differences.

What's in for me (make your project / strategy attractive)

This aspect is often overlooked, especially when the pressure is high. There is a natural tendency to focus on entrepreneurial needs and benefits. Yet the opportunity to participate in building a future that will be better for oneself is an important source of motivation. For example, your audience asks itself: "will my work become more varied or more interesting? Will opportunities open for me? What will I discover new? Which people will I meet? Etc. "It is necessary to proactively propose answers to these questions.

How do we get there? (boost confidence, that it is possible)

As soon as your listener has understood the ambitions, arise the question "how do we get there" and the doubts "I fear that a couple of capabilities are missing". It is important to explain the path and methods for the execution of project / strategy and to openly speak about the capabilities to create and how to create them.

Reasons not to want it (boost the credibility of your project / strategy)

Risk taking is part of any ambitious project or strategy. Speak transparently about the risks in the execution, about unpleasant consequences and about the possible fears and doubts. By this means, you accelerate your auditor's individual decision making towards active contribution.

The Team for the Story

Experience shows that there is always a role that is particularly credible, legitimized or accepted to carry particular content. The auditor has specific expectations of a role and assumes that the role has specific abilities and skills. You have to use this matter of fact for your story. When there is a fit between role and content, your story is particularly compelling.

For example, the entrepreneur is ideally legitimized to talk about the reason why. The customer is perfectly credible to describe problems to solve. The colleague is particularly accepted to describe the "what's in for me". The project manager is best able to present the way to go. By the way, these are also the roles that have the most to offer for these contents.

You have the options to involve several people or to consciously embody yourself the different roles. If you embody yourself all the roles, you can use for your preparation and to mentally enter into the role the following sentence: "as ... (entrepreneur, colleague, customer, expert, project manager), I ... (say, request, advice, ...) ".

Feedback welcome

I wish you every success with your next story.

I would be pleased if you share with me your experiences with the story telling canvas. Feel free to write to me a few lines about it or contact me.

Warm regards.

About the author

Dr. Yordan Athanassov

UPGRADE.swiss
organisationsentwicklungspartner

Oberer Batterieweg 73
CH 4059 Basel
+41 79 680 20 25
yordan.athanassov@upgrade-swiss.ch
www.upgrade-swiss.ch

Some Books that inspired this instrument

o   Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, Penguin Group, 2009, 256p.
o   Daniel H. Pink, *To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth About Moving Others*, Riverhead Books, 2013, 272p.
o   Oren Klaff, *Pitch Anything: An Innovative Method for Presenting, Persuading, and Winning the Deal*, McGraw-Hill, 2011, 225p.
o   Carmine Gallo, *Talk Like TED: The 9 Public Speaking Secrets of the World's Top Minds*, Macmillan, 2014, 288p.
o   Carmine Gallo, *Fire Them Up!: 7 Simple Secrets to: Inspire Colleagues, Customers, and Clients*; Sell Yourself, Your Vision, and Your Values; Communicate with Charisma and Confidence, Wiley, 2007, 240p.
o   John P. Kotter, *Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World*, Harvard Business Review Press, 2014, 224p.