



The Change Compass

Cambiana

## How to tell stories of change

Telling effective stories is a critical skill for those leading change management. An effective and emotionally engaging story can make or break the outcome of a change initiative. We have all heard inspiring and engaging stories that compel us to move toward the journey and change our current ways. On the other hand, a badly formulated story that does not connect with us will do little to progress the change imperative.



To tell an effective story of change we need to refer to facts. What happened before that prompted the change process? What happened during the change journey? What was the outcome of the change? Anecdotal information may be interesting, but data and facts form a critical part of the change story as it adds to the ‘meat’ of the story and provides insights on exactly what happened, adding to the ‘texture’ of the story. Here is a change story I experienced.

When I was at Intel, there was significant concern that there was not a way to sustain the pace of change according to Moore’s Law. Moore’s Law was written by Intel’s co-founder Gordon Moore. In a paper published Moore postulated the number of transistors that would fit into a microchip would double every year. Over time, the pace of change at Intel in innovating to meet this expectation (and in many ways shaping the overall computer industry) had driven the company to innovate constantly.

At that time in 2004, there was concern within Intel that there may not be a way to fit in even more transistors within a chip as inserting even more would result in significant heat and energy consumption to not make it viable. For us layman, transistors are basically the ‘brains’ of the computer. The race was on to find another way to fulfill Moore’s prophecy. This is a company known for its technical prowess, building the most powerful supercomputers in the world. Therefore, there was significant motivation to continue to find ways to meet this challenge.

The challenge was met and tackled when engineers came up with a way of organising and grouping transistors as a 'core' in a way that distributed heat balanced with energy consumption (my simplified layman translation). This started with dual-core processors followed by multi-core processors. The company rejoiced and the law was maintained!

## Typical story formats

There are several typical story formats that are common in telling change stories (adapted from Sparkol) including:

- 1) The Quest – The hero sets out in search of a particular challenge, prize or reward and in the process comes across a series of challenges. There may be accomplices along the way to help the hero in the quest. Eventually, after struggles, the hero succeeds and all is well.
- 2) Rebirth – The main character has a significant flaw or is a bad person, and eventually is shown their flaws and through this awareness and realization redeems him/herself to transform into 'good'.
- 3) Overcoming the monster – The main character sets out to defeat a monster, and through sheer will, determination and hard work the character defeats the monster

## Using data to tell the story

A typical story for organizations undergoing significant change is ...

- 1) Context: Industry is undergoing significant changes and with significant competition, the company needs to transform ABC to stay competitive.
- 2) Quantitative data: The change roadmap contains a series of changes. Looking at the data (as shown through a heatmap or other analytical reports) there are certain months where change loading peaks. Last time this load happened business performance was impacted in ABC ways.
- 3) Qualitative data: From previous change episodes, anecdotal feedback from employees and other frontline teams is that ABC. For example, during this is what people experienced, and as a result XXX happened.
- 4) The problem statement: This presents a number of risks and challenges in terms of ABC.
- 5) The solution: To effectively manage these risks it is recommended that ABC.

To continue reading [click here](#).