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Business & Economics

Lead with a Story: A Guide to Crafting Business Narratives That Captivate, Convince, and Inspire
Paul Smith
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There is nothing particularly unique about storytelling. It happens countless times and in countless ways: bedtime stories are told to children; stories are conveyed in songs, movies, and television; and stories proliferate in newspapers, magazines, and books. Indeed, storytelling has been a staple of popular culture for centuries.

But storytelling is more unusual in the corporate culture. In this fascinating, instructive book, Paul Smith of The Procter & Gamble Company makes a compelling case for transferring the skill of storytelling to the business world. He points out that corporate storytelling has become accepted only recently. Today, Smith says, many leading companies "have assigned a high-level 'corporate storyteller' to capture and share their most important stories." He also notes that a number of business schools have added storytelling courses.

Smith follows his own advice: He "leads with a story"—in fact, many stories—in virtually every chapter. As a result, *Lead With a Story* is both a treasure trove of stories that any corporate storyteller can use, as well as a comprehensive guidebook to storytelling. Because his focus is on managers, Smith organizes the book into these five distinct parts: Envision Success, Create an Environment for Winning, Energize the Team, Educate People, and Empower Others. The author weaves appropriate stories throughout each of these parts; in addition, he embeds how-to chapters within each that address such basics as story structure, stylistic elements, emotional appeal, the element of surprise, and metaphors and analogies. By interspersing the how-to chapters with storytelling chapters rather than lumping them into one potentially dry section, Smith keeps the reader engaged and motivated.

Many of Smith's stories are so relevant and have such impact that they could easily be used by most any corporate storyteller. But the real value of *Lead With a Story* goes beyond the compendium of tales it contains. This book lays out a solid rationale for corporate storytelling

and provides in-depth training in this specialized skill. Smith helps readers understand and overcome common barriers to storytelling, provides a story-structure template and a story elements checklist, and includes chapter summaries and exercises—all of inestimable value to anyone who wants to be an effective corporate storyteller.

Paul Smith is the consummate storyteller, but he is also a generous, sharing teacher who imparts a great deal of wisdom in his book. This is a highly readable volume that should benefit managers everywhere.

Barry Silverstein