



Leading Through Story

How Storytelling Builds Relationships That Shape Organizational Culture

"Culture isn't written on a wall. It lives in the stories leaders tell, about how decisions get made, how teams show up for each other, and how the right conversation changes everything."

Peter Lijnse, September 2026



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Leading through Story

Storytelling is one of the most underrated leadership capabilities available. Not the ability to craft a polished narrative for a town hall, but the greater skill of using story to build trust, navigate change, and sustain the relationships that make culture real. When leaders develop this capability alongside the discipline of relationship management, something shifts. Culture stops being something the organization talks about and starts being something people live.

Why Culture Lives in Stories, Not Statements

The relationship between storytelling, trust, and organizational culture

Walk into almost any organization, and you will find the same things on the walls. A framed mission statement or a list of values, carefully chosen and professionally printed. These artifacts are not wrong, but they are incomplete. Culture is not what an organization declares. Culture is what people experience in moments of pressure, how a difficult conversation is handled, and the daily texture of working life.

And that experience happens inside relationships.

**Culture is not what an organization declares.
Culture is what people experience.**

Business Relationship Management as a Leadership Skill

Business relationship management (BRM) is a discipline for creating, sustaining, and deepening the relationships that allow organizations to function, adapt, and grow. The Business Relationship Management Institute (brminstitute.org) defines it as a role, a discipline, and an organizational capability that evolves culture and drives value. The goal is not relationships for their own sake. It is the collaboration, alignment, and results that only become possible when the right relationships are in place.

For leaders, BRM is not a role; it's a leadership skill. It's the ongoing commitment to treat every significant interaction as an opportunity to build the trust that makes real collaboration possible. When that trust exists, people share information earlier, solve problems faster, and commit to outcomes more fully. When it doesn't, even the best strategy stalls.



The Three Forces: Communication, Behaviour, and Story

The tools leaders use to shape relationship cultures are not processes or systems. They are three forces that work together: communication, which carries meaning across the organization; behaviour, which validates everything that is said; and story, which creates the shared meaning that makes culture something people feel rather than just read. When all three are aligned, culture compounds. When any one of them is out of step, trust begins to erode.

Storytelling as a Relationship Act

There is a version of storytelling taught in leadership programs that focuses on structure: the arc, the hook, the moment of tension, the resolution. These are useful skills, but they treat storytelling as a performance, when storytelling is, at its core, a relationship act. A performance is delivered to an audience. A relationship act is offered to a person. A performance can be rehearsed to perfection and still leave people cold. A relationship act, imperfect but authentic, can change the entire temperature of a room.

The human brain does not process narrative the same way it processes information: facts are stored and create awareness; stories are felt and create identity. And identity—a sense of this is who we are and how we do things here—is what culture is made of.

**Facts are stored and create awareness.
Stories are felt and create identity.**

Impact Stories: Showing What the Work Is Worth

Impact stories are among the most powerful tools available for relationship management. They clearly demonstrate value, make change feel real, and answer the questions stakeholders are always asking: Why does this matter? What happened? And so what? A good impact story does not always begin with a problem. Some of the most powerful ones begin with a success worth understanding and repeating. Either way, the structure is the same:

- 1. The Situation:** What was the context, and why did it matter?
- 2. The Action:** What was done, by whom, and what made the approach distinctive?
- 3. The Result:** What changed? What success criteria were met, and what did that enable?
- 4. The So What:** How did this connect to purpose or strategy, and what would the organization want to do more of as a result?



Stories, Trust, and the Relationship

Telling stories within relationships is one of the most reliable ways to build trust. Frances Frei's Trust Triangle identifies three conditions trust requires: authenticity (people believe you mean what you say), logic (they trust your judgment), and empathy (they feel you care about them). Story addresses all three simultaneously. A true story, honestly told, signals authenticity. A story that shows clear thinking builds the logic leg. A story that acknowledges the listener's experience builds empathy.

The relationship cost of inauthenticity is high. An organization that tells managed, manufactured stories trains its people to distrust what they hear. Authenticity is not a stylistic choice; it is a relationship imperative.

**A story told without a genuine relationship
behind it is content.
A story told within a relationship, with honesty
and care, becomes culture.**

STORY EXAMPLE: "WHO AM I?" STORY

Claire had just been appointed as Regional Director for a professional services firm. In her first week, she requested one-to-one meetings with each of her senior interest holders, not to present her priorities, but to listen.

In the first meeting, the Head of Finance was polite but guarded. He had seen new leaders arrive with energy before. Claire didn't start with her plan. She started with a story about a turnaround she had led three years earlier when she had made all the right operational decisions and almost none of the right relationship ones. The numbers improved while the team fractured. Two of her best people left within six months.

"You can be completely right about the strategy and still lose the people you need to deliver it," she said. "I learned that the hard way." By the end of the meeting, the Head of Finance had shared two concerns he had never raised with her predecessor. The relationship had begun, not with a presentation, but with a story that made her human before she was a title.

Story type: "Who I Am?" story. Builds personal credibility by demonstrating honesty about past failure before asking for trust.



The Three Forces: Communication, Behaviour, and Story

The forces that define how culture is experienced

How does culture travel? Not how it is designed or declared, but how it moves from the leaders' intentions to the daily lived experience of people inside an organization. The answer is not a policy; it is the relationship between three forces: story, communication, and behaviour. This alignment, or misalignment, determines whether culture is something an organization has, or merely something it claims.

What Each Force Does

Communication is how leaders create shared understanding. It is not simply transmitting information. It ensures that meaning lands, context is provided, and people feel heard as much as informed. Poor communication doesn't just cause confusion. It creates distance, and distance is one of the most reliable early warning signs of a culture under strain.

Behaviour is how leaders make their values real. People do not primarily follow what leaders say. They follow what leaders do, especially under pressure. Behaviour is what people watch when they want to know the truth about an organization. Behaviour cannot be managed or messaged. It is simply observed, constantly, by everyone around it.

Story is how leaders create meaning. Stories connect the past to the present and imagine a future worth moving toward. Without story, communication will report and behaviour will demonstrate, but neither carries the meaning that tells people why any of this matters. Story gives these two their cultural weight. It is also what makes culture transferable: behaviour alone stays local, but a story about what good behaviour looks like can travel anywhere.

When all three align, culture stops being a conversation and starts being something people simply feel as the truth of where they work. When anyone falls out of step, the gap fills very quickly with the counter-stories that people always have ready.

When story, communication, and behaviour are aligned, culture stops being a conversation and starts being something people feel.



When the Forces Fall Out of Alignment

Most culture failures trace back to a breakdown in one of the three forces. The table below identifies the three patterns, what they look like, and what it takes to restore alignment.

	Story without Behaviour	Communication without Story	Behaviour without Story
Problem	The Credibility Gap	The Noise Problem	The Scale Problem
Symptom	Leaders tell inspiring stories; actions contradict them	High volume, low meaning; people stop listening	Behaviour stays local; it does not travel
Effect	Counter-stories spread faster than the originals	Updates arrive but are not absorbed	Culture leaves when the leader leaves
Solution	Only consistent behaviour closes the gap	A single honest story cuts through the noise	Story gives behaviour a life beyond the moment

Keeping the Three Forces in Alignment

Before any significant leadership act, three questions are worth asking:

- What story does this moment call for?
- Is the way I am communicating consistent with what I am saying?
- Does my behaviour confirm the story I am telling?

These are not complicated questions, but they require the kind of conscious attention that most leaders under pressure default away from. The leaders who practice them consistently are the ones who build cultures that hold.

STORY EXAMPLE: “VALUES IN ACTION” STORY

Two weeks before signing a significant strategic partnership, an account director flagged that the partner’s supplier contracts contained terms inconsistent with the organization’s stated commitment to fair trading. The flag was noted, and the deal timeline was kept.

After signing, the terms became public internally. The Chief Executive called a meeting and said: “We had a signal that this wasn’t aligned with what we say we stand for, and we chose the deal. That was the wrong choice, and I own it.” She asked the account director to walk the room through what she had flagged. They used this information to rewrite how values alignment was assessed in future partnership decisions and gave the account director a seat in future negotiations.

The story travelled fast, not because it was announced, but because the behaviour confirmed the story the leadership team had been telling about accountability.

Story type: “Values in Action” story. Demonstrates accountability through behaviour that matches stated values and shows how the repair of trust becomes a cultural signal in itself.



The Story Factor: Types of Stories That Reveal Culture

The right story for the right relationship moment

Stories are precision tools. Each type is designed to do something specific in a relationship: to build a particular kind of trust, to open a particular kind of conversation. In Annette Simmons' book, *The Story Factor*, she identified six core story types that leaders use to influence, connect, and lead. The skill is not just knowing the types; it is knowing which one this relationship, in this moment, needs. Start not with "What story do I want to tell?" but with "What does this relationship need right now?"

1. "Who I Am?": Building Personal Credibility

These stories reveal the person behind the role: what formed them, their beliefs, and their experiences. They set the conditions for trust by making the leader human before they are authoritative. The most powerful stories are not ones of triumph. They are stories of the moment a leader didn't know what to do, and what they did anyway.

Relationship lens: Every relationship begins with an unasked question: can I trust this person? A "Who I Am?" story answers that question before it is posed. It closes the distance between role and person faster than any introduction or credentials can. A leader who shares a genuine "Who I Am?" story signals that the relationship they are offering is authentic.

Story: "The moment I understood what kind of relationships I wanted to build was the day a neglected relationship told me, very clearly, exactly what that neglect had cost."

2. "Why I Am Here?": Establishing Purpose and Commitment

People want to know whether a leader is genuinely committed to something larger than their own advancement. These stories trace the connection between personal values and professional commitment. They answer skepticism not by arguing against it but by making it unnecessary. These stories are most powerful at the beginning of relationships, when a new leader joins a team or when an organization asks people to commit to a direction they didn't choose.

Relationship lens: Skepticism is the default position in any new or strained relationship. People withhold their full engagement until they are confident the person asking for it is worth the investment. A "Why I Am Here?" story helps dissolve that skepticism by making intent visible and personal. It answers the question that underlies every partnership: Are you here for yourself or for me?

Story: "I'm not here because of the role. I'm here because I've seen what becomes possible when people stop being transactional and start genuinely collaborating. I've also seen how quickly trust disappears when they don't."

3. "Teaching": Transferring Wisdom Without Hierarchy

Teaching stories transfer hard-won wisdom without lecturing. Through the account of a real situation, they demonstrate what good judgment looks like in practice. Unlike a lecture, a teaching story does not create defensiveness because it implicates the storyteller rather than the listener. This makes these stories especially effective for building psychological safety and developing leadership judgment.



Relationship lens: Sharing what you learned from failure is one of the most significant acts of relationship investment a leader can make. It gives the other person something of value without asking for anything in return. That asymmetry—offering before receiving—deepens relationships quickly and creates the psychologically safe place where the other person can admit their own uncertainty. That is where genuine collaboration begins.

Story: The hardest thing I ever had to learn was that I had been measuring my effectiveness by the quality of my outputs, while the person across the table was measuring it by the quality of our relationship. We were both right; here's why.

4. “Vision”: Co-Creating a Shared Future

Most vision statements leave people cold, not because the future they describe is undesirable, but because they offer people no role in it. Vision stories make the future vivid, connect it to values people already share, and leave genuine space for people to see themselves in it. When people can see themselves in a story about the future, they stop being recipients of a strategy and become participants instead.

Relationship lens: A shared vision is one of the strongest bonds in a professional relationship. Vision stories create that bond, not by announcing a destination, but by painting a picture vivid enough that others can place themselves inside the journey. In BRM terms, this story type deepens alignment across relationships, giving teams and stakeholders a common frame of reference that survives disagreements because it was imagined together, not handed down.

Story: The relationships that worked best were never just about getting things done together. They were built around a shared picture of where we were going and why it mattered.

5. “Values in Action”: Demonstrating That Culture Is Real

These are the stories that prove, not assert, that the culture an organization describes is the culture it lives. They are born in moments of genuine choice, where doing the right thing costs something real. The power of these stories is proportional to the difficulty of the moment they describe. They send a clear signal: the values you signed up for are real. You can rely on them.

Relationship lens: Trust in a relationship is built on predictability: the confidence that a person will behave consistently with their values, even when it is inconvenient. Every relationship carries an implicit question: “When it is difficult, who will you be?” “Values in Action” stories answer that question with evidence. For any stakeholder deciding how much to invest in a relationship, that evidence is worth more than any amount of declared commitment.

Story: There was a moment where protecting a relationship meant saying something that complicated my position. What surprised me was how much that one choice changed what the other person was willing to share with me from that point on.

6. “I Know What You’re Thinking”: Building Trust Through Honesty

Every leader faces an undercurrent of mistrust in their audience. These stories address it directly by naming the doubt in the room. When a leader says, “I know this is not easy to hear, and I know there is a version of this story where you have been here before and it didn’t go well”, it helps people stop spending their energy managing that doubt and begin listening. These are the repair stories of



relationship communication, most needed in moments of change, difficult news, or when trust has been strained.

Relationship lens: Unspoken doubt sits between what is being said and what is actually being thought, and as long as it goes unacknowledged, it prevents real communication. When a leader names it, they signal something powerful: they care more about the truth of the relationship than about protecting their own position. In relationship management terms, this story type is most critical when the trust account is low, and the risk of misreading is high. Naming the unspoken is an act of relationship courage, and people remember it.

Story: I know there have been times when people here invested in relationships that weren't honoured in return. That history is in the room with us right now, and it deserves to be named before we talk about anything else.

The Hero's Journey

One story type to use with care is the Hero's Journey, written about most famously by Joseph Campbell. It's a powerful archetype in literature but one that can distort organizational storytelling when applied too rigidly. The Cynefin Company has written on the risks of imposing structured, linear narrative forms on the complexity of real organizational experience (thecynefin.co/finding-things-within). In the Hero's Journey, we find a hero who begins in an ordinary world, receives a call to adventure, crosses a threshold into the unknown, faces trials, encounters a mentor who cannot go the full distance with them, undergoes a supreme ordeal, and returns bearing something of value to their community.

In practice, the most useful organizational stories are often fragmented, contextual, and honest about uncertainty, rather than built around a clean arc of challenge and triumph.

STORY EXAMPLE: "WHY I AM HERE" STORY

James was the newly appointed Head of Organizational Development. His first meeting with the COO was polite but not productive. At their second meeting, he described an earlier role when he designed a leadership program that won an industry award and changed almost nothing. Six months after delivery, behaviours in the business were identical to what they had been before.

"That experience ended my interest in programs," he said. "It started my interest in relationships. Development doesn't happen in a workshop. It happens in the conversations a leader has the day after with the people they lead. I'm here because I think we can change those conversations, but only if we build this together."

The COO said: "That's the first honest thing anyone in your function has said to me in four years." The meeting ran over by an hour. James hadn't opened a single slide.

Story type: "Why I Am Here?" story. Establishes genuine purpose, disarms skepticism, and lays the foundation for a working relationship rather than a client-supplier dynamic.



The Storybook: Building Your Culture Library

A practical guide to collecting, organizing, and using organizational stories

Every organization has more stories than it knows what to do with. The problem is not scarcity; rather, most stories are never collected. They live in the memories of people who eventually leave, in conversations at the edges of meetings, in experiences nobody thought to record. A storybook is a curated, living collection of stories that demonstrate who the organization really is. It is designed to be used, not archived.

Where a Storybook Gets Used

- Onboarding: New employees receive stories, not just information. They arrive as participants in a living culture, not recipients of a briefing.
- Change management: When people are anxious about what is changing, stories about who the organization has been under pressure remind them of what will not change.
- Leadership development: Leaders learn from the lived experiences of their own organization, not anonymized external case studies.
- Stakeholder conversations: A well-chosen story demonstrates character more effectively than any data. It provides evidence, not argument.

How to Gather Stories

Stories are gathered through listening, not surveying:

- Story interviews are one-to-one conversations with leaders or long-serving employees. The best questions are specific: Tell me about a time when you saw the culture at its best.
- Story circles are facilitated group conversations around a theme. They surface the peer-to-peer experience that leaders often don't hear.
- Leadership listening sessions create space for senior leaders to receive stories rather than tell them, signalling through the act of listening itself what the organization values.

**Stories are not gathered through surveys.
They are gathered through listening: unhurried,
genuinely curious, and present.**



Organizing Stories with a Taxonomy

A storybook without organization is a library without a catalogue. A story taxonomy makes stories findable and ensures the right story reaches the right relationship at the right moment. The two most important dimensions are Story Type (drawing on the six types from The Story Factor) and Relationship Purpose (what the relationship needs right now: building trust, navigating change, repairing a rupture, or inspiring action).

Dimension	Examples
Story Type	Who I Am, Why I Am Here, Teaching, Vision, Values in Action, I Know What You're Thinking
Cultural Theme	Accountability, Inclusion, Innovation, Resilience, Trust
Relational Context	Leader to Team, Peer to Peer, Organization to Customer
Relationship Purpose	Build Trust, Navigate Change, Inspire Action, Repair Relationship
Emotional Tone	Inspiring, Humbling, Challenging, Celebratory, Cautionary
Format	Written narrative, Video, Story card, Case study

Keeping the Storybook Alive

A storybook needs a steward: someone responsible for gathering new stories, retiring outdated ones, and ensuring the collection stays honest and representative. The question that matters most is not "Is this a good story?" but "Does this story still reflect who we are?" The gaps in the collection are as revealing as its contents.

STORY EXAMPLE: "TEACHING" STORY

The Head of People had spent months building the case for a new approach to leadership development. She had the data: retention figures, engagement scores, 360 feedback trends. She had presented it twice. Twice, the executive team had listened politely and moved on to the next agenda item.

Before her third attempt, a colleague suggested she try something different. Instead of opening with the data, she called one of the managers whose name appeared in the numbers. She spent thirty minutes listening to his story: a man who had joined the organization twelve years earlier as a junior analyst, who had never been given a formal development conversation in that time, and who had quietly been preparing to leave when a new manager had asked him, for the first time, what he actually wanted from his career.

"That one conversation changed everything," he told her. "I've been here another four years because of it."

She opened her next executive presentation with his story. She didn't change a single data point. At the end, the CFO said: "I've seen this data twice before. This is the first time I've understood what we're losing when we don't do this." The investment was approved that day.

Story type: "Teaching" story. Demonstrates without instruction that the right story transforms how data lands. The teller doesn't explain the lesson. The listener finds it themselves.



Becoming a Relationship Storyteller

From knowing about stories to living them

The gap most leaders face is not between knowing and not knowing. It is between knowing and doing. Closing that gap is a practice challenge. It is built through small, deliberate choices made in real relationship moments, over time, under pressure. Three practices define the shift.

Listen Before You Tell

The most important storytelling practice available to a leader is not telling. It is listening. Stories are not invented in isolation. They are discovered in relationships. Listening means asking questions that open stories rather than close them: not “How is the team performing?” but “Tell me about a moment this week when you saw the team at its best.” The difficult stories, the ones that reveal a gap between the culture the organization describes and the culture people experience, are the most valuable ones a leader can hear.

Be Consistent

Nothing undermines a story faster than behaviour that contradicts it. Consistency is the practice that makes storytelling trustworthy, transforming a well-told story from an inspiring communication into a credible cultural signal. The leaders who build the deepest relationship trust are not the ones who are always consistent. They are the ones who say so when they are not.

Share Generously

Culture does not scale through scarcity. Generous storytelling means offering stories freely in small moments as well as large ones and actively giving stories to other leaders to tell in the relationships they hold. When stories are carried by many voices, the culture becomes genuinely collective, owned not by the leadership team but by the organization.

The most important storytelling practice available to a leader is not telling; it is listening. Stories are discovered in relationships.



The Storytelling Do's and Don'ts

Drawn from the principles of The Story Factor and the relationship management discipline explored throughout this article:

Do	Don't
Choose the story type that fits the relationship moment, not the one you are most comfortable telling.	Don't use data as a substitute for story. Numbers and facts inform. Stories move people.
Be present in your story. Tell stories you have lived, not observed from a distance.	Don't make yourself the hero of every story. Culture is built by many people, and the stories should reflect that.
Name the doubt in the room. The most trusted stories acknowledge what people are already thinking.	Don't over-rehearse. A story that sounds performed loses the authenticity that makes it land.
Listen for stories before you tell them. The best story for this moment may come from the room.	Don't tell the same story in every context. Each relationship moment calls for a different type.
Tell stories where you were wrong, uncertain, or changed. These build more trust than stories of success.	Don't apply the Hero's Journey rigidly. Organizational life is complex and rarely follows a clean arc of challenge and triumph.
Share stories generously. Give them to others to tell in the relationships you cannot reach.	Don't manufacture stories to send a message. People can feel the difference between a story that illuminates and one that manages.

STORY EXAMPLE: "I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE THINKING" STORY

The change program had been running for eighteen months with mixed results. The program director opened her quarterly review with three words: "I know what you're thinking."

"You're thinking we've been here before. Big program, lots of energy at the start, and then it slowly becomes part of the furniture. By year three it's a budget line that everyone wishes would disappear. I've been on the receiving end of a program like that. I've also led one that faded, because we stopped telling the story and started managing the plan."

"This time I want to tell you what is hard about this, what we got wrong in the last quarter, and what I need from this room that we haven't asked for yet." The room that had been preparing to receive a presentation became a conversation. Four leaders shared things they hadn't said before.

Story type: "I Know What You're Thinking" story. Names the doubt in the room, builds trust through honesty, and converts a stakeholder communication into a genuine relationship conversation.



STORY EXAMPLE: “VISION” STORY

The CEO stood at the front of the room at the start of the company’s culture renewal year. She had done this before: annual themes, workshops, posters in the corridors. She knew the half-life of those initiatives. This time she started differently.

She described a logistics business she had visited two years earlier that had gone through painful consolidation and made one decision most competitors hadn’t: rather than manage people out, it asked what each person could become. Operations managers became coaches. People who had expected redundancy notices became architects of how the organization worked. The business came out smaller but stronger, with a culture people talked about from the outside.

“I’m not describing our future,” she said. “I’m describing the kind of organization I believe we are capable of becoming. The path starts with the conversations we choose to have and the stories we choose to tell about who our people are and what they are capable of.” She then asked each leader to share one story about someone on their team who had surprised them in the past year. The session ran 45 minutes over time. Nobody left.

Story type: “Vision” story. Makes the future vivid and invites people into it as participants. Culture is built through genuine relationships, not announcements.

The most powerful thing a leader can do is make the invisible visible. Give what is felt but unspoken about the shape and weight of a story.

Conclusion

Culture Is Relationships in Progress

Relationships are not an end in themselves. The goal is the collaboration, alignment, and results that only become possible when the right relationships are in place. Storytelling is the capability that makes those relationships real: not as a technique applied to a situation, but as the honest, consistent, generous practice of making the invisible visible, and giving what is felt but unspoken about the shape and weight of a story.

The **three forces** keep that practice honest. The **six story types** from The Story Factor give it precision. The **storybook** gives it memory. And the **do/don’t** disciplines give it the daily rigour that separates leaders who know about storytelling from those who lead through it.

Culture is not a destination. It is relationships in progress, always being built, always being tested, always being revealed in the stories that are told and the ones that are not yet being told. The right conversation—told as a story, held in a relationship, confirmed by behaviour—changes everything.



We built these ideas into our own leadership work because storytelling is not a topic we teach, it's a practice we lead with. In *Leading with Relationships*, storytelling is how participants learn to build the trust that organizational relationships depend on. In *Leading with Impact*, it's how leaders learn to make their value visible, turning results into stories interest holders remember and act on. If this article has given you a way to think about storytelling as a relationship act, our programs are where we help you practice it.

Source Information

Frei, F., & Morriss, A. (2020). *Unleashed: The Unapologetic Leader's Guide to Empowering Everyone Around You*. Harvard Business Review Press. Source for the Trust Triangle (authenticity, logic, empathy) referenced in the Stories, Trust, and the Relationship section.

BRM Institute. Business Relationship Management Professional (BRMP) Body of Knowledge. brminstitute.org. The definitional source for BRM as a role, discipline, and organizational capability referenced in the article.

Simmons, A. (2019). *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling* (3rd ed.). Basic Books. The primary source for this article's entire story type framework. Simmons identifies the six story types (Who I Am, Why I Am Here, Teaching, Vision, Values in Action, I Know What You're Thinking) and makes the foundational argument that influence in organizations is always a storytelling challenge. Essential reading for anyone developing this capability. The Do/Don't table in Part Five draws directly on Simmons' principles for effective organizational storytelling, particularly her argument that the teller must be present in the story and that over-rehearsal kills the authenticity that makes stories land.

Snowden, D. The Cynefin Company. thecynefin.co. Source for the caution against applying the Hero's Journey rigidly to organizational storytelling. Snowden's work on narrative and complexity argues that the most useful organizational stories are often fragmented and contextual rather than structured around a clean arc of challenge and triumph. Snowden's work on narrative as a sense-making tool in complex organizations, and the distinction between constructed stories and emergent narrative, informs the Storybook's design principle of gathering stories through listening rather than engineering them for communication purposes.



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