

A**DISCUSS**

- Both stories and presentations have a beginning, a middle and an end. Timing and pacing are extremely important. And, although you should be fluent, you mustn't sound like you've learned the story by heart. It can help if you memorise just the key events, not the exact words – let the actual words come spontaneously on the day if you can.
- A good story adds context and perhaps a little drama or humour to what might otherwise be over-factual. All strong messages (movies, advertisements, songs, historical events, religions) take the form of stories of one kind or another.

RECALL

Rhetorical techniques push your ideas onto the audience by giving what you say more impact. Stories pull the audience towards you. Stories are subtler, more personal and, ultimately, more powerful than rhetoric.

B**REFLECT**

The story might have benefited from a slightly faster pace. More use of gestures and mime could have helped too – for example, when talking about the two different hats.

VIEW 2

Mark's key qualities of a good story are: make it relevant, use the present tense for immediacy, recreate conversations in direct speech and use your voice and gestures to the full. In fact, using slightly different accents can help differentiate between speakers in a dialogue, and a simple gesture can sometimes take the place of many words.

RECALL

He said true stories hold the audience's attention better than fictional ones. In fact, just about the only fictional stories that work are either jokes or 'words of wisdom'. But, in general, the audience will prefer to hear about something that really happened.

C**DISCUSS**

If you are going to disclose something about yourself in a story, good disclosures are: a problem and how you dealt with it, something you have learned (perhaps from someone else), or a particular event that made you change your mind about something. Learning from an older, wiser person may be popular in countries like Japan or China. Overcoming obstacles could be better received in success-oriented cultures such as the USA. In some cultures – for example, British – admission of a personal failing or mistake can often build rapport with your audience, but be careful not to undermine your credibility as a professional, especially in countries such as Germany. In many cultures, stories of personal triumph usually go down well. But, again, be careful not to seem immodest – especially in Asia and Scandinavia.

VIEW

This story comes from the heart. There's only a little mild humour, but it's quite inspiring in its own modest way.

PRESENT

Model answers:

An expensive mistake

I guess you've all heard the famous story of Thomas Watson and the ten million dollars. No? Well, Tom Watson, of course, was the legendary founder of IBM. And it seems that one day one of his top managers comes up to him and says 'Hey, I have this idea for a totally new division of the company.' Well, Watson's impressed with what he hears and immediately gives him the go-ahead. But it turns out to be an absolute disaster! In fact, the new division actually loses ten million dollars! So the manager comes into Watson's office, apologises profusely and hands in his resignation. Watson says 'Why are you resigning?' 'Well, obviously because my idea was such a miserable failure,' says the manager. 'I wanted to resign before you fire me.' 'And why would I do that?' says Watson. 'I've just spent ten million dollars on your education!'

Theme: Today I want to talk to you a little bit about investing in people.

Zero tolerance

Some of you may perhaps have heard of Andrew Carnegie, the famous industrialist. Well, apparently, Carnegie was visiting a steel factory one day and he stopped to speak to one of machine operators. 'Ah, yes, sir,' said the plant supervisor. 'This is Wilson. He's the firm's oldest employee. Been with us for, oh, must be nearly forty years now.' 'Is that so?' says Carnegie. 'Well, congratulations, Wilson!' 'Thank you very much, sir,' says Wilson. 'And can I just say, sir, that in all my years here I have only ever made one tiny, tiny mistake.' 'Good job, Wilson!' says Carnegie, shaking his hand. 'But in future please try to be more careful.'

Theme: I'd like to say a few words about quality control and eliminating error from the manufacturing process.

An offer you can't refuse

Back in the early 1980s the president of Pepsi was a guy called John Sculley. Now, Sculley was a brilliant marketer – famous especially for the 'Pepsi Challenge' commercials – some of you may remember those – where Coca-Cola drinkers are invited to blind-taste Pepsi and Coke and say which one they prefer. Truly great comparative advertising! In fact, Sculley's so good at what he does that Apple co-founder Steve Jobs wants him to come and work at Apple. But Sculley isn't keen. He says: 'I'm doing fine at Pepsi, thanks. Why would I want to move?' To which Jobs memorably replies: 'Do you want to sell sugar-water for the rest of your life or come with me and change the world?'

Theme: The subject of my presentation is businesses that make a difference and businesses that don't.

REFLECT

It's always easier to tell your own story than someone else's. The genuineness shows. Just as spontaneous humour (even if only mild) will often get a bigger laugh than the funniest rehearsed joke, so a personal anecdote (even if only moderately interesting) will usually gain more attention than someone else's clever story.