

## Storytelling

Polson's Discussion Group - October

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**Your cultural or tribal mythology** is the collection of stories that tells you about your relationship to:

- Your God/s and/or Creator/s
- To nature/environment
- To the rest of your tribe (including inherent social structures)
- To the others, the people beyond your tribe
- To your Self

**Your Corporate Mythology** is the stories – both the conscious and unconscious, public and internal – that tell staff about their relationship to:

- The Creator / Owners / Leadership
- To nature / environment
- To the economic environment
- To the broader community
- To other companies, organisations or agencies
- To fellow staff
- To the customer (or person served)
- To Self (who am I in this job?)

### Comparisons between “Corporate Comms” and Corporate Mythology

- The word “**myth**” used to mean “lie” and the origin of the word myth as a story containing truth, meaning and power.
- **Visions** communicated by powerful figures in stories, such as Kings, Queens and Magicians and “Vision Statements” written in corporate language that rarely inspire the same heroic actions or noble deeds.
- **Missions** chosen by heroes, or quests undertaken by adventurers, compared to Mission Statements which, again, are often written in corporate speak and fail to inspire.
- **Values** and archetypal qualities exhibited by symbols and characters in stories as opposed to the Charters of Values generated by organisations and often printed, framed and then ignored.

### The “Overcoming the Monster” myth as the story of a change process

This classic myth nearly always follows five stages. Below is an example of how these stages might manifest in a change process.

- The Call – an inspiration to make a major, positive change.
- Early success – a burst of enthusiasm, support, resources and maybe even good early results or outcomes.
- Confrontation and Frustration – encounter with resistance or significant setbacks, leading to anger, conflict, hatred, disillusionment or despair. (This is the point where most people give up.)
- Trapped and Facing the Monster – a situation where we must now confront whatever is blocking the way. We're trapped because we have come too far to go back.

- Slaying the Monster and/or Miracle Escape – if we use our cunning, work together, draw on extraordinary resources and are maybe even favoured by some good luck, we may win the day!

NOTE: Knowing these underlying mythological dynamics – and what is required at different stages of the journey – can radically change our attitudes and actions at critical times.

**How does the storyteller build meaning and what structure facilitates that connection with the audience?**

Firstly, work out WHAT TYPE OF STORY YOU'RE TELLING.

Then, in terms of CONTENT, consider:

1. Truth – what are the deepest or most important truths that need to be communicated.
2. Symbols (characters, objects, time, place) – how can those truths be captured in symbols.
3. Threads (themes) – what are the threads that remain consistent between your stories?
4. Problems, challenges, monsters, conflict, tension and release – all great stories have tension and release, in any of a hundred different manifestations. Think about where your tensions (challenges, obstacles, monsters) will be and what will lead to their release (resolution, victory, denouement).
5. Smallness and grandness – great stories often capture both the microcosmic and macrocosmic, the self and the corporate, universal themes in personal experiences. Ask if your story can do that.

TWO ELEMENTS OF MAKING MYTHOLOGY LIVE:

1. Speaking it – ensuring it is spoken by one whose voice is heard.
2. Ritualising it – making it habit, living it every day.