

Storytelling News '04

The daily newspaper of the Storytelling Weekend in Washington DC April 16-18, 2004

Saturday April 17, 2004 Conference Day Two

Events taking place Saturday and Sunday:

SATURDAY WORKSHOP

9am to 5pm
S. Dillon Ripley Center
1100 Jefferson Drive SW
Washington, D.C. 20560

Over 40 people attended the Friday social event and shared their stories.



SATURDAY REAL STORY MAKING MAGIC: A THEATER IMPROV EVENT

7pm
Arlington Campus
George Mason University
3401 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington Original Building
Arlington, Virginia
Room #329

Hosts: Liz Berny, Kelly Cresap,
Lynne Feingold, Michelle James,
Joe Mancini, Michael Margolis.
\$15. Pay at the door.
No advance registration necessary.

SUNDAY WORKSHOPS

10am to 4pm
Arlington Campus
George Mason University
3401 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington Original Building
Arlington, Virginia
Room #244

Hosts: Madelyn Blair, Kelly Cresap,
Sharon Benjamin, Michael Arena,
Cary LeBlanc, Dave Rippey, Victoria Ward,
Carol Russell, Stephanie Colton.
\$25 includes food. Pay at the door.
No advance registration necessary.

For more information: www.stevedenning.com/Smithsonian04.html

MORNING, DAY ONE: THE SQUIRREL LEAPS

Steve Denning, author of *The Springboard* and *The Squirrel*, got the morning session off to a rousing start with his wily PowerPoint and excalibur wit. First he cast himself as the world's least likely storyteller, and the World Bank as a notoriously change-resistant organization, and then showed how story became the very catalyst for turning the World Bank from a knowledge-hoarding to a knowledge-sharing system. He presented a contrast between rehearsed and unrehearsed stories, and between those that are productive and those that are unproductive. He outlined seven basic types of storytelling: 1) springboard stories to stimulate change; 2) stories that communicate the identity of the speaker and build trust; 3) stories to get people working together, mobilized toward action; 4) stories to impart knowledge, designed to build understanding; 5) stories to disrupt the narrative dynamic (a.k.a satire); 6) stories to transmit values; and 7) stories that pave the way to the future. Denning concluded with a quotation from Proust: "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

After an audience participation segment—"a cup of opportunity"—by Seth Kahan and Madelyn Blair, Mark Morris, founder and chief strategy officer of the Brand Consultancy, demonstrated how a company's "brand" is a function of the stories that get told about it. In a knowledge-based company, Morris said, a great deal of the real assets lie in perception; and perceptions, in turn, are built through active conversations such as those that happen casually over coffee. He championed efforts at "heroic customer service"—such as a CEO taking up Spanish and doing box lunches with his employees. Building on examples from Levi Strauss and the American Bible Society, he told the audience, "Create an authentic reputation through actively listening—and show that you listened by executing change based on what you heard." He added, "Listen to the stories of the people you serve . . . and in them, find your inspirational voice. See yourself in the reflection of what people say about you." Another gem from his talk: "In every disaster there's a miracle; find the miracle."

WASHINGTON STORYTELLERS

Learn storytelling techniques from the masters! Washington Storytellers Theatre is the nation's premier presenter of world-class storytelling performance. Our next performance features NOA BAUM and her original full-length piece entitled A LAND TWICE PROMISED. Our Master Class series features in-depth study opportunities with such nationally renowned instructors as Doug Lipman, Donald Davis, Jon Spelman, Elizabeth Ellis, Gail Rosen and many others. Learn about all of our storytelling programs by calling our office at (301) 891-1129 or visiting us at www.washingtonstorytellers.org. Become a part of the next chapter in our story.
— Brad Hills and Amy Saidman

CHAUTAUQUA

You're invited to a free monthly online author series hosted by Group Jazz. Each Chautauqua opens on the 15th and continues to the end of the month. Right now you can engage with Brian Alger author of *The Experience Designer: Learning, Networks and the Cybersphere*. In June, catch Steve Denning on his Harvard Business Review article and Squirrel, Inc. www.groupjazz.com/chautauqua

Visit the Golden Fleece web site at www.storyatwork.com. The participant directory will be available beginning next week.

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AFTERNOON, DAY ONE:

IDEA PRACTITIONERS, TACIT KNOWLEDGE, AND BEYOND

The afternoon session began with Larry Prusak, author and public speaker extraordinaire, setting off fireworks over the notion of ideas as compressed knowledge with enormous power. He championed a new class of "idea practitioners" who use their innate narrative sense and cognitive authority to enact organizational change. They are most often consultant/academic hybrids who can move with agility across the scaffolding of an organization, shrewdly assess its dominant form of logic, and carefully pinpoint the story with the maximum power of transformation. They read widely across a range of fields—in particular Prusak touted classic studies such as Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, Aristotle's *Treatise on Rhetoric*, Wayne Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction*, and Hubert Dreyfus's *On the Internet*. Why not study persuasion over physics or calculus? Prusak asked. With positive and negative judgments falling as briskly as leaves in a November storm, Prusak mocked PowerPoint and sage-on-a-stage methods as "enemies of learning," and made fun of a nice but dull executive who took a \$9000 course on how to be witty, and came out none the wiser. Prusak said that companies are desperate for new ideas and new people, for innovative process and the next great idea. To an audience query about whether storytelling might be a corporate fad, he said storytelling goes as far back as bison-hunting and cave-paintings; the vocabulary and the modes may change, he said, but storytelling is here to stay.

Next on the program was Melinda Bickerstaff, vice-president of Knowledge Management at Bristol-Myers Squibb. Her report focused on storytelling innovation in the pharmaceutical industry, where she has catalyzed the usually daunting R&D process. In her iceberg model of kinds of knowledge, she showed that explicit knowledge accounts for only about 20% of an organization's supply, with tacit knowledge making up for the overwhelming majority. Key questions to ask workers are "What keeps you awake at night? What nags at you?" She spoke of involving senior executives in storytelling hours—taking them back to the campfire experience. At NASA, such story-gathering was especially effective in the wake of the Challenger disaster. Bickerstaff also touted storytelling that creates a future by rendering it as a fantasy article, complete with doctored photo opportunities in Paris, and a concretely imagined day in the life of the chairman. "Think big!" she said. Case studies are better conceived as stories, she said, and routine executive summaries are better transformed into dynamic playbooks. She urged audience members to seize opportunities and be courageous as they scavenge for knowledge solutions.

Seth Kahan and Madelyn Blair wound up the day by asking participants to find one other person to exchange a story of a learning event that really worked for them. Participants then shared these parting thoughts: Real learning involves all the senses, when you really get it, it hits you in your soul and in your heart --Trust in social networks, bringing the whole person in the door and telling stories is one way of building trust -- I embrace storytelling but don't think of myself as a good teller -- can we learn to tell stories? -- If I want to tell others to tell good stories, I should figure out what my own stories are? -- There are miracles and crises, how hard it is to tell the story of a miracle and not of a crisis -- Storytelling is the great antidote to jargon -- Seems like the most compelling stories involve surprise, how do you take a basic, boring chronology of events and make it compelling?

OVERHEARD

Jody Brady is interested in the drama of story and how to construct a good story. Jody feels a good story has an ending that is organic to the story and brings the listener/reader to another stage. **David Lipscomb** wants to share with his students how narrative theory/competencies are applied outside of academia. What are organizations doing with story as related to Joyce? **Beth Goodrich** is an editor for a USAID contractor and edits articles written about projects done in many parts of the world. She finds it hard to get the project managers to turn their interesting content into anything but reports no one would want to read. At break **Steven Hobbs** shared that he is a law professor who went to a workshop given by an internationally famous storyteller because he wanted to improve his acting abilities. He is at this conference because he sees the application to teaching law in the classroom and for using story in situations in the practice of law. How does a lawyer tell a story? And how does the lawyer listen to a clients story - these are questions that intrigue Steven. **Ira Koretsky** engaged speaker **Larry Prusak** over their differing attitudes toward Power Point. This subject wove itself into the remaining parts of the workshop, and the interaction became a part of Friday's story on storytelling in organizations.

SEEKING

Any good stories about collaborative design, especially in the areas of architecture or design.
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