

# Loneliness and Love Stories

## THE BUSINESS CASE FOR TELLING PERSONAL STORIES

—Michelle M. LeBow; Speech Writer, Personal Advice Columnist

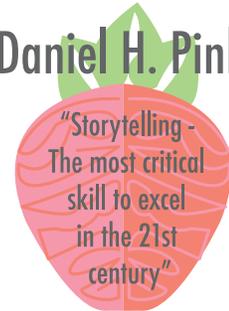
### INTRODUCTION

Great leaders tell great stories. And not just stories, but personal stories. Personal stories that share a story truth, while bringing an element of vulnerability to interactions. Personal stories that create an emotional connection, while igniting energy towards a larger purpose.

Daniel Pink, author, “A Whole New Mind,” says storytelling is the most essential skill to excel in the 21st century. An enormous body of research indicates stories activate the mind in ways that make us feel like we are having actual visual, tactile and kinetic experiences that allow us to engage with the storyteller in more profound and compelling ways.

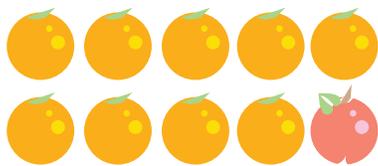
Author of “A Whole New Mind”

**Daniel H. Pink**



### Stories in Business

While we know how significant the story is to our success and the success of our businesses, still, ninety percent of business leaders say they are bored with the corporate speak used in their conversations and nine out of 10 executives say they don't know how to tell a story.



9 out of 10 execs say they don't know how to tell a story.



90% of business leaders are bored.

Stories sound easy enough, however very few stories embody the seductive elements that make a story stand on its' two feet, sway its' hips, and move the relationship and the conversation forward in the manner the storyteller desires. Each of us remembers a time when a story walloped us right in the heart with both the physical heft and the swagger of authentic meaning. These lusty stories are few and far between, but when they are shared at the perfect moment, the story allows people to enter new spaces they otherwise wouldn't have been invited.

### Big Ed and the Body Brace

I have a personal example of a time this became true in my own life. I had been working on negotiating the licensing of my personalized children's book with a big online personalized site. I had provided the

data and documentation as to why the licensing would make the online site money many times over. And, the people I was negotiating with at every turn had given me a roadblock. So, the next round, instead of providing more data, I responded with a story. A personal story. A story that made me vulnerable. A story that featured my human weakness. A story with heart and a story truth. The story I shared was the following:

When I was in junior high I wore a scoliosis brace. Today, braces are so sleek and slim, one hardly notices them. Back when I wore a brace, it had big metal bars in the front and back that reached up to my chin. One of the best memories I have of wearing my brace is of a boy in my grade called, "Big Ed." Between classes, Big Ed would pick me up by my bars and lift me like rolled yoga mat over his big head. I'd watch below me the hive of smaller heads shift in the hall as he carried and set me down gently at the door of my next class. Two years of Big Ed hauling me around in my brace and the doctor said I'd need to have surgery. The spring of my eight-grade year, I had a metal rod surgically wired to my spine. After, I was in a body cast flipped over every two hours for two weeks. The only memory I have of those weeks was begging for pain medication. When I finally slid out of the body cast -- I used a walker, weighed 52 pounds, and had no padding on the balls of my toes.

That very next crackly leafed fall, six months later, I ran cross-country and was one of five freshmen in Minnesota to qualify individually for the state high school cross-country meet. My doctor had told me, over and over again, it couldn't be done.

The truth in this story is there are always a million reasons why something can't be done and why something won't work. However, the truth is if you try, it just might happen.

Sharing this personal story changed the tone and depth and pitch of our negotiating conversations. The next month, my personalized children's book was featured on that big personalized .com site.

## Sharing the Power of Storytelling

Once I realized how personal stories opened me to opportunities and experiences I wouldn't otherwise have found, I wanted to share this idea with others. Storytelling comes natural to all of us -- it's the oldest form of communication -- and we all have our own natural storytelling gifts and style. However, what makes one story snap its' fingers and shake its' head while another story folds its' knees to the ground?

This is the question that compelled me to research -- to find the formula of the exact story elements that added together in a way like  $2 + 2 = 4$  and out plops a perfect story. I found many books and articles and many story elements of truth and of struggle, of heroes and of villains, of uniting and of igniting, but not one concise formula of how to create and tell a story. I, then, created a personal story formula myself.

In this whitepaper, I will cover why business leaders want a new type of story in their conversations, how large organizations such as Pfizer, American Girl, and Tiffany & Co. are using personal storytelling to improve sales and ROI, and how to create personal business stories using the Romeo and Juliet personal storytelling formula.

## WHY BUSINESS LEADERS WANT A NEW STORY IN THEIR CONVERSATIONS

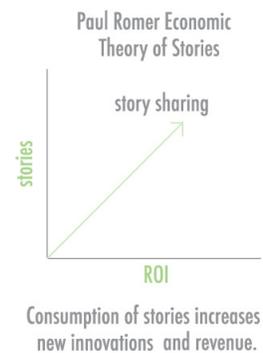
Corporate speak, or bullet points with data, in conversations and presentations no longer work. As Daniel Pink explains we are moving away from the information age into a conceptual age where people not only want to be inspired through creatively putting patterns of ideas together in new ways, additionally, people are looking for meaningful relationships in their business experiences.

Peter Drucker, business thinker, says people in business are looking to hear “a juicy story.” Juicy personal stories connect the inside of the business and their business leaders to the outside world by giving people a drama to remember and repeat. These juicy stories become the meaningful stories employees tell each other, their partners, and their customers and drive the culture and the brand of the business.

## Increasing ROI with Stories

Stories cut through the clutter and are the easiest way to turn ideas into making money. Paul Romer’s Economic Theory holds that the investment of human capital – personality and creativity, innovation, and knowledge are significant contributors to economic growth. Using his theory, story sharing and the consumption of personal, creative stories increases innovation and ultimately ROI.

Sharing stories increases ROI, however, as John Capecinni, author of *Living Proof: Telling Your Story to Make a Difference*, states stories aren’t magic and won’t make money unless there is something profound you are showing through your story. Capecinni also makes the case for bringing a level of intimacy using stories in our advocacy and daily interactions.



## An Increase in Loneliness

This level of intimacy and vulnerability is something missing from most online and personal interactions. At no other point in history have people been able to connect through story sharing, and yet, people still report a feeling of loneliness within their online and personal communities. The best tool yet developed for measuring the condition is the UCLA Loneliness Scale, a series of 20 questions that all begin with this formulation: “How often do you feel ...?” As in: “How often do you feel that you are ‘in tune’ with the people around you?” And: “How often do you feel that you lack companionship?”

Measuring the condition on this scale, studies have shown loneliness rising drastically over a very short period of recent history. A 2010 AARP survey found that 35 percent of adults older than 45 were chronically lonely, as opposed to 20 percent of a similar group only a decade earlier. According to a major study by a leading scholar of the subject, roughly 20 percent of Americans -- about 60 million people -- are unhappy with their lives because of loneliness.

Sharing personal stories in business interactions creates an emotional connection, of a deeper, more intimate engagement with the business people we interact with. John Taft, author of *Stewardship: Lessons Learned* speaks of a new story of business and leadership and responsibility that involves conversations that are a meaningful exchange of sharing, more than the data and the monetary benefit of products or services. An exchange where business people have a closer understanding of with whom they are working – what they stand for, but even more, of inspiring the business community to be a part of stewardship -- something meaningful, truthful, and helps the world evolve.

In sum, moving into the conceptual age business leaders are looking for conversations to connect closer to those with whom they work, and at the same time share meaningful and intimate dialogue that engages using personal stories of integrity and responsible leadership

## CASE STUDIES: HOW LARGE COMPANIES USE STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE ROI

### The Pfizer Story:

The personal storytelling approach has been used in Pfizer to increase sales and improve the brand. Pfizer conducted a huge organization intervention using storytelling circles with 94 sales representatives in 11 cities, across six countries, which resulted in over 200 stories. Sales representatives shared stories

about their sales efforts, the product, and customer feedback. These stories were indexed to create a clear picture of how the sales force viewed the product and experience of selling it. Leaders and sales representatives across the organization were then taught strategic storytelling elements and equipped with the best personal stories elicited from the storytelling circles to improve sales.

After using their new stories and storytelling skills, the Pfizer sales representatives reported an increase in trust of colleagues, a feeling of being connected to the sales results, and increased clarity around sales process. In addition, groups felt a competitive spirit and increased engagement to produce effective results using the storytelling strategy.

Nigel Edwards, Pfizer internal communications director, reported the length of time from story collection to analysis and results was four weeks. The analysis process was a straightforward and speedy method that maintained energy around the project and allowed sales representatives to stay engaged in the study conclusions and implementation. The storytelling results were as follows:

- 1. The conclusions identified through story data crossed geographical and department boundaries and were found in short span of time.**
- 2. The story data was easy to understand, and therefore, simple to design behavior initiatives and interventions.**
- 3. Story data created an emotional connection with employees that have shown increased engagement, involvement, and behavior change.**
- 4. The personal storytelling used by sales representatives did increase sales; Pfizer has not reported the percentage of increased sales.**

### **The American Girl Story:**

Another example of companies using personal stories to improve business is American Girl. Pleasant Rowland understood the power of the story well when she created her company with a simple mission: to provide girls with an alternative to existing dolls. She created “American Girl” each doll as a character complete with a name and a storybook to tell the doll’s tale from different periods of American history.

The story of each doll struck an emotional chord with moms, who purchased \$1.7 million worth of storied dolls in the first year. By 1998, Rowland sold her “American Girl” franchise to Mattel for a reported \$700 million. Since, American Girl has expanded to include publishing, retail stores, digital media, and more. The stories behind the American Girl dolls gave the dolls a setting, a plot, and a character history that offered a story start for the imaginative play of a million little girls. The story is what created a significant point of differentiation and a higher value in the marketplace. Without the story, the American Girl would’ve just been another doll on the shelf.

### **The Tiffany & Co. Story:**

Finally, one more true and personal love story that created ROI. On June 1, 2011, Tiffany & Co. stock closed around \$72 a share. Later that month, the brand launched its “What Makes Love True” brand story effort. The “What Makes Love True” micro site was developed so users could check in and leave a love message for their significant other. The love message along with a digital heart would appear on a Tiffany geo-location map.

The love micro site was not designed to sell jewelry and didn’t feature any Tiffany products. Rather, the site was created and deployed with one, specific purpose in mind: to give Tiffany & Co. “ownership” of the story of true love. Tiffany wanted to solidify true love as its brand story. Through these love messages Tiffany succeeded in engaging customers in their organic personal love story effort. In less than a month, its stock prices were closing more than \$10 higher at around \$83 a share.

These three case study examples are real-life ways large organizations are using the personal story to increase sales and impact the bottom line.

## HOW TO CREATE PERSONAL BUSINESS STORIES USING A PERSONAL STORY FORMULA

So business people truly do want more meaningful intimate conversations that contribute to more significant business interactions and large companies are using the personal story to make more money. How do I start using my personal stories to enter new spaces and move my business interactions?

A little over 400 years ago, Shakespeare shocked audiences with the unpredictable outcome of two young lovers, innocent and vulnerable, dying for one another. This element of surprise and human failure has made the story of Romeo and Juliet the most well known love story since the late 1500s. This love story resonates as the best love story of all time because of one main element -- vulnerability. I believe vulnerability is the heart of every great story. Using Romeo and Juliet as a model, the story formula teaches business leaders how to think in love stories and how to create and tell their own personal business love stories.

Romeo & Juliets' Story  
resonates as the greatest  
Love Story of all time because of...



### Story Truth – The Most Important Step in Creating a Business Story

What does it mean to “think in love stories?” The first step in creating a story is finding the pulpy, vulnerable heart or truth of the story. The story truth is what creates the emotional connection and ignites a greater purpose. A story truth is conveyed through the story and is what gives the story a seductive draw and a keen physical weight.

For example, the hearty pulp of Apple’s creation story -- Jobs and Wozniak toiling in a garage -- inspires a love connection and champions Apple, not only as a business with products, but as something with a robust and lusty heartbeat. The Apple story jangles in the lower stomach of people everywhere whom everyday toil in the same types of meager digs with the same types of gritty determination as Jobs and Woz have done. Jim Signorelli says, “Stories clothe truths.” Without strategically finding this story truth, there is no story.

### The Story Portfolio

After the story truth, the next step is choosing the most authentic personal stories, stories that push the boundaries of comfort in vulnerability. A story portfolio is a compilation of three types of personal stories business leaders can use interchangeably in conversations and presentations that create the greatest amount of return in creating intimacy, engagement, and connection. The three types of portfolio stories used by successful business leaders are as follows:

- **Creation stories – “Who am I” and “Who are We” stories**

- **Value stories** – “How we work” and “What we believe” stories
- **Vision stories** – “Where are we going?” stories.



## Creation Stories: The Most Important Personal Story

First, the most important of all personal stories, and if no other personal stories are used, is the creation story. Creation stories are the stories used to tell customers, clients, and audiences “Who am I” and “Who are We.” Business leaders with a compelling “Who am I” story that clubs people square in the space we feel things most profoundly – in the gut – are more successful than those without one.

Without a creation story of “Who am I,” business leaders battle to create a connection and sense of trust and loyalty with their customers, clients, and audiences. In addition, a powerful “Who are We,” story – a story of the struggles and triumphs of company and organization creates a stronger bond with customers and clients.

### **Example of Creation Story:**

I haven’t always been [Job Title.] In fact, I engineered, I sales supported and I project coordinated my way to the role I have now. I remember vividly my first customer assignment where I spent the night [Project Assignment.] I think I grabbed a couple moments of shut-eye that night wrapped up in a roll of unused carpet under an empty desk. It was at that customer site I realized I didn’t have all the knowledge or the exact skill-set I needed to make the project work. Part of me wanted to run out of that office, pack up my bags at the hotel, and drive straight home. Instead, I poured another cup of coffee, and read every piece of technical documentation I could get my hands on.

I didn’t finish the install that night and so the very next night I was back at it again. I didn’t give up and I didn’t give in. And it wasn’t just me. It was all of [Company Name] the team I had back at the office shipping parts to me at midnight, and my manager [Manager Name] patiently walking me through the installation at three o’clock in the morning. It was the next day, that together we completed the project.

This is only one tiny story in the tons of [Company Name] stories where we weren’t the smartest or the richest or the most gifted in a situation. But the thing that makes [Company Name] different and the core of who we are since [Company Founder] started this company on his personal credit card is something I like to call GRIT. GRIT is the stuff that glues our employees together and prevents us from splintering under pressure. GRIT isn’t glamorous and that’s what makes it so beautiful. GRIT is our commitment to success and our willingness to do what we say and keep our promises. GRIT is what it takes to get the job done well and right, no matter how unglamorous the process might be. And GRIT is what makes [Company Name] one of the premier [Company Business.]

## Value Stories:

The second types of stories used to increase the level of meaning and ultimately ROI in your conversations are value stories – “How we work” and “What we believe.” These stories are character-based case scenarios and narratives of the integrity and what it means to work with a company. Values describe how the company behaves toward each other, partners, and customers and define the priorities that drive decision-making.

Studies indicate companies whose employees doggedly adhere to their core values in their everyday interactions and decisions make an average of six times more money than comparison companies and almost 12 times the return of the overall stock market. This means the core values impact the bottom line and contribute to future success.

Taking a company value -- such as loyalty or environmental sustainability or innovation -- and wrapping an employee situation around this value is the most powerful way to show clients and customers the company experience. Andre Martin, of the Dardin Institute of Design, describes a value in action as “a surprising values story creates an emotional yearning and an energy towards a cause. A cause that ignites and inspires people.”

### **Example of a Value Story:**

In the movie Up, the main character --- the old guy Carl has a dog and the dog says to Carl, “I waited up all night under the porch, because I love you.” This is a quality I like to call GLUE. GLUE is supporting and taking care of each other. And this is the kind of loyalty I have seen [Company Name] employees show for each other time and time again. As [Employee Name] says, “Helping our team members is part of our genes -- in a way that, if you ask an employee “What sacrifices have you made?” they will struggle to give you an example. They don’t remember working for 18 hours without sleep, or cancelling vacation days or special dinners. The only thing they remember is that the problem was solved and the solution a success.

Our employees might struggle to come up with examples of the GLUE that permeates inside of [Company Name,] but I do not. I do remember -- with awe -- the sacrifices our employees make to support each other. Just a couple of months ago, [Employee Loyalty Story.]

## Vision Stories:

The third type of stories that are important for business leaders are Vision Stories – “Where are we going?” Vision stories are stories of future and are the stories that become the driver in where the company is going and how employees, clients and partners see the future and feel about what’s to come.

This quote from the Roman philosopher Seneca shows how important vision is, “If a person does not know what port he is steering for, no wind is favorable to him.” A company might be the hardest working team on the planet and, yet, won’t get anywhere if there is not a story to guide the direction and the spaces a company is entering. As Mauro Porcini, CDO of Pepsi, describes vision stories, “Our stories inspire our customers by sharing what we are doing, where we are going, and how we want to dream of the future with them.”

### **Example of a Vision Story:**

In addition to GLUE, [Company Name] has something I like to call ZEST. Two years ago, when I took [Job Title,] I started with one word. “Yes.” I didn’t know what I was really signing up for when I said, “Yes,” but I did say, “Yes” with ZEST. Winston Churchill was quoted as saying “Success is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.” If that quote doesn’t describe the [Company Name] ZEST, I don’t know what does. It’s that type of attitude we bring when we say, “Yes.” The way I’ve seen this play out at [Company Name] most recently can be best described with our story of future. What started as a simple idea has now become our strategic future [Company Vision.]

## Romeo and Juliet Story Formula: Story Vine + Heroes + Finale = Great Story!

Most people tell story glimmers – a glimpse or snap shot of a story. Even Jobs and Wozniak toiling in the garage, is a story glimmer. The way to move business conversations to something that shimmies like the samba on a sultry, hot evening is to tell more than a story glimmer. A true business love story is a complete drama.

The six elements of the Romeo and Juliet story formula help business leaders create a complete, vivid story. The model, the Romeo and Juliet story vine, make it easy to visualize and follow.



1. **Story Truth** – The pulpy, vulnerable heart of the story is the meaning or moral that creates an emotional longing for the larger purpose of the story. Romeo and Juliet story truth is true love overcomes time, space, and hatred.
2. **Story Vine** – The movement and tension in the sequence of events builds as the story moves upward toward the story finale. Imagine the tension building as Romeo climbs the vine to get to his young secret lover Juliet alone on her balcony.
3. **Story Setup** – The important current realities and details, such as the who, the where, and the when of the story. The family feud of Montague and Capulet families is the setup to Romeo and Juliet falling in forbidden love.
4. **Hero/Villain** – The compelling hero and villain characters are central to the story. The hero is you, your services, or products. The villain is the person or thing you fight against – the evil thing your product or service struggles to beat for the customer. Romeo and Juliet are the heroes. The villain is the family feud that prevents them from being together.
5. **Struggle** – The climax or the how the hero overcomes the villain in the story. How do you, how does your company, how do your products or services battle to overcome for the customer? The unpredictable struggle in Romeo and Juliet is the two lovers killing themselves for love.
6. **Story Finale** – The finale ignites to action around a new reality. What is the action, what is the cause you want your customer to be inspired to do as result of this story? The Romeo and Juliet finale inspired Montague and Capulet families to join hands and end the family feud after the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

## Final Touches – Telling the Business Story

Lastly, how do you tell your business love story? Telling the business love story involves staging the business love story in three connecting “acts.” These acts connect the storyteller to the story listener. In addition, the final touches means using stimulating words that appeal to the five senses to connect to the customer, client, or audience.

Doug Lipman, author of *Improving Your Storytelling*, states imagery includes what we can see, taste, touch, hear, and feel is what creates the memory of our story experience, without which, we cannot place the memory in the mind. Words, like grit, glue, and zest are words that appeal to the five senses and make it easier for the listener to remember and engage in the story.

- **Invite – Propose the story to the listener. Think of this act as an offering and a gift to the listener.**
- **Unite – Bond together. This act is repeating a uniting phrase throughout the story unites the listener to the story truth. For example, Romeo and Juliet’s repeated uniting phrase is, “Romeo! Romeo! Where for art thou?”**

- **Ignite – Marry in action. The story finale ignites the listener to act in a different and new way. In this act the story marries the storyteller and listener in an authentic new reality.**

## EASY AS:



*Propose Story*



*Bond Together*



*Marry in Action*

Every story, even a business story, is a love story. These personal, vulnerable love stories bring meaning to our everyday interactions and conversations, connect us closer with whom we work, and allow us to behave in ways that move us into more authentic spaces. The business case for using the personal story is pervasive and impacts the bottom line of increasing both sales and ROI, as seen in Pfizer, American Girl, and Tiffany & Co. corporations. Using Romeo and Juliet storytelling makes it easy for business leaders to think, create, and tell their own business love stories.

### Your Story Guide

Need help bringing your story to the surface? I can help. As you can tell I am passionate about stories and improving lives and business through personal stories. I would be thrilled to help you find your stories and develop them. Visit my website for more information about how to get your stories started or contact me at [michelle.lebow@memoirofme.com](mailto:michelle.lebow@memoirofme.com), 651-271-1438.

### Telling Your Story Online

Need help telling your story online? At 9 Clouds, we don't make websites but we make websites work and we are passionate about improving digital literacy and marketing. We can help you take the story you have or develop with Michelle and bring it to life online. Remarkable and compelling content is a must to crack through the noise online. Visit our website or contact us at [info@9clouds.com](mailto:info@9clouds.com) for more information.

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