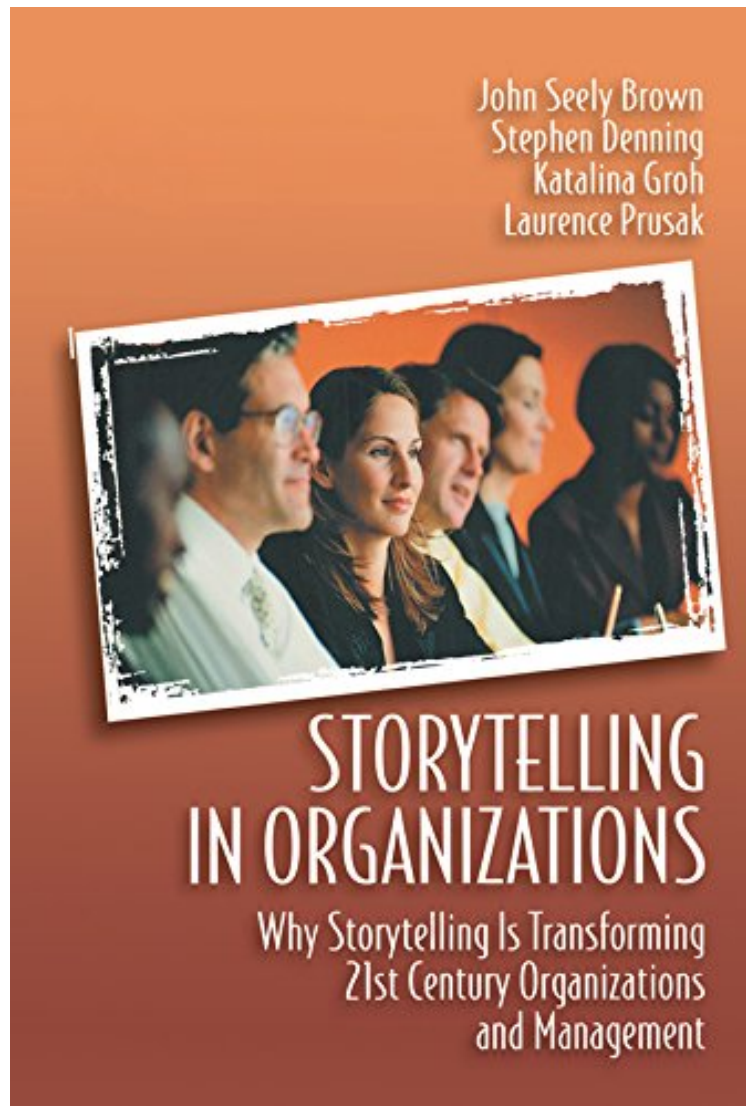


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## Storytelling in Organizations

*Laurence Prusak, Katalina Groh, Stephen Denning, John Seely Brown*

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**Laurence Prusak, Katalina Groh, Stephen Denning, John Seely Brown : Storytelling in Organizations** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Storytelling in Organizations:

40 of 42 people found the following review helpful. Asleep at the CampfireBy Greig's BrotherI read with keen interest and anticipation "Storytelling in Organizations", by Brown, et. al. By profession, I coach an organization in a fortune 100 firm in how to create and deliver stories. I concur that telling stories in the organization is extremely effective in educating and persuading teams to improve products and services, and for my company, that has translated to literally millions of dollars in savings, improved product usability and service delivery, margin preservation, and increased market share. Though the book is written by professionals and academicians, they only do a fair job of telling the story

and describing "what" storytelling is and to some extent "why" it works. It is ineffectual in teaching the most important lesson--the "how" to tell a story. Regretfully, only one author's work is effective, and it is a shame his strength is watered down by the mediocrity of the others. The result is that this book represents a lost opportunity to impart meaningful, actionable knowledge sharing. Two reasons account for the failure. First, no clear-cut model is presented. This hinders the would-be story teller in that there is no repeatable roadmap to follow in structuring a story, thereby making storytelling practice and critique difficult. Second, the book itself is a poor example of storytelling. The reader is severely distracted by the disparate writing styles and sometimes overlapping content of the authors, the not-so-occasional editorializing and a peppering of poorly written case studies that lack the very punch that the authors are suggesting is the power of the story. I found myself asking, "what's the point" a number of times. Had I not been holding out hope that some useful nugget of wisdom might be forthcoming, I would have set it aside after the first chapter. Now, after finishing the book I wish I had. A trip to the library for recent articles on the subject might better serve the would-be story teller.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. CIM 654  
Storytelling in Org  
By D. Adams  
Book purchased for class it was dirt-cheap for used copy looked new and shipped timely. What more is there to say.  
8 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Why organizational storytelling is more than a fad  
By David C. Lipscomb  
The book offers two different timeframes -- the authors' speeches from the Smithsonian symposium on storytelling in April 2001 and their thoughts today, in 2004 -- and the book's value resides in showing what's changed and what hasn't in those three years. I found the 2004 "reflection" sections particularly valuable, since they make clear that storytelling turned out to be far more than the fad many feared it would become in 2001. Especially useful are John Seely Brown's reflections -- including his discussions of "knowledge ecologies." The bibliography and the endnotes to each chapter also help map the landscape of a field that is, in Stephen Denning's words, "widening and deepening."

This book is the story of how four busy executives, from different backgrounds and different perspectives, were surprised to find themselves converging on the idea of narrative as an extraordinarily valuable lens for understanding and managing organizations in the twenty-first century. The idea that narrative and storytelling could be so powerful a tool in the world of organizations was initially counter-intuitive. But in their own words, John Seely Brown, Steve Denning, Katalina Groh, and Larry Prusak describe how they came to see the power of narrative and storytelling in their own experience working on knowledge management, change management, and innovation strategies in organizations such as Xerox, the World Bank, and IBM. *Storytelling in Organizations* lays out for the first time why narrative and storytelling should be part of the mainstream of organizational and management thinking. This case has not been made before. The tone of the book is also unique. The engagingly personal and idiosyncratic tone comes from a set of presentations made at a Smithsonian symposium on storytelling in April 2001. Reading it is as stimulating as spending an evening with Larry Prusak or John Seely Brown. The prose is probing, playful, provocative, insightful and sometime profound. It combines the liveliness and freshness of spoken English with the legibility of a ready-friendly text. Interviews with all the authors done in 2004 add a new dimension to the material, allowing the authors to reflect on their ideas and clarify points or highlight ideas that may have changed or deepened over time.

"*Storytelling In Organizations* is brain food for managers who want to ascend to leadership positions. Melding four different perspectives, the authors make a compelling case to become a more relevant, powerful, and memorable communicator. By the time you finish the book you will be thinking differently and running to a mirror to practice, practice, practice."-- Jim Hatherley, author of 'Daring To Be Different, A Manager's Ascent To Leadership' "Story telling is increasingly recognized as central to organizational life. This book draws on the expertise of four thought leaders in this area to help us all understand the role of narrative and ways that we can best leverage stories in our own organizations. It is a must read for those looking for more effective approaches to knowledge sharing and transfer, large-scale change, employee socialization and leadership."-- Rob Cross, Assistant Professor of Management at the University of Virginia and Author of *The Hidden Power of Social Networks: Understanding How Work Really Gets Done in Organizations*"The authors weave a fascinating tale, one that took place at the Smithsonian and resulted in the unexpected- the lawyer, the film director, the scientist, and the historian all agreeing on the power of narrative and storytelling to compel people, as well as the organizations they manage, to change. I would highly recommend this to anyone dealing with the issue of organizational change."-- Bruno Laporte, Manager, Knowledge and Learning, The Worldbank"At the heart of Product Development are our consumers' stories of unmet needs and desires. In RD, we utilize these stories to inspire breakthrough technical innovations and delightful new products that resonate with our consumers in their journeys toward "happily ever after." This book provides wonderful tools to spark and leverage storytelling functionally and organizationally to create collaborative work environments and authentic visions of what's possible."-- Dr Jamesina A. Fitzgerald, VP Global Oral Care Manager Scientist, Procter Gamble"Storytelling is the single most effective way to communicate a change in an organization. Through stories, people visualize events, understand concepts and engage both their hearts and minds. Vision and mission statements people read, walk out of a

room, and two days later cannot remember. But tell them a story and they will not only remember, they will repeat it."-- Stacy McCarthy, Director, Marketing and Strategy and Customer Communications, The Boeing Company

"In a world where all aspects of life are more integrated than ever a leaders' ability to connect with people is more critical than ever. We can no longer solely rely on connectedness through geography, culture or country, The sort of "automatic" connecting we were spoiled with. There are simply too many choices, too much change and too many ways of going your own way to blindly just do what you are told. Rather leadership today must connect with the deeper meaning that exists in every human soul. Storytelling in general and the authors in this book in particular, offers inspiring insights into the art and rewards of telling a story."-- Mats Lederhausen, Managing Director, McDonald's Ventures, McDonald's Corporation President Business Development "...lays out for the first time why narrative and storytelling should be part of the mainstream of organizational and management thinking."- Journal for Quality Participation

From the Back Cover Business/ Management Storytelling in Organizations: Why Storytelling Is Transforming 21st Century Organizations and Management John Seely Brown, Stephen Denning, Katalina Groh, Laurence Prusak". Storytelling in general- and the authors in this book in particular- offer inspiring insights into the art and rewards of telling a story." - Mats Lederhausen, Managing Director, McDonald's Ventures, McDonald's Corporation". This book provides wonderful tools to spark and leverage storytelling functionally and organizationally to create collaborative work environments and authentic visions of what's possible." - Dr. Jamesina A. Fitzgerald, VP Global Oral Care, Manager Scientist, Procter Gamble

"The authors weave a fascinating tale. I would highly recommend this to anyone dealing with the issue of organizational change." - Bruno Laporte, Manager, Knowledge and Learning, World Bank

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John Seely Brown, formerly Director of Xerox PARC, is an independent consultant. He was recently awarded the Industrial Research Institute Medal for outstanding accomplishments in technological innovation and is the co-author of the highly acclaimed book, The Social Life of Information. Stephen Denning, formerly Program Director for Knowledge Management at the World Bank, is an independent management consultant, and the author of The Springboard and Squirrel Inc. Katalina Groh is a writer, producer, and director of independent films and documentaries. Laurence Prusak, formerly with IBM Global Services, is an independent consultant. He is author of Knowledge in Organizations.

About the Author John Seely Brown divides his time between being the Chief Innovation Officer of 12 Entrepreneurship, an entrepreneurial operating company in San Francisco and the Chief Scientist of Xerox Corporation. In June of this year he stepped down from being the director of the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), a position he held for the last ten years. While head of PARC, Brown expanded the role of corporate research to include such topics as organizational learning, sociological studies of the workplace, complex adaptive systems and micro electrical mechanical system (MEMS). His personal research interests include digital culture, ubiquitous computing, design and organizational and individual learning. He was recently awarded the Industrial Research Institute Medal for outstanding accomplishments in technological innovation and is the co-author of a highly acclaimed book "The Social Life of Information," published by Harvard Business School Press. In November 1996, he was selected as one of the world's ten Most Admired Knowledge Leaders (Teleos). John, or as he is often called-JSB-sits on numerous boards of directors and advisory boards, is a member of the National Academy of Education and a Fellow of the American Association of Artificial Intelligence. He received an A.B. degree from Brown University in math and physics and a Ph.D. from University of Michigan in computer science. John is an avid reader, traveler and motorcyclist. Part scientist, part artist and part strategist, JSB's views are unique and distinguished by a broad view of the human contexts in which technologies operate and a healthy skepticism about whether or not change always represents genuine progress.

Program director for knowledge management at the World Bank, the massive international financial organization (it lends approximately \$30 billion each year). He contributes to knowledge management and organizational learning publications and presents very frequently at leading professional management conferences. In November 2000, Katalina Groh launched a new educational series specifically designed to explore the power and practice of storytelling. Global reactions have been overwhelming. The first programs, An Art of Possibility and Radiating Possibility have been released to more than seventy-five countries in thirty-five

languages. Katalina is working with organizations to explore and share the impact of storytelling. Her films and presentations create learning experiences which inspire transformation, behavioral change and new kinds of conversations which continue long after the sessions have ended. She focuses on practical tools and results as well as narrative transitions which inspire knowledge sharing, training and communication. Katalina Groh has written, produced, and directed documentaries and independent feature films for the past ten years. She helped launch New World Entertainment's educational division, New World Knowledge, where she wrote and produced award-winning educational programming. Her work is focused on new narrative structures for educational programs, communication, and the development of new models for content structure that would create new conversations and experiences. At college, Katalina studied finance and economics. Before becoming a filmmaker, she was a trader in bonds and currencies at the Chicago Board of Trade.