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Measuring Leaders' Attitudes About the Use of Story to Communicate Organizational Vision

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MEASURING LEADERS' ATTITUDES ABOUT THE USE OF STORY TO
COMMUNICATE ORGANIZATIONAL VISION

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

By

Tamala S. Vaughn
B.S. Wright State University, 2009

2011
Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

April 15, 2011

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Tamala S. Vaughn ENTITLED Measuring Leaders' Attitudes About the Use of Story to Communicate Organizational Vision BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Science.

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ABSTRACT

Vaughn, Tamala S. M.S., Department of Educational Leadership, College of Education and Human Services, Wright State University, 2011. Measuring Leaders' Attitudes about the Use of Story to Communicate Organizational Vision.

The purpose of this study was to develop and pilot an instrument to measure leaders' attitudes concerning the use of story in communicating organizational vision. Although story can be an effective communication tool, an instrument that measures leaders' attitudes could not be found. In this research, an instrument to measure leaders' attitudes regarding the use of story to communicate organizational vision was developed and piloted. The instrument was administered to a pilot group of for-profit and non-profit leaders in the final phase of this research. The results indicated that leaders perceive it is favorable to use story to communicate organizational vision.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Illa Rose. You taught us to never accept or reject another human being based on their story (their past, their mistakes, or their friends). The only story that matters in any relationship is the one inspired by the relationship itself. Thank you, Mom, for teaching us that it is an obligation to love and serve others unconditionally.

I dedicate this to my son, Ryan, who is quickly moving up the leadership ladder and who faithfully serves his family, his community, and his country. Thank you for all the joy you have brought to my life. I am as so very proud of you.

And to my best friend and confidant, Phillip – you share your story with others so that they may find the hope needed to hang on and salvage their lives. I have the pleasure of seeing the power of story work every time I sit in your audience. Thank you for having the courage to stand out front and light the way for those in need. Most of all, thank you for waking up every day and asking how you can make my life better. You have just by being in it.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Humans have used stories to share their triumphs, tragedies, and journeys dating back to ancient times (Hatch, Kostera & Kozminski, 2005). The ancient Greeks, Homer and Aristotle, used stories to inspire others and to share the way one sees the world (Hatch et al., 2005). Throughout history, novelists, poets, kings, and CEOs have used story to entertain, inspire and unify tribes, nations, and modern organizations (Gabriel, 2004). Makati (2008) demonstrated the power of story with a critical study of Charles Dickens' writings. Dickens' novels provided a representation of London's socially disadvantaged that inspired others to take action against such ills such as poverty and prostitution (Makati, 2008). The stories encouraged social responsibility and called ordinary citizens to action.

According to Harbin and Humphrey (2010), two of America's greatest leaders, Presidents Lincoln and Reagan, were effective communicators who used stories to encourage followers to share their vision. Lincoln's, "A House Divided," was an example of how story could be used effectively to communicate the dangers that a complex political issue, such as slavery, had on a unified nation. Lincoln's story warned that the unresolved issue of slavery would eventually divide the nation. His compelling speech on the issue of slavery inspired the beginning of a willingness to work towards a solution (Sneller, 2009). Reagan's speech titled, "A Time for Choosing," was so famous that it was affectionately known by the American public as, "The Speech." Although this speech was written and delivered on behalf of Barry Goldwater's campaign for President

in 1964, it is laden with lessons about freedom that continued to capture the attention of the American public long after Reagan's own presidency ended in 1989 (Eidenmueller, 2001). Looking further back in history, Jesus used parables to make his teachings more understandable and memorable. In the classic parable, "The Good Samaritan," found in Luke 10:26-37 (New Revised Standard), Jesus expanded the concept of 'neighbor' beyond tribe or community to include all mankind. By stripping away the defining adjective of 'tribe,' Jesus emphasized the obligation of one man to help another. Whether it was a parable or an epic, humorous or profound, inspirational or ironic, story has played a vital role in leadership for many years (Gabriel, 2004).

Over centuries of human development, sources of leadership have ranged from the prophet, to the artist, to the intellectual. Now, in the 21st century, experts and specialists of all types are sources of leadership (Gabriel, 2004). At whatever level one leads, he/she must be able to transmit a concrete vision of the organization's future to the audience. Vision does not predict an organization's future but it does shape it (Bell, 2007). Bell said, "Visions energize. A vision exercises a magnetic pull that irresistibly engages people in its pursuit" (p. 18).

Significance of the Study

This study will develop an instrument that uses a Thurstone scale to assess the attitudes of leaders about the use of story to communicate organizational vision. The author could not find such an instrument in the existing literature. The instrument can be used to measure attitudes regarding the use of story to communicate vision in leadership. Understanding the attitudes towards the use of story allows leaders to adopt or reject the use of story as a communication tool.

Statement of the Problem

Storytelling experts and leaders such as Denning (2007) and Gabriel (2004) postulated that leaders adept in the use of story to communicate messages can engage audiences more effectively to work towards a common goal and a shared vision for their organizations. These authors confirmed that leaders who use story to communicate organizational vision motivate others to take action with energy and enthusiasm. Denning (2005) stated that most executives operate with an analysis type mind-set. Although the hard, fact-based objectivity of this type of mind-set can be a strength in business, it can also be a weakness when trying to communicate a vision to employees (Denning, 2005). This researcher could not find literature related to measuring leaders' attitudes towards using storytelling to communicate organizational vision. Understanding attitudes towards the use of story will substantiate the effectiveness of the use of story in leadership.

Definition of Terms

Audience – a group of workers, employees or followers (Hatch et al., 2005).

Culture – the values and beliefs that shape the feel of an organization (Gabriel, 2004).

Leader – one who mobilizes others to get things done in every arena of organized activity (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Metaphor – when a term is transferred from one level of meaning to another (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011).

Narrative – a depiction of a sequence of events, real or fictional, to illustrate a truth or to create shared meaning (Duening & Ivancevich, 2006).

Organizational Vision – the unique image and ideal of the future for an organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Story or Stories – narrative that communicates ideas intended to inspire action (Denning, 2007).

Storytelling – the use of story in organizations to achieve an objective (Denning, 2004).

Thurstone Scale – a method used to construct an attitude test (Salkind, 2009).

Narrative and storytelling are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

Hypothesis and Research Question

Statement of Hypothesis

Leaders have a positive attitude relating to the use of story when communicating organizational vision.

Research Question

How do leaders perceive the use of story to communicate organizational vision?

Assumptions

The participants understand what organizational vision and the use of story within organizations mean. The participants in each phase of the development will respond truthfully.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this thesis is to develop an instrument to measure leaders' attitudes concerning the use of story to communicate organizational vision. The instrument will be pilot tested and no reliability or validity measures will be developed. No ethical issues are foreseen pertaining to this research. The possibility of bias exists in the interpretations made by the researcher during the three phases of instrument development.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Although storytelling is not new, interest in the concept of organizational storytelling is relatively new (Gabriel, 2004). Leaders in contemporary organizations are similar to Homer and Aristotle. Leaders encourage and motivate listeners (the audience) by using storytelling to communicate strategy and inspire action (Hatch et al., 2005).

Organizational leaders who use story assert that it is effective in communicating organizational goals and unifying groups towards a common vision (Gabriel, 2004). Most importantly, leaders who use story to inspire others claim that it is more successful than the mere recitation of data (Brown, Denning, Groh, & Prusak, 2005).

Ready (2003) and Gellis (2002) also stated that for stories to be persuasive in organizational settings, they must align with the mission, vision, values, and culture of the organization. The ability to persuade others is the most important skill for a leader to possess. Kador (2004), a professional speech writer, acknowledged that every organization needs a vision and someone capable of articulating it. Employees rely on their leaders for only a few things, and stimulating their imagination about the organization is the most important (Kador, 2004).

Nanus (1992) understood the importance of vision. He believed that vision is a scenario depicting a realistic, credible, and attractive future for an organization. Nanus stated that vision should not be confused with strategy. Rather, vision provides a focus for strategies and decisions for years ahead. Terry (1993) stated that vision is a key element to effective leadership and the lack of a vision is a major cause of incompetence

in organizations. Terry emphasized that vision serves as a compass to provide direction and motivation for leaders and audiences. Most business textbooks written suggest that the success of an organizational is central to leaders encouraging people to work together with a shared vision. Using story enables a leader to accomplish this by generating a shared narrative around common goals (Denning, 2004).

Successful leaders are known for using comic, tragic, and epic stories to motivate audiences. Hiatt, of Stride Rite, opened the first corporate sponsored child care center in 1971 at the site of the Stride Rite corporate offices with the help of a story. The corporate offices were located in a low socio-economic neighborhood and Hiatt felt that the company was obligated to do something to help rebuild the community. He delivered a compelling story to his employees that justified the company's investment in a pre-school for underprivileged children versus complying with union demands for employee pay raises. Eventually, the pre-school became half enrolled with community children and half enrolled with employee's children, creating benefits for the company and the employees (Hatch et al., 2005).

Former World Bank program director, Denning, demonstrated the success of using stories. Denning postulated that when argument failed to communicate his organizational vision, stories worked (Denning, 2007). During his tenure as program director at the World Bank, his colleagues were not responding positively to the vision he promoted through traditional presentations and PowerPoint slides. As a result, he intentionally began to use stories in his speeches aimed at conveying the organization's vision (Denning, 2007). In 1996, Denning (2005) used this story to help his staff envision the benefits of using the technology that was available to the World Bank:

In June of last year, a health worker in a tiny town in Zambia went to the Web site of the Centers for Disease Control and got the answer to a question about the treatment for malaria. Remember that this was in Zambia, one of the poorest countries in the world, and it was in a tiny place six hundred kilometers from the capital city. But the most striking thing about this picture, at least for us, is that the World Bank isn't in it. Despite our know-how on all kinds of poverty-related issues, that knowledge isn't available to the millions of people who could use it. Imagine if it were. Think what an organization we would become (p. 4).

Denning believed that where analysis and argument failed through traditional presentations, stories brought about a desired response when communicating vision. Denning (2005) stated, "Analysis might excite the mind, but it hardly offers a route to the heart. And that's where you must go if you are to motivate people not only to take action but to do so with energy and enthusiasm" (p. 5). If a leader can convince an audience to envision the 'what if,' then the audience will naturally move to thinking 'what now' (Phoel, 2006).

Stories have the ability to move most people at a deeper level than straight-forward factual presentations (Denning, 2007). A leader's use of story significantly improves his or her ability to change worker's attitudes and to communicate organizational mission, vision, and values (Brown, et al. 2005).

Denning (2005) observed that in the mid-nineties interest in storytelling began to grow. The practice of storytelling in the business environment was still perceived as counterintuitive to many executives who believed that storytelling was too informal (Denning, 2007). The use of story in organizations has been taken more seriously over

the past twenty years (Kador, 2004), and Alvesson and Spicer (2011) alleged that using story is a means to shape and understand what it means to lead and be led. Story can be used for three purposes: to influence the audience, to add breadth and depth to organizational messages, and to provide a context for the leader to experience the organization within (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011).

The Audience

Aristotle's view of a diverse audience was the amalgamation of middle-aged men from Sparta and middle-aged men from Athens. Audiences today are more diverse in terms of socio-economic background, race, and gender (Gabriel, 2004). In today's world, communicating with a diverse audience can be a more challenging and complex issue because audiences have an expanded world view and no longer accept the command and control form of business management (Denning, 2007). Denning believed that modern audiences have more control within their organizations because they have more access to knowledge. He emphasized that the use of story is important because it has the power to unite a diverse audience and build community through establishing common meaning and shared vision. Story can be a powerful tool for creating high-performing teams in today's culturally diverse organizations (Denning, 2005).

At the World Bank, Denning (2000) demonstrated the important role storytelling had with an audience. When all else failed in his attempt to help his colleagues understand the value of knowledge management he used a story. The positive results of using story were witnessed when Denning's colleagues subscribed to his vision and collaborated on transformational changes (Denning, 2000). After his success at the World Bank, Denning became an organizational storytelling consultant. Phoel (2006) believed

that if Denning's advice is followed, leaders' words can be turned into powerful messages. Experts Bates and Gilbert (2008) contended that storytelling is a universal language that offers leaders the ability to transcend barriers.

As stated by Brown et al. (2005), narrative plays a large role in knowledge management in organizations. Knowledge is partially intuitive, social, and needs practice. Audiences learn and share knowledge through listening to and using narrative (Brown et al., 2005). Knowledge not only consists of social and cognitive learning but also includes passion and shared experience (Gabriel, 2004).

Because storytelling generates knowledge through obscure ways, such as discovery, invention, and imagination, it encourages thinking beyond mere facts. As a result, storytelling provides an opportunity for the audience to think and learn beyond a set of denotative statements (Gabriel, 2004). The impact of storytelling is not so much the information that it relates, but how it catalyzes understanding (Denning, 2004).

According to Kotter (1996), storytelling incorporates the basic elements for communicating vision effectively. Those elements include: simplicity; metaphor, analogy and example; multiple forms; repetition; leadership by example; explanation of seeming inconsistencies; and give and take. If structured as a story, most types of communication can be successful. Good stories can also restore the attention of the bored and the eye contact of the distracted (Bates & Gilbert, 2008).

A good story can bind the audience to an issue quicker than analysis and provide an opportunity for visualizing how to participate in the change (Denning, 2004). A good storyteller will not only engage the listener but also will transmit the story to the listener so that it becomes the listener's story. The audience becomes involved (Denning, 2004).

According to Denning (2004), leaders can use storytelling to

- ignite action;
- share knowledge;
- get people working together;
- lead people into the future;
- neutralize bad news;
- communicate one's self; and
- transmit values.

Conger (2001) stated that the days of command management are over. He believed that leaders must be adept at the art of persuasion, through the use of story, to influence their audiences to adopt and execute a widespread vision for their organization.

The Organization

In a 1982 study done at Harvard Business School, researchers tested the effectiveness of story by comparing four methods of persuasion on MBA students. The goal was to persuade the students to favor one business solution hypothesis over the three others as presented in the case study. The case study and the four hypotheses were presented to the students by

- using story alone;
- providing statistical data alone;
- providing statistical data and the use of story; and
- providing a policy statement from a senior executive.

More students in the group with whom the researchers used story alone chose the favored hypothesis than in the other groups (Martin & Powers, 1982).

Using the abovementioned study as one piece of evidence that storytelling has a place in the business world, Harbin and Humphrey (2010) recommended that business management courses include training regarding how to tell and use stories in a business environment. Business schools and management professors should not overlook the impact that stories have on conveying messages (Harbin & Humphrey, 2010).

Denning (2005) recognized that leaders can encounter difficulties gaining top management approval to use story in organizational communication. He discovered that using a company's existing business model facilitated the acceptance of the use of storytelling. Traditionally, business models include numbers and analysis; Denning believed that every business model has a story that can be extracted to help explain its value to the organization. When a business model is turned into a story, the audience will be able to make a better connection to the mission and vision of the organization (Denning, 2005). Boje (1991) asserted that organizations are storytelling systems:

Stories are to the storytelling system what precedent cases are to the judicial system. Just as in the courtroom, stories are performed among stakeholders to make sense of an equivocal situation. The implication of stories as precedents is that story performances are part of an organization-wide information-processing network. Bits and pieces of organization experience are recounted socially throughout the firm to formulate recognizable, cogent, defensible, and seemingly rational collective accounts that will serve as precedent for individual assumption, decision, and action. This is the institutional memory system of the organization. Although individuals are limited information processors, each person retains a

part of the story line, a bit of interpretation, story performance practices, and some facts that confirm a line of reasoning (p. 1).

Storytelling is a tool that contributes to leaders' effectiveness. Although assessments of the effects of storytelling are just beginning to emerge, the potential return on investment for businesses could be massive (Denning, 2005).

The Leader

Everyone can tell a story, but not everyone can tell it well (Brown et al., 2005). Leaders who use stories must know how to do so intelligently and explicitly to elicit their intended effects (Brown, et al., 2005). Additionally, storytelling requires both a teller and a listener (audience). If the story is not presented in a way that engages the audience in a vicarious experience, it will not be productive. In fact, the story could fail and produce undesirable results (Hatch, Kostera, & Kozminski, 2005).

Storytelling is an important skill for business leaders to possess because the ability to use story effectively can increase the reach of the leader's influence within the organization (Hatch et al., 2005). According to Denning (2005):

Storytelling is about making managers and leaders more effective in what they do.

So what do managers do? The first point to realize is that for managers – and indeed most people in the knowledge economy – talk is work. If you can learn how to talk more effectively, you can become much more productive (p. 20).

Once leaders become cognizant of the fact that they speak in stories they can learn how to tell stories in ways that facilitate a desired response from their audiences (Brown et al., 2005). Brown et al. (2005) suggested:

Thus, on one level, storytelling is a set of tools, but on another level it is something more than that. It's also a way for leaders – wherever they may sit – to embody the change they seek. Rather than merely advocating and counter-advocating abstract ideas of change, mere propositional arguments that lead to more arguments, leaders can enhance their credibility and authenticity through telling the stories that they are living (p. 177).

Driscoll and McKee (2006) contended that leaders who use storytelling not only develop their management skills, build community and motivate others to move towards a common vision, but also contribute to a culture of spiritual well-being within the physical and emotional framework of an organization or team. Storytelling is not only a way to motivate and inspire followers but also a way to understand and change the culture within organizations (Driscoll & McKee, 2006).

Literature Review Summary

The popularity of storytelling continues to rise and the field of organizational storytelling continues to widen (Brown et al., 2005). The use of story to communicate organizational vision has grown in the 21st century and large corporations such as McDonalds, IBM and GE are now engaged in organizational storytelling (Brown et al., 2005). Alvesson and Spicer (2011) recognized that story can be used to benefit the audience, the organization, and the leader by shaping and clarifying what leading and being led means.

The sources referenced in this literature review suggested that communicating the vision of the organization in a way that captures the attention and motivates the audience to take action is a key element of organizational leadership. The use of story is an

effective and profound way to communicate organizational goals, values, mission, and vision. It is important to measure attitudes about the use of storytelling in organizations. This project will develop and pilot an instrument to measure leaders' attitudes about the use of story to communicate organizational vision.

III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The goal of this project was to develop and pilot an instrument that could be used to measure the attitudes of leaders about the use of story to communicate organizational vision.

Sampling Methods

The sampling method used for this research was an arrangement of purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling was used to solicit professionals who possessed specific qualifications essential to the study. This study sought leaders with a minimum of three years of experience working in mid-to upper-level management positions in organizations ranging from medium to large size. All leaders recruited to this study were actively involved in goal setting and strategic planning for their respective organizations. In addition, for one phase of this research published authors were recruited. Leaders and published authors from across several Midwestern states were targeted for participation in this research.

Convenience sampling was used to invite participants from the researcher's own professional network. To amass as many professionals as possible, the researcher also requested email addresses from colleagues' networks to invite additional participants. A total of 63 professionals participated in this study.

Using Thurstone methodology, participants in this research were divided into three groups. Thurstone methodology consists of three phases of data collection. Phase 1

develops favorable and unfavorable statements related to a topic. Phase 2 rates the statement's degree of favorability. And Phase 3 administers a scale to measure attitudes using the rated statements.

For this study, the first group of leaders was referred to as the 'Experts.' The Expert group was comprised of individuals within a wide variety of mid-level leadership and management positions in for-profit and non-profit organizations across the Midwest, as well as published authors. The Experts who were invited to participate included assistant directors, directors, chief operating officers, judges, managers, philanthropists, politicians, published authors, supervisors, and vice presidents.

The second group was the 'Judges.' With the exception of the published authors, the same types of professionals as the Expert group were recruited for the Judge group.

A third group of participants was referred to as the 'Respondents.' The Respondent group was comprised of high-level leadership personnel from medium to large for-profit corporations, large non-profit organizations, and large scale communitywide initiatives.

The method used to invite the participants was an email form of electronic communication (See Appendices A, C, and E). A Survey Monkey link was provided for participants to provide responses. Survey Monkey is a secure, web-based survey service.

Data Collection

The process of collecting data and developing an instrument using a Thurstone scale consisted of three phases. Email and Survey Monkey were the primary methods of communication throughout the three phases of data collection. Additionally, this

researcher fielded two phone calls from participants who had questions or needed additional clarification relating to their role.

Phase 1 – Experts

In the first phase the Expert group was asked to develop a minimum of ten statements, favorable and unfavorable, related to the use of story as a tool for communicating organizational vision. They were provided with instructions and a link to submit their statements through Survey Monkey. The researcher organized the statements by themes; statements that the researcher found irrelevant or duplicative were discarded. Facilitated by the themes, twenty statements were developed to represent the statements submitted in Phase 1.

Phase 2 – Judges

In the second phase of data collection, the Judge group was asked to rate the 20 statements developed from the Phase 1 responses. The ratings were on a scale of 1-11. The Judges were instructed not to rate a statement based on their level of agreement or disagreement, but on the statement's favorable or unfavorable relationship to the use of story in communicating organizational vision. A score of '1' indicated that the statement was extremely unfavorable regarding attitudes about the use of story to communicate vision and a score of an '11' indicated that the statement was extremely favorable regarding attitudes about the use of story to communicate vision. The Judges rated each statement individually. The cumulative score for each statement was divided by the number of scores to provide the statement with an attitude value. Three statements were found to be ineffective for the scale and were removed from the list. Details about determining ineffectiveness are included in Chapter 4. The remaining 17 statements were

reviewed for effectiveness and accepted by this researcher. An instrument to measure leaders' attitude using a Thurstone scale was developed.

Phase 3 – Respondents

In the third and final phase of data collection, the instrument to measure leaders' attitudes about the use of story to communicate organizational vision was administered to the Respondent group. The Respondents were asked to use a Survey Monkey link to review 17 statements about the use of story to communicate vision. The Respondents were instructed to insert a check mark next to the statements with which they agreed. The selections of each respondent were totaled and averaged to provide an attitude score for each leader who participated. Additional details about those calculations can be found in Chapter 4.

Summary

Using purposive and convenience sampling, leaders were asked to participate in three phases of data collection. The data were analyzed and applied to the development of an instrument to be administered in the final phase of data collection. Participants were invited to participate through email and then a Survey Monkey link was provided to collect responses. A pilot instrument using a Thurstone scale was administered to the Phase 3 participants.

This researcher chose the Thurstone scale method because a one-dimensional scale is easier to administer using an online surveying technique. This researcher also believed that the Thurstone scale method reduced researcher bias when developing and rating statements. The development and rating of the statements by two collaborating

groups, rather than one researcher, provided credibility to the instrument designed to measure attitudes about the use of story to communicate organizational vision.

IV. RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to develop and pilot an instrument to measure leaders' attitudes related to the use of story to communicate organizational vision. The development of the instrument included three phases of data collection

Research Question

How do leaders perceive the use of story to communicate organizational vision?

Phase 1 – Developing the Statements

In the first phase of data collection email invitations were sent to 35 leaders and published authors (Experts). The email included a link to detailed instructions for submitting favorable and unfavorable statements regarding using story to communicate organizational vision (see Appendix A and B). The link remained open for one week. Twenty-six Experts responded by submitting a total of 185 favorable and unfavorable statements. Among the 185 statements there were 60 unduplicated statements regarding the use of story to communicate organizational vision.

Upon reviewing the statements, 21 themes were developed. This researcher assigned each of the 60 statements to a theme checking the final list for congruity. For example; the theme, “Stories Provide a Less Threatening Method to Share Negative Information” was developed as a result of the two statements:

- Story can make delivering difficult news more palatable to an audience.
- The use of story can make negative information less threatening.

Two statements were incongruous with all themes and were discarded. One theme was removed because it was duplicative. This exercise was repeated three times with all theme/statement combinations until final assessments yielded 20 themes (Table 1). This researcher assembled the themes into 20 statements for Phase 2.

Table 1

The 20 Final Themes from Phase 1 Responses

Theme
1. Allows deeper connection between speaker and listener
2. Can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations
3. Can make change easier
4. Can strengthen relationships
5. Contributes to positive work environment
6. Helps listener better understand actions needed to be taken
7. Helps listener better understand information
8. Helps listener better understand storyteller/leader
9. Motivates for future desired actions
10. Not every story is appropriate
11. Places storytelling in a more approachable light
12. Promotes team building
13. Provides a common language for an organization
14. Provides examples of desired behaviors or reactions
15. Provides more memorable messages
16. Provides less threatening method to share negative information
17. Should be about successes and failures as examples
18. Stories should be true
19. Takes longer than presenting goals without using story
20. Too much storytelling causes positive effects to be lost

Phase 2 – Assigning Values to the Statements

In the second phase of data collection, 25 recruitment emails were sent to leaders who comprised the Judges group (see Appendix C and D). The link for this phase was left open for one week. Respondents were asked to rate the 20 statements developed to represent the themes from Phase 1. Using a scale from 1 (extremely unfavorable) to 11 (extremely favorable), Respondents rated each statement according to favorableness or un-favorableness towards the statement's relationship to the use of story. There were 22 Respondents. For each statement, the participant ratings (1-11) were averaged. Table 2 includes the statement, the average rating, the standard deviation, and the range of responses. The values ranged from a low 2.71 to a high 9.81.

Table 2

The Phase 2 Ratings Associated with the 20 Statements

Statement	M Attitude Value	SD	Range
1. The use of story and metaphor in leadership helps expand the understanding of organizational goals.	9.29	1.42	6-11
2. Stories help others understand actions that need to be taken.	8.43	2.06	3-11
3. Leaders who use story are better understood by their subordinates.	8.14	2.12	2-11
4. Stories encourage others to share and act upon ideas.	8.57	1.84	6-11
5. Stories provide memorable messages and improve retention of factual information.	9.81	1.05	8-11
6. Stories that elicit sympathy without action are useless.*	5.57	2.83	1-11
7. Stories waste valuable time in organizations.	2.71	2.16	1-9
8. Stories contribute to a positive work environment.	8.62	1.96	4-11
9. Sharing stories promotes team building.	8.71	1.58	6-11
10. Stories are distracting.	2.90	1.45	1-6
11. Storytelling provides a common language for an organization.	8.48	1.40	6-11
12. Stories provide a less threatening method for sharing negative information.	7.90	2.20	2-11
13. Stories make change seem possible.	9.05	1.09	7-11

Table 2
The Phase 2 Ratings Associated with the 20 Statements

Statement	M Attitude Value	SD	Range
14. Stories dilute a leader's message.	3.10	1.44	1-7
15. Stories help develop positive relationships in the workplace.	8.86	1.20	6-11
16. Both success and failure stories can have a positive impact on employee motivation.	9.19	1.53	6-11
17. Using story takes longer to present organizational goals.*	5.14	2.00	1-10
18. Storytelling can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations.*	4.71	2.39	1-9
19. Storytelling provides examples of desired behaviors or reactions.	8.81	1.33	6-11
20. Storytelling is more appropriate for smaller, non-profit organizations.	3.86	1.83	1-6

*Statement deemed ineffective because Judges found it neither favorable nor unfavorable. Ineffective statements were discarded prior to Phase 3 analysis.

The leaders were instructed not to rate the statements based on their own agreement or disagreement with the statement. This instruction emphasized that the rating represented the statement's degree of favorableness or un-favorableness towards the use of storytelling in communicating organizational vision.

During Phase 2 analysis, the 20 statements' attitude values were evaluated regarding ineffectiveness. There are two reasons a statement could be described as ineffective. First, if a statement presented a high concentration of votes in or close to the 'neither favorable nor unfavorable range' (5-7), it was considered ineffective and

discarded. Second, if the individual responses to a statement were spread too evenly across the continuum, the statement was considered ineffective and was removed. The reason for removing statements is based on the philosophy of Thurstone scale development. According to Salkind (2009), the Thurstone scale should not include statements that are neither favorable nor unfavorable; all statements should be favorable or unfavorable. Three statements (#6, #17 and #18) were eliminated. The calculated attitude value of statement #6 was 5.57 with a standard deviation of 2.8. The calculated attitude value of statement #17 was 5.14 with a standard deviation of 2.0. These attitudes values are close to the midrange of the scale. In other words, it appeared the Judges could not decide whether the statements were favorable or unfavorable. Statement #18, scored 4.71 with a standard deviation of 2.4, was also considered ineffectual because the Judges scores were spread too evenly across the range. After removing the three statements, a total of 17 statements were advanced to the scale.

Phase 3 – Administering the Scale

In the third phase of data collection, 30 recruitment emails were sent to leaders in the Respondents group (See Appendix E and F). The link to the scale was left open for three weeks. There were 15 respondents. The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements remaining after Phase 2 analysis. The seventeen statements used in the scale are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

The Final Thurstone Scale Statements from Phase 2

Statement

1. The use of story and metaphor in leadership helps expand the understanding of organizational goals
 2. Stories help others understand actions that need to be taken
 3. Leaders who use story are better understood by their subordinates
 4. Stories encourage others to share and act upon ideas
 5. Stories provide memorable messages and improve retention of factual information
 6. Stories waste valuable time in organizations
 7. Stories contribute to a positive work environment
 8. Sharing stories promotes team building
 9. Stories are distracting
 10. Storytelling provides a common language for an organization
 11. Stories provide a less threatening method for sharing negative information
 12. Stories make change seem possible
 13. Stories dilute a leader's message
 14. Stories help develop positive relationships in the workplace
 15. Both success and failure stories can have a positive impact on employee motivation
 16. Storytelling provides examples of desired behaviors or reactions
 17. Storytelling is more appropriate for smaller, non-profit organizations
-

Table 4 includes the number and percentage of respondents who indicated agreement with any of the 17 statements. Note that no Respondents agreed with four statements. The Respondents did not agree that

- stories waste valuable time in organizations (Statement 6);
- stories are distracting (Statement 9);
- stories dilute a leader's message (Statement 13); or that
- storytelling is more appropriate for smaller, non-profit organizations (Statement 17).

The above listed statements were the only unfavorable statements in the list.

Note that all Respondents agreed that

- stories help others understand actions that need to be taken (Statement 2);
- stories encourage others to share and act upon ideas (Statement 4); and
- stories provide memorable messages and improve retention of factual information (Statement 5).

These statements indicate that the Respondents agree that stories help audiences understand and act upon information.

Table 4

The Number and Percentage of the 15 Phase 3 Respondents who Agreed with Statements

	Statement	Response Percent	Response Count
1.	The use of story and metaphor in leadership helps expand the understanding of organizational goals.	66.7%	10
2.	Stories help others understand actions that need to be taken.	100.0%	15
3.	Leaders who use story are better understood by their subordinates.	60.0%	9
4.	Stories encourage others to share and act upon ideas.	100.0%	15
5.	Stories provide memorable messages and improve retention of factual information.	100.0%	15
6.	Stories waste valuable time in organizations.	0.0%	0
7.	Stories contribute to a positive work environment.	93.3%	14
8.	Sharing stories promotes teambuilding,	93.3%	14
9.	Stories are distracting.	0.0%	0
10.	Storytelling provides a common language for an organization.	66.7%	10
11.	Stories provide a less threatening method for sharing negative information.	66.7%	10
12.	Stories make change seem possible.	93.3%	14
13.	Stories dilute a leader's message.	0.0%	0
14.	Stories help develop positive relationships in the workplace.	86.7%	13
15.	Both success and failure stories can have a positive impact on employee motivation.	93.3%	14

Table 4

The Number and Percentage of the 15 Phase 3 Respondents who Agreed with Statements

	Statement	Response Percent	Response Count
16.	Storytelling provides examples of desired behaviors or reactions.	86.7%	13
17.	Storytelling is more appropriate for smaller non-profit organizations.	0.0%	0

Table 5 includes the attitude score for each Respondent. The attitude score for each Respondent is the average of the attitude values of the statements the Respondent checked on the scale. For example, Respondent 1 agreed with eight statements (2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 16 in Table 4). The total of the attitudes values of the 8 statements that Respondent 1 agreed with is 70.28 (see Table 2 for attitude values). The Respondents' attitude score is $70.28 \div 8 = 8.79$. The range of scores for the Respondent group was 8.71 to 8.90. The average attitude score for the Respondent group was 8.80.

The attitude scores for the pilot instrument do not have variability. This researcher proposes that further development of the instrument may provide a greater range of attitude scores.

Table 5

Respondents Attitude Scores about the Use of Story in Communicating

Vision

Respondent	Attitude Score
1	8.79
2	8.90
3	8.85
4	8.76
5	8.76
6	8.80
7	8.83
8	8.76
9	8.83
10	8.78
11	8.71
12	8.83
13	8.84
14	8.79
15	8.81

Note. Attitude scores were calculated by averaging the attitude values of the statements to which each respondent agreed. The statements' attitude values are included in Table 2.

Summary

In three phases of data collection, 63 leaders across the Midwest participated in developing a scale to measure leaders' attitudes regarding the use of story to communicate organizational vision. An instrument using a Thurstone scale was developed and administered as a pilot. The pilot analysis indicated that participants felt that storytelling to communicate organizational vision is considered favorable. This researcher accepts the research hypothesis contending that leaders have a positive attitude concerning the use of story to communicate organizational vision. Leaders perceive the use of story to communicate organizational vision as favorable.

V. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY

Introduction

The goal of this project was to develop and pilot an instrument to measure leaders' attitudes concerning the use of story to communicate organizational vision. To meet the project's goals, there were three phases of data collection. The data were used to develop an instrument to measure the attitudes of leaders relating to the use of story to communicate organizational vision. The instrument was piloted. Responses indicated that leaders have a favorable attitude about the use of story to communicate organizational vision.

Conclusions

Through the literature review this study investigated the importance of vision and leaders' attitudes towards the use of story to communicate organizational vision. This researcher concluded that the use of story to communicate organizational vision is a formal tool and strategy that business and organizational leaders use to persuade audiences and to influence the success of the leader and the organization. How to use and tell stories to communicate organizational vision is something that can be learned and should be incorporated into business management training. Through the literature review this researcher concluded that the use of story makes organizational information easier to remember than listening to the recitation of facts. The use of story has the ability to unify individuals and groups, which this researcher believes is a key ingredient to engage others to work towards a common goal in an organization.

The organization's audience benefits from the use of story because it provides memorable messages and unifies individuals and groups to work towards a common goal. The organization itself can benefit by incorporating the use of story into their business plan. Story has the power to engage, motivate and move the audience to achieve desirable results.

The major goal of this research was to measure leaders' attitudes to determine if the literature related to the use of story corresponded with leaders' attitudes about the use of story. Sixty-three leaders from across the Midwestern states participated in three phases of data collection for the instrument design. An instrument was piloted and the results indicated that the Respondents were favorable towards the use of story to communicate organizational vision.

In three phases of research, data were collected to develop a Thurstone scale. In Phase 1, the Expert group developed statements related to the use of story in organizations. In Phase 2, leaders in the Judge group ranked the statements selected for the instrument. Because the Judges placed a value on the statements, the statements could be used in a scale to measure attitudes. This method of ranking is also referred to as the *method of equal-appearing intervals* (Salkind, 2009). A Thurstone scale gets as close to an interval level of measurement as possible, and provides equal distances between points which reflect psychological differences (Salkind, 2009). This is important because attitude is a difficult concept to measure through yes or no questionnaires. A Thurstone scale expands the range of a simple yes or no question and provides a more discriminating method to measure attitude. The intervals in the Thurstone scale allow a scaled attitude instrument.

In Phase 3, the leaders in the Respondent group indicated the statements with which they agreed. Each statement in the pilot instrument has an associated value from Phase 2. The associated values of each statement that Respondents agreed with were totaled and divided by the number of statements checked by that Respondent. The average score is the Respondent's attitude score. The overall average score for the Respondent group was an 8.80 on a scale of 1-11. This overall score indicates the Respondent group had a favorable collective attitude about the use of story to communicate organizational vision.

This researcher noted that all respondents agreed that

- stories help others understand actions that need to be taken (Statement 2);
- stories encourage others to share and act upon ideas (Statement 4); and
- stories provide memorable messages and improve retention of factual information (Statement 5).

The consensus related to the abovementioned statements support the argument Denning (2005) and Phoel (2007) made stating that leaders can help their audiences understand information better, as well as motivate them to take action, by using story. The authors believed the use of story helped audiences envision the 'what if' and motivated them to think 'what now.' The Respondents in this research also believed that stories help audiences understand actions, share and act upon ideas and improve retention of information.

Four statements in the pilot instrument generated a greater than 90% agreement from the Respondents. Most Respondents in this research agreed that

- stories contribute to a positive work environment (Statement 7);

- sharing stories promotes team building (Statement 8);
- stories make change seem possible (Statement 12); and
- both success and failure stories can have a positive impact on employee motivation (Statement 15).

Driscoll and McKee (2006) believed that leaders who use storytelling contribute to a culture of spiritual well-being within the physical and emotional framework of an organization or team. They also stated that storytelling is not only a way to motivate and inspire followers but also a way to understand and change the culture within organizations. The abovementioned responses from the pilot instrument provide considerable support to Driscoll and McKee's appraisal of the use of story in organizations.

The results of this pilot administration of the instrument provide credibility for the use of story in business. The attitude scores provide data for business leaders to use to gain top management's approval for the use story in organizations. The results of this study lend support to Harbin and Humphrey's (2010) recommendation that academic institutions should integrate lessons on how to use story effectively in their business and leadership coursework.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included sample size and research design. The population used in the study was this researcher's professional network and the extended network of colleagues. A larger sample size could have generated a larger response rate. The research design using email and electronic surveys limited the study by removing collaboration among participants during Phase I and 2. More collaboration between the

participants could have generated a more diverse number of statements that might better reflect the use of story.

Implications

The existing research examining the use of story in organizational settings is disproportionately opinion-based. Most books and articles written on the topic of using story in business are written by leaders who are conveying their own personal experiences. The absence of existing research to support the use of story to communicate organizational vision was the stimulus to develop an instrument to measure leaders' attitudes. This research produced a pilot version of an instrument to measure leaders' attitudes. This pilot version needs further work in development, reliability, and validity. Leaders and organizations will benefit from the development of a reliable tool to measure attitudes regarding the use of story. This pilot administration supports the leader who wishes to incorporate storytelling into communicating organizational vision.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

A more diverse sample of leaders in all phases of data collection should be used.

Recommendation 2

Further sampling should be done in the development of the instrument and extensive administration of the instrument should be done to develop reliability.

Recommendation 3

A plan to seek validity should be developed and implemented.

Recommendation 4

The Phase 1 and Phase 2 data collection should include interpersonal methods of communication, such as face-to-face meetings and interviews.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to develop and pilot an instrument to measure leaders' attitudes about the use of story to communicate organizational vision. A Thurstone scale was developed, involving three phases of data collection and analyses. Sixty-three leaders from several Midwestern states participated as Experts, Judges and Respondents. Statements relating to the use of story to communicate organizational vision were developed and placed in an instrument to measure the attitudes of leaders. Fifteen leaders responded to the pilot administration. The range of scores assigned to the statements in Phase 2 (2.71 – 9.81) validated that the statements represented both favorable and unfavorable attitudes towards the use of story to communicate organizational vision.

The overall attitude score of the Respondent group was 8.80 on a scale of 1 to 11. This score indicates a favorable attitude concerning the use of story to communicate organizational vision. The research hypothesis was accepted. Leaders have a positive attitude relating to the use of story when communicating organizational vision.

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Appendix A
Phase 1 Email Invitation

----- Original Message -----

From: Tamala Vaughn <vaughn.35@wright.edu>

Date: Tuesday, February 15, 2011 11:59 am

Subject: Research Participation Request

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to request your participation in my thesis research at Wright State University. My topic is, "How to Measure Leaders' Attitudes on the use of Story to Communicate Organizational Vision". The details are outlined in the Survey Monkey link pasted below. If you participate in the survey (via the link below), please type or electronically sign your name on the attached consent form and email back to me at vaughn.35@wright.edu. Your statements submitted through Survey Monkey will be anonymous and your participation kept confidential. Thank you for considering my request.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7SGDZQV>

Sincerely,

Tammy Vaughn

Appendix B

Phase 1 Survey Monkey Link Contents

Measuring Leaders' Attitudes about the Use of Story to Communicate Organizational Vision

In his book - *Myths, Stories and Organizations* (2004), Howard Gardner suggests that using stories to communicate with others has an important role in effective leadership. In my graduate research in Leadership Development at Wright State University, I have studied numerous leaders who use story to inspire and motivate employees. From Steven Denning to Herb Kelleher, leaders from both the non-profit and for-profit sector have used story to communicate their organizational vision.

My research goal is to measure leaders' attitudes about the use of story to communicate organizational vision. I will use the following timeline/steps to conduct this research:

1. Ask leaders, such as you, to submit a minimum of 10 statements about the use of story in leadership (please include both positive and negative statements about the use of story). There is no maximum number of statements.
2. Once all statements are submitted through Survey Monkey, I will compile and analyze the statements. I will choose which statements will be sent back out to participants to be rated.
3. Select statements will be sent back out to leaders to be given a numerical rating.
4. Participants will rate each statement on a scale of 1-11, and return to me.
5. I will analyze the ratings and use the information to measure leaders' attitudes about the use of story to communicate organizational vision.

Please enter your 10 statements about the use of story to communicate organizational vision below:

Appendix C
Phase 2 Email Invitation

----- Original Message -----

From: Tamala Vaughn <vaughn.35@wright.edu>

Date: Wednesday, March 2, 2011 10:37 pm

Subject: Tammy Vaughn Master's Thesis Request

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I am excited to tell you that I am close to completing my master's thesis research at Wright State University! I am conducting ground-breaking, original research on the use of story. My topic is, "Measuring Leaders' Attitudes about the use of Story to Communicate Organizational Vision". No one has completed this type of research before. I am in the second phase of a three phase data collection process and I need help from experts like you!

This will only take five minutes of your time. Additional details are included in the link below. Your participation will remain anonymous. Thank you in advance for your participation and helping me complete this original research.

Click this link to participate - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LBTCKH6>

Sincerely,

Tammy Vaughn

Appendix D
Phase 2 Survey Monkey Link Contents

**Judging Statements Related to the Use of Story in Communicating
Organizational Vision – Phase 2**

My research goal in the Master of Science in Leadership Development program, at Wright State University, is to measure leaders' attitudes relating to the use of story to communicate organizational vision. This is the second of three phases of research.

In this judging phase, you will rate each of the statements below, indicating the degree to which the statement is favorable or unfavorable related to the use of story in communicating organizational vision. Do NOT respond in terms of your own agreement or disagreement with the statements; rather, respond in terms of your judged degree of favorableness or un-favorableness related to the use of story in communicating organizational vision. The respondents in the third phase will agree or disagree with the statements.

In taking this survey you will first ask yourself if the statement represents a favorable outcome for using story in communicating organizational vision. Please rate how favorable or unfavorable the statement reflects an effective outcome. See examples:

"Business-minded executives find storytelling to be too abstract." You may find the statement neither unfavorable nor favorable because it depends on the leader's personality.

"A good story improves communication between the speaker and listener." You may find the statement extremely favorable if you believe leaders use storytelling to improve communication with their subordinates.

"Stories are too distracting to use at work." You may find this statement extremely unfavorable if you believe leaders use storytelling to help focus their subordinates' attention.

Please take a few minutes to rate the statements. This research technique has never been used to explore the use of story in leadership before; your answers are extremely important. Thank you again for taking time to assist in this ground-breaking research regarding storytelling.

Rate each statement unfavorable or favorable related to the use of story to communicate organizational vision using the following scale:

Unfavorable				Neither Favorable nor Unfavorable							Favorable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	

Appendix D (continued)
Phase 2 Survey Monkey Link Contents

Statement

1. The use of story and metaphor in leadership helps expand the understanding of organizational goals_____ (<Rank here)
2. Stories help others understand actions that need to be taken_____
3. Leaders who use story are better understood by their subordinates_____
4. Stories encourage others to share and act upon idea_____
5. Stories provide memorable messages and improve retention of factual information_____
6. Stories waste valuable time in organizations_____
7. Stories contribute to a positive work environment_____
8. Sharing stories promotes team building_____
9. Stories are distracting_____
10. Storytelling provides a common language for an organization_____
11. Stories provide a less threatening method for sharing negative information_____
12. Stories make change seem possible_____
13. Stories dilute a leader's message_____
14. Stories help develop positive relationships in the workplace_____
15. Both success and failure stories can have a positive impact on employee motivation_____
16. Storytelling provides examples of desired behaviors or reactions_____
17. Storytelling is more appropriate for smaller, non-profit organizations_____

Appendix E
Phase 3 Email Invitation

----- Original Message -----

From: Tamala Vaughn <vaughn.35@wright.edu>

Date: Wednesday, March 9, 2011 12:08 pm

Subject: Tammy Vaughn Master's Thesis Research Request

Dear Leader:

I am excited to tell you that I am close to completing my master's thesis research at Wright State University! I am conducting ground-breaking, original research on the use of story. My topic is, "Measuring Leaders' Attitudes about the Use of Story to Communicate Organizational Vision." I am in the final phase of a three phase data collection process and I need help from leaders like you!

This will only take three minutes of your time. Additional details are included in the link below. Your participation will remain anonymous. Thank you in advance for your participation and helping me complete this original research.

Click on this link to participate - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YKSLHJN>

Sincerely,

Tammy Vaughn

Appendix F
Phase 3 Survey Monkey Link Contents

Measuring Leaders' Attitudes About the Use of Story

Please take a few minutes to check the statements that you agree with and send them to me by clicking the "Done" button. This type of research related to measuring attitudes about the use of story has never been done before; your answers are extremely important. Thank you for taking time to assist in this ground-breaking and original research regarding storytelling.

Remember, I am measuring your attitude on the effectiveness of the use of story to communicate vision.

Please check the statements you agree with:

- The use of story and metaphor in leadership helps expand the understanding organizational goals.
- Stories help others understand actions that need to be taken.
- Leaders who use story are better understood by their subordinates.
- Stories encourage others to share and act upon ideas.
- Stories provide memorable messages and improve retention of factual information.
- Stories waste valuable time in organizations.
- Stories contribute to a positive work environment.
- Sharing stories promotes teambuilding,
- Stories are distracting.
- Storytelling provides a common language for an organization.
- Stories provide a less threatening method for sharing negative information.
- Stories make change seem possible.
- Stories dilute a leader's message.
- Stories help develop positive relationships in the workplace.
- Both success and failure stories can have a positive impact on employee motivation.
- Storytelling provides examples of desired behaviors or reactions.
- Storytelling is more appropriate for smaller non-profit organizations.