



How to tell stories to get the response you want (Storytelling for Technical Professionals)



Arizona Transit Association
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What do your conversations sound like?

We've been in business for 75 years and have 5,383 employees in 47 states, and we have

We're a multi-disciplined firm that delivers quality service...

What? I have a full plate already!!

Can you send an email about **XXX** to the client?

Please send me your final report.

Do you get the results you want?

Transit design and construction is complex.

- Complicated projects
- Highly technical solutions
- Plethora of regulations
- Managing risk
- Complex funding processes
- Capital Improvement Programs
- Project delivery
- Qualifications Based Selection
- Technical jargon, data, calcs
- ***Everyone is so busy!!!***

Even so...

- Complicated projects
 - Highly technical solutions
 - Plethora of regulations
 - Managing risk
 - Complex funding processes
 - Capital Improvement Programs
 - Project delivery
 - Qualifications Based Selection
 - Technical jargon, data, calcs
 - ***Everyone is so busy!!!***
- ***Everyone is so busy!!!***
 - *Clients don't have all the time in the world.*
 - *As, Es, and Cs aren't the best communicators.*
 - *Most technical people hate writing.*
 - *No one reads ANYTHING anymore.*
 - *Email? Phone? Text?*
 - *We're short-handed and need to find people!*
 - *Communication is hard!*

Most technical professionals struggle to communicate.

It's hard to explain complicated planning & engineering solutions.

Professionals who **communicate clearly** stand out because they help others understand complex information.

Being **relevant and memorable** leads to an improved reputation, trust, and confidence.

Story is the greatest weapon
to combat noise because it
organizes information
in such a way that people
are compelled to listen.

- 25+ years in engineering, construction, architecture, construction management & consulting
- Words > Numbers
- Help technical professionals improve communication skills – written and verbal.

Today's plan

- Learn about the power of story
- See examples of how the story creates clarity
- Exercises & ideas!



7 Storytelling Steps

1. A **character**
2. Has a **problem**
3. And finds a **guide** who understands their fear
4. And gives them a **plan**
5. That calls them to **action**... that results in
6. **Success**... with the risk of
7. **Failure**.



Stories work.



1



Survive & thrive



Conserve calories

2

If you stop talking about a client's problem, they stop paying attention to you.



3

If you confuse, you lose.

- The brain is an energy hog... brain cells need twice as much energy as the rest of your body.
- **The brain is always working to make sense of things.**



**Our brain edits what we don't need to survive & thrive...
*that's why "going into the weeds" loses readers and listeners.***





*(Yes, I know this is
what you're
thinking!)*

7 Storytelling Steps... for winning work

1. A character... **your client**
2. Has a **problem... project issues**
 1. **Internal**
 2. **External**
 3. **Philosophical**
3. And finds a **guide** who understands their fear... **you!**
 1. **Empathy**
 2. **Authority**
4. And gives them a **plan... what you do**
5. That calls them to **action... call us, select us...** that results in
6. **Success... specific outcomes...** with the risk of
7. **Failure... fines, public dismay, delays, etc.**



7 Storytelling Steps.... beyond clients

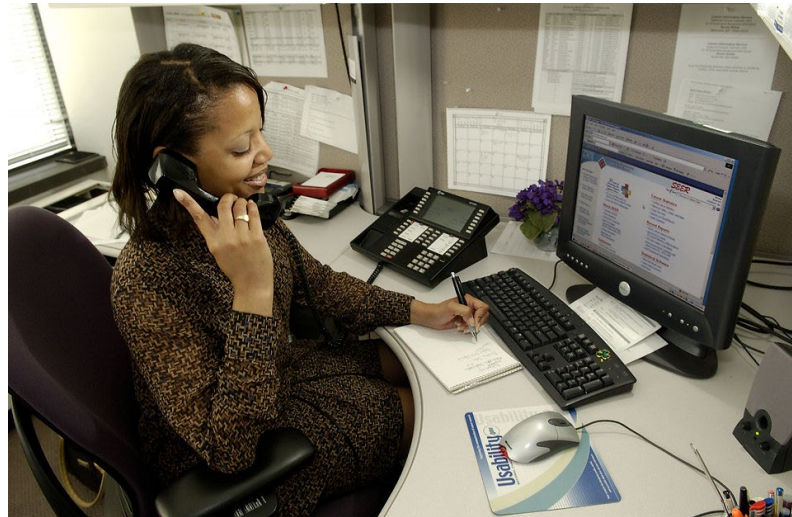
1. A character... **your colleagues, teaming partners other persons**
2. Has a **problem... issues, concerns, challenges**
3. And finds a **guide** who understands their fear... **you!**
4. And gives them a **plan... what to do, instructions, approach**
5. That calls them to **action... call us, team with us, do it...** that results in
6. **Success... specific outcomes...** with the risk of
7. **Failure... fines, public dismay, delays, etc.**







You are a guide! *(Not the hero!)*





*We're telling
stories and
trying to get
people to do
things... all
the time...*

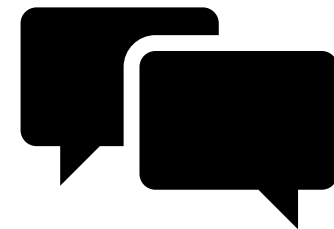
- **Proposals**
 - Cover letters
 - Qualifications
 - Experience
 - Project Approach
 - Resumes
- **Presentations**
 - Meetings
 - Boards of Commissioners
- **Emails**
- **Meetings**
- **Technical Reports**
- **Recruiting**
- Social Media
- Networking
- Brochures
- Websites
- Content Marketing

What else????



How can you apply storytelling to **your** work?

What kinds of conversations do you have?



Use a simple formula: One-Liner

A concise statement you can use to communicate clearly. It is the most powerful tool you use to get a response.

A one-liner makes people lean in rather than tune out at a cocktail party, ***especially people who are not engineers.***

The one-liner formula.



STATE THE PROBLEM.



STATE THE SOLUTION.



STATE THE RESULT.

Before...
(marketing
message)

Acme Engineering is the only firm you need to **ensure your project reaches its full potential.**

Acme offers award-winning, multidisciplinary solutions for the engineering, architectural, and surveying needs of our clients.

After...

(marketing message)

Challenges are part of every engineering, architecture, or survey project. At Acme Engineering, our design and survey teams create solutions that minimize delays and avoid budget overruns.

After...

(marketing message)

Low-cost surveys aren't always a good deal. Quality surveys lead to quality projects. We match survey requirements to project need, so clients are set up for better design and construction.

If you're a subconsultant.

**Managing
consultants...**
(marketing
message)

Some subconsultants require so much managing that it seems like you should just do the work yourself.

Acme Engineers' team of professionals consistently delivers hassle-free projects, so you can focus on your work, not ours.

Emails

Mark,

We are starting a new multi-family / build to rent project in Avondale and are helping the owner prepare the project schedule. One question that came up was whether Avondale would allow us to submit CDs at risk ahead of the Development Plan approval. Are you able to tell us if this is possible or if we need to wait for approval of the DP before the CDs can be submitted? Thanks for your help.

Mark,

We are helping the owner of a new multi-family/build-to-rent project in Avondale prepare the project schedule. Would you please let us know by **Friday noon** if you will allow us to submit CDs at-risk ahead of the Development Plan approval, or if we need to wait for approval of the DP before the CDs can be submitted?

Thanks for your help,
John

Use one-liners for recruiting

Many gifted program management professionals are stuck in jobs that leave them tired and unfulfilled. At Acme, you can get off the job treadmill, join a close-knit team, and do fulfilling work that is both challenging and rewarding.

Too many professionals work for average companies that cramp creativity and stay stale. At Acme you'll get to use your problem-solving and project delivery skills to make a meaningful difference with career opportunities and tangible rewards.

Many professionals don't love where they work. At Acme, we offer cream-of-the-crop planners and designers a chance to create the career of their dreams.

**Before: Another
very simple
example...**
(verbal instruction)

You need to move your vehicle.
This is a no-parking zone.

**After: Another
very simple
example...**
(verbal instruction)

No parking zones are a hassle, I get it. When you park on the other side of the lot, your car will be safe and won't be towed.



Apply It!

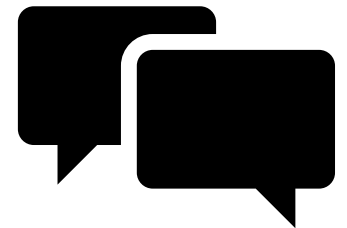
Create a one-liner about this story.

THE 3 LITTLE PIGS



Once upon a time, there were three little pigs who were sent out by their mother to make their place in the world. As they reached the edge of the forest, they decided it would be a good place to build their homes. Peter was the oldest, and the laziest of the three. He chose to build his house quickly out of straw so he could sleep for the rest of the day. Joe was the second oldest, and just a bit less lazy than Peter. He decided a straw house would not be warm enough, but he didn't want to work that hard on building a house, either. Joe decided to build his home out of wood, and spent the rest of the day watching television. Mark was the youngest and the hardest working of the bunch. He remembered what his mother had told him about succeeding by working hard, and decided to take time to build a sturdy house out of brick. Although it was hard work, after two days he had built a nice brick home. His brothers laughed at him for wasting precious time that could have been spent napping or watching TV.

Later that week, a big bad wolf came knocking on Peter's straw hut. "Let me in little pig!" cried the wolf. "Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin," mocked Peter. **The wolf growled, "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!"** Since the house was built out of straw, it quickly blew apart. Peter dashed down to Joe's home and locked the door behind him. "Let me in little pigs!" yelled the wolf. "Not by the hair on our chinny-chin-chins," said the brothers. "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!" the wolf replied. **Again, the weak home of sticks blew apart, and the brothers ran to Mark's sturdy house to hide.** The wolf once again demanded to be let in, but this time a confident Mark said, "Go away wolf. You could never blow my house down!" The wolf huffed and puffed like he never had before and tried to blow the brick house down. After failing many times, the poor wolf sulked back into the forest. The two older brothers thanked Mark for saving the day, and promised to be a little less lazy next time.



3 Little Pigs

When people settle for houses that were built hurriedly and with the wrong materials, they eventually have big regrets. At Barbara's Brickhouse Construction, we take the time necessary to build your home right, using only use the finest materials, so you'll always appreciate your home.

3 Little Pigs

Building your home with the wrong materials makes for an unhappy ending. Don't blow it and build your home right the first time with Wee Wee All The Way Home Construction.

3 Little Pigs

Most new home builders take waaaaay too long to build you your special place in the world.

That's why, at Mark Porker Construction, we build sturdy brick homes for families *in just two days*, because you deserve to live in a home that keeps you safe--even on the biggest and baddest of days.

How did I respond?

Thanks so much! I'll take a look at it tomorrow? Maybe have a call on it Monday? If you have time. We are finishing a huge proposal with Acme today and I need to work on some Paradise Design stuff tomorrow. It would be great to have the weekend to give myself some recovery time from this Acme monster. Then I can focus on the brochure again. Let me know if Monday would work for you.



What if I received....

Thanks so much for sending the writeup! I'll need to get through some other deadlines before I can revisit the brochure. Here are some times on Monday that work for me to have a status call. **Let me know your preference by Sunday night**, and I'll send an invite:

Monday, 3/27

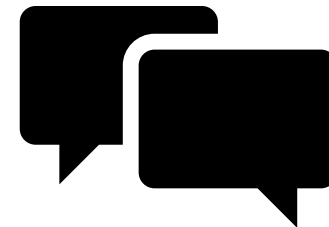
8-9 am

10 – 11 am

2 – 3 pm

Apply It! What is your One-Liner?

1. It's Tuesday and your firm has a deadline on Friday. You haven't seen anything from the consultant.
2. You want to meet with the agency's PM before the RFP is issued to understand about an upcoming project.

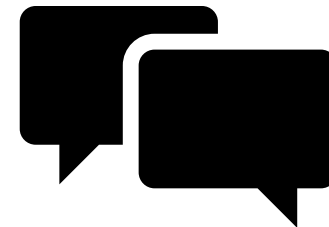


problem | solution | result

Apply It! What is your One-Liner?

Why should I hire you?

What do you recommend?



problem | solution | result

Why should I hire you?

The Roadrunner+Coyote team brings the technical know-how, self-performance capability, and CMAR experience to deliver transit infrastructure improvements for the City. We have placed great emphasis on bringing together a team you know and trust, implementing a proven project management approach to effectively advocate, design, and build this project. Our approach provides cost transparency and competitive bidding to prove we are good stewards of your investment. Our subcontractors are also local and equally invested in the community.

What do you recommend?

While all the alternatives have advantages and disadvantages, the biggest challenge is to make the most cost-effective decision in the face of volatile costs and unpredictable material deliveries. We recommend Option C, which provides the most certainty because the unknowns are incorporated in a robust contingency plan, which cushions the impact of today's unknowns.

Apply It!!! Group Discussion:

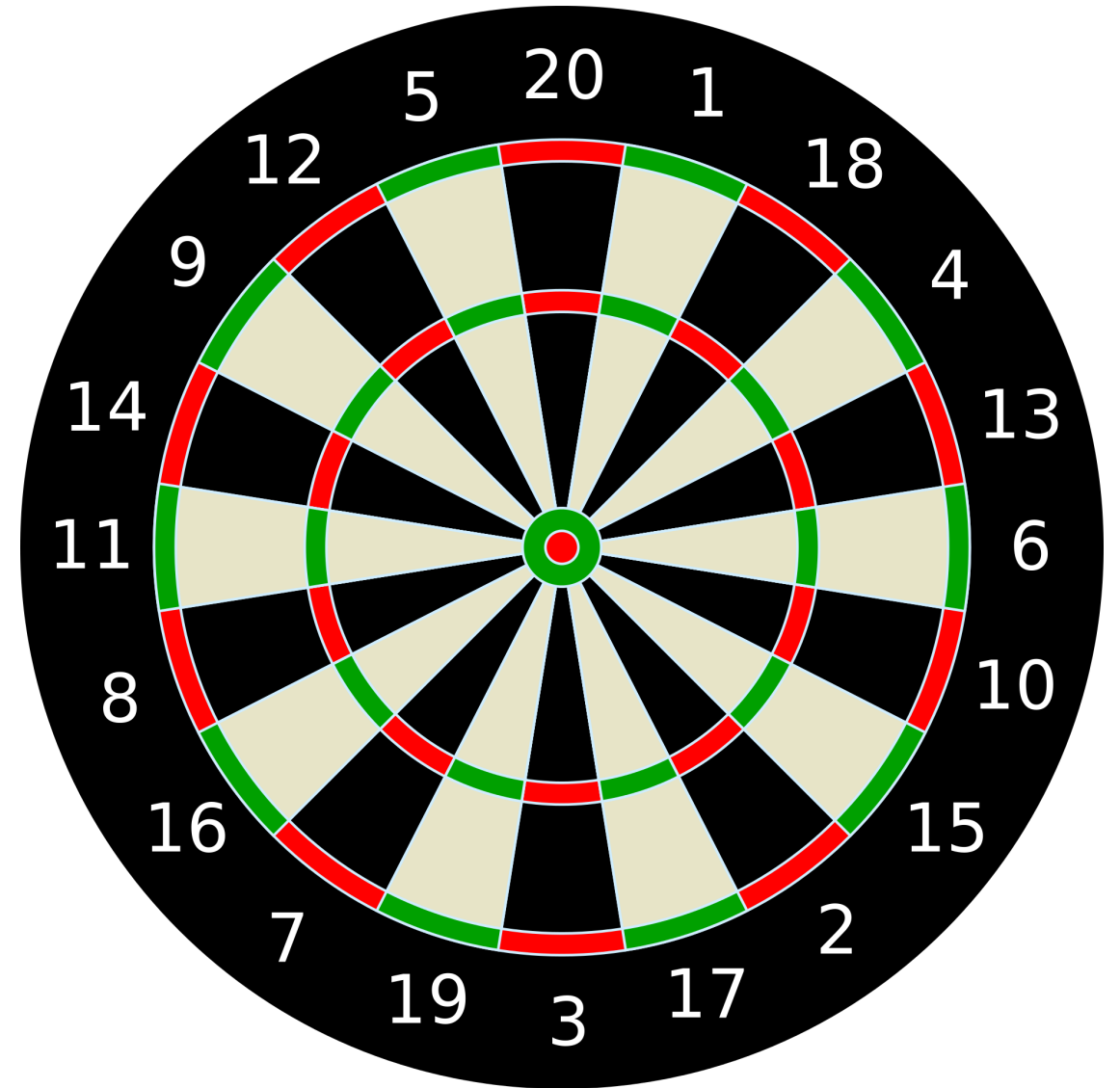
How would storytelling help avoid this situation?

These contractor promotional items were shipped to us, let me know if you have a connection with them... or want an item....



Dart Throwing Contest

When would storytelling **NOT** work?



Next Steps

- Ask clients, consultants and colleagues about what makes their work difficult – find out about their problems
- Simplify how to solve problems – 3 steps!
- What does success look like?
- What's the alternative?
- Use the one-liner for emails.
- Less “I” and more “you”







ONE thing I
learned today....

*that I promise I
will use in a
conversation or
writing....*



Most architects, engineers & contractors struggle to stand out from the competition. My marketing toolbox is full of practical strategies and tactics that help companies communicate clearly so they win work and attract employees to grow their firm.



Stand out from the competition.

**Win profitable work.
Attract great employees
Grow your business.**

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