

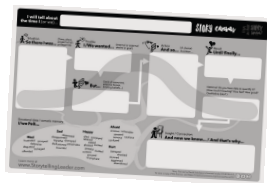
the STORY Dash cards

Use these cards to find stories about your work that create *engagement* and *belief* so people will *act*.

To get the most power from the Story Dash Cards, use them with:



&



The book “Story Dash”
by David Hutchens

The Story Canvas
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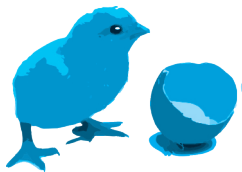
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Continuity
Novelty
Transition

It Was True at the Beginning

"There's something special about how we began."

Ever noticed how every super hero has an *origin story*? To understand them, you have to know how they began.

That's true in organizations, too. These stories hold the DNA of identity, and telling those stories creates powerful continuity.

The origin doesn't have to be the founding of the organization. When you stepped into your current job or new position, there was an origin story. Every time you kick off a new project, you have an opportunity for a origin story.

Find your story!

*Tell me about
something that happened
at the beginning, and
what that says about us
that is still true.*



Example of *It Was True at the Beginning*

"Francisco's Garden"

Our founder, Tami, started her career as a teacher. She worked in the public schools, and she saw the poor nutrition that kids were getting at school. It broke her heart.

One night she was invited to stop by the home of one of her young students, Francisco. She saw the entire family eating potato chips and other junk food for dinner.

Tami said she couldn't believe it. No wonder kids like Francisco were struggling so much!

So she started the first vegetable garden as a class project, so that her students could take home fresh, organically grown spinach and tomatoes to their families. Francisco and the other kids were so proud to eat food that they had grown themselves!

That was ten years ago. Today we have greenhouses in 11 counties, helping dozens of communities manage their own gardens.

Because of the economy, our funding is down and we are making tough choices. But our mission is alive! We believe in bringing food security to every kid in America. And that commitment is one thing that will never change.





Continuity
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Transition

The Power of Our Values

*"We won't compromise
what makes us special."*

Customers and markets are interested in much more than your product, service, or offering. They want to see who you are. What makes you different from others? What do you believe?

Most teams have a statement of values listed on the website. You know what's even better? A story! Tell us about a time your values drove your decision making. These are "how" stories, and they bring your identity and deepest convictions to life in unforgettable ways.

Find your story!

*Tell me about a time
when you (or we)
powerfully lived our values,
even though it may have
come with a cost.*

What happened?



Example of *The Power of Our Values* **"Anyone Can Save a Life"**

It's not too often that someone in Medical Billing, like me, gets to save a child's life. But that's what happened!

On my social media, I saw a story about a little girl in Venezuela who was suffering from a medical condition that happens to be a speciality of the researchers here at our hospital. And I thought, "that kid looks like a good match!" Of course, I'm no doctor. So I decided to just call Dr. Wilbur, who runs the research in this area. I was nervous about calling someone as senior as Dr. Wilbur but he was completely attentive! He said the case sounded interesting, but we would need to know more.

So I went back to social media and got in touch with this family and I said "I might have a possibility for you."

Soon, we had the entire family on a flight to Houston. We even raised money for their airfare! Today their little girl has completed treatment and is healthy and happy.

Here, we have a value of "people first." And that's real. It doesn't matter what your role is in the organization. Everyone here is responsible for "people first."





Continuity
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Transition

Imagine If We Had That Here

"A possibility with power."

A story is a great way to bring a vision to life. The only problem is that the vision is in the future. How do you tell a story about something that hasn't happened yet?

One great way is to reach outside of the organization and bring in a possibility that exists elsewhere.

Sometimes this external story can come from a world that is wildly different from yours, which can powerfully engage our team to make the translation: "our context is very different... But what would that look like if we had that here?"

Find your story!

*Take me to a moment when
you saw something valuable
that we don't have here.
(But imagine if we did!)*



Example of *Imagine If We
Had That Here*

"Print Your Own Shoes"

When I was in New York last week, I had some time to walk around Manhattan after meetings. I went into this really cool shop that sells custom athletic shoes.

And I mean these shoes are *completely* customizable! You can choose features on a computer kiosk, and even upload your own artwork to go on the shoes. There's an amazing "shoe printer" that produces your shoes right there while you wait! I was blown away. The process was just so engaging, and I came home with exactly the shoes that I wanted. I'm *invested* in these shoes!

We are in an age where technology has made mass customization possible. *What if we had that?*

In our industry of consumer medical devices, we never talk about that kind of customization. But why not? Think about how varied our customers' needs are. What do you think it would look like if we brought some level of choice to our customers, and then engaged them *emotionally* in the process? What do you think our version of the "custom shoe printer" would look like?





Continuity
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Transition

Us at Our Best

"Imagine if more people did that!"

Sometimes the possibility for change comes from within your organization or team.

Whenever a person or a team demonstrates exemplary behavior, you have a golden opportunity. Elevate that behavior! Make sure everyone can see it!

As the body of theory called Appreciative Inquiry shows, these stories of "us at our best" are powerful attractors that draw people forward. The more you tell these stories, the more you'll see the desired behaviors start to emerge within the system.

Find your story!

*Tell me about a time when we
were at our best as we acted
on our mission, and it made
you feel proud.
What happened?*



Example of *Us At Our Best*

"Jake's Penguin Dream"

When COVID 19 first hit, we had to shut down the city aquarium to all visitors. It has been a painful time for us.

Then we got this letter from a woman whose little boy, Jake, has autism. She wrote, "Before COVID hit, I promised Jake we would come to your gift shop because he saw a toy there that is a bag filled with plastic penguins. Once I make a promise to my son, he never forgets it! He has not stopped begging me for his bag of penguins."

Our Finance Director, Maurice, heard about that. He said, "we've got to help Jake!" So on Saturday, Maurice drove to Jake's house an hour away. He presented Jake with the toy penguins as a gift from the aquarium, and he said he saw Jake come alive.

Then he also presented Jake and his mom a special invitation to come to the aquarium later this week, where Jake will get to help our keepers feed the penguins!

Running this place is complex, and we all work hard. But imagine if we all reconnected with that kind of joy and dedication every day. Just think how unstoppable we would be!





Continuity

Novelty

● Transition

One Courageous Personal Step

*"We can overcome barriers
with behaviors."*

We think of organizational change in terms of grand strategies. But the reality is that change happens when people make decisions to do something different.

Here's a pro tip: What behaviors do you wish you would see more of on the team? *Tell stories that have those behaviors in them.* Stories work like simulators: The listener "experiences" them in a way that creates a sort of muscle memory – as if the listener had actually exercised that behavior. These stories are a powerful path to organizational change!

Find your story!

*Tell me about a moment
when you saw someone
(maybe yourself) make a step
toward our desired change.
What did they do?
What happened?*



Example of One Courageous
Personal Step

"Transparency Is Listening"

We've been talking for more than a year about building our culture of customer transparency. To be honest, our progress has been slow. This is a hard journey!

That's why I'm so impressed by what Sanjay did on Monday. He called Rohan, the COO over at BioGyzer, and said "I'd like to set up a second meeting with you."

Rohan said, "It's no use, Sanjay. We've already decided we're not hiring your team. We're going with your competitor."

Sanjay said, "I know. I'm not trying to change your mind. I just want to come sit and listen, because I don't think we listened to you very well during the RFP process."

So Sanjay drove over, and he spent the afternoon just asking Rohan questions. He didn't try to sell anything. He just listened.

At the end of the meeting, Rohan said, "I'm really touched by this. This is the kind of partnership we value at BioGyzer." Now Rohan is actively looking for projects for us!

I'm so inspired by what Sanjay did. Imagine if we all listened with that kind of humility. I bet it would make our customer transparency culture come to life.





Continuity

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Eureka!

*"What it looks like when
we solve tough problems."*

These "process" stories are powerful, and leaders miss the opportunity to tell them all the time.

Let your stakeholders see what it looks like when you or your team are solving tough problems with creativity and ingenuity.

These stories are especially compelling when you structure them like a mystery: "We tried something, and that didn't work... And then we tried something else... And then finally we found the solution."

Find your story!

*When was a time that
you or the team
had to solve a tough problem?
How did you finally get to
the solution?*



Example of *Eureka*

"Counting Phone Poles"

We were serving a \$3 billion utility company and we needed to monitor the location of every electrical transformer in the region.

This was nearly impossible because in this rural part of the world that data just didn't exist. We were amazed that no one had it!

The idea of driving around to find every utility pole was a nightmare, like needles in a country-sized haystack. We were stumped.

I remember the team was working late right here in this conference room and eating pizza when Anja, one of our junior team members, said, "You know what? I bet we could create an inventory of all of those utility poles using a basic web browser, Google Street View, and an artificial intelligence engine to analyze the images, and identify and count the poles."

I nearly dropped my pizza! What a brilliantly simple solution! So Anja created the code, and now we offer this software to other municipalities around the world. It's a great piece of software... but we always say that innovation is more than cool software. Innovation is team members like Anja who think differently to solve big problems.

