

Super Seminar Tips & Tricks[®] by Frank Maselli

Episode 15: **Become a Master Storyteller!**

Humans have used stories to convey emotional messages since the dawn of time. We resonate with stories on both a conscious and sub-conscious level. They fit into our reality in a way which facts and statistics simply cannot.

We all understand the incredible power of stories. Our species has been telling stories for millions of years. They are part of the deepest human experiences. Using great stories in a workshop will connect you to your audience in ways that other speaking elements will not. Here are some helpful hints.

BASIC STORY RULES

There are many critical rules to great storytelling. Let me just highlight a few simple ones here that will help you.

Rule #1: Start with the moral in mind

Effective seminar stories need a moral — something important you want people to know. If your story doesn't have a moral or if the audience has to work too hard to figure it out, the story isn't going to have the impact you desire. You don't want people to struggle to absorb the value and lessons in your stories.

Rule #2: Keep it tight

Audiences get excited when you start a story, but if it goes longer than 1 or 2 minutes, they start getting bored and you run into confusion or even resistance. If you have some kind of epic tale that you want to tell and you absolutely cannot trim it down to two minutes, consider breaking it up into chapters that weave throughout the presentation and takes the audience on sort of a journey. That can be fun and very entertaining.

Rule #3: Make it relevant

Your stories need to connect to the audience. They should be able to empathize with the characters and identify with the situations and the dollar amounts involved. Very specialized or highly exotic stories that might only fit a tiny proportion of the audience will have far less impact.

Rule #4: Don't over-brag!

Every story can't be about how you saved the day. Sometimes it's better to talk about a mistake you made when you were new that taught you a valuable lesson. Self-deprecation plays better than self-aggrandizement.

Rule #5: Place the story properly

It's vital to remember that **WHEN** you tell a story is just as

critical as what the story is about. A great story, told at the perfect time can be massively powerful. That same exact story told at the wrong time, can fall dead flat, undermine your presentation and even hurt you.

One example of really bad story placement is telling your "**Why Story**" at the start of the workshop. It's OK to build some credibility after the opening. But the opening segment should be more about them...not you. Save the WHY for later and you may find it works much better.

Also, avoid back-to-back stories. You want the first message to sink in before launching into another tale.

15 CORE STORY TYPES

Here are 15 different story types you might want to weave into your seminars. These are discussed in greater detail in my book, but this will get you started.

● **Your "Why Story"**

Why did you choose to become a Financial Advisor? This is a common story type that usually has some element of wanting to help people. That's OK, but it risks being a little dull. If you would like some help making this more interesting, let me know. As noted, placement is absolutely critical with your Why Story.

● **The Horror Story**

You saw something really bad happen to someone (maybe a client, family member, or friend) who made the wrong decision. You vowed to never make that mistake yourself or to let others you care about make it. Often this goes with the Why Story.

● **The Success Story**

You did something great for a client and it helped them tremendously...maybe even better than expected. One or two of these stories are OK. Too many and you sound like you're bragging which can severely diminish the impact.

● **The Turn-Around Story**

A client (or seminar attendee) came to you after the event with a nightmare of a problem created by a previous advisor or something they did on their own. They felt hopeless and lost with no visible solution. You were able to turn things around for them, (at least partly) through the application of your superb process and skill. Again, don't use too many of these.

● **The Historical Story**

This is a huge category and having several stories related to your topic can nicely augment your presentation. Young advisors need a few of these if they expect to build relationships with wealthy clients. Fortunately they are easy to acquire.

● **The Skeptical to Satisfied Story**

This is where you heard about something that you absolutely did not believe at first. But over time you saw just how powerful it really was. Now you're a huge fan. This is my story with annuities. I hated them for many years until I learned the truth!

● **The Missed Opportunity**

Someone really smart and trustworthy gave you a piece of advice. For some reason, (*you were too busy or focused on something else*) you didn't act in time, and it came true exactly as they told you. The lesson you learned was that when honest and powerful people say something...pay attention and take action!

● **I Screwed Up Big Time!**

I did something as a younger advisor that I thought would be a total home-run. It went very wrong but I learned a valuable lesson and will never make that mistake again.

I've found that audiences love hearing these. Confessing that you got burned years ago but learned something important from it gives audiences confidence that you will be better able to protect them if those situations pop up again, which is probably true. People like their advisor to have gone through a few bad storms in their career. Plus they're glad you had these learning experiences with other people before you met them. They are getting the "seasoned and wiser" version of you.

● **Only One Captain**

One of my clients wanted to invest heavily in an idea they thought would be fantastic. I strongly recommended against it, but they insisted and I relented. Of course, it went bad. This taught me to trust my judgment and maintain control of the process. As the Captain, it's my job to steer the ship. It's YOUR ship, and ultimately your money, but if you insist on steering it yourself, then you need to find another Captain.

● **Odd Couple Therapy**

A couple came in to meet with me and I got the feeling that they were not in agreement on the goals or a strategy for their finances. Over a few meetings, I helped them by facilitating a conversation that they were not able to have on their own and we developed a much better plan because of that.

Stories that display skills beyond the world of money help people begin to see you as a more holistic and valuable resource. Another great example is where you might have helped a client deal with a situation that was very traumatic for them, like helping them find a good long-term care facility for an aging parent. The message is that your clients can come to you with concerns that are not exclusively financial.

● **Patience Pays**

I put clients into something that did very well over a short period of time. I took profits thinking we got lucky and the run was over. But I failed to realize that the short-term success was a good indication of longer-term potential. The profit we would have made if I had been patient was double the one I was quick to take too early. Winners win for a reason.

● **The Prodigal Returns**

One couple attended my workshop and we met afterwards. I was concerned that the path they were on was not viable. We had a few meetings but they never became clients. Two years later, they called me and asked to come in. Sadly, they were in a worse situation than when we first met. But I was very happy they came back and we started to rebuild a great plan together. Today they are back on track and feeling much better.

● **People & Process Before Performance**

I was introduced to a money management firm who had very hot performance. Their numbers were extraordinary but they were very secretive about their investment discipline. It turned out they were pure momentum players and cratered when the market turned. I almost made the mistake of buying performance when I should have been more focused on the people and the process.

This story gives people a more specific feel for how you make decisions based on fundamental research rather than flashy fame. It adds credibility to your recommendations.

● **A Peak Behind the Curtain**

This type of story is designed to give people a look at the inner workings of our profession that most investors never get to see. Audiences go wild over these!

Over the years I've accumulated scores of these types of tales that generally have a common moral which translates into some form of "*Be very careful where you get your financial advice.*"

I'm sure you could tell some similar stories yourself.

● **Personal Stories**

Stories about your family can be a great way to bond with the audience and I might sprinkle in a few very short ones. Spending too much time talking about your kids, your hobbies, or personal interests can get old fast. Remember...this is about THEM!

In conclusion:

We are creatures of story. Human civilization is built on them and our minds are hard-wired to absorb them on levels that transcend mere data. Tighten them up, tell them well, with clarity of purpose and passion. Let your audience put themselves into those tales of triumph and despair. Your workshops will come alive and resonate long after the facts and charts have faded from memory.

The 5th edition of my best-selling book — "Seminars: The Emotional Dynamic" — is coming out VERY SOON!

If you would like to get on the pre-order list, just email me at frank@maselligroup.com and you will get a 25% discount from the insanely high price I plan to charge for this "verbum finalis." Approx. 325 pages containing everything you could ever want or need to know about seminars and workshops (live or virtual) in thoughtfully curated explosion of wisdom, wit, and experience!