Storytelling

Equating generality with abstraction is one of the most fundamental misunderstandings that we’ve inherited from 300 years of Cartesian belief. …One of the most powerful ways to have the general is to show how it is rooted in the particular and we do that through narrative.... A narrative... is about building a powerful idea through the particulars. Every story has particulars. They way you construct a narrative is by joining these particulars --- contextually situated, together into a moral, or the point of the story. Those two elements---the context and the moral--- enable you to apply the story to a new situation, and sometimes many new situations.... We often overlook narrative as an important practical way to get to the general, particularly in new situations where we don’t have reliable abstractions.

John Seely Brown, in Storytelling in Organizations, 64.

Why do we want to use stories?

- Stories evoke active empathy
- Stories are memorable
- Stories let people build understanding rather than being told – give them ownership
- Stories can capture the essence without all the detail

What makes something a story?

Point of view

- Message – the “point of the story”
- Protaganist – point of view for users empathy
- Narration – point of view from which it is told

Specificity

- Storytelling is concrete and timeless
- Provides context and evocative details
- Conveys personalities & attitudes
You want to make the story concrete enough with details with which the listeners can engage, but not so detailed, that they can't imagine themselves in the same place.

**Action**

- The content is a narrative / happening / process / activity: somebody does something.
- A story moves from some kind of problem/unknown to some kind of resolution

A prototype is a thing (or activity) **plus** a story.

References: