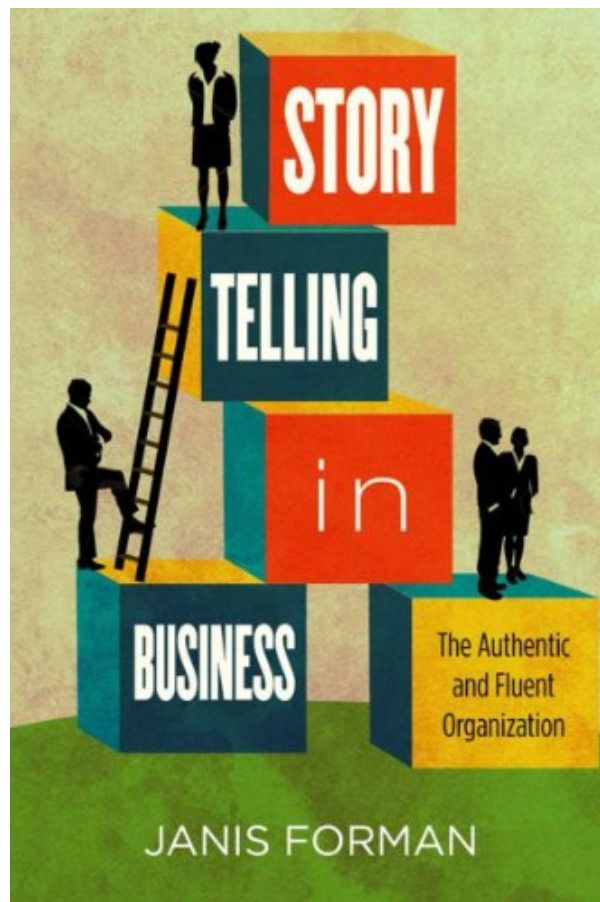
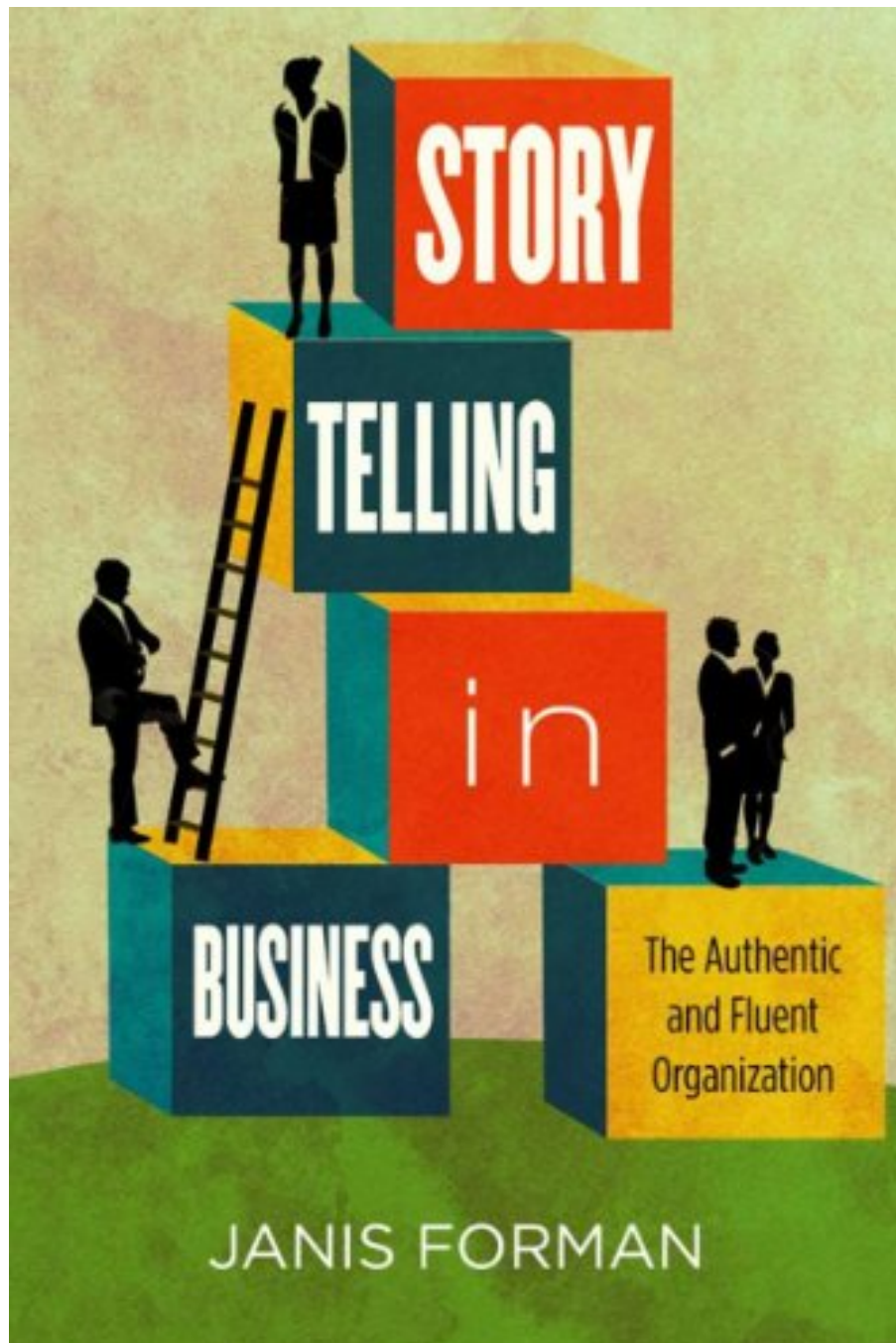


STORYTELLING IN BUSINESS: THE AUTHENTIC AND FLUENT ORGANIZATION BY JANIS FORMAN



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Review

"Forman brings a unique expertise in the humanities and management disciplines. Her years of experience advising MBA students on strategy projects that require storytelling and consulting with executives give her a unique advantage as an author. This book should appeal to business professionals who want to learn how the power of storytelling can move an organization through a large-scale change, inculcate a cultural change, or execute strategy. Consultants will appreciate the in-depth case studies, diagnostic checklists for crafting stories, and connections to management concepts."—Gail Fann Thomas, *International Journal of Business Communication*

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Janis Forman is the founder and Director of the Management Communication Program at the UCLA Anderson School of Management. In this capacity, she has taught communication as a form of persuasive storytelling to full-time and executive MBA's who conduct strategic studies for multi-national companies like Coca-Cola, Disney, and Microsoft and for start-up firms in the United States and abroad. Forman has received numerous awards for her research, including fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation, the Center for International Business Education and Research, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the UCLA Anderson Price Center for Entrepreneurial Studies. With Paul Argenti, she is author of *The Power of Corporate Communication*, which won the Distinguished Publication Award from the Association for Business Communication. Forman has consulted with a wide variety of organizations.

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Storytelling can be a lifelong and life sustaining habit of mind, a personal inheritance that connects us to our communities. It can also serve as an organizational inheritance—a management tool that helps businesses to develop and thrive. For more than a decade, award-winning author Janis Forman has been helping executives to tell stories in service of their organizational objectives. In *Storytelling in Business: The Authentic and Fluent Organization*, she teaches readers everywhere how the craft of storytelling can help them to achieve their professional goals.

Focusing on the role of storytelling at the enterprise level, this book provides a research-driven framework for engaging in organizational storytelling. Forman presents original cases from Chevron, FedEx, Phillips, and Schering-Plough. Organizations like those featured in the book can make use of storytelling for good purposes, such as making sense of their strategy, communicating it, and developing or strengthening culture and brand. These uses of storytelling generate positive consequences that can have a sustained and significant impact on an organization. While large firms employ teams of digital and communication professionals, there's much that any of us can extrapolate from their experience to create stories to further our own objectives.

To show the reach of storytelling, Forman conducted 140 interviews with professionals ranging from CEOs in small and thriving firms, to corporate communication and digital media experts, to filmmakers—arguably the world experts in visual storytelling. She draws out specific lessons learned, and shows how to employ the road-tested strategies demonstrated by these leaders. Although this book focuses on storytelling in the context of business, Forman takes inspiration from narratives in literature and film, philosophical and social thought, and relevant concepts from a variety of other disciplines to instruct the reader on how to develop truly authentic and meaningful tales to drive success. A final chapter brings readers back to square one: the development of their own "signature story."

This book is a pioneering work that guides us beyond the pressure and noise of daily organizational life to influence people in a sustained, powerful way. It teaches us to be fluent storytellers who succeed by mastering this vital skill.

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2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Required reading for communication professionals AND executives

By Karl K

Two important observations about this brief, yet thorough book.

First, it should be required reading by EVERY corporate communications professional, and EVERY marketing professional.

Second, it should be required reading for any executive faced with a tough turnaround challenge or faced with implementing critical changes - whether a CEO of an entire enterprise or a manager of division or business line. (In fact, a subtitle for some of the examples Forman presents might be "How to Save Your Company with Storytelling.")

For a corporate communications or marketing professional, the story telling principles outlined in this book should be a key part of your arsenal. If you haven't created an "authentic" and "fluent" story or set of stories for your company or your product line, get this book and see how it gets done, and do it for your business. Through a series of case studies from four companies - Schering-Plough, FedEx, Chevron, and Philips - Forman delves deeply into how these businesses formulated their stories and implemented their delivery to key audiences. (Forman also brings in examples from other companies besides these four). Forman lays out the lessons learned and provides a set of checklists for you to use in developing your own stories. And while Forman's case studies come from large organizations, the principles and lessons will work for smaller enterprises.

However, the book is more than a how-to book. It also weaves in examples from literature, film, and personal stories.

For me, the most compelling part of the book is Forman's section on the turnaround of Schering-Plough, and how CEO Fred Hassan and his team used storytelling principles in their effort to resurrect what Hassan called "a wounded company in prolonged decline." By formulating a 5-chapter prospective narrative about where they planned to take the company, Hassan and his team laid out a turnaround vision that was used to communicate with employees, stakeholders, and regulators. This story dovetailed with the turnaround strategic plan and roadmap. As I was reading the Schering-Plough section of the book, it was astonishing to me how much effort and intelligence were brought to bear to formulate the story, deliver the story over a long time period, AND implement business changes necessary to make the story come true. Whatever the company paid Hassan and his team was not enough. Though the story was never quite finished as originally formulated - Schering-Plough eventually merged with Merck - you know that the ending would have occurred as planned.

"Storytelling in Business: The Authentic and Fluent Organization" - the end product of a four-year effort and hundreds of interviews with business leaders - is an outstanding treatment of this important business communication technique. And done in a little more than 200 pages.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Your New Engagement Strategy

By GFT

I have several storytelling books on my shelf, but Forman's, *Storytelling in Business: The Authentic and Fluent Organization*, is now my favorite. Her research for this book includes interviews with more than 140 storytelling experts including corporate communication directors, CEO's of small companies, business communication university faculty, and filmmakers. Using this research, she develops a four-component framework of organizational storytelling: authenticity, fluency, trust, and a focus on business objectives. While Forman admittedly leaves theoretical jargon behind, her book is built on a strong foundation of expert

practical experience as well as the latest research. In addition to practical diagnostic checklists, Forman takes us on a journey through four best practice storytelling organizations. In a world where employees, customers, and investors insist on more engagement, Forman shows us how stories can help us make better connections with our constituents-- not only incorporating their stories into our organizational stories, but by carefully listening to their stories to better understand their perspectives.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Story puts the POW in power

By Park Howell

Storytelling in Business is the ideal guide to help remind executives and leaders how to engage employees, shareholders, stakeholders and customers through the bewitchery of story. Its current case studies demonstrate how major companies like FedEx, Schering-Plough, Chevron and others use the power of authentic, purpose-told stories to captivate internal and external audiences and move mountains. It's the best primer for business storytelling I've seen in some time.

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