

HERSTORY

Learning How to Tell Your Story for Personal and Union Leadership Development and Member Engagement and Action

Inspiring political, social justice, and labor leaders all understand the value of storytelling to connect to people for action and engagement. Storytelling is a powerful component of leadership building.

This workshop teaches participants the value of storytelling in developing union leadership skills for effective labor-management and union member relations. Participants will learn the value of telling their personal story to move others to action through identification of a goal and a request to the listener.

Effective leaders understand how to tell their story so that they can persuade others to follow them and work with them in common cause. It has been scientifically proven that people remember stories 22 times more than they remember plain facts and statistics. It's clear that knowing how to tell your story is an important step in leadership development.

However, in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, UAW women (and men) often don't have a chance to focus on developing their personal story. They may also overlook storytelling as a key component to developing and building personal and organizational leadership skills. They may not realize that they are experienced storytellers already, but need to connect their storytelling experience (bargaining negotiations, grievance handling) to a deeper understanding of what "storytelling" really is and its power for positive transformation and leadership.

By the end of this workshop, participants will understand:

- The role storytelling plays in their personal and union leadership
- How storytelling can be used to focus personal goals and accomplishments for leadership enhancement and progression
- How to tell their union connection story effectively
- How to connect with listeners for action and engagement
- How to connect storytelling into all areas of their union life to strengthen their leadership and member engagement

For this workshop you will need:

- Classroom set up for groups 4-6 at each table
- Overhead projector and screen
- Two flip charts and markers
- Class participant sign-in sheet
- Name tents
- 500-count index card pack or equivalent

- Handouts: Handout 1 – Outlining Your Story – Worksheet; Handout 2 – Outlining Your Story – Sample Outline

Duration: This is a 3.5 hour workshop, divided into one 1.5-hour session and one 2-hour session.

INTRO AND ICEBREAKER – 20 minutes

Notes to instructor: Welcome the class and provide the class background and objectives as described in the cover page notes. Emphasize that the classroom is a safe space for all participants. Connect the class to the labor and UAW experience and their leadership growth. Highlight the many ways storytelling is used in the union movement: by union organizers to bring more members into the union, by grievance handlers to persuade management to grant a grievance, by elected officials, candidates, politicians, human and civil rights activists, union leaders and others to motivate listeners to action.

Emphasize that storytelling is a tool to help us better understand that more connects us than divides us. Storytelling gives us our voice. Storytelling connects the personal to the bigger picture. Allow for any questions to be sure everyone understands the workshop goal.

Have participants count off 1-4 or 1-6 (depending on class numbers) to divide the class into four or six workgroups. Make adjustments where needed to ensure that each workgroup is numerically balanced with an even number of participants because much of the work for this class will be done in pairs. Use a classroom facilitator to work with anyone who doesn't have a partner.

When people have organized into their table workgroup, ask them to turn to the person on their left and conduct a three-minute interview, asking the following questions. Keep time so that each person has about three minutes to answer the interview questions.

- Name
- Local
- Region
- Worksite
- UAW positions held (if any)
- Community positions held (if any)
- Years of UAW membership
- One thing that most people don't know about you

Ask for a pair of volunteers from each table to share the information they learned from the person they interviewed. Take volunteers depending on time remaining for this section.

After the information sharing session:

- **Ask** for feedback on how people felt while they were being interviewed.
- **Ask** for feedback on how people felt while they were listening.

Feedback can consist of short explanations (“I had trouble picking one thing about myself”) or just one word (“nervous,” “scared,” “excited,” etc.). **Solicit** a variety of feedback on feelings to help you and participants get a sense of the emotions and individual comfort levels in the room.

Ask: Did anyone have a hard time sharing something that people don’t know about you? (Allow time for participants to share their experience during the interview process. Again, the sharing can consist of a short explanation [“It was hard for me to pick one thing”] or one word [“shy,” “embarrassed,” “proud,” etc.]).

Tie the feedback responses together and explain that the interview was a form of storytelling. Point out common themes in the room – such as challenges people had focusing on themselves, picking one thing about themselves, opening up to the person interviewing them – and lead the class into the next workshop phase.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING – PART 1, BREAKING DOWN THE STORY – 70 minutes

Note to instructor: Explain that leaders – and aspiring leaders – need to know how to tell good stories to earn trust and respect from their audience. When we don’t know someone well, or at all, that personal story can be a way to connect so that we pay attention, learn more, and want to join together on a project, campaign, union activity, etc.

Show the YouTube clip at the link below to use as an example of how you can let people know who you are and connect with you in just 30 seconds.

<http://youtu.be/naHB90zYdnw>

Say: That was a short campaign ad for Lori Millin, a democrat and candidate for the Wyoming House.

Ask: Even though, no one in this room knows Lori Millin, what did you learn about her from watching this 30-second ad? (Answers may include: she’s a mother, she cares about kids’ safety, she’s down-earth, she’s proud to be a woman and mom, she’s a fighter.)

Say: She packed a lot about herself in 30 seconds. Did she seem shy about sharing her story? Did she hold back in talking about what she believed in?

- **Ask:** What would your reaction have been to this ad if Lori Millin hadn’t talked about her status as a mother? Would it have changed your connection to the ad in any way? (**Take some call outs**)

Say: This ad was only 30 seconds long, but it packed a punch. And, it didn’t happen by accident. Lori Millin had to figure out what story she wanted to tell voters. She had to practice. She had to focus her body language to look confident. She had to be at her best on camera to convey her story to the public to win support – in her case, to win votes. (and she did win her election).

Now, it’s time for you to think about your story. Let’s start.

Constructing Your Story

Note to instructor: Yu will need to pre-chart these points to begin the individual work in this section of the class. Pre-chart these points.

- Your audience
- Your goal
- Your request for action
- Your “hook”
- Your point(s)
- Five key words/phrases you want people to connect with

Say: We probably don’t pay attention to this when we are telling a story or listening to someone tell theirs, but the most effective stories are told with logic, flow and connection. It takes practice, but you can make your stories more effective if you keep these points in mind.

Refer to flipchart terms and explain:

- Your audience: Know who's in the room so that you can figure out the best way to connect with them, what you may have in common, what may divide you, what you can say to win them over.
- Your goal: What do you want to get out of sharing your story? Why are you telling it? How do you want your audience to feel about you and what you are asking of them?
- Your request for action: What action (getting more information, voting, participating, donating, etc.) do you want your audience members to take? Is the action doable?
- Your "hook": What can you tell your audience about yourself that will pull them in – or "hook" them – to follow you or to commit to do as you ask? What can you say to your audience that will allow them to be interested in your story and identify with you?
- Your points: What do you want to cover in your storytelling? How much time do you have? You may have one main point or many – but you need to focus and consider the amount of time you have to convey your point(s) to be effective.
- Five key words or phrases you want to use so people connect with you: These can help you remember your flow from one part of your story to the next. Remember Lori Millin from Wyoming. She started her 30-second political ad holding a child car seat and telling you she was a mother and a fighter. So, in Lori's case, "mother" and "fighter" and "vote for me" were actual or implied words on her list that she wanted voters to hear and connect with. Those key words (and the car seat prop) set the stage for voters to know, trust and vote for Lori Millin.

Note to instructor: The rest of the morning session will be devoted to participants working on their story outline worksheets. Handout 1 is the worksheet. Handout 2 is a sample worksheet participants can use as a guide for their own outline.

Say: For the rest of this first half of the workshop, you will identify and map out your union story. You will have two minutes to tell it. That's longer than you think! Check the clock before you begin the outlining process so you have a better idea of what two minutes feels like.

Distribute the handouts: 1) Outlining Your Story and 2) Sample Story Outline. You will explain the handout components and focus on Handout 2 to help participants form their own thoughts for their story.

Say: The flip charts are here to help you keep track of the points you need to hit as you develop your story. Follow the handout prompts to make sure you have all of the important elements for your speech.

Say: You're also getting a sample completed worksheet to help you outline and structure your story to help you with the organizing process and get you thinking about the direction you want to take.

Note to instructor: Ask whether anyone has any questions about the worksheet and sample and answer as appropriate. Circulate through room with facilitator(s) to answer questions and be sure that participants are on track and understanding concepts. Remind participants that the first thing they have to figure out is what they want to accomplish with their story – and what story they need to fulfill that goal.

NOON – END OF FIRST HALF OF WORKSHOP BREAK FOR LUNCH

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING – PART 2, TELLING THE STORY - 2 Hours

Note to instructor: Welcome the class back and allow for everyone to sit at their prior seat. **Give the class 5 or 10 minutes** to re-focus by reiterating the morning session's main points and having them make any adjustments they want to their worksheets.

Place a pack of index cards on every table and say: We're ready for the next phase of your union storytelling. It's time to take what you structured on your worksheet and transfer it to index cards. Make the cards work for you. Write as many words as you need to stay on track with your story. Maybe some of you will try to share your story using the FIVE KEY WORDS that you wrote on your worksheet to guide you through your two-minute speech. Remember, you want the cards to help you, not distract you.

Give the class about 15 minutes to organize their index cards and then call time and direct the class as follows.

Say: Now it's time to test your story to see how you feel telling it and how your audience feels hearing it. Turn to the person on your right. Each of you will have about two minutes to tell your story to one another. I'll be generous with the two minutes because this will be your first time telling the story.

Allow everyone to take the time to tell their story to their partner. You don't have to be a stickler with the two minutes, but keep an eye on the clock and after 6-8 minutes:

Say: Let's share some reactions to the telling and listening. First, let's talk about the storytelling experience. How did telling your story make you feel? (Get several reactions to give the class a sense of the various experiences – different and common. ***Spend about 5 minutes*** listening and connecting responses for participants and having them connect their reactions to what others say.)

Say: Now, let's talk about the listening experience. How did you feel in that role? Did the story you heard persuade you to take the requested action? Why? Why not? (Get several reactions to give the class a sense of the various experiences – different and common. ***Spend about 5 minutes*** listening and connecting responses for participants and having them connect their reactions to what others say.)

Note to instructor: After this process, repeat the exercise to compare the storytelling/listening experience with more practice. All prior participant pairs should remain the same for this exercise.

Say: We're going to repeat the storytelling and listening exercise and compare the second go-around with the first one. But this time, we're going to stick closer to the two-minute mark. We'll keep the same pairs for this repeat.

Note to instructor: ***Allow 5 minutes*** for this exercise, which includes the two minutes for each pair and one minute to have everyone refocus and come together as a class.

Say: We'll start with the storytelling perspective. Did you feel any differences telling your story the second time?

Say: From the listening perspective, did you feel any differences hearing the story the second time? Did you feel a different response in yourself in reaction to the storyteller's call to action?

Note to instructor: Facilitate discussion among participants on differences between the first and second storytelling/listening experiences. Highlight the value of practice and its impact on building confidence. Remind participants that body language is important to show confidence. Connect participants to situations where storytelling helps build our union (contract negotiations, grievance handling, GOTV door-step conversations, member recruitment). Share your own story about one of these situations. Remind participants that active listening is equally important to communication and relationship-building. Both storytelling and listening are essential for productive labor-management relations and internal union relations with members, leaders, and the community.

Note to instructor: You should have about 1 hour remaining in the class by this point. Transition into the final phase of the workshop.

Say: Now, we're going to give you a bigger audience to share your story with. Who's ready to tell their story to the whole class? (Encourage participation and support for the speaker. Encourage respectful and active listening.)

Note to instructor: Spend the remainder of the class having participants tell their story and listeners providing constructive feedback. If someone wants to try telling their story a second time, allow it, time permitting. **Leave 5 minutes** to wrap up the workshop.

Conclude by thanking everyone for their attention and say: You should now be able to connect the importance of storytelling and listening to your work and leadership skill-building in the UAW and in your community. Being part of the labor movement is personal. It's a movement that touches us, our families, our communities, and our country. Make your storytelling personal so you can too connect with others in your union life and motivate them to action. You have powerful union stories worth telling – and hearing.

HERSTORY – Handout 1

Outlining Your Story

WORKSHEET

Inspiring political, social justice, and labor leaders all understand the value of storytelling to connect people for action and engagement. Storytelling is a powerful component of leadership building and it is at the core of effective labor-management relations and motivating union member involvement.

Outlining your union story will help you focus on the point(s) you want to make and the goal(s) you want to accomplish by telling it.

THE OVERALL MESSAGE OF MY UNION STORY IS:

MY LISTENER(S)/AUDIENCE IS:

I AM TELLING MY UNION STORY TO MOVE MY LISTENER(S)/AUDIENCE TO:

THE “HOOK” FOR MY STORY IS:

THE MAIN POINTS OF MY STORY ARE:

Main Point #1:

Main Point #2:

Main Point #3:

FIVE KEYS WORDS/PHRASES TO HELP ME REMEMBER MY MAIN POINT(S) ARE:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

HERSTORY – Handout 2

Outlining Your Story

SAMPLE OUTLINE

Inspiring political, social justice, and labor leaders all understand the value of storytelling to connect people for action and engagement. Storytelling is a powerful component of leadership building and it is at the core of effective labor-management relations and motivating union member involvement.

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THE OVERALL MESSAGE OF MY UNION STORY IS:

Getting involved with my Local Union changed my life in ways I didn't expect, all for the better, and if you get involved it will change your life too.

MY LISTENER(S)/AUDIENCE IS:

The group of co-workers I have lunch with almost every day.

I AM TELLING MY UNION STORY TO MOVE MY LISTENER(S)/AUDIENCE TO:

Go to the next union meeting with me to learn more about our Local Union and maybe volunteer for a project.

THE "HOOK" FOR MY STORY IS:

I used to be totally against the union and said it was just there to protect lousy workers. But that all changed after I was targeted by my supervisor because of a personal disagreement and she disciplined me unfairly. I went to my steward, not expecting a lot of help. But she was so respectful and fought for me, even knowing how I had badmouthed the union. I learned a lot from that experience and it turned me around. Today, I am our Local Union Education Committee chair and thinking about running for an executive board position.

THE MAIN POINTS OF MY STORY ARE:

Main Point #1:

Ignorance is NOT bliss. It can make you miss opportunities to learn and find a whole new life path.

Main Point #2:

The union is for all workers by all workers. It's only as strong as the membership.

Main Point #3:

Union meetings have a bad reputation! It's where we all come together to share news, make important decisions, plan new projects, and socialize. My best friends are my union brothers and sisters!

FIVE KEYS WORDS/PHRASES TO HELP ME REMEMBER MY MAIN POINT(S) ARE:

1. Former union delinquent
2. Current union activist
3. My union is my family
4. Responsibility
5. Solidarity

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