



COMPETITIVE Advantage



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WHAT MAKES A STORY A STORY?

By Lori L. Silverman

When presenting workshops on organizational stories use, I ask participants to reflect on the best movie or novel they've ever encountered and to identify their commonalities. I often hear:

- * There are characters. You learn what they're thinking and feeling.
- * There's a main plot—with suspense and drama.
- * There's an ending, with a lesson or moral.
- * You're transported into the story—it's as though it's happening right in front of you.

Yet, when I review internal publications, endorsements, case studies demonstrating customer successes, and myriad other communications that purport to convey stories, I find them missing these characteristics. They describe situations instead of relaying actual stories. So, what is a story, what's its basic structure, and what considerations go into crafting it?

What is a Story?

"A story is an act of communication that illustrates complex interconnections between characters, ideas, events, and even abstract concepts that provides people with packets of sensory material allowing them to quickly and easily internalize the material, comprehend it, and create meaning from it" (adapted from Karen Dietz, as cited in *Wake Me Up When the Data Is Over* and David Hutchens, as cited in *Stories Trainers Tell*).

This definition implies that sound bites and case studies don't qualify as stories. Neither do examples and personal anecdotes that are devoid of contextual information, characters, and a plot.

The Structure of Story

In their purest form, stories have a beginning, middle and an end—a story arc. To capture people's attention, the beginning paints the context of the situation. This may include the location, time of year, hour of the day, weather, and geography, as well as some history and what's currently going on in the situation. It introduces the main character and the supporting cast, if applicable.

The middle of the story fleshes out a "conflict"—an obstacle, a challenge, an issue, a dilemma or a paradox—and builds to a climax. For various reasons, organizations often minimize or hide this conflict. I'm suggesting just the opposite. State it. Give it shape and form. The contrast between the conflict and its resolution is what gives a story its impact.

Finally, bring the story to closure. Describe how the "conflict" is resolved and move people who hear or read it to meaning. Two items help accomplish this: answering the question, "what's the point of the story?" and stating the story's "call to action."

Take time to uncover the story's key point even though story recipients will create their own meaning from it. Ideally, this moral will universally resonate with the story's intended audience. Word it in a positive manner, in seven words or less, so that it's memorable and causes the recipient, when they say or hear it, to recall the entire story. Stating it positively allows people to know what's expected or needed from them—or the action you'd like them to take. Once you're clear on the key point (this could take several weeks to determine), rework the entire story to support it.

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Vision of *Competitive Advantage*

To be the highest value newsletter in the world on issues pertaining to Service Quality.

Division Website

www.asq.org/service

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The 17th Annual Service Quality Conference was held September 15-16 in Orlando, Florida at the Rosen Centre. With a lot of learning and networking taking place, the conference was a big success.

I want to say thank you to our conference planning committee and all who helped make this event such a success. We are grateful to all of you who attended, and hope to see even more in Long Beach, California for our 18th Annual Service Quality Conference.

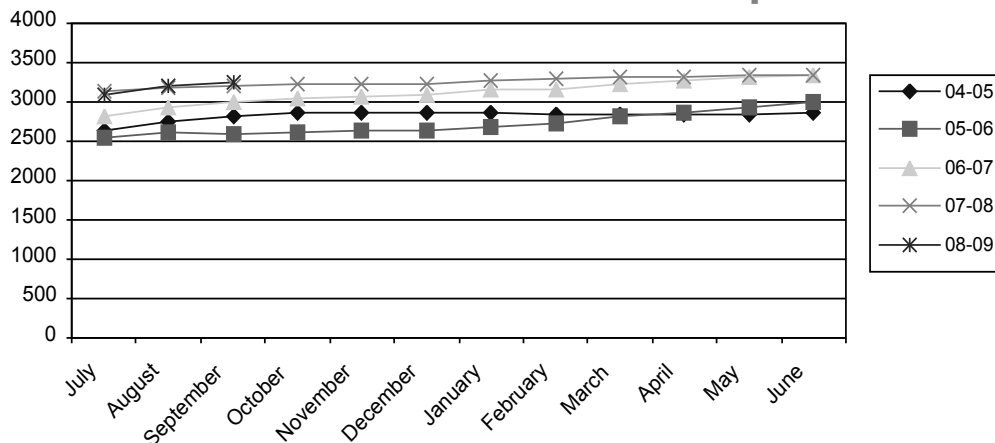
There's a lot to share in this month's issue. We're happy to have one of this year's keynote speakers, Lori Silverman as a contributing writer, and the Service Quality Body of Knowledge Committee has some exciting updates on the progress of this important project. Thanks to all 70 (that's right: 7-0) volunteers who are participating in the SQBoK! ■

Best Regards,
Jen Piccotti
Chair, Service Quality Division

MEMBERSHIP TRACKING

Month	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	Δ Same Month Last Year	% Grow	Δ Since June	% Retention
July	2646	2536	2818	3134	3084	-50	98%	-248	93%
Aug	2746	2613	2923	3193	3214	21	101%	-118	96%
Sept	2820	2588	3000	3205	3257	52	102%	-75	96%
Oct	2857	2612	3049	3226		-3226	0%	-3332	97%
Nov	2865	2636	3065	3229		-3229	0%	-3332	97%
Dec	2872	2646	3087	3230		-3230	0%	-3332	97%
Jan	2856	2679	3149	3284		-3284	0%	-3332	99%
Feb	2837	2726	3170	3299		-3299	0%	-3332	99%
March	2849	2814	3227	3309		-3309	0%	-3332	99%
April	2850	2874	3265	3315		-3315	0%	-3332	100%
May	2850	2934	3310	3338		-3338	0%	-3332	100%
June	2855	2999	3331	3332		-3332	0%	-3332	100%

Grand Total SQD Membership



Book Review of *"The Tipping Point"* by Malcolm Gladwell

Do you ever wonder how a fad starts or what makes a culture take hold? Malcolm Gladwell, in his acclaimed book, "The Tipping Point", examines these questions and provides some thought provoking answers, with years worth of examples. The Tipping Point discusses the world in light of "epidemics" that have shaped people, cities, and countries history. Of course "epidemic" as Gladwell discusses it, is not always negative. For example, today's national television programming is saturated with interactive children's shows. These shows are an example of a positive epidemic that began years ago. What does Gladwell say "tips the balance", and creates an epidemic? He attributes it to "the Law of the Few, the Stickiness Factor, and the Power of Context." Throughout the "Tipping Point" these three laws are discussed in detail, painting the reader a clear picture of how change can happen and an epidemic can sweep a nation, a city, a neighborhood, or a business. So whether you are trying to instill a culture of quality in your organization, launch a new product line in your store, or start a fad at your college, this book is a terrific place to start.



Update Your Library

by Holly Mensen
TEAS Quality Manager/TechEditor

You Can Advertise in **COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

The following are the black-and-white advertising rates for **Competitive Advantage**. Submission on diskette is preferred.

Size of Ad	Single Issue	Four Issues
Full Page	\$425	\$1500
Half Page	\$225	\$800
Quarter Page	\$125	\$450
Business Card (1/8 Page)	\$65	\$200
Insert (Full Page)	\$275+	Call

If you prefer to furnish a printed full-page insert, we will include it at \$150 per issue, subject to limitations. Contact Editor for additional details.

Checks for payment should be made payable to ASQ, Service Quality Division, and full payment is due on receipt of ad copy.

The deadline for inclusion in the next issue of **Competitive Advantage** is 35 calendar days prior to the listed targeted publication months.

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VISION, MISSION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES - SERVICE QUALITY DIVISION

VISION - *The ASQ Service Quality Division will be the leading worldwide provider of knowledge resulting in the improvement of service quality operational performance excellence.*

MISSION - *The ASQ Service Quality Division addresses service quality globally by providing a body of knowledge to individuals, organizations, and communities through the creation, gathering, and exchange of information.*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES -

- *We exist to serve our customers, and value their geographic and occupational diversity.*
- *We strive for operational excellence and continuous improvement in our endeavors.*
- *We support ASQ and follow the ASQ Code of Ethics.*

17TH ANNUAL SERVICE QUALITY CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

The 17th Annual Service Quality Conference in Orlando, Florida on September 15-16th was a successful educational and networking event. Keynote speaker Robert Stephens, founder of the Geek Squad, delighted attendees with his story of innovation and customer service and was an all-around favorite. Keynote speakers Lori Silverman and Michael Stanleigh engaged the audience with knowledge that could be implemented immediately.

These keynote sessions were complemented by 16 technical presentations where participants got to interact with service quality experts sharing their hands-on experiences.

Another big win for the conference were the Service Quality Body of Knowledge round table discussions. Participants brought their knowledge and experience 'to the table' and provided a solid foundation for the ongoing content collection efforts for this project.

For 2009, we are proud to announce the 18th Annual Service Quality Conference will take place in Long Beach, California on October 5-6th. Save the date. You won't want to miss it! ■



SQBOK PROJECT IS OFF AND RUNNING!

By Michael McDermott

The project for the creation of a Service Quality Body of Knowledge has begun in earnest! With more than seventy volunteers in addition to the Steering Committee members, we are engaged in organizing our efforts to move this project forward. And for those of us who've struggled over the last year to get this effort up on its feet, the transition from "somehow, someday" to "away we go" has been stunning.

A sincere concern for the original core group of volunteers has been to avoid exuberantly plunging ahead before we were prepared to do our best work. The magnification of effort through inclusion of a widening base of volunteers will move things forward and as we gather momentum, still others will learn of the effort and want to contribute. We expect to be faced with a welcome dilemma – the need to balance that enthusiasm against sober deliberation so we can ensure that the materials we eventually include in the Service Quality Body of Knowledge truly represent the best work of knowledgeable, experienced and thoughtful practitioners.

We will focus on gathering the best possible concepts, processes, procedures, methods, definitions, skills, tools and information in a timely manner. We intend to work quickly but not hastily: we won't allow our enthusiasm for visible progress to cause us to include items that are not generally accepted and fundamental to service quality. At every step, we will carefully validate included materials. What do we mean by validation? Some tools, for example, are already validated by long and fruitful use in the real world. But there will be other inclusion decisions that are less clear-cut and for these decisions, we'll have to rely on careful, knowledgeable editors – experienced volunteers are more than welcome

For those who have not been involved to date or who volunteered earlier when we weren't ready to make good use of your offer of time and attention (and I personally apologize for what may often have seemed glacial progress), there's no time like the present to get involved. Please click into the SQBoK project SharePoint site at <http://asqgroups.asq.org/divisions/SQD/bok/Default.htm>. We hope that you will begin your journey by taking the time to view Jen Piccotti's webinar presentation, at the end of which, you'll find an invitation to join us. Or perhaps you'd like to join a discussion thread. You might have materials that you want to have considered for inclusion. Or maybe you simply want to check us out before you commit your time to the project. Fair enough - you'll find it all on the SharePoint site.

There is room for you at our table and we hope you'll join the discussion. Please become involved at a level that is comfortable for you, and to choose a topic about which you're particularly knowledgeable or passionate. We need to include as many voices as possible in order to ensure that the end product is useful to folks in the widest possible range of service lines. ■





PROACTIVE CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

IS A WIN-WIN FOR YOUR COMPANY AND CUSTOMER

By John Goodman & Cindy Grimm, TARP Worldwide
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What's the problem?

Customer problems cut loyalty by at least 20% and often 50% if they are not reported. Many problems are caused by:

- Incorrect customer expectations
- Customer errors
- Customer failure to read all the literature and directions

These problems end up not only costing loyalty but also incurring excessive support costs. Once the customer gets into trouble it is often much more costly to diagnose and the issues, leading to high support centers call volumes and costs. For most contact centers, up to 30% of calls could theoretically be prevented, reducing cost.

What is the solution?

There is one broad strategy that leads to fewer problems and calls and higher self service adoption and user satisfaction: **proactive education and service**, which is best implemented using these two key concepts:

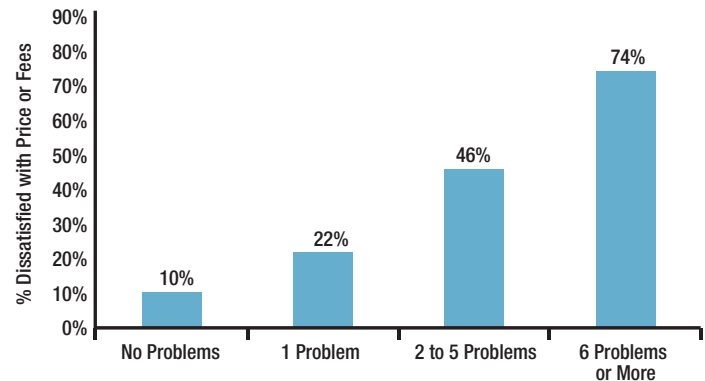
- The “Psychic Pizza” concept
 - Anticipating and delivering education and/or service to your customer “just in time” or better yet, before they even know they need it; as in the pizza delivery man approaching your door and saying, “This is the pizza you were about to order!”
- The “Sip of Water” concept
 - You have heard the saying “you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” But if you can get the horse to just take a sip, he is much more likely to continue to drink.
 - Guiding a customer through an initial use of self service will greatly increase the likelihood that the customer will continue to use self service.

The following are some examples of these concepts in action that have produced measurable impact and success.

- AOL has a welcoming home page aimed at novices with FAQs that are driven by the last week’s call volume. Further they have an avatar, “Regina” who guides you to other parts of the website.
- A consumer electronics company used proactive, preventive education by highlighting prevalent problems to avoid in the quick start page, resulting in a 30% reduction of calls on those issues.
- Several catalog companies take preventive measures online by offering to chat when a customer has a 30-60 second dwelling period on

a particular page and may be “stuck.” As many as 50% accept and 15% end up buying.

- When customers call HP or Keycorp with a question, a rep cheerfully answers the question and then offers to show the customer the self service channel. Reps are given two minutes of talk time to educate the customer and they get a significant number of customers comfortable with self service, thus avoiding the next twenty calls from that customer.
- A health insurance company welcomed customers with a welcome call and package that warned that certain services were not always covered. Satisfaction went up and denied claims went down.
What’s the payoff of proactive communication?
- Lower call volume and cost – up to 15% of calls can be prevented completely and another 15% redirected to self service, providing up to a 30% workload saving.
- Higher satisfaction – if the problem is resolved on first contact, satisfaction and willingness to recommend increases by 20%.
- Higher perceived value and margins – Less problems reduce sensitivity to price, thereby supporting high margins, as shown on the chart below.



- Remarkable delight - proactive education creates word of mouth via delight and 30% higher loyalty. The customer’s reaction is, “you cared enough to take the time to educate me and warn me how to avoid the problem.
- Having worked with high satisfaction companies like USAA, Honda and Chick-Fil-A, TARP finds that **the law of diminishing returns doesn’t apply**. Even when you are at 90% satisfaction, eliminating or handling problems allows you to get even better. Each percentage point of improvement is worth tens of millions of dollars. We consistently find that investment in proactive education always gives at least a 200% ROI.

Actions you should take

- Identify preventable problems and proactively educate on how to avoid them via all channels including website homepage – it’s not a marketing turn off but makes customers more confident.
- Give phone reps extra time to educate and introduce self service, ensuring first-time success.
- Feature all communication channels prominently in all literature and on every page of the website.
- Proactively educate on problem avoidance and self service use via multiple channels.
- Identify precursors to issues and develop strategies to intervene with a message or chat before the customer encounters trouble. ■

QUALITY PROFESSIONALS RECOGNIZED BY ASQ-SQD

Lorelee McCleary | SQD Awards Chair | Accident Fund Insurance Company of America

You may be part of an organization that recognizes your top sales team, customer service unit or production line. Those of us working behind the scenes know that many of those teams achieved their great success due to efforts from quality experts within their organization that help them achieve better workflows, better use of technology and fewer errors.

Our Service Quality Division is no exception, we are able to provide better services to our members, better learning opportunities and tools and effective networking forums because of quality professionals the volunteer their time to SQD. At our fall SQD conference we were able to celebrate two individuals whose quality expertise and efforts have contributed to their company, our division and ultimately the quality industry.



Rob Houle, Tufts, was awarded the **Dedicated Service Award**. Rob was nominated by a fellow SQD member for his dedicated leadership over the past two years pulling the team together and advancing our goals. Rob, who serves as the Chair-elect, stepped in this year to lead our annual strategy session while the Chair was on maternity leave. He made sure we completed our efforts on time and met all deliverables for the planning session. Rob has demonstrated consistent, reliable and loyal efforts on behalf of our members and for the shared cause of providing member value.



Lori Dellinger, Citizens Bank, was awarded the **Outstanding Service Award**. Lori's nomination cited that she consistently stepped in to complete goals when others were unavailable or had to step aside for work or personal reasons. She was a key representative for SQD at the World Conference, at the booth, recruiting potential SQD conference sponsors, welcoming guests at the hospitality suite, and recruiting volunteers for the BoK project. She has contributed to the SQD conference planning by completing follow up with potential speakers, organizing booth coverage, and providing sessions supporting the BoK project. Only a small percentage of these accomplishments are what she originally volun-

teered for. She has gone above and beyond for the division, filling the gaps as they appear. Her time and dedication have directly impacted the division's success this year.

These recipients were selected from nominees submitted by fellow ASQ members during the year to our SQD Awards Committee. Please join our division in recognizing and celebrating these quality contributors. And watch for articles starting next spring where you can recognize your fellow quality professional or organization. Visit <http://www.asq.org/service/awards> to learn more our different awards given out each year at our Annual SQD Quality conference in the fall. ■

What Makes a Story A Story?

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Reinforce the key point through a “call to action” at the end of the story. Craft it specifically for those who are receiving it. For example, if the key point is, “consider the consequences,” its associated “call to action” might be:

“How often when making a decision have you overlooked its consequences because you're too busy, only to have unintended negative consequences stare you in the face later on? How costly has this been for you—and for your organization? To minimize these risks in the future remember to ‘consider the consequences’ of your decisions before announcing them.”

While the key point of a story is timeless, the “call to action” can be modified to fit the intended audience.

Tips For Crafting Stories

Given this structure, what do you need to consider when creating a story? Here are eight tips.

- Craft stories using the spoken word. It's easier to audiotape a story than to develop it first in writing.
- Characters talk. Provide actual dialogue as well as what they're thinking.
- Use words that appeal to all five senses, especially those that create pictures in people's minds and evoke various emotions.

- There are many versions of “factual” and “historical” stories. Acknowledge this in some fashion in conjunction with the story.
- While you'll always want to stay true to the essence of a real story, as long as you stay within ethical guidelines, using special words or humor to exaggerate a character's behaviors or the conflict, for example, may enhance its memorability.
- Create composite stories from a variety of situations. This is especially useful when relaying market information about a specific customer segment.
- It's acceptable to fabricate stories. Examples include future stories that expand upon an organizational or initiative-driven vision and scenario stories that imagine a situation many years from today.
- Obtain written permission if the story is not your own. Have its originator approve the final version before using it.

Remember...

Stories have the ability to change people's behaviors, shift their attitudes, and alter their feelings. To get the business results you want and need, take the time to carefully craft them. ■

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653199	12/03/2008	12/03/2008	ISO 13485 Implementing and Incorporating Key
653204	12/03/2008	12/03/2008	Quality Fundamentals for Service
653209	12/04/2008	12/04/2008	Defining & Achieving the ROI of Quality in Service
SYWMBW	12/10/2008	12/15/2008	Measuring Process and Organizational Performance
678245	01/06/2009	01/06/2009	Corrective Action/Problem Solving
KWCZPB	01/08/2009	01/08/2009	Lean Kaizen
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678309	01/13/2009	01/13/2009	Consultant's Boot Camp
653192	01/20/2009	01/20/2009	The Case for Quality: Taking it to Management
678319	01/21/2009	01/28/2009	Service Excellence through Quality Practices
678292	01/22/2009	01/22/2009	Quality Fundamentals for Service
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