



Teaching Conference for  
Management Educators

**OBTC 2016 at Walsh University**  
**June 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

## 1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

### **Title:**

**Connecting and uniting through stories:** An interactive session on the use of metaphors (short stories) as an inspiring teaching method.

### **Abstract:**

In an era of electronic, global, diversified, interdisciplinary, change-embracing learning environments, it takes creativity to be heard. Audiences, especially those in our classrooms, want to be enticed in effective ways that transcend complex theories and structures, and speak to their imagination in the most direct way. Aha! The old-fashioned stories re-surface! Oh wait! They never went away! Our inner-child loves them, no matter how seasoned, experienced, and educated we become! So let's share stories! Let's share our latest findings with you, and hear yours in return, and then: let's revive this evergreen form of human awareness transmission with our students!

### **Keywords:**

*Storytelling, reflection, creativity, morality*

## 2) Format

- Activity or exercise
- Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)
- General discussion session

### 2a) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for

- A traditional classroom
- An online class
- Either

### 2b) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for

- Undergraduate students
- Graduate students
- Either

## 3) Time Requested:

- 30 Minutes
- 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
- 90 Minutes

## 4) Planning Details:

No special needs, as we will be verbally communicating and exchanging stories in the good old-fashioned way.

## 5) Teaching Implications:

Management is not a structural activity. It is full of surprises, and reliant on critical and creative thinking. So are stories. Because we reach beyond textbook information and challenge our students to share their interpretations of stories, an interesting blend of viewpoints emerges, enhancing the understanding of diversity in actions and thinking, and elevating understanding.

Teaching stories have frequently been used in the wisdom traditions of the past for their entertainment, moral, and developmental value. Most teaching stories contain an element of humor that ensures their longevity. The humor is also used as a cloak to conceal the profounder meaning. As Plato has pointed out, "Serious things cannot be understood without laughable things." But to stop only at the humor level is to miss their real meaning. Robert Anton Wilson explains: "If you don't laugh, you've missed the point. If you only laugh, you've missed your chance for illumination."

Psychologically speaking, stories have the following dimensions:

1. Intuitive. The moment the speaker says "let me tell you a story," the listener shifts gears (figuratively speaking) and a different faculty of comprehension is brought into play. In scientific terms, a better harmony between the left and right hemisphere of our brain is established.
2. Participative. A story is a sort of invitation that prods the listener to participate in its proceedings by identifying himself/herself as one of its characters. And it is common knowledge that participation enhances the quality of learning.
3. Multiplicity of impacts. A good story carries a constellation of impacts within its fold and thereby creates multiple impacts on the listener's mind. This enables us to view things from several perspectives, which, in turn, facilitates holistic thinking.
4. Tip of the iceberg phenomenon. At a deeper level, there are several underlying messages. The listener/reader receives the nourishment for which he/she is ready. Like the skins of an onion, one will peel off one depth after another. Thus, a story offers something to all levels of experience. This is the reality behind the concept that we cannot really exhaust the entire meaning of a tale. And probably this is the reason that all great teachers choose to speak in parables.
5. Element of shock. A good story also contains an element of "shock"—an unexpected incongruity to wake the reader from the slumber of habitual thought patterns. By an unexpected turn or twist, the story teases a greater attention span out of the reader, besides preparing a way to a deeper understanding of the intended message. To quote Harvey Cox, "A parable is a story that draws the listener's attention to the normal events of ordinary life, but then introduces an

unexpected twist, a surprise inversion that undercuts the audience's normal expectations and pushes them into looking at life in a new way.”

At the end of this session, participants will:

- Understand the value of stories in learning communities
- Be able to share with others, some stories heard in this session
- Be able to apply the art of storytelling to their course material
- Be able to integrate a transdisciplinary approach in their teaching

## 6) Session Description and Plan:

This session aims to:

- Enhance OB professors' understanding about the many ways of storytelling
- Help them understand that this is a skill we can all learn to master
- Load up our common mental storage room with new stories to share
- Help us reflect on the storytelling style that befits us best
- Help OB professors gain insight in how to include stories into our OB courses in order to serve our students' learning needs better

We plan on executing this workshop in the spirit of the message we try to convey: as an alternating session of stories we tell one another and interpretations that we brainstorm about.

1. We will first provide a brief introduction, in which we will share our motives, personal reflections on using stories in our OB courses over the past years, our findings, and of course, some stories. 15 min.

We will then present the approach for the rest of the program:

2. We will invite members of the audience to share their stories in such a way that we can all contemplate on the possible interpretations and how the stories relate to organizational behavior. 15 min.
3. We also plan to discuss possible challenges about storytelling in diverse environments, and collectively consider possible pros and cons. 20 min.
4. We will then continue our cycle of stories, ensuring a variety in length, setting and style. 10 min.
5. End of session (total) 60 min.

## 7) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *United in Service*?

Stories have served many purposes since humankind began. Our history, lessons, cultural inheritance and traditions have transcended through generations through stories. Stories serve our minds in expanding our creative and critical thinking skills; they serve our understanding that multiple viewpoints can be extremely useful in finding solutions; they stick better to our mind than textbook contents, so they positively serve our mental preparation for professional life. Most importantly, stories can help us understand the need to serve others better through the messages they harbor and the understanding they provoke.

#### 8) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

We have presented sessions on stories before, but find that our supply of stories evolves through our experiences, readings, and encounters with other storytellers. In the past year we have travelled, been exposed to circumstances of pleasant and dreadful natures, have listened to others, and have thus generated many new stories to share. In every setting where we bring stories to the table, we find that the stories change, because stories are very organic. Making this session interactive will also mean that we will invite participants to share their stories, so that a give-and-take atmosphere emerges. We therefore consider this session as much a learning and service experience for us as for the participants.

#### References and/or Additional Materials:

Marques, J., Dhiman, S., & Biberman, J. (2011). *Stories to Tell Your Students: Transformation toward Organizational Growth*. Palgrave-McMillan, New York, NY.

Marques, J., Dhiman, S., & Biberman, J. (2012). *Teaching Leadership and Organizational Behavior Through Humor: Laughter as the Best Teacher*. Palgrave-McMillan, New York, NY.