A Mixed Method Approach to Understand "Engage to Be Engaged" Engaging Peers with Story Telling Nurtures an Engaged Employee

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Abstract

Business success stories are a new and upcoming strategy in the corporate world and overtime have been found to be highly beneficial to both companies and employees alike. The research study aims to analyze the extent to which successful business stories have a positive and progressive influence on employee motivation and engagement. The objective to understand the positive effect of sharing business stories on the story sharer. The methodology adopted is thematic content analysis and factor analysis. The major findings are that although story telling has been used as a knowledge sharing tool it has a remarkable effect on the sharer. As much as the employee who shares successful business stories engages the audience, the employee himself feels a sense of satisfaction resulting in improved morale and encouragement to be a part of an engaged community.

Keywords: storytelling, motivation, employee engagement, success stories

1. Introduction

Business success stories are a new and upcoming strategy in the corporate world and overtime have been found to be highly beneficial to both companies and employees alike. This is a strategy that is utilized by organizations to build motivation and employee morale among the workforce and as a consequence boost their performance and engagement levels. Recognized as a core professional skill at both the management and leadership levels, business stories are quickly emerging as a top priority in multi-national corporations and other organizations. By increasing pro-activeness among the employees, organizations are able to speed ahead in their respective fields as the personnel are willing to go the extra mile in order to achieve better results. The research study aims to analyze the extent to which successful business stories have a positive and progressive influence on employee motivation and engagement.

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1.1 Objectives

- To understand the positive effect of sharing business stories on the story sharer.

- To evaluate if business success stories help in promoting employee engagement

- To understand how integrating business stories into permanent business strategy aids business process.

1.2 Literature review

In business circles, it is a well-established fact that communication is of paramount importance. This can be both internal as well as external communication. While external communication focusses more on conveying information about a brand to its customers, internal communication is concerned with the exchange of information, ideas and knowledge between employees at the workplace. In the current market scenario, corporate storytelling has become one of the most primary and salient principles in business. In order to get a better understanding of corporate stories, it is necessary to understand its meaning and what it constitutes. Stories may be defined as a series of logically and chronologically related events. (Forster, 1963).

There has been considerable debate regarding stories, narratives and their impact on storytelling in the corporate context. It is suggested that stories have internal temporality and coherence while narratives do not always have coherent plotlines or characters (Cunliffe *et al*., 2004). A few critics of storytelling have proposed that some corporate stories are "myths", involving heroes and villains, courage, sacrifices and ordeals (Gabriel, 1991) while Rowlinson and Procter (1999) suggest that events which are mythical are seen as imaginary, indicating that mythical corporate stories could present events which did not actually happen. However, those in favor of this method state that corporate storytelling is an art form that has been used for decades due to its unparallel impact and uniqueness. It is a two-way interaction between the storyteller and their audience and may be verbal, non-verbal (body language), written and/or visual. The listener or the observer become co-creators in the story that is being told as every individual interprets a story from their own perspective. Additionally, Leo Widrich (2012) cites Princeton neuroscientist Uri Hasson, "a story is the only way to activate parts in the brain so that a listener turns the story into their own idea and experience." Stories are important as they help to engage your audience. The right stories that are imparted in an accurate manner can capture audiences and create an impact on them and further influence their decisions. Stories can be used to inform, educate, inspire and entertain (Gallo, 2019). A study conducted by Nielsen has found out that our brains are far more engaged by corporate storytelling than by mere facts. This is due to the fact that numerical data does not have the same effect as reading and writing stories do. Our brain processes both data differently and stories have been found to have a more profound impact on humans than hard facts. Being highly structured forms of communication, stories help with the audiences understanding of what is being communicated. When the narrator is talking or writing about something that the audience may not understand, it is beneficial to use stories so that the audiences get a better grasp on the crux of the issue at hand. (Thompson. 2018). Stories also help to form a human connection between the narrator and the listener of the story. When organizations come up with new ideas, there has likely been a motivation behind it. That motivation, when communicated effectively, can help the audiences form an unforgettable bond with the storyteller. For example, if the idea has been created to solve a problem, tell the story of how it helped you and make sure the story is relatable to the audience

using real-life situations. In a corporate context, an effective story can also be used to communicate the vision, mission and goals of a company in addition to ensuring harmonious employee relations. The right setting and environment can help arrest the attention of the audience and possibly even help them resonate with the message being communicated to them.

Employee engagement can be defined in a number of different ways and varies according to the perception of each individual. In essence, employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization. When employees feel engaged, they care about the company and they do their best work to achieve the company's goals. In such cases, the first objective of the employees is to contribute to the company's success. Employee engagement is not about employee benefits or bonuses but rather it is about being part of a successful business. However, many independent surveys conducted recently have highlighted that the epidemic of an unengaged and an actively disengaged workforce is on the rise in many organizations. There are a variety of factors that are responsible for the same, including and not limited to, absence of motivation, lack of connection to the company's vision / mission and lack of attachment with their workforce. Research conducted in relation to the topic has found that that there exist four enablers for successful employee engagement. The first among them is Strategic Narrative. It is about leaders using corporate storytelling to connect, engage and inspire the workforce. These stories could be founder stories, customer impact stories, employee impact stories, and leader specific stories to name a few. (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009). The next enabler is called Engaging Managers. This is an extension of the belief that the relationship between a manager and an employee can make or break the performance of an organization. It is stated that those managing organizations will do three things well namely clarity on the definition of success in their role while simultaneously giving themselves scope for creativity and energy, knowledge and treatment of workers as human beings instead of 'human resources and regular coaching of employees which includes the acknowledgement of good behavior and addressing dysfunctional behavior in a positive way. The third enabler is Employee voice. Good organizations with a healthy work environment allow employees to voice their opinions and express themselves. In most organizations, when things go wrong, it is evident to a lot of people but no one chooses to speak for fear of negative repercussions. This often leads to publicized failings and the need for lawyers and PR strategists to fix the issue at hand. Instead, if the employees of an organization trust their management, they will be willing to step forward and voice their opinions and suggestions to them which is an easier and more cost-effective manner of solving issues. (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009).

The last enabler is Integrity. The values of a company is reflected in their day-to-day behavior and work culture. Mistrust occurs when there is a gap between who the company claims to be and who they actually are. It is impossible to gain engaged employees when there has been a breach of trust. Therefore, it is important for an organization to build trust among its members. This is only possible with the co-operation of every individual in the organization. Thus, employee engagement is an important requisite for the smooth and successful operation of an organization without which the company will not reach the heights of which it aims for.

2. Methods

2.1 Data and sample

The scope of the study is limited to an organization that has the practice of sharing business success stories amongst the personnel within the company on a periodic basis. A sample size of 51 employees was utilized for the purpose of this study with no restriction to age or any other factor. The non-probability sampling technique employed is the convenience sampling method whereby the immediately available data source (the authors of the business success stories) became the primary foundation for the testing of the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of the research. Further, the sample design method used in the research is the convenience sampling method.

The primary data was collected over the course of 22 days from March 23rd to April 13th, 2022 via a questionnaire that was circulated among the authors of the business success stories in the said organization. The respondents were required to answer the questions based on their interpretation and understanding of the same. A variety of survey questions such as open-ended questions, rating scale questions, dichotomous questions, multiple choice questions and likert scale questions were applied in the questionnaire, in order to gain a better and more holistic understanding of the data.

2.2 Measures

A list of questions were posed to the candidates willing to participate in the study by means of a questionnaire that had a diverse range of inquiries, which would help to evaluate their responses in accordance with the objectives listed at the beginning of the research paper.

The questions proffered to the candidates of the study, helped to comprehend the extent to which authoring and sharing the business success stories with their colleagues and peers, helped the employees to be closely engaged in their jobs. It further assisted in understanding the extent to which publishing the business success stories, positively impacted the authors. Additionally, it was useful in analyzing the extent to which successful business stories have a progressive influence on employee motivation.

2.3 Data analysis

The research method utilized in this study is the thematic content analysis and descriptive research methods respectively. By definition, thematic analysis is a method for analysing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse and report repeated patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006). This method has been applied in order to examine and determine the common underlying themes that were present in the data collected. Post the review of the data, names for the themes are employed based on the actual words of the participants of the study and these themes are grouped in a manner that directly reflects the text as a whole (Anderson, 2007).

Descriptive research is a research method that describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon studied. The descriptive research methodology allows for the research to be conducted in the natural environment of the respondents which helps to ensure that high-quality and accurate data is collected.

3. Results Analysis and interpretation

After conducting interviews with employees who had shared success stories   the transcripts were observed to understand the general theme of their responses. The thematic content analysis revealed the following common themes:

1. **SENSE OF SATISFACTION**

➢ It gives satisfaction for hard work done and motivate to do even more. It really helped in giving more maturity as a person to learn from other's success

➢ I felt by sharing my achievement I feel self-satisfied that I have done my work to the best of my ability and succeeded in my efforts / time / energy.

➢ The Satisfaction & Motivation received due to Achievement inspired me to write stories & gives me hope for to achieve even better milestones

2. **TO ACHIEVE RECOGNITION/ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

➢ I desire to achieve recognition from my seniors and also it reflects on myself that I am contributing something valuable for the larger goals of the organization.

➢ It is an opportunity to share with pears with respect to tasks accomplished in spite of difficulties to achieve desired goals of the organization

➢ Achievements are significant milestones in each professional's work life that provides them with confidence on their individual capabilities. And when these

➢ achievements are acknowledged and celebrated by colleagues and higher   management it provides an impetus to the achiever to create more such successes.

➢ It was a feeling of achievement which I shared through the success story which was intended to portray the journey of the project from start to finish and to highlight the significant takeaways of the success to be replicated not only by me in other projects but also inspire other colleagues to think and act in a similar manner in similar situations.

➢ This is the way to showcase the efforts we are taking to win projects in front of management and other colleagues.

3. TO INSPIRE

- Story always gives inspiration to perform better, its might have help other team members to go extra miles in day to day working to make their success story.

- I wanted my fellow teammates to take my success story as a template and emulate the same values and culture card behaviors when they face a similar situation.

- To showcase our achievement inspired to write success story, this would also help others to be motivated.

- It's inspired me to achieve new milestone aging & again

- By sharing I want to inspire my team met to also achieve such milestone and feel the happiness when are part of such work.

3. TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

- It's a way to pass on your learnings to colleagues in organization, which helps save a good deal of time, in case they face a similar situation.

- Helps in identifying & improving on potential gaps.

- Working process & some more idea's

5. PROVIDES A SENSE OF BELONGING

- It gives a kind of belongingness to the organisation at application level.

- It creates an archive of different successful application reference for entire employee community

6. SELF MOTIVATION

- It keeps me motivated.

- Story's help us to get a motivation & encourage us. We hope that our colleagues also get inspiration

- It gives satisfaction for hard work done and motivate to do even more. It really helped in giving more maturity as a person to learn from other's success.

7. TO SHOWCASE HARDWORK AND MOTIVATION

- It was a collaboration between 2 teams which was needed in difficult times for

business. We hoped to achieve more collaborations in future

➢ We are guiding the Team and Motivating them to acquire knowledge

➢ The hard work and the dedication which went into winning an order inspired me to write my story

➢ To showcase my strength among team & others follow it and use as a case study

➢ The kind of had work done while execution & satisfaction once done after completion

➢ Outcome of Hard work inspired me a lot and doing so in my day to day working as per our cultural card will inspire others

8. PROVIDES INNER BELIEF AND CONFIDENCE

➢ The victory after facing all odds inspired me to write the success story. I achieved the vigor and courage to fight for the order till last hope and inspiration of keep trying and never give up

➢ It gives an inner self belief that we can do much more and beyond what we have done. Secondary it helps me hearing my colleagues successes which I can implement in my areas

➢ Just to feel Good and share the positive thoughts

➢ Self-motivation

9. EMBRACE POTENTIAL

➢ To Share the glimpse of our journey with other team members, sharing best practices, Success Stories help us to move beyond what we can do and embrace our true potential.

➢ To reflect & learn from work

10. TO SHARE

- ➢ Sharing experience of best practice and lessons learnt

- ➢ Sharing the ideas & encouragement.

- ➢ The positive vibes that we have on achieving a milestone after facing all the hardships, definitely a worth sharing with colleagues.

- ➢ Sharing is one of the best ways to learn new things from others. Once I did something which was appreciated by my peers, I thought of sharing the process to my colleagues across the organization. My process might help others to make some changes in the procedure and implement in their territories and replicate or better my achievement.

- ➢ Wanted to share the learning that we have received in the project

- ➢ Sharing the information gathered throughout the project. Knowledge sharing.

- ➢ Sharing success stories makes me feel more confident and enthusiastic to get more businesses and to achieve targets.

The data collected indicates that a vast majority of the respondents recognize the value in sharing business success stories as it helps them feel more confident in their work and gives them a sense of satisfaction and pride in the same

H0: Business Stories does not have a positive impact on Employee Engagement

H1: Business Stories has a positive impact on Employee Engagement

To analyze the relationship between Business Success Stories and Employee Engagement, we will use the Karl Pearson's Correlation Test to evaluate the extent to which the two variables are correlated. The two variables selected are the Sense of Accomplishment Achieved through writing Business Success Stories and the Reception of Recognition or Praise by the Employees for doing good work in the last week.

Table 1.1 Correlation between sense of accomplishment and recognition from business story telling

	Pearson correlation	Reception of recognition/ praise for doing good work in the last week	Sense of accomplishment

Reception of recognition/ praise for doing good work in the last week	Pearson correlation	1	.474**
	Sig (2 tailed)		< .001
	N	51	51

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)

The analysis reveals that there is a positive correlation between the two variables. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Since it is less than the 0.01 level, it can be said that this relationship is statistically highly significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected at 99% confidence level and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, it can be stated that Business Success Stories has a positive impact on Employee Engagement.

Factor analysis

Table 1.2 Rotated factor matrix

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Business stories augmenting agility	.774	.228	.298
Business stories have a positive impact on overall performance	.731	.407	.248
Business stories help to realise potential	.621	.187	.516
Business stories and innovative smart ways of working	.587	.515	.274
Others stories enabling creative thinking	.307	.509	.397
Business stories and improved performance	.280	.422	.660
Business stories helping alignment to staying connected with organisations performance/ acheivements	.416	.356	.501

Extraction method: maximum likelihood

Rotation method: varimax with kaiser normalisation

The aforementioned variables can be divided into three sub categories:

Aptitude - Business Success Stories augmenting Agility, having a Positive Impact on Overall Performance, helping to realize Potential

Creative thinking- Business Success Stories aiding Innovative and Smart Ways of Working, Creative Thinking

Future potential - Business Success Stories and Improved Performance, helping alignment to staying connected to the Organizations' Performance and Achievements

4. Conclusion

The findings of the research study indicate that successful business stories do have a significantly positive and progressive impact on employee motivation and engagement. It revealed that the business success stories help in boosting the morale of the workforce by providing them with a sense of satisfaction with the work completed, instilling in them a sense of belonging among their fellow colleagues, enabling them to believe in themselves and thereby increasing their confidence and also empowering them to embrace their full potential.

In addition, the successful business stories improve the creativity of the employees by allowing them to tackle a problem from different angles in order to achieve the same goal. This in turn, leads to efficient working among the employees as well as quicker achievement of the organizational goals and objectives, which is beneficial for the company.

Furthermore, engaged and motivated employees are highly committed and dedicated to their business enterprise which is critical from an organizational perspective as it aids employee retention. Through the publication of the business success stories, the employees receive due recognition and praise for their achievements which encourages and boosts their self-esteem. This contributes to employee satisfaction which is an important and noteworthy factor in the success of an organization.

Thus, the research concludes by urging business corporations as well as other related institutions to begin employing the practice of publishing business success stories written by their employees, in order to build an engaged and highly motivated workforce within the organization.

5. Discussion and future scope

The publication of business success stories written by the employees of the organization have been proven to have a massive and positive impact on employee engagement levels (Love, 2008). They have the ability to effectively shape the culture of the entire organization (Barnes 2003). Besides storytelling by an employee provides a more first- hand view of the organization and succeeds in being more convincing to the perceiver, Magaard (2014). A good narrative by the employer creates a strong brand image in the minds of the employee leading to the latter himself becoming a brand ambassador by retelling the story (Poulton, 2005). This study views the benefits of storytelling from the teller's perspective. Sharing success stories fits the quote of being as beneficial to the receiver as it is to the giver. Though earlier studies have viewed knowledge sharing on an broad basis, this article explores success stories an exponential benefit booster and primer driver to an engaged workplace. Future studies can explore the varying effects of domain specific success stories, the essential facilitating environmental factors and the likely negative impact of the need to share a story leading to making an illusionary concoction of false information.

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