

PUBLIC SPEAKING & STORYTELLING
FOR PROJECT MANAGERS & ENGINEERS

Rashid N. Kapadia

Necessary Bridges



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Public Speaking & Storytelling for
Project Managers & Engineers

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Rashid N. Kapadia

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With infinite gratitude I dedicate this work to ...

My parents, for their limitless love and their sterling examples. And for invaluable memories of contentment, erudition and equanimity.

My wife and son, for their limitless love and their selfless support. And for making us the blessed family we are.

I would also like to dedicate my work to ...

All engineers and project managers, past, present and future. Alas, too often, “the world little knows ... nor long remembers ...” the greatness of our professions.

All who bring passion and purpose to public speaking, storytelling and oratory.

All who set audacious goals, long to build necessary bridges and make the world a better place.

Contents

Preface **9**

1. Who Am I? **15**
2. Who Are You? **43**
3. Your Project Charter **57**
4. To the Moon ... and ... to the Stars Beyond **71**
5. Basic Parts of a Speech **91**
6. The Fittest Speaker: The Expert Speaker **103**
7. The Fear of Public Speaking **117**
8. Ending Your Speech **135**
9. Leaders Are Speakers (Rondo 1) **151**
10. Opening Your Speech **159**
11. Another Copernican Revolution? (Rondo 2) **171**
12. Storytelling **181**
13. Orthodox Public Speaking and Storytelling
Competencies **197**
14. Creating the Icebreaker Speech **209**
15. Memorizing, Listening, and Connecting **237**
16. Finding Flow Through Public Speaking and
Storytelling **251**
17. Our Closing Conversation **265**

Appendix 1: Exercises to Complete **275**

Appendix 2: Books and Products Worth Buying **277**

Appendix 3: My Wishes for You **284**

Appendix 4: My Pre-Speech Preparation **286**

Appendix 5: Links/URLs **296**

About the Author **305**

Connect **307**

Preface

“It always seems impossible until it is done.”

— Nelson Mandela

I remember being truly mesmerized, watching a scene from the movie *Invictus*. This is the scene in which the president of South Africa summons the captain of its national rugby team to his presidential office, and plants the seed of an idea: “Win the Rugby World Cup; our broken nation needs this of you. Together, we must all become ‘One Team, One Nation.’”

This movie portrays a portion of the multifaceted book called *Playing the Enemy* by John Carlin. It is one of the best sports books I’ve read, covering one of the greatest sports stories of all time; but it is much more. It is an inspirational self-help book. It is a book about a political genius who faced multiple impossibly difficult challenges, and who responded with, “It always seems impossible until it is done.” It is a book about an epic injustice and an epic reconciliation. It is a book about a leader, who perhaps more than anyone else on this planet, mastered the art of making friends and influencing people. It is a book about a superb public speaker. It is a book, which describes the most unlikely exercise in political seduction ever undertaken. And it is a book, which led to a superb scene in a marvelous movie.

President Nelson Mandela (NM): Tell me, Francois, ... what is your philosophy of leadership? How do you inspire your team to do their best?

Captain of the Springboks Rugby team, Francois Pienaar (FP): By example ... I’ve always thought to lead by example, Sir.

NM: Well that is right ... that is exactly right. But how to get them to be better than they think they can be? That is

*very difficult, I find. Inspiration, perhaps. How do we inspire ourselves to greatness, when nothing less will do? How do we inspire everyone around us? I sometimes think it is by **using the work of others.***

On Robben Island, when things got very bad ... I found inspiration in a poem.

FP: A poem?

NM: A Victorian poem ... just words ... but they helped me to stand when all I wanted to do was to lie down.

But you didn't come all this way to hear an old man talk about things that make no sense.

FP: No, no, please Mr. President ... it makes complete sense to me. On the day of the big match, say a test, in the bus, on the way to the stadium, nobody talks.

NM: Ah yes, they are all preparing.

FP: Right. But when I think we are ready, I have the bus driver put on a song, something I've chosen, one we all know ... and we listen to the words together ... and it helps.

NM: I remember when I was invited to the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. Everybody in the stadium greeted me with a song. At the time the future ... our future, seemed very bleak. But to hear that song in the voices of people from all over our planet made me proud to be South African. It inspired me to come home and do better. It allowed me to expect more of myself.

FP: May I ask, what was the song, Sir?

NM: Well ... it was Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika ... a very inspiring song.

We need inspiration, Francois, ... because in order to build our nation, we must all exceed our own expectations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQhns5AwAkA>

I wondered why this scene moved me so deeply. I thought long and hard about it. Engineers all too frequently cannot leave great feelings, or well enough alone. They try to “figure it out.” You already know this. I wasn’t really satisfied with anything I initially came up with. That changed after I was exposed to the worlds of public speaking and storytelling.

After spending a few years trying to improve my public speaking and storytelling skills, I got a much better appreciation and understanding of why I was so mesmerized by the powerful *Invictus* scene. It is the same power that public speakers and storytellers everywhere attempt to harness.

I know I want to exceed my own expectations on a regular basis. Who doesn’t? But to hear and see it dramatized this way was a game changer.

Vikas Jhingran has written a book called *Emote: Using Emotions to Make Your Message Memorable*. In his approach (with his uniquely analytical articulation of the role of emotions in speech craft), he recommends that we start writing a speech after having made a clear decision of the “final emotion” we want to leave the audience with.

Well, the emotions that I was left with at the end of this scene would be a fabulous way to feel at the end of any speech or presentation—regardless of whether I was in the audience or speaking to an audience.

I have drawn much inspiration from the movie *Invictus*, and especially from using **the work of others**.

In *Necessary Bridges*, I have used **the work of others** extensively. I acknowledge with much gratitude all that is available to us on the road to exceeding our own expectations. I have meticulously credited sources. Whenever I have cited the work (or the words) of others, I have italicized them. In the unlikely event I have inadvertently omitted to cite a

source, I apologize in advance. The oversight error is entirely my own.

To the reader, if I have cited sources in a way that seems excessive, and occasionally disrupts the smooth flow of reading, or requires you to read too much italicized font, I ask your indulgence. It is an essential compromise: I ask your understanding.

Over many years as a project manager and engineer, it became clearer and clearer to me project managers and engineers were inadvertently compromising their professional and career advancement by not being “good enough” in public speaking and storytelling.

I committed to write this book because I inadvertently stumbled into a hole. I became aware of a gap, a mismatch; one that I could no longer ignore.

Briefly, these conclusions dawned on me: (1) there is a mismatch between what project managers know they need to excel at: and with what they commit to excelling at: and (2) there is a mismatch between what engineers think they need to know and learn: and with what they really need to know and learn. Put differently, this topic found me and in an inexplicable way commanded me to act! “Write a book, Rashid. Evangelize public speaking and storytelling to project managers and engineers. In time they will thank you for this contribution to our professions.” A bonus benefit: Writing a book on a subject helps the author become an expert on that subject.

The primary purpose of this book is to get project managers and engineers to commit to acquiring expertise in public speaking and storytelling. The secondary purpose is to provide (just) enough content (accompanied by exercises, examples and directions to other resources—i.e. the work of others) to keep the commitment strong and sustained over

years. There is plenty of marvelous content out there.

This book is NOT about technical presentations or presentations specific to the professions of engineering and project management. The content of this book is generic and exposes the reader to the basics of public speaking and storytelling.

This analogy may help explain my thinking. In the 1970s there was a revolution in which personal computers began entering our lives in a major way. Two dominant companies driving this revolution were Microsoft and Apple. Microsoft focused on providing really useful and ubiquitous products, but they were (in my opinion) not too concerned, perhaps even indifferent, to the design and the beauty of the products. Apple, on the other hand (in my opinion), was deeply concerned about the design and beauty of its products, perhaps obsessively so.

I see the Microsoft approach as one to which possibly engineers and project managers (at least of my age and background) default. Certainly that was my approach. I mean, “Who cares what it looks like as long as it works well?” It was only after the stunning success of products like the iMac, the iPod, the iPhone, the iPad, the MacBook Air etc., that the advantage of great design dawned on many of us.

I have come to believe that deciding to lavish deliberate attention and care on public speaking and storytelling can make the same difference to our professions that Apple’s “design is very important” approach made to the computer (and computer-based consumer devices) industry.

This book has been conceived and created more as a product to be used in combination with other resources, than as a stand-alone book. It has been developed as a guide book providing course work. It has been conceived as an incubator of and companion to a self-development project,

of minimum two years duration. It has been conceived with the intention that the reader will return to it multiple times over the duration of the self-development project, and read it along with other recommended books simultaneously. This is also called syntopical reading.

Indeed, here is a sample recommendation. I recommend that you procure a book called *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading* by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, and read that book in parallel with *Necessary Bridges*. You will extract much more value out of *Necessary Bridges* if you follow this approach.

It is my hope (dare I say vision), that someday in the not too distant future, project managers and engineers will routinely be thought of not only as smart and educated individuals, but as excellent public speakers and storytellers too; the way Apple products are thought of as marvels of engineering and are beautifully designed, too. Why? Because these are essential skills to move any human endeavor along. Public speaking and storytelling are essential skills to (using a line from Apple's Think Different ad) "*to push the human race forward.*" Public speaking and storytelling skills are lubricating oils that keep the machinery of engineering, project management and relationship management running super-smoothly. And engineers and project managers have moved — indeed, pushed — the world forward as much as or more than any other profession.

It is my hope that engineers and project managers increasingly communicate in a way that leaves everyone around them experiencing the same final emotion I felt at the end of the *Invictus* movie scene; inspired and committed to exceeding their own expectations.

It always seems impossible until it is done!

Chapter 12

Storytelling

“Frankly there isn’t anyone you couldn’t learn to love, once you’ve heard their story.”
— *Quote carried in wallet of children’s television host Mr. Rogers*

For those us who default to a strictly intellectual, (sometimes neurotically rational) approach when facing life’s challenges and voyages, coming to intelligently acknowledge the sheer power of storytelling is not going to be easy. Nonetheless it is necessary. It took me a long time to rationally acknowledge that storytelling is one of the most powerful ways of persuading. It is one of the most powerful ways of making a meaningful impact in life. Storytelling is one of the most powerful ways to express what we care about in this world. My excuse for this delayed “arrival at correct decision” is a pretty good one actually; I am an engineer. Storytelling was no part of my educational experience. If anything, my training required me to be guarded against stories.

To be fair to those of us with this neurotically rational (OK, if not neurotically rational, at least strictly rational) approach, we were probably educated into it when we were young. It was a theme throughout my educational voyage. An educated and wise person was not to be guided or persuaded by mere emotions, nor be naïve enough to be fooled by stories. The correct and optimal way to make decisions, especially important ones, was to be guided by reasoned argument, facts, and data only.

However, new knowledge always comes along and disrupts some cherished and long-held methodologies. Now new (for me) knowledge requires me to acknowledge and accept the sheer power of storytelling.

The task that I have to accomplish in this chapter is to convince you that storytelling is not the low-status refuge that

some of us believe it to be. It is a powerful and necessary component of effective communication. We would do well to excel at it and to understand where its power comes from.

Let me return again to the argument I made in chapters 3 & 7 based around this quotation, *It is harder to decide—really and truly decide—to become a millionaire, than it is to actually become a millionaire.* This time, a modified version of the quotation would be, *It is probably harder to decide—really and truly decide—to commit to becoming an expert storyteller, than it is to actually becoming an expert storyteller.* Again, I am not offering this as an exact science type of statement, but more as a means of recognizing that these are two very different processes.

The first line of Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The Ballad of East and West” is “*Oh East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.*” When I was young, growing up in India, I considered this to be basically accurate. Today, however, this kind of thinking is hopelessly outmoded. Look at any engineering team or project team and in all likelihood, the east and the west have met and melded in ways that are admirable and desirable.

I see a similar pattern here. Once it may have been basically accurate to think, “Oh, PS&ST is PS&ST, and PM&E is PM&E, and never the twain shall meet.” Well, I predict that they will meet and meld as admirably and desirably as East and West have.

I will now caution the strictly rational reader, that this could be the longest Necessary Bridge you will have to cross while making the PM&E to PS&ST voyage. There is a clash of (cranial) civilizations of sorts going on—and it’s best not to underestimate the nature of this clash.

However, other professions are increasingly utilizing storytelling, and so must we. The book *TATA Log: Eight Modern*

Stories from a Timeless Institution by Harish Bhat provides an example. The author has been a successful business leader, (managing director and chief operating officer) of large organizations, and is simultaneously a master storyteller. The storytelling advantage is beautifully articulated in the foreword of the book. *In the world of business, storytelling is not a skill that is particularly envied—the expression has pejorative undertones, and suggests tall tales and fiction rather than fact.* Sounds familiar? *But Harish’s kind of storytelling plays a valuable role in business. How do you assemble solid facts and incidents, often mundane when they occurred, into a narrative that interests the reader, and leaves him or her with an overarching message? That is the art of corporate storytelling. Stories and narratives are at the heart of human evolution.*

I hope you are beginning to agree.

Why become an expert storyteller? In one sentence, **Because Stories Make Us Care.** If we care for anything at all in this world, then storytelling is a premium way to express and empower that care. We care deeply about our professions; storytelling is a way of expressing that deep care. A common line in the PS&ST world is “Your audience does not care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” This is why opening with a story is so popular. It allows all of us to care, together, about the topic that is to be introduced and discussed. Starting off with high neural resonance is a good thing!

At this point dear reader, I ask that you block out about 1 to 2 hours of uninterrupted time and go through the following TED Talks. Isn’t TED one heck-of-a-gift to this world? I ask that you enjoy the talks, and simultaneously view and listen to them as both an expert student, and as a professional determined to acquire expertise in storytelling. Be a detective; capture the clues to this unfamiliar craft.

The first three are wonderful talks celebrating and evangelizing storytelling. They cover stories in drama, business, leadership, change, politics, public relations, and public interest. I request you to also pay particular attention to the slides (visual aids) and compare how different they are to what we PM&Es routinely use and endure. Please also be on a lookout for a theme that will recur whenever you are absorbing storytelling: **Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins.**

Andrew Stanton: The clues to a great story

http://www.ted.com/talks/andrew_stanton_the_clues_to_a_great_story

TEDxHogeschoolUtrecht—Steve Denning: Leadership storytelling

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RipHYzhKCuI>

TEDxVancouver — Greg Power: The power of story

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iExl_rF7zgQ

From these talks we can pick up the following nuggets:

- The greatest story commandment is “Make me care.”
- Storytelling has guidelines, not hard and fast rules.
- Another fundamental thing we learned is about liking your main character.
- A story must have a theme. There should be a grand design under it, despite seeming to depict historical lineage.
- The best stories infuse wonder.
- The fine line between speaking and being heard is storytelling.
- Great stories are powerful and capricious.
- Storytelling is deeply embedded in our DNA.
- All culture is nothing but a series of stories.
- We want our news packaged as drama.

- To work well, stories must be irresistible, believable, and unforgettable.

We now know that:

- Stories are a powerful way to engage an audience.
- It is a great idea to start any speech, talk, or presentation with a story.
- In business, stories should preferably be minimalist.
- Feelings (emotions) drive decisions. (Copernican Revolution 3?)
- Unconscious mind is driven by emotions. (Copernican Revolution 3?)
- Emotions are organized as story narratives.
- Stories are saved directly into memory.
- Emotions lead to action. (Copernican Revolution 3?)
- Stories drive behavior. (Copernican Revolution 3?)
- Emotional narratives stored in memory help us to speak and be heard

Fundamentals of storytelling include:

- There should be an opening, middle, and ending.
- Stories have a conflict and a resolution.
- Stories revolve around a hero or protagonist who overcomes something during the story and is changed by the end of the story.
- The conflict is usually in the form of man-against-man, man-against-obstacles, or man-against-himself.

In PM&E, there is bound to be a (dormant) treasure trove of man-against-obstacles (the laws of physics and science) stories, like in no other profession. Our opportunity is to unearth and tell these stories.

The most basic guideline for story construction is, “Every

sentence in the story must either be developing the characters or moving the action forward.”

The next three talks are more formula-based talks: How to create a story.

Dave Lieber TED Talk, “The dog of my nightmares”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xig_r8eKfeM

Kurt Vonnegut talk, “The shapes of stories”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oP3c1h8v2ZQ&list=PL991B74289AE23E10>

Nancy Duarte TED talk, “The secret structure of great talks”

http://www.ted.com/talks/nancy_duarte_the_secret_structure_of_great_talks

It is also suggested that you look at the storytelling tips from the experts at Moth:

<http://themoth.org/tell-a-story/storytelling-tips>

If you have any stories in your current presentations or speeches, this would be a good time to check them out against the suggested formulas or guidelines.

In my experience the biggest issue with PM&E stories is that we tend to include too much technical or other detail, just because we know the material—and believe that it provides necessary context. Most stories work just fine with no technical details at all. As long as each sentence in the story is either developing the characters, or setting the scene, or moving the action forward, or describing the conflict and the outcome, or summarizing the point of the story, the story will be more memorable and therefore repeatable. If the story includes an excellent one-line sound bite, then the story is most likely to be remembered and repeated.

Here are questions associated with storytelling and can be used as a checklist for your stories.

1. Is this really a story, with a proper start-middle-end? *I*

am embarrassed to report that many times I did not get past this question. I was mistaking speeches for stories.

2. Is there a conflict and a resolution?
3. Is there a point to the story? Is the point clearly made?
4. Is there a good sound-bite line? Is the line memorable and repeatable?
5. Does each and every line either develop characters, or set the scene, or move the action forward, or describe the conflict and the outcome, or summarize the point?
6. Go over each and every sentence and ask, “What is the worst thing that would happen if I removed this entire sentence?” *This proved to be a surprisingly effective exercise for me.*
7. Is this story true? This is a tricky one. Better questions may be “Is this story emotionally true?” “Could there be ‘lies-by-omission’ or ‘deception’ issues associated with this story?”
8. Are the characters likeable?
9. Will this story make my audience care?
10. Am I the hero of the story? Or is the main point being made by another character in the story? Is the wisdom being provided by someone other than me?
11. Is this story memorable and repeatable?
12. Is there a purpose to telling this story? If the story is a part of a longer speech or presentation, what is the purpose?

So far we have seen some features and characteristics of stories, we have gone over some guidelines on how to create stories, and how to differentiate stories from not-stories, and we have got a checklist against which we can check our own stories.

Now I want to return to some more thoughts on why storytelling is so important and why you should commit to becoming an expert in storytelling.

Sun Tzu is a historical Chinese general who is said to have lived around 500 BC. One of the most famous military treatises of all time is associated with his name. It is called *The Art of War: Sun Tsu*. It is well known in military circles and is part of some advanced leadership and management curriculum. Sun Tzu's wisdom has been passed down for centuries. It is comprised of 13 chapters, each of which is devoted to one aspect of warfare.

Two components of Sun Tzu's approach are:

1. To win a hundred battles is not the height of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is. Indeed the History Channel documentary *The Art of War* refers to this (*the best way to win is not to fight at all*) as the ultimate secret.
2. The term "orthodox" refers to "by the book" operations. "Unorthodox" refers to flexible, creative, unexpected maneuvers. The great general must master both the orthodox and the unorthodox. Generals engage according to the orthodox, but victory goes to the master of the unorthodox.

It is possible for me, in my mind's eye, to equate being an effective storyteller to being a general who wins his or her battles-of-day-to-day-life-in-times-of-peace without fighting, or with the least amount of fighting. It is further possible for me to equate storytelling with unorthodox operations and flexible operations; and to predict that in the battles-of-day-to-day-life-in-times-of-peace the generals who excel in the unorthodox skill of storytelling will win. This is especially so when trying to bring about change in stodgy, rigid, and—dare I say—orthodox organizations.

We keep returning to the observation: Whoever tells the best story wins.

A very famous historical example of this can be seen in the movie *Amistad*. A lawyer is tasked with an impossible situation. Try to get justice for a group of slaves who had revolted on a sea voyage—when slavery was legal. An ex-president John Adams tells the lawyer that in his experience, “Whoever tells the best story wins.” The lawyer follows this advice and, against all odds and expectations, prevails.

Do you remember the Microsoft and Apple comparison from the preface?

Two dominant companies, Microsoft and Apple, drove the PC revolution. Microsoft initially focused on providing really useful and ubiquitous products, but was (in my opinion) not too concerned about design. Apple was (in my opinion) deeply concerned about design. Its stunning success with its beautifully designed products eventually brought about a paradigm shift. Great design brought very real advantages. I am arguing that skillful storytelling has many parallels to great design. I am of the opinion that Apple understood the power of storytelling better than Microsoft did, and used it to great advantage.

Once we look at storytelling seriously, it is difficult to avoid these conclusions.

1. Whoever tells the best story wins.
2. Stories make us care.
3. Regardless of intellectual prowess and advantage, nobody cares about what we know, until they know how much we care.
4. The really important issues of this world are ultimately decided by the story that grabs the most attention and is repeated most often.
5. Stories capture attention much more efficiently than facts.
6. When we control attention, we control conclusions.

7. Stories stick; facts are forgotten.
8. Facts tell; stories sell.
9. Presidential elections can be won and lost on storytelling.
Here it is again: Whoever tells the best story wins.
10. Politics is fundamentally about story.

This is a formidable list to fight against.

I strongly urge you to act on your commitment to storytelling soonest by procuring some books and products on storytelling. I strongly urge you to block out some time in the weeks and months ahead to learn more about storytelling.

Here are some of my recommendations.

Book 1

Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins: How to Use Your Own Stories to Communicate With Power and Impact by Annette Simmons. (Kindle Version US \$10)

This book is simple, compelling, and has many useful and practical story-capturing exercises. It is an easy and essential read. I heard this author present at a PMI-H event and she made a compelling case. She was mesmerizing when she shared her veterans' affairs consulting story where she used story and poetry to get the result she wanted. One of her other books, *The Story Factor*, has been named one of "The best 100 business books of all time." So she is a recognized expert in this field.

Book 2

The Leader's Guide to Storytelling: Mastering the Art & Discipline of Business Narrative by Steven Denning. (Kindle Version US \$16)

The author has had a very distinguished career and a strictly rational background like ours. The book also provides some very nice templates for crafting the many different types

of stories that can benefit any business.

Book 3

Strategic Storytelling: How to Create Persuasive Business Presentations by Dave McKinsey (Kindle version US \$3)

A very analytical approach with very detailed explanation of best practices of business slides.

Product 1

Edge of Their Seats Storytelling Home Study Course for Speakers: How to Keep Your Audiences Riveted, Revved Up and Ready for Your Message—Craig Valentine.

I have attended some keynotes and breakout sessions of Craig Valentine and loved this 6 CD set. I whole-heartedly recommend it to anyone who wishes to acquire expertise in storytelling. This will be one of the very few products I recommend. Cost US \$300.

I'll close this chapter with a personal story I told at a local Moth event. The theme of the event was "Altered." We had to tell a personal story of when and how we were altered. Notice how different the writing style has to be. Check it out against the storytelling guidelines. This is written in a minimalist style, with very little detail, yet retaining emotional truth, and teaching the lesson that fighting is suboptimal. As this was written for Moth, there is no title for the story, but if I had to provide a title it would be either "A Book and a Boss" or "Fixing Is Better than Fighting."

Actually, it is two stories—one nested in another. One story is about the Cuban missile crisis and the other is something that happened to me a long time ago. Both stories teach the same lesson—that fighting is not an optimal option.

Since this is a story more than a speech my speaking rate

is much faster. The target time was five minutes plus or minus one minute.

My speaking rate here is about 150 words per minute, i.e. 50% faster than my preferred speech speaking rate.

Even before I started crafting this story, I knew that someday I would end one of my stories with Kennedy's famous words. Consequently, I started out constructing this story with a very clear end in mind.

Recently I was reading a book called "To Move the World: JFKs Quest for Peace." The very first sentence.

The President of the United States, John F. Kennedy exclaimed in frustration "There's always some son-of-a-bitch who doesn't get the word."

My mind went back to a boss and an incident from over a decade ago.

I was a manager for a ship repair company. My boss ... came to me with a fax.

Rashid, Norwegian customer, seismic vessel, lots of work, you're in charge.

I called the Norwegian customer.

He asked: Rashid, can you take care of engine repairs ... yes

steel work ... yes

electric work ... yes

He continued, "Can you organize a large crane?"

I responded, "Yes, but all this is going to cost you tens of thousand of dollars" (1 minute/ 133/ 133)

He said "I know—proceed."

I arranged everything and called the agent to inform him my team would be attending. Now the agent is the person who looks after all local matters for the ship owner. He told me that the ship would be docking in Galveston dock No. x.

I got my team on dock No. x before the seismic vessel pulled

in and was preparing to mobilize, when I saw a fabulous new bright red sports car.

This was unusual. Usually the dockside is full of pickup trucks and old cars.

The guy inside was looking around and getting increasingly angry. He stepped out, looked over my team at the crane and trucks, and seemed to get more angry ... walked off ... and started talking to someone on his cell.

By the time he put the phone down ... he was really angry ... and then he came our way.

“Who’s in charge of this crew?” He yelled. (2 minutes / 161/294)

Trying to stay calm and look confident I said, “Me.”

“What the bleep are you doing on my dock?”

“Your dock? I’m sorry ... isn’t this a public dock? ... sorry. I did not know.”

“Yes, I’ve leased this dock” ... “I’ve paid tens of thousands of dollars for it” ... “There’s always some SOB who doesn’t get the word.” ... “Take your crew and leave ... get off my dock!”

Here, I had just spent tens of thousands of dollars. And I had been very publically yelled at in front of all my crew.

How could I have known otherwise? Neither the Norwegian owner nor the local agent said anything about going to a private berth.

I got in touch with the Norwegian customer, who was also at the dock. Gave him a brief update.

He went and spoke to the angry man. He fared no better than me. (3 minutes/ 148/442)

I really felt for him. Suddenly all his planning was for naught. He certainly had bigger problems than me now. He agreed to cover all my costs.

My team and yours truly ignominiously left the dock ... evicted!

Next day ... back at the office ... boss called me "Rashid, You're in charge of the office today."

"Where you going, boss? What about the other bosses?"

"Oh, they are all coming with me. We are going to Galveston."

I did not know whether to feel glad or sad that I was not going to be present to see some fighting and fireworks. I would have gladly contributed my share of fireworks ... after all, I had just been very publically humiliated.

Next day back at the office, I asked, "Boss, how did it go? Did you'll have a good fight? Who won?"

"Oh it was nothing. I fixed everything. I just had to un-ruffle some feathers. We are all friends now. No point in fighting." (4 minutes/ 163/605)

And I don't really know whether he said this ... but I heard it. "Fixing is better than fighting."

Fixing is better than fighting. Fixing is harder than fighting.

I had decided, a long time ago, to be a better fixer than a fighter.

My mind returned to the book I was reading. Here was a fight on a terrifying global scale.

JFK had just uttered history's most famous SOB statement.

The USA and the USSR were on the brink of nuclear war.

Two combatants-in-chief, Kennedy and Khrushchev, were looking squarely at a planet-annihilating blunder.

By dumb luck our planet survived.

After the crisis passed, both men ... profoundly altered, said ... "ENOUGH"! They launched peace initiatives.

Both leaders made a necessary transition from fighting to fixing. (5 minutes/ 125/730)

JFK put it this way.

"So let us not be blind to our differences, but let us also direct attention to our common interests ... for in the final analysis ... we all share this small planet ... we all breathe the same air ...

we all cherish our children's future ... and we are all mortal."

*Good enough for a boss and for JFK: Good enough for me.
(5.5 minutes/69/799)*

Dear Reader, I remind you that transitioning from "strictly rational professional" to "storytelling expert" can be fairly difficult. It may initially have to be a leap of faith, but you will come to discover its power eventually. I know I struggled with it. Indeed If I had not heard Annette Simmons speak at the PMI-H event, and subsequently bought her book, I would have taken even longer to commit to acquiring storytelling expertise.

If you have truly committed to become a PS&ST expert, have committed time and money on a project plan toward this goal, then I urge you, and urge you again to immediately procure the two books and one product I have recommended. Now is the time to act. Indeed, create a parallel project task in your plan to work on storytelling on a continuous basis. Good luck!

About the Author

Rashid N. Kapadia, a marine engineer and project manager for decades, discovered the transformational power of public speaking, storytelling and oratory after joining a Project Management Institute (Houston) sponsored Toastmasters club.

He also discovered, to his surprise and dismay, that too many engineers and project managers seriously underappreciate—even shun—these transformative skills.

Having always seen himself as an ambassador for his storied and challenging professions, he has made it a personal mission to evangelize PS&ST to engineers and project managers around the globe.

Connect

To book the author to speak at your event or to learn more about his work and how he can help you, please visit NecessaryBridges.com or rashidkapadia.com.

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- ▶ Take steps towards becoming a master orator through a wide range of exercises.

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- ▶ Evangelize public speaking and storytelling to young professionals and students of engineering and project management—across the globe

As an engineer & project manager for decades and a public speaking & storytelling aficionado in recent years, Rashid N. Kapadia has made it a life mission to bridge these two estranged worlds.

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