

Is it the story or the storyteller?

Lately, I have been seeing lots of articles being written about how important storytelling is, most recently 3 Reasons to Master the Art of Storytelling on Inc. Magazine's website. This has got me to thinking on whether you can become a better storyteller, or is it something you are born with. Or, does it matter at all if you are good or bad at storytelling if your story is great (or terrible).

So, is it the story or the storyteller?

A bit of both in my opinion. A bad storyteller could ruin the best story, but a boring story won't get any more exciting if someone tells it really well.

But, can you make the telling of the story better?

Yes!

These are my tips for improving your storytelling ability, while cautioning you that you have to have a good story to start with.

1) **Have a point, and don't bury it.** Start with the end in mind. Is there anything worse than a pointless story?

2) **Don't get bogged down with all the details.** I had a friend years ago who was the kind of storyteller that would make you look at your watch ten times because she had to relay every single last detail. (Like this: I was walking to the train station in my new blue shoes with tassels, and then I saw the cutest cocker spaniel, and I started talking to the woman who was walking the dog, she was wearing a jumpsuit that I had seen in a store window....).

3) **Realize your audience may not view the story the same way**

you do. You have a specific point of view, but if it is very specific to you and your worldview, it may fall flat with your audience. There are things that are more universal than others, and to resonate, your story has to have some type of “universal truth.”

4) **Adapt to your surroundings.** If you are telling a story to your friends in your living room you may be more informal, whereas if you are telling a story to the board in the corporate headquarters, you may need to be a tad more buttoned up.

5) **Use humor, but only if it is not offensive or obtuse.** Have you ever been told a story, and the teller throws in some weird joke you don't think is funny? Or worse, you think is offensive (these jokes are usually tired canards about women, or racist stereotypes)?

What would add? And do you think the right storyteller can make up for a bad story? Let me know in the comments.