

“Panel” Symposium Proposal

**Stories about Management Teaching and Research:  
Making Sense of Management in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

by

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Of potential interest to members of:

Management Education & Development Division  
Management, Spirituality & Religion Interest Group  
Research Methods Division

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**Abstract** (< 250 words)

The purpose of this symposium is to listen to and share stories about storytelling as management professors seek to teach and do research on management concepts. Three tenured management professors from three diverse universities will tell stories about doing management research and stories that they have used to teach management concepts. Each story will address some new aspect of management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After the three panelists tell their stories, the moderator will invite the audience to ask questions of the panelists, or to tell their own stories. The end result of this symposium should be greater clarity on how management is different in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as well as a deeper understanding of how storytelling is an ancient but invaluable tool for advancing our understanding of the practice of management.

**Keywords:** Storytelling, Management Education, Management Research

## **Symposium Overview:**

The theme of this year's Academy of Management meetings is "A New Vision of Management in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." As management educators and researchers, management professors use a wide variety of tools and techniques to train and educate managers for today and tomorrow. Despite many new and exciting techniques afforded by rapidly advancing information technologies, storytelling remains a timeless and invaluable means of visioning effective management (Canfield, Hansen, Rogerson, Rutte & Claus, 1996; Denning, 2001; Macguire, 1998). Consequently, we think that it might be interesting and useful to assemble a symposium that focuses on how master teachers and researchers are making sense of management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

How do we make sense of management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Things seem to be so different from the previous century – hypercompetition and constant change is norm, not the exception; employment is no longer lifetime, but transitory; markets are increasingly complex with global suppliers and customers seeking higher levels of quality at decreasing prices. There is one superpower in the world, but it is increasingly dependent on a new world order; CEOs are no longer viewed as heroes, but as greedy and self-serving; and information technology eliminates advantages of time and space.

Storytelling is an ancient art that is perhaps more relevant than ever before in this technologically advanced and fast-paced world that we live in (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). In a real sense, the Academy of Management is a "storytelling organization" whose grand narrative is simply to make sense of current management practices (Boje, 1995). The academy seeks to understand executive leaders, who link vision through stories and metaphors (Conger, 1991). As such, we need more stories by management professors seeking to understand modern day storytellers.

As one storytelling consultant argues, “Storytelling is one of the most effective tools leaders can use. But they need to pick their stories carefully and match them to the situation” (Denning, 2004: 122). Related to this symposium, we need to pick the storyteller carefully as well. All of the following storytellers are active management teachers and researchers. They are all well established, tenured faculty from diverse disciplines within the field of management from diverse parts of the United States. Each of these individuals has received teaching and/or research awards, and each of them is an accomplished storyteller. Each of these individuals has listen to or told stories to better understand or explain the art and science of management in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the first part of the symposium, we will get things started by have these master storytellers tell some stories about their teaching and/or research experiences. Each story will be carefully chosen and artfully delivered to implicitly illustrate what management is like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In order to stay on schedule, each storyteller will be allotted approximately 10 minutes to tell their story(s). Rather than using a “talking stick” employed by Native Americans (cite), a single traveling microphone will be passed from storyteller to storyteller. In between each story, a brief period of silence will be observed to absorb the full impact of the story.

After listening to the panelist’s stories, the audience will be invited to ask the storytellers questions, make observations, or tell their own stories. The moderator will facilitate this discussion and this period will be limited to twenty minutes. The purpose of this segment is to turn the audience from active listeners into active participants in the symposium.

In the final segment of the symposium, the moderator will facilitate a discussion between the panelists and the audience by elucidating what the new vision of management might be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Specifically, symposium participants will be invited to identify characteristics of

the new vision of management as a result of listening to stories about management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Panelist 1 Contribution: Brian Boyd (2-4 pages)**

Submission #:

**Panelist 2 Contribution: Judi Neal (2-4 pages)**

**Panelist 3 Contribution: Bill Judge**

I am a professor of Management at the University of Tennessee. I earned my doctoral degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a concentration in strategic management, and a support area in Business Ethics. I have received numerous teaching awards at the University of Tennessee and currently serve as a Reagan Scholar within the College of Business. Although I have taught undergraduates, MBAs, and doctoral students over the past 15 years, my current teaching focus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in our senior executive MBA program. My current teaching and research focus is on strategic leaders and the strategic change process.

Before I discuss my stories, I would like to describe my students in the executive MBA program as this context sets the stage for understanding why these stories may shed light on management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This program began in 1994 and is offered to executives who are being groomed for, or currently operating as senior executives within their firms. All students work full-time and engage in a rigorous, 12 month modular, part-time MBA program aimed at transforming their skills and mindsets into becoming strategic leaders within their respective firms. More specifically, all executives work an average of 70-75 hours per week, and simultaneously pursue their MBA which takes another 15-20 hours per week between residency periods. The average age of these executives is 42 years old, they all possess more than 10 years of management experience, and most of them are married with children at home.

In a typical class of 30 students, 80% will be white and 85% will be male. Increasingly, we have one or two executives who live and work outside the United States who are admitted to this program each year. According to the *Financial Times*, this EMBA program is one of the top-rated EMBA programs in world due to the very positive alumni success and subsequent satisfaction with their annual surveys. In a nutshell, these executives are on the frontlines of the global economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I plan to tell two stories from my teaching of senior executives within this EMBA program. The first story will focus on a character retreat which I designed and co-deliver within our EMBA program. This retreat is consistently rated one of the top “transformative” experiences in our program, and its approach is quite unconventional for management education. The aim of the retreat is to enable participants to examine their own character now, and enhance their ability to lead with character in the future. Using videos, journaling, small group discussions, and personal testimonials, participants are asked to confront their character flaws, clarify their personal values, recommit to their spiritual journey, and take the path less traveled. Tears are not uncommon. Matters of the heart are often disclosed. Lives are changed. Leaders are born or remade.

My second story will focus on my attempt to teaching storytelling as a critical skill of effective leaders to my senior executive students (Conger, 1991; Urwick, 1965). Using the metaphor of the springboard (Denning, 2001), I ask my students to compose and deliver a “springboard story” within their organization over the internet to their peers. We then discuss the power and limitations of the internet for communicating to an entire organization. Through this story, we begin to understand that “hi tech” requires “hi touch” if it is to be effective.

### **Symposium Relevance**

We see this symposium as relevant to three different groups within the Academy of management. First, it is relevant to the Management Education and Development (MED) division. The specific domain of MED is “the study of the organization and delivery of management education (academic) and management development (no-credit instruction).” Since storytelling has significant implications for not only the content, but the process of management

education and development (McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988), we see this division as being a good sponsor or co-sponsor of this symposium.

Second, this symposium is also relevant to the Management, Spirituality and Religion (MSR) interest group. As one of the newest, and arguably most 21<sup>st</sup> century aspect of the Academy of Management, the MSR interest group may also be interested in sponsoring or co-sponsoring this symposium. The official domain statement for MSR is: “The study of the relationship and relevance of spirituality and religion in management and organizations.” Spirituality and religion deal with man’s search for meaning. Storytelling helps individuals make sense of the world around them, so there is a rich and on-going tradition of storytelling within the world’s spiritual and religious traditions (Canfield & associates, 1996; Lipman, 1995). As a result, the MSR interest groups and members might be very interested in sponsoring this symposium.

Finally, this symposium is also relevant to the Research Methods (RM) division. With its domain focus on the philosophy of science and research methodologies, the listening to and analysis of stories represents a complementary alternative to the traditional positivist orientation of the academy and its journals (Dyer & Wilkens, 1991). Furthermore, at least one of the stories by the panelists’ deals with researching management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so the members of the RM division might be interested in sponsoring or co-sponsoring this symposium as well.

### **Symposium Format**

This symposium can be done in either an 80 or 120 minute format, depending on program needs. First, the moderator will welcome participants and explain the purpose of the symposium. Next, each of the three panelists will tell at least one story about teaching management concepts, and one story about researching management concepts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After these stories

have been told, the audience will be invited to ask questions, or share their own stories as management teachers and researchers. At the conclusion of this symposium, the moderator will lead a discussion to elicit what these stories tell us is different about management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as compared to management in previous centuries.

**Panelist E-mail Agreements**

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