

## StoryMatters: Increasing Your ROI on Life's Lessons at Work

Three Stories in Exactly 99 Words	Index Words
<p><b>Motion Sickness</b></p> <p>During my parent's first visit to Vermont, they drove along Route 100 for a scenic tour of fall foliage through the Green Mountains. When asked how they liked it, Dad waxed poetic about the bright colors and picturesque New England villages. He loved the challenge of navigating the curved, rolling highways.</p> <p>But, Mom, accustomed to the flat, straight roads of South Dakota, could only remember the green tinge to her own complexion as she tried to calm her rolling stomach!</p> <p>It's no fun to be along for the ride if you're just a passenger with no control</p>	
<p><b>Lead Me, Please!</b></p> <p>It's obvious the regulars of the Senior Aerobics Club come to socialize as much as to exercise. Jean was chatting with a friend as they waited for the instructor to arrive one early morning. "I don't know why we need a leader. We all know the routine," she said, "I guess it's just easier." Her friend agreed.</p> <p>When the regular teacher never arrived, they suffered with a substitute, someone known as "that bossy woman from New York."</p> <p>Too bad it's so easy to be a follower when there are so many opportunities to be a leader.</p>	
<p><b>Built to Last</b></p> <p>The Incan ruins of Machu Pichu are famous for their massive stone walls fitted together without mortar. Even after hundreds of years, the blocks are so tight there's not the slightest gap between them. What's more, each block has a unique, irregular shape. Some are larger than an SUV!</p> <p>Why build with such irregular stones when clearly any shape could have been fashioned? Because these walls have withstood earth quakes when walls of standardized block have crumbled.</p> <p>Helping people fit into the place that's best for them builds a stronger organization than forcing people to conform.</p>	

***StoryMatters***  
**Increasing Your ROI on Life's Lessons at Work**  
**Bagel Barrel Session**  
**ISPI 2009**  
**Brian Remer (thefirefly.org)**  
**Terrence Gargiulo (MakingStories.net)**

*StoryMatters* is a format for maximizing learning from experience and applying it in the workplace. Stories are used to spark deeper conversations creating multiple layers of meaning that have relevance to team members. The *StoryMatters* process promotes a culture of continuous learning within an organization by modeling the skills of advocacy and inquiry. In this way, *StoryMatters* can become an invaluable tool for any learning organization.

***StoryMatters: The Process***

- I. Read or tell three 99 word stories – these stories act as triggers to spark listeners' imaginations
- II. Listeners recapitulate the stories to find index words that capture the essence of the stories
- III. Listeners leverage the index words to find personal stories along the same theme
- IV. Those stories are shared and people hearing them share their reactions
- V. Conclude with a dialog and conversation of themes and relationships between stories

***StoryMatters: Why it's Important***

- The reflective process modeled in *StoryMatters* gives insight about how to take advantage of learning that happens in the moment. People are challenged to look for meaning in every day situations.
- Both story tellers and story listeners are able to practice active communication skills like advocacy, inquiry, suspension of assumptions, and challenging one's mental models.

***StoryMatters: Why it's Effective***

- Stories are a common form of communication – people do not notice how often they tell stories – and how comfortable they are with stories.
- In conversation, we get ideas of our own stories but we don't drill deep enough to derive much meaning from them
- Offers a framework and format for active reflection and learning
- People react to the stories and build upon them

- Creating a story space heightens the possibility to make more stories present
- It's the reflection of two or more people that makes the process work
- Stories don't have to be complete with beginning, middle end – especially when the stories are collaged or combined
- Single stories have the danger of becoming one-dimensional and trite like Chicken Soup for the Soul.
- Only by putting stories together do you develop a three dimensional space of shared meaning
- The format gives everybody a chance to talk. This doesn't always happen in conversation – even with just two people

### ***StoryMatters: Tips and Tricks***

- Use three or more stories to avoid dualistic thinking and provide enough triggers for a rich conversation
- Keep stories short, share the air time
- Leave stories open ended, avoid moralizing or insisting on a particular interpretation
- Give people time and space to develop their index words
- Leave 'em hungry, you don't have to tie up every loose end. People will continue the conversations that are meaningful to them off line.
- Be comfortable with ambiguity, trust that the time spent will be meaningful even if you don't know exactly where it will end up

### ***StoryMatters: Where to Go for More Information***

*StoryMatters* Productions – A “TV” style web-based short feature presentation with two people. Each episode is 13 to 17 minutes long. Use as a model for the *StoryMatters* Process or to jump start conversations in your own organization. To view a sample episode: <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/145574002>

Once Upon a Time: Using Story-Based Activities to Develop Breakthrough Communication Skills, by Terrence Gargiulo, <http://www.makingstories.net>

[99 Word Stories by Brian Remer, The Firefly Group,  
http://www.thefirefly.org/Firefly/html/99%20Words/99%20Word%20Home.htm](http://www.thefirefly.org/Firefly/html/99%20Words/99%20Word%20Home.htm)