Quick-Start Guide

The Cruxio Bridge

Build Persuasive Communications that **Motivate Action**

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The Cruxio Bridge®

The Cruxio Bridge by Rob Wishnowsky

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Examples provided in this book are fictitious, disguised, or composites of different situations. All are based on realities experienced over 37 years of working with, and within, corporations.

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Get action—approach business stories strategically

Your goal is action, not entertainment

"Storytelling" in business has been gaining traction in recent years. It sounds like a welcome direction for those of us who have suffered years of talking heads reading crowded slides to bored audiences. But, after spending more than a decade coaching executives to develop and deliver boardroom-level stories, the use of the word "storytelling" has me worried.

Why?

Because most of the stories we're exposed to are designed to entertain. Books, movies, TV shows, and stage plays are based on narrative forms. The shape of these stories—their arc—typically culminates in a high point of tension just before the story ends. As an audience, we are engaged by the conflicts and struggles that lead up to this climax and, ideally, we are satisfied or moved by their resolution.

Great storytellers thoughtfully structure their stories to keep us on the hook right to the end. They are masters of entertainment. And there's the issue: the goal in the boardroom is to reach a decision, not to entertain. If you are presenting to a decision-level group, you are in the business of *persuasion.*

Business audiences want to know three things:

1. Why should I care?
2. Why should I believe you?
3. What do you want me to do?

The opening of an effective business story answers the first question. The middle, which comprises a robust set of arguments, answers the second question. The closing answers the third. You *should* approach your answers to these questions with a story mindset, but the structure and content of business stories are different from those in the entertainment worlds of stage, page, and screen. The approach you'll learn in these pages blends vital elements of entertaining stories such as challenges, conflict, and struggle, with the business essentials of data, facts, logic, and examples. Without challenges, conflict, and struggle, there is no story in entertainment. The same is true in business.

Here we lay out our strategic, step-by-step approach to building persuasive communications that motivate action. This approach can be applied to many types of communications, including:

About our company, Cruxio, Inc.

Our company's name is based both on the word "crux," which means "the essential point," and our business goal: to equip leaders to motivate action through persuasive stories. This explains our tagline, "the crux of the story."

Since 2005, clients have used our methodologies to secure more than $5 billion cumulatively to fund their initiatives. Four out of five executives return to work with us again. They return because they have experienced the value of thinking strategically about communications that are critical to their success. We have taught Cruxio's story development process to more than 1,000 businesspeople in workshops spanning the United States, Europe, South America, Asia, and New Zealand.

Emails
Conversations
Presentations
Documents

We call these communications "strategic stories" because the thinking behind each story is fundamentally *strategic,* forms part of a communication *strategy,* and enables leaders to achieve *strategic* goals. Each story is tailored to a particular audience, which could be one key decision-maker, a committee of 10, or an audience of 100 or more people. Every strategic story is designed to improve a business by either starting a journey or continuing an existing journey toward a better future.

These journeys face barriers to progress that are like rivers that must be crossed. Tackling obstacles and overcoming challenges is difficult and risky, so people tend to resist! They're reluctant to make decisions in the face of uncertainty. They have competing priorities. Change is hard. Cruxio's strategic story development process equips you to surmount barriers to action, whether you are persuading others in the boardroom, in town hall meetings, or on the factory floor.

This book isn't about flashy presentations. It won't show you how to make sensational slides, but it will show you how to use the Cruxio process so that your openings seize your audience's attention, your arguments stand up to scrutiny, and your closing inspires action that catalyzes change, earns support for initiatives, or secures funding.

Conflict is central to strategic stories

Every strategic story is designed to answer a key question that you raise in the audience's minds. This question creates a conflict that the story must resolve. Here are examples of key questions raised within different types of strategic stories. The questions are expressed from the audience's point of view:

- In a pitch for investment funds, "Why should we believe that your start-up is likely to succeed when similar ones have failed?"
- In a board-level presentation, "Should we consider changing our strategy?"
- In an online training module, "How will this training help me in my job?"

Your message is the answer to the key question being asked. This singular focus gives the story a clear direction. You support your message with arguments. You close by asking your audience to act. The result is a simple three-part structure:

1. Opening
2. Arguments
3. Closing

1. Opening. In strategic stories, the opening raises a key question that matters to your audience (the question may be explicit or

implicit). You answer it with your message, which states your position and shows the audience why they should care. This naturally leads to the arguments that support your message.

2. Arguments. The middle of the strategic story presents a set of arguments comprising data, facts, logic, and examples. These elements show the audience why they should believe your message and have confidence in you.

3. Closing. Your closing ties all your arguments together and asks the audience for specific action, either in that moment or in the future. This lets the business audience know what you want them to do.

Strategic stories speak rationally and emotionally

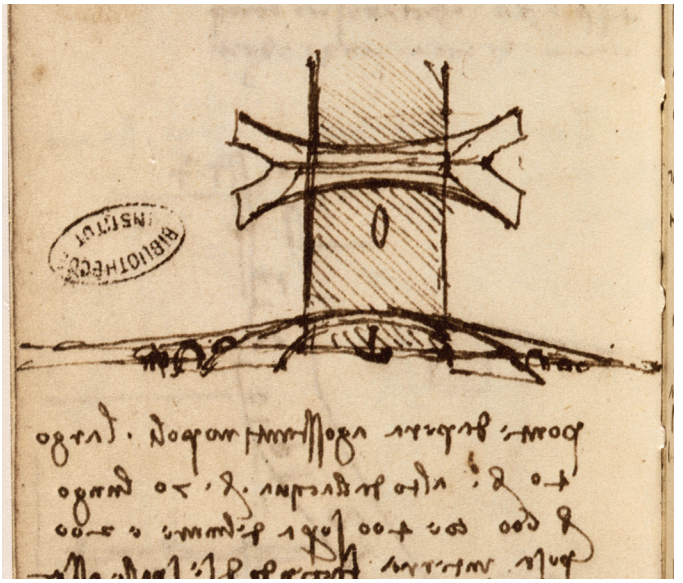
As businesspeople, we like to think of ourselves as being primarily rational, but research proves us wrong. Princeton University psychologist Daniel Kahneman won the 2002 Nobel Prize in Economics for demonstrating that our decisions aren't nearly as rational as we'd like to think.[2] Much additional research supports his profound insight that the main source of our explicit beliefs and deliberate choices are impressions and feelings.[3]

Stories speak to our emotional minds. This is another reason to approach persuasion in business with a story form. In multiple experiments, Kahneman has shown that people disregard even obvious data in favor of vivid descriptions. "No one ever made a decision because of a number," he said. "They need a story."[4]

"No one ever made a decision because of a number. They need a story."

—Daniel Kahneman, winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize in Economics

Leonardo da Vinci's bridge was (radically!) different



Leonardo da Vinci's sketches of the bridge show both a bird's-eye view and an elevation with a sailing ship passing beneath.

The wooden model Cruxio Bridge draws on a 1502 design by Leonardo da Vinci. His design would have solved a major problem for Sultan Bayezid II who wanted a bridge to span the Golden Horn inlet—connecting Istanbul with Galata—while still allowing tall sailing ships to pass into and out of the inlet. The usual solution of the era would have been a masonry bridge comprising a series of semicircular arches—at least ten in this case[5]—but that kind of construction would have prevented ships from passing.

Da Vinci envisioned a high, 900-foot (274 meters), single-span, parabolic arch sweeping across the Golden Horn. Built of stone and relying purely on compression for structural stability (no mortar) it would have been the longest bridge of its time.[6] It also would have worked![7]

Unfortunately for history and for us, the Sultan took a pass . . . but, 500 years later, da Vinci's design was brought to life as a bicycle and footbridge near Oslo, in Norway. The Norwegian interpretation features three arches that independently support the road above. These independent arches became a vital feature of the wooden model Cruxio Bridge.

Leonardo da Vinci inspired the Cruxio Bridge

At Cruxio, we have used the metaphor of a bridge for years to represent how strategic stories enable business communicators to overcome obstacles on their path to a better future. The structure of these stories, and of the Cruxio Bridge, is specific: it's critical that arguments supporting a persuasive communication are independent of one another. Why? Because the failure of one argument does not necessarily mean the whole case will collapse, provided that the remaining arguments stand.

This bicycle and footbridge in Norway is a one-third scale interpretation of Leonardo da Vinci's Golden Horn bridge design. The independent arches that you can see so clearly here inspired the design of the Cruxio Bridge model.

We searched for years to find a bridge design that would reflect this independent structure. When we saw the Norwegian interpretation of Leonardo da Vinci's Golden Horn bridge design, we knew we had found it. The independent arches could represent independent arguments that support the communicator's message. The roadway could represent the audience's experience. Finally, we had the basis of a physical model that would represent the key elements of a strategic story. In that moment, with deep thanks to Leonardo da Vinci, the Cruxio Bridge project was born!