Action: At the start of each weekly sales meeting, do the following:

1. Assign a salesperson the week before to start off the meeting by telling a 2-minute story (see storytelling guide and templates).
2. Share the best example for the previous week of how a salesperson used a story to influence a sales opportunity. Nothing breeds adoption like success.

When a salesperson shares their story with the group, the VP of Sales can test if the story SELLS by asking themselves three key questions.

If it doesn't SELL, then the VP of Sales can coach the Reps to improve their story by helping them either increase the contrast, and/or improve the focus of the story. Based on your feedback, the Rep can edit their story, write it up, and then publish it so that your team will have a valuable sales asset to use to help win future sales opportunities.

The Three Key Questions- Does it SELL?

1. Are you a buyer? Would this story reframe your thinking if you were the customer?
2. Is the story memorable? Could a random Rep you flag down in the hallway repeat this story back to you after hearing it only once?
3. Are you engaged? Does the main character have enough conflict with a clear villain so that the story isn't boring?

If the story doesn't sell, then most likely it's because of the following common problems.

Lack of Contrast- Is it boring?

- **Little Value:** If you feel that they story lacks value, all you need to do is get them to increase the contrast between the before and after picture. And because clients often don't believe most of the claims for gains in the after picture, you've got to help your Rep reduce the customer's baseline by creating a worse "hell if they don't" before picture.

- **Drill down to a Tangible Impact:** The "hell if they don't" often isn't clear because they don't drill down to a tangible impact of the customer's pain points. Either they just scratch the surface on one point, or they give a laundry list of business pains. And when you ask them the key questions "so then what happens" they push back. And the reason they push back is that they are embarrassed that they don't know. But to get a story that SELLS, you've got to get them to stick their hand in the hole. For example, say without a good ERP system, salesman's complication in their story states that the customer isn't able to see inventory transfers between stores. Because that's abstract, you've got to ask "so then what happens." And eventually you may get the answer that in some stores they are overstocked in blue paint, and in others stores the shelf for blue pain is be bare. So finally you have something that is concrete, because you can see, hear, smell or feel it. It also helps make the story more memorable.

- **Tee up Capabilities:** Don't let the Rep sneak capabilities into the resolution unless they have been fully developed in the complication, because the value of your solution's ability to rescue the customers is dependent on how much they feel like they are drowning in problems. So don't let a story try to rescue someone who is only ankle deep in problems.

Lack of Focus- Are you lost?

- **Wordy:** Because people speak 150 to 160 wpm, you don't want the story to go over 250-350 words, otherwise you can't deliver your story in under 2-minutes. Remember, these stories are designed to reframe the conversation- they are not monologues.

- **Unfocussed:** If you feel lost in the story, just bring the Rep back to why? Why are they telling the story? Everything in the story, *and nothing more*, should support the change from the clear before picture to the clear after picture. Once they are clear on why, then ask then what is the capability, and then ask what does hell look like if they don't have that capability. It's that easy.

- **Only one point/story:** Making more than one point is common, because Reps think it will make their story appeal to a wider audience. But it won't, because it will bury the core message and only leave room to superficially develop the complications. Besides, if they flood the customer with too much information, the customer will shut down.

Coaching Cheat Sheet

Assumption: The cheat sheet assumes that the Rep already has the correct story structure from the Storytelling Template: Why; Setting; Complication; Turning point; Resolution, and; Questions.

Questions- Does the story SELL?
1. Are you a buyer?
2. Is the story memorable?
3. Are you engaged?

Contrast- Is it boring?
1. Low Value, then increase the contrast.
2. No conflict: Find a villain, but not the customer or their employees.
3. Not clear: Drill down to a tangible customer impact
4. "So then what happens?" (negative)
5. "So what would that then allow your customer to do?" (positive)
6. Be prepared for pushback – they may not know.
7. Tee up all capabilities fully in the complication.

Focus- Are you lost?
1. Too Long? 250-350 words or deliver it in 2 minutes of less.
2. Lost? Find the Why, then the Capability and then describe Hell if they don't have the capability. It's that easy☺
3. Only one point per story otherwise you'll lose the core message and flood customer with TMI.

Points to consider when providing feedback

Be Genuine	• Show empathy • Actively listen	• Look at the storyteller & smile. • Be curious & open minded regarding the storyteller's theme.
Recognize Strengths	• Positive reinforcement • Nourish self-esteem	• Praise! • Choose positive words, make the storyteller feel accomplished & rewarded.
Motivate	• Positive reinforcement	• When preparing your evaluation, keep in mind the storyteller's experience and previous achievements. • Note areas of improvement over previous stories.
Avoid Value Judgments	• Create a climate that • Motivates storyteller	Personalize the language of your evaluation: • "My reaction was…" vs. "~~You should have~~…" • "It appealed to me" vs. "~~You failed to~~…" • "I felt that you…" vs. "~~Your story was~~…" • Provide suggestions and points for growth. • Focus on just 1 to 2 points.

Evaluation

Category	Rating	Comments
Are you a Buyer? Is the story memorable?	1 2 3 4	
Is the contrast clear between the before & after?	1 2 3 4	
Drilled down to the tangible impact of the customer's pain points?	1 2 3 4	
Too long? (more than 2 min.)	1 2 3 4	
Lost? (more than 1 point)	1 2 3 4	