## The importance of story

Telling powerful stories is a crucial leadership skill – stories enable connection and are an avenue to share meaningful learnings. As storytellers, it can certainly be easy to make mistakes. We often spend far too much time providing detailed context. Then we downplay how we were vulnerable or needed to learn something, and tend to not give enough time to sharing the personal impact or a-ha moments experienced, resulting in an unimpactful close.

It can be helpful to craft some key stories that help people to understand who you are, what you do, and why you do it. By sharpening these standard stories, you will in tandem sharpen your skills and start to build a repository of useful stories that help you to engage others and share your expertise effectively.

If you are looking to improve your storytelling, experiment with the model below to bring your story elements together and land your point. To get started, note the differences between the example stories provided on the next page.

The 'Original Story' acts as a stream of consciousness, helping to get what is in your head onto paper. The 'Final Story,' on the other hand, is a sharpened, more powerful story with the structure in mind. We like to target at least a 25% word reduction between the two!
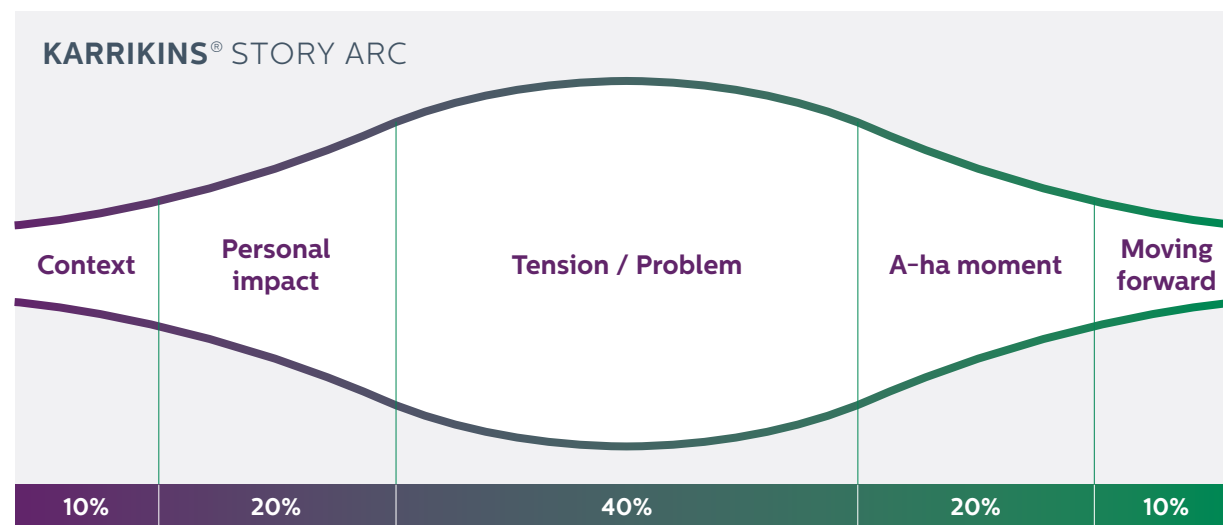
Tips:

- ✓ Tune the story for your audience
- ✓ Model people whose stories impact you
- ✓ Share your vulnerability or learning
- ✓ Practice telling your stories effectively
- ✓ Ask people to share their own

Traps:

- ✗ Providing too much context
- ✗ Not connecting with the audience
- ✗ Missing the landing on a strong close
- ✗ Adding in unnecessary embellishment
- ✗ Going off on tangents / non sequiturs

KARRIKINS® STORY ARC

Context	Personal impact	Tension / Problem	A-ha moment	Moving forward
10%	20%	40%	20%	10%

Original Story

About 15 years ago, I was working in Seattle, Washington at a technology startup. My background was in digital transformation and the startup culture always intrigued me, so I felt like this job was the perfect fit for me. I officially started my role in June with a team of 5. By September, I was overseeing a team of 10. The startup grew quickly, and I had taken on many responsibilities beyond my job description. One of these responsibilities was building out new software for a client. It was my first time leading a team of that size and it was also my first time in charge of a software rollout with a firm delivery date established by the client. I was up against a tight deadline. After much deliberation, I realized that the only way we could possibly meet the client's deadline was to work overnight. I broke the news to my team, picked up 2 big boxes of Starbucks coffee from down the street, and ordered pizza from the local pizza place. I had to prepare my team for the night ahead. Of course, my team was not too happy about staying at work...and I didn't blame them. They had to cancel their after-work activities and tell their families that they would see them tomorrow. It wasn't easy. But they also knew (as did I) that this type of commitment was required in our startup culture and in order to meet the client's needs. **(Context)**

I felt so much pressure to launch on time and show my boss that I was an effective, productive leader. I really wanted to prove myself and knew that meeting this deadline would impact my performance evaluation and, ultimately, an opportunity for promotion. I knew I had to meet it. **(Personal impact)**

The next morning, the project was ready for launch — "We did it!" I thought. However, when my boss arrived that next morning, he looked around and noticed we had not left the office from the day before. He immediately said, "We will not be launching today." I freaked out and asked why we were not launching considering the deadline was met. He responded and shared that an exhausted team does not produce a quality outcome. Instead, he would rather push the launch a couple days out to run proper testing. He sent us all home to rest and get back to it the following day. I reluctantly went home. **(Tension / problem)**

I knew my boss was right. We rushed to meet a deadline and there was huge risk associated with that — an over-worked and exhausted team does not produce a successful launch. **(A-ha moment)**

I learned so much from that morning that I will take with me throughout my career. Ultimately, it wasn't worth risking the wellbeing of my team and myself to meet an arbitrary deadline, nor was it worth the risk of an unsuccessful launch. **(Moving forward)**
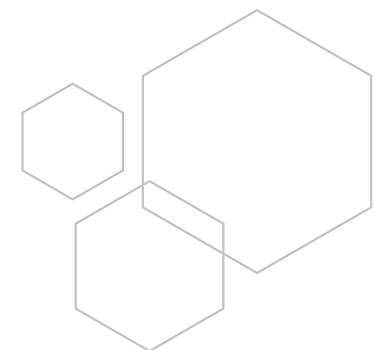
Final Story

I was up against a tight deadline. So tight that it required my team and I to work on our project throughout the night to meet the morning launch date. **(Context)**

I felt so much pressure to launch on time and show my boss that I was an effective, productive leader. **(Personal impact)**

The next morning, the project was ready for launch — "We did it!" I thought. However, when my boss arrived that next morning, he looked around and noticed we had not left the office from the day before. He immediately said, "We will not be launching today." I asked why, considering the deadline was met. He responded and shared that an exhausted team does not produce a quality outcome. Instead, he would rather push the launch a couple days out to run proper testing. He sent us all home to rest and get back to it the following day. **(Tension / problem)**

He was right. We rushed to meet a deadline and there was huge risk associated with that — an over-worked and exhausted team does not produce a successful launch. **(A-ha moment)**

I learned so much from that morning that I will take with me throughout my career. Ultimately, it wasn't worth risking the wellbeing of my team and myself to meet an arbitrary deadline, nor was it worth the risk of an unsuccessful launch. **(Moving forward)**

SHARPENING YOUR STORYTELLING

First, think about a story where you learned a big lesson in your career and write it out in the text box labeled 'Original Story.' Once written out, go back and identify the 5 key components of the **KARRIKINS Story Arc** (see example 'Original Story'). Next, it is time to edit! Challenge yourself to reduce the words by 25% to make your storytelling even more powerful. Include the edited, sharpened story in the text box labeled 'Final Story' (see example 'Final Story').

ORIGINAL STORY	FINAL STORY