

# Storytelling is a secret weapon for increasing service sales and overcoming employee resistance to change

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Valeria Boldosova. Credit: Riikka Kalmi

With the increasing digitalization in manufacturing industries, companies start to integrate big data analytics into business processes and sell smart services. However, people tend to resist change, remain skeptical about unknown products and technologies and avoid new ways

of doing work. According to Valeria Boldosova's doctoral dissertation at the University of Vaasa, Finland, using deliberate storytelling in the workplace might help to deal with these problems.

"My doctoral research is inspired by the real-world challenges that managers face with and in the dissertation, I provide practical guidance to companies on how to sell more and how to adopt new technologies," says Valeria Boldosova.

## **Use storytelling to deal with employees who resist technological change**

According to Boldosova's research, introducing new technology to employees can be difficult, especially if it is business analytics driven by [big data](#). Employees lack the awareness of why the technological change is happening, fail to understand how it will affect their jobs and what are the benefits, feel threatened by a novel technology and do not trust it. This prevents companies from maximizing the business potential of big data.

Boldosova suggests that to improve the attitudes of employees toward analytics and increase its use among employees, managers should create and spread positive stories.

"I strongly encourage managers to use storytelling when steering an organization through internal technological change. As a result of successful storytelling activities, companies can observe up to 80% increase in analytics use among employees," Boldosova writes in her dissertation.

## **Do your employees struggle with interpreting big data? Turn numbers into stories**

Nowadays, everyone speaks about the business potential of big data, however, extracting value from complex technical data can be challenging to nontechnical experts. Employees hesitate to use the analytics technology because they find it difficult to translate data into actionable insights and instead of relying on hard data they prefer to use intuition. According to Boldosova's dissertation, storytelling helps to make sense of technical data, reduces the perceived complexity and gives employees the confidence to use analytics in daily work.

"Managers should build their stories around the analytical dashboards and put numbers into a business context so that employees understand which [customer](#) problems analytics solves. At the end of the day, people can forget numbers, but stories they remember. Stories can be more effective during training than a technical document and it is a great way to educate existing employees instead of hiring expensive data scientists," suggests Boldosova.

## **Storytelling is a secret weapon that helps to close more deals**

Boldosova's dissertation also reveals that [storytelling](#) can help manufacturing companies to sell digitally-enabled smart services, like remote condition monitoring and predictive maintenance, to customers. She points out that manufacturers often struggle with selling [smart services](#) because customers tend to have a product-oriented mindset and are reluctant to pay for what they cannot touch. Customers do not recognize the practical value of new services and have security and privacy concerns due to high levels of digitalization.

"Storytelling can help sales managers to change conservative customer minds toward data-driven services and increase service sales," says Boldosova.

"Stories supported by the reference customer data demonstrate how analytics solves real-life problems of existing customers and help prospective customers see the practical value of a service. Stories paint a positive picture of a trustworthy service provider, reduce uncertainty and help to persuade a customer to buy from you," she concludes.

In her interdisciplinary dissertation, M.Sc. (Econ.) Valeria Boldosova combines insights from information systems, marketing, linguistics, psychology and neuroscience and explains how companies can influence the behavior of employees and customers through stories.

Boldosova conducted her research in the Finnish offices of international large organizations in the energy sector, industrial automation field and sheet metal processing industry. Boldosova's dissertation builds on four articles published in high-quality international scholarly venues and her research material consists of ethnographic observations from 55 events, 78 interviews, over 300 documents and 130 pages of fieldwork notes.

**More information:** Boldosova, Valeria (2021). Facts tell, but stories sell : The power of storytelling in influencing human behavior toward big data analytics and smart services: [osuva.uwasa.fi/handle/10024/13159](https://osuva.uwasa.fi/handle/10024/13159)

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