



STORIES TRAINERS TELL

A Legacy of Generosity

Contributor

Chip Bell, senior partner, Performance Research Associates, Inc.; email: chip@chipbell.com

Chip Bell is a senior partner with Performance Research Associates, Inc., in Dallas, Texas. His consulting practice focuses on helping organizations build a culture that supports customer devotion. Prior to starting a consulting firm in the 1970s, Chip was director of management development for NCNB, now Bank of America. A renowned keynote speaker, he is the author of several best-selling books including *Customer Love* (2000), *Customers As Partners* (1994), and *Managers As Mentors* (1996). His work has been featured on CNBC, CNN, Bloomberg TV, and NPR, as well as in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, *USA Today*, *Entrepreneur, Inc.*, and *Business Week*.

Type and Purpose(s)

Vignette; encourage

Background

Chip's father was a big storyteller. Many of his stories come from his early years growing up in South Georgia.

Presentation Tips

This story is best told in a relaxed tone, preferably with a southern drawl.

Set-up

Option 1—Our early life experiences help shape our values around giving.

Option 2—One truly memorable experience can shape our relationships with others forever.

Option 3—What happens when we approach the world from an attitude of abundance rather than scarcity?







A Legacy of Generosity

I grew up in a small country town in South Georgia. Like most folks in my era, I didn't get an allowance. I made all my spending money mowing lawns. I got one dollar for a regular size yard and two dollars for a big yard. My grandmother . . . now, she had a two-dollar yard! I loved mowing it 'cause there weren't a lot of two-dollar yards in the town where I grew up.




In the summer of 1954, there was a major drought in South Georgia. I was ten years old and yards hardly didn't grow at all that summer. I was looking at a pretty bleak year in terms of spending money. Towards the end of that summer, my grandmother called me up and said, "Chip, I want you to come and mow my yard." I was so excited I went right over and mowed her yard. When I showed up at the back door to get my two dollars, she met me there and handed me a five-dollar bill . . . and said the most wonderful words that I've ever heard: "Keep the change." And it did change my relationship with my grandmother, a relationship I kept until she died in her eighties.

When you feel generosity it literally changes your relationships—it definitely did between my grandmother and me. Her spirit continues to guide the choices I make about my own legacy of generosity. Who has influenced you with their generosity of spirit and what is the "legacy you wish to leave"?

Debrief Questions

-  What did it mean for Chip to have this experience with his grandmother?
-  What did Chip's grandmother teach him about the value of generosity?
-  What experiences of generosity have you had in your life?
-  How have your early experiences helped shape your values?
-  What does the spirit of generosity—an attitude of abundance—mean in your work?
-  What are some ways you could demonstrate generosity at work? At home? How can you develop a “giver” mentality?

Key: Three Levels of Debrief Questions

-  **The Story:** What the story means—its moral or main lesson. What the story characters have experienced.
-  **The Learner:** How the participant feels about the story and how it personally applies to the individual.
-  **The Organization or World:** How the story applies to the participant's work group, department, business unit, division, organization, industry, or to society-at-large.

Key Point Options

1. Relationships are the foundation of our lives. It is important to manage them with a sense of generosity—a sense of abundance. Generosity is a core value of building relationships.
2. People tend to associate with organizations that they feel have their best interests at heart. Organizations that communicate that generosity of spirit engender customer and employee loyalty.

Follow-up Activities

Step 1—Paired Discussion: With your partner, share a time in your life when someone has shown generosity to you. What did it feel like? What impact did it have on your relationship with this person? On your life? On your values?

Step 2—Large-Group Discussion: Have people share their insights from the paired discussion. Then explore the following questions as an entire group: How have you shown generosity to others? What impact has this had on your relationships with these individuals or organizations?

copyright notice

This story is designed for use in a group setting and may be reproduced for educational/training purposes as long as the copyright notice appears on all reproductions as printed. This free permission is restricted to the paper reproduction of such materials for education/training events. It does not allow for systematic or large-scale reproduction, distribution (more than 100 copies per page, per year), transmission, electronic reproduction or inclusion in any publications offered for sale or used for commercial purposes—none of which may be done without prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 750-4470, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax to (201) 748-6008, or email permcoordinator@wiley.com.