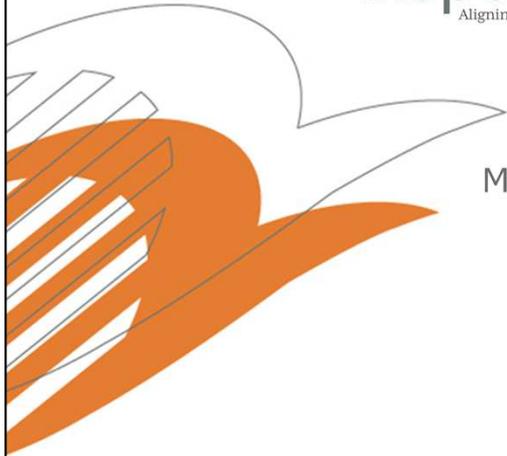




inspearit
Aligning for Customer Value



Mythology for IT Architects

or: how stories can help

Arjen Uittenbogaard



The world's first great architect

A short retelling of three important scenes in Daedalus's life. *(Please come to my presentation to hear the entire story.)*

Daedalos – Chronology



- ⚡ 1350 bc: Daedalos born
- ⚡ 1332: soon a famous architect in Athens
- ⚡ 1330: starts architect school
- ⚡ 1326: student steals designs and ideas
 - ⚡ Student wins prizes and orders with ideas of Daedalos
- ⚡ 1324: revenge
 - ⚡ Daedalos takes student up on tower
 - ⚡ To show buildings in the city
 - ⚡ Pushes off the tower
- ⚡ Escape to Crete
 - ⚡ King Minos, queen Parsiphae
 - ⚡ Daedalos court architect
- ⚡ 1323: Parsiphae in love with bull
 - ⚡ Cf. [Wrath of Poseidon](#)
- ⚡ Parsiphae stealthily orders Daedalos to help her get pregnant
 - ⚡ Builds wooden cow for queen to enter
 - ⚡ It works
- ⚡ 1322: Parsiphae gives birth to minotaur
 - ⚡ Soon becomes a monster
- ⚡ 1318: Minos orders Daedalos to engage the monster
 - ⚡ Daedalos designs and builds the labyrinth
 - ⚡ Minos imprisons Daedalos in his own labyrinth
 - So minotaur will kill him
 - Daedalos survives because he knows labyrinth well and outsmarts the minotaur
- ⚡ 1315: Daedalos escapes by building wings
 - ⚡ Ikaros, his son, also flies away
 - ⚡ The son flies too close to the sun
 - Wax melts
 - Ikaros crashes to the ground
- ⚡ 1315-1286(?) Daedalos perishes mourning his losses and misfortune
 - ⚡ No more great inventions
 - ⚡ No more successes
 - ⚡ Never mentioned in any chronicles

An alternative presentation of the facts

Which story will you remember? The story with living characters or the above abundance of details and facts? The story with recognisable dilemmas and emotions or the 'objectivity' of the chronology? The story with colours, flesh and blood or the bare bones facts?

How do your presentations compare? How do you convince your stakeholders?



Who am I?

Arjen Uittenbogaard, I am a trainer, coach and consultant at **inspearit** working in requirements engineering, agile teamwork and scenario planning. Also, I am storymaker, storyteller and coach at **verhalenmaker**.

These two worlds are increasingly coming together. As a trainer I need to be able to tell stories. As a coach I help others tell their stories. As a consultant I urge teams to tell each other stories.



A Soviet Economist in Rotterdam

A teaching and coaching story I tell a lot. *(Please come to my presentation to hear the story.)*

I can explain that in a complex world it is no longer possible to control it all. I can explain to architects that a blueprint or a grand design will not work anymore (if it has worked at all). I can explain it using complexity theory and systems thinking. I can explain and everyone will nod, thinking they understood.

However, you will not *feel* the *angst* that comes with letting go. You will not *feel* the fear that comes with not only trusting yourself, but also trusting others. Until you have felt that fear yourself, you have not truly understood what I mean.

This story brings you closer to this feeling. You can empathise with the Soviet economist and with his despair: *“how can this possibly work?!”*

A story can give you deeper understanding.

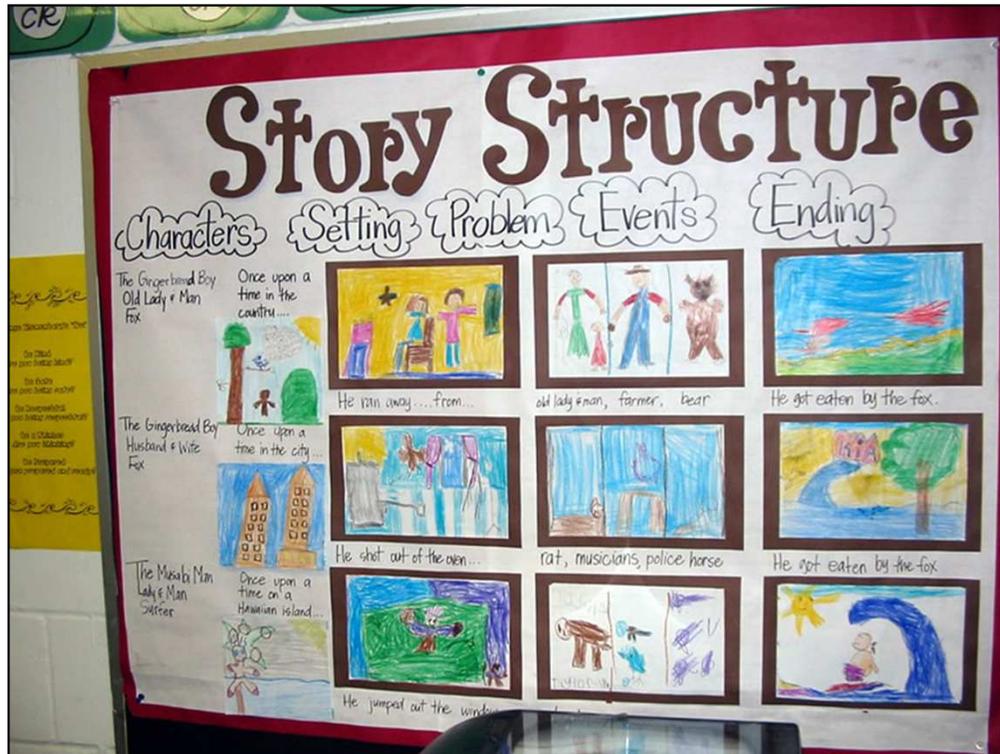


No more room

A fairy tale I wrote. *(Please come to my presentation to hear the story.)*

As an architect I may be convinced that something needs to be done. But I need approval of my boss. I will try to convince him by presenting the facts: our home-grown ORB is outdated, we need technology that is at least capable of communicating XML, that is capable of expanding and is open to new technologies. However, this will most certainly not ring any bells. I will try harder by repeating my facts, preferably with more detail. But this will only make matters worse. Then I will construct a PowerPoint, or even a Prezi, presentation including all relevant UML diagrams. But if my boss was not listening in the first place, I will have been wasting our time. My boss will decide whatever he would have decided without my intervention. I will return to my ivory tower and pull up the ladder again.

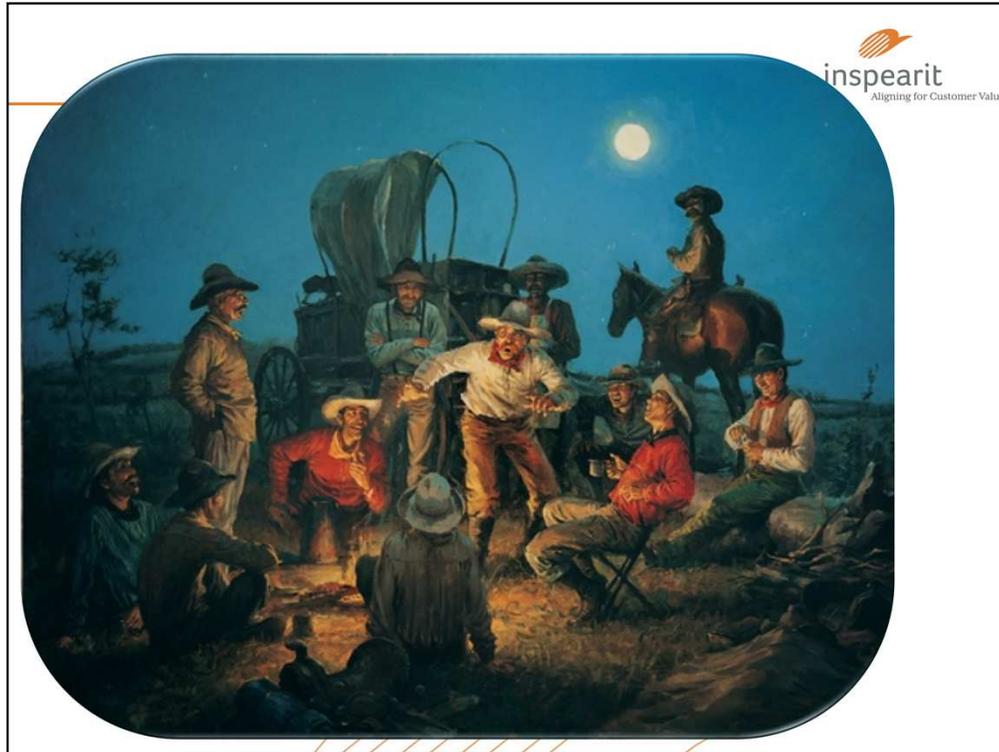
Why not tell a story? People are hardwired to start listening when a story is being told. You have the stage. At least a couple of minutes of free attention. Of course you can still blow it, but if you've prepared well, chances are that this time you will get your message across.



Building a story is easy

Six questions to help you get started (from Allan et al: *The Power of the Tale*).

1. Who is the main character of the story? (Real, imaginative, single, few, animal, hero, heroine)
2. What is the task or mission of that character?
3. Who or what can help in this task? (If at all)
4. What is the obstacle in the way? (What prevents it from happening?)
5. How does the main character go about it? (How does he cope with the obstacle?)
6. What is the outcome? (Happy ending? Open end? Or any possible a cliff hanger for a sequel?)



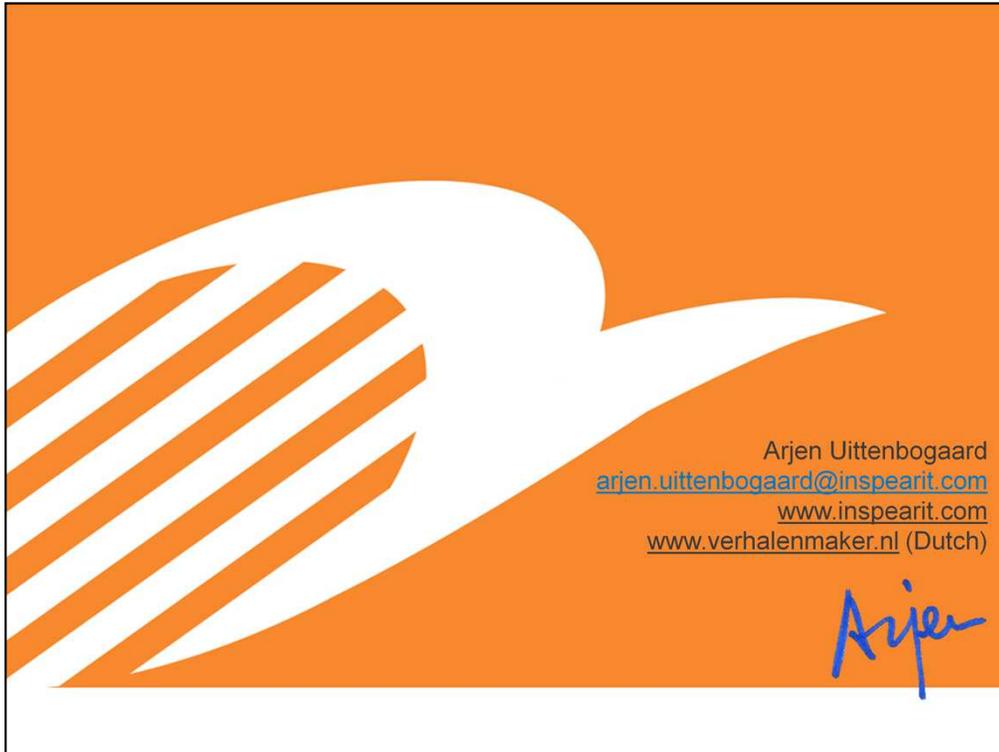
Stories build learning organisations

Stories are not just for you to convince others of your ideas.

Let's telling each other our stories. What have you achieved and what are you proud of? What did you learn the hard way and what are you ashamed of? When did you join this organisation and how did things go back then? What would your ideal future look like?

Forget communities of practice, patterns, knowledge management, best practices and quality management.

Let's start telling each other stories.



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