

You need a good story

Written by Julie Desmond
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Inventor of the HANDy Paint Pail, Mark Bergman, spoke to a group of business leaders about his inarguable success: how he got where he is, what the joys and challenges are in his work, and how he incorporates fundamentals including family, fitness and faith into his success. His audience was curious about the topic to start with, and they stayed interested because Bergman had a great presentation style. He did not use loud music, Harlem Shake backup dancers or a PowerPoint. He just sat on a stool in his jeans and sweater and told people a few short stories.

First, Bergman told a story about his son and the invention of a spoon. Ok, the spoon had already been invented. But his story was about how he was in his kitchen with his one year old, feeding the baby his mashed carrots and making airplane noises when it occurred to him that a plastic spoon with wings on it would be something people might buy. As it turns out, they did.

Then he talked about noticing his kids' shoes were always untied. He thought about a doohickey he could remove from his gym bag, slide onto their shoe laces, tie a knot, cut them off, and then his kids wouldn't have to tie their shoes anymore. He manufactured cuter and sportier versions of the doohickey which appealed to the younger-than-gym-bag set, and another success was born. Personally, I've purchased more than a few of these for my kids who were too old for Velcro but too busy to bend over and tie their laces

Next, he described the Hallmark Movie afternoon when he was preparing a room for the new baby girl he was adopting from some faraway land. He had to paint the room and his hand got tired from holding the container with the paint in it. We already know the guy is clever. Give a clever guy a roll of duct tape and a problem and you better just stand back because something interesting is sure to happen. He fashioned a strap out of the duct tape, attached it to the side of the paint can, and the million dollar HANDy Paint Pail was born.

Bergman wrapped up his presentation with a story about his company's philanthropic initiatives, specifically around the Children's Tumor Foundation. Giving back is a mainstay of the organization and the cause is one that an employee got him involved in, most likely piquing Bergman's interest by telling a captivating, personal story.

Julie Desmond is IT Recruiting Manager with George Konik Associates, Inc. Send your resume and career planning questions to Julie at jdesmond@georgekonik.com.