

ST★RMAKER

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The Story Spine

The Story Spine, originally created by playwright Kenn Adams, is a tool for creating well-structured stories. It is a series of sentence fragments that prompt the narrative elements of a story. The template serves as a dynamic and fluid structure, allowing storytellers to create stories that may be visionary, anecdotal, cautionary, inspirational, allegorical, etc.

The following story is illustrated by using the story spine.

Innovation & Creativity contributing to Business Success at American Express

Once there was a young woman named Susanna Lee who joined American Express back in 1987 and over the years she took up various management positions across different Asia Pacific markets.



The background is a gradient of purple and blue, decorated with various colorful geometric shapes and patterns. At the top, there are orange, purple, green, and cyan shapes. On the right side, there are blue and pink shapes. At the bottom, there are orange and red shapes. The overall aesthetic is modern and vibrant.

And everyday... as she worked with people from different walks of life, her appreciation of the importance of inclusion and diversity blossomed.

Susanna began to see a direct connection between an inclusive, diverse workplace and the cultivation of creativity and innovation. She saw that “happy colleagues can bring happy customers”.

The Catalyst

Until one day... Susanna, currently the Managing Director for Hong Kong and Taiwan and General Manager for Insurance Asia at American Express, was sitting in a senior leadership meeting discussing how innovation was changing the way businesses around the globe are attracting, engaging and developing talent.

When an idea hit her – instead of senior management prescribing activities to engage and support colleagues, why not have talent on all levels identify what engaged them and where they needed support, for themselves?

The Consequences

And because of that... Susanna worked with the HR head to elevate the relationship between leadership, employee engagement and business outcomes.

And because of *that*... she was confident that the answer was to create an engagement platform that spans across the Hong Kong operation, with cross-functional workstreams to develop engagement programs and activities “for the employees, by the employees”.

And because of *that*... **she knew she'd have to get the senior leaders, who** traditionally concentrated on their own business and expertise, to broaden their focus and make resources available to support this company-wide effort by listening and supporting diversity and inclusion for all.

The Climax

Until finally... the senior leadership team aligned to sponsor the initiative because they all shared the same belief – that ownership and collaboration would ultimately lead to success.

The Resolution

And so... confident that “happy colleagues can bring happy customers”, Susanna and her team established the Market Colleague Plan in American Express Hong Kong in 2014.

Today, there are 11 work streams with over 100 colleagues driving the initiatives. And despite the pandemic they digitized and delivered over 40 events this year for colleagues with a total participation of over 2,000.