



Numbers alone are seldom persuasive. Instead, great accountants employ drama, like a John Grisham novel, to tell a story in three acts complete with a sympathetic hero, a compelling storyline, and a mighty challenge to overcome.

Act I, the opening narration, introduces the protagonist (the firm), and establishes the plot: *Will the firm achieve its quest for increased profitability?*

Act II is the messy part, where the protagonist encounters various challenges in the form of adverse data likely to impede the hero's quest.

Act III is where the storyteller resolves the dramatic tension by stating, "together, we address A, B and C to solve the problems and achieve success."

Financial storytelling humanizes financial data. It enables the law firm accountant to frame the financial discussion, postulate how key numbers are trending, present alternatives, and influence the manner in which the readers of the financial statements interpret the data. Storytelling is an empathy technique great accountants employ to chart new tactics and goals for the law firm without necessarily calling out individual heroes or adversaries.

Lawyers are suckers for a great story. They are trained to construct narratives from cold sets of facts so that judges and juries can understand and be persuaded by them. Accountants should use those same techniques when presenting numbers to the law firm. Great accountants become great storytellers in order to talk with lawyers in their native tongue – *the persuasive narrative*.

Financial reporting *done well* is so much more than reports and spreadsheets. It requires oral, written and non-verbal communication skills to inform, instruct and persuade. The objective is to ensure the lawyers understand the numbers as well as you, the accountant, do. It is in this manner that great accountants contribute to law firm profitability without ever recording a single billable hour.

