

“Telling a Good Story: Changing Hearts, Minds and Actions” Webinar Handout

There is no tool more important to the work of the development professional than that of a good story. Story is hardwired into us – we have been telling stories since the dawn of humanity. Story is embedded in language and intrinsic to the human experience. Storytelling is a craft that can be continuously refined and honed with intention, practice and a little creativity. This handout shares quick tips for crafting and deploying your organization’s powerful stories, in addition to sharing other helpful resources for diving deep into the art and craft of nonprofit storytelling.

Determine and Source the Type of Story You Want to Tell

Think creatively about where you can find interesting and untold stories about your organization. Remember, no matter what type you decide on, the story you craft should always tell the story of a person and their journey.

- Founding or origin
- Clients and impact
- Donors
- Volunteers
- Partners and coalition
- Board member or governance story

Capture Your Story

Thinking about story structure, and using your empathy and listening skills, sit down with the hero of your story and capture the trajectory and emotional and sensory material.

- What did the hero need or desire?
- What was the barrier(s) the hero encountered in reaching what they needed or wanted?
- What was the event that changed the course of the story?
- What role did your organization play?
- What is different today than in the past? What might be different in the future?
- How can you ‘paint the picture’ with details using all five senses? Consider – colors, smells, sounds and the way something felt to the touch or tasted.

Put Your Story to Work!

Once you have crafted your story, use the copy to develop content and other assets for sharing the story over multiple channels and methods.

- Website and newsletter
- Email marketing
- Facebook and other social media posts. Yes, even a tweet!
- Photo assets for Instagram and other photo sharing sites
- Audio, speeches, pitches, podcasts or video storytelling
- Content for donor thank-you notes

Components of a GREAT Story

Remember, the best nonprofit fundraising stories:

- Start with great (and quick) hooks and leads
- Feature your organization as an outstanding supporting character, not the hero
- Include visual and other compelling sensory material – SHOW not TELL!
- Use metaphors and analogies that help “frame” complex issues your hero is grappling with
- Take great care in the ethical procurement and use of personal stories
- State a clear and powerful call to action

Great Resources

[Stories Worth Telling: A Guide to Strategic and Sustainable Nonprofit Storytelling](#)

The Meyer Foundation and Georgetown University Center for Social Impact Communication

[Storytelling for Nonprofits: How to Present Stories that Attract Donors, Win Support, and Raise Money](#)

Network for Good eGuide

[The Nonprofit Storytelling Field Guide & Journal](#)

Christopher Davenport and others

[Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate](#)

George Lakoff

[FrameWorks Institute](#)

[Ethical Storytelling](#)

Story Starts

Oftentimes, deciding how to start your story is the hardest part. Take a look at the following “story starts” for inspiration. Fun fact: you can use these story starts in the middle of your story to re-engage your audience!

“Can you imagine...”

How that must have felt... what it must have been like to...

“Have you ever...”

Experienced... seen what X does to... thought that... wondered...

“Would you like to...”

Know more... see pictures... take a tour... have someone...

Getting Started...

Next 3 hours, 3 days, 3 weeks

Next three hours

- **Research** the resources provided to you. Look up one of the great resources we introduced you to and subscribe to their lists.
- **Explore** story ideas! Go to coffee with a colleague who works in a department you would like to learn more about. Ask them about some great stories they know about your organizations.
- **Develop** a short list of 2-3 people to interview to illicit stories.
- **Share** the importance of storytelling with your organization. Curate new stories by asking your colleagues to share their story!

Next three days

- **Schedule interviews** using the interviewing techniques shared in [Stories Worth Telling: A Guide to Strategic and Sustainable Nonprofit Storytelling](#) by the Meyer Foundation.
- **Sit down with a colleague** from your sector to talk about the dominant narrative you need to change to increase support for your issue. How can organizations lift up together with a shared narrative?
- Do more research! Look up existing opinion research on the issue.

Next three weeks

- Following your conversations and interviews, **identify two powerful stories** about the organization.
- Using the storytelling craft you've acquired, **develop that story.**
- **Identify two channels** for each story, and share them!