

Why storytelling?

- Long standing oral tradition of humans
- Makes fundraising more fun!
- Easy to tell stories, harder to “prepare a grant application”

Before you tell your story...

Is your story ready to be told?

Do you know the whole story?

Can you connect with the people who live the story before you tell it?

What do stories accomplish?

- They communicate history
- They establish identity
- They help with memory
- They establish culture

Universal Themes

- Mob at the gates
- Rot at the top
- Benevolent Community
- Triumphant individual

Universal themes will help you engage the listener so they keep listening.

Organizational Stories and Themes: Examples

Organization name	Mob at the Gates	Benevolent Community	Rot at the Top	Triumphant Individual
Sample Nonprofit School	Government funding being cut for education New legislation requires more time for testing and less time for other classes	Students' families and friends get together to refurbish the auditorium for performances	Owner of property next door to school building large factory and trying to force school to move	Principal of school was once a student there and has come home to provide education for his hometown

Most organizations have at least one story in each category. One will likely be the most compelling for your organization.

Story Structure

It's easier to convince a prospective donor to contribute if he or she can empathize with a character and be engaged by the story

What do you need to transform your data to a story?

- Protagonist
- Antagonist or inciting incident
- Primary universal theme

Classic story structure

“Introduce hero, get him up a tree, throw rocks at him, then get him out of the tree.”
Robert McKee, Screenwriting Guru

Introduce Protagonist – who are we following

Can be individual or your organization

Create backstory—why is this protagonist a hero?

Inciting Incident

Importance of antagonism—emotional dynamics

This is the problem statement

Obstacles/Barriers

Why is it hard to fix the problem?

Resolution/Success

Put the donor in the story

Telling the story

Determine your audience

Focus on who you can actually persuade to act

Give your characters voice

Client quotes

Real people where possible

Select communication vehicle

In person? Print? Radio? TV? Video?

Pick presentation style

How formal do you need to be?

Target desired response

What do you want them to do? Fall asleep? (bedtime story) Get angry? Change their mind? Give you money?

Think about the epilogue and the sequel

Storytelling as Best Practice

Ten Tips for Storytellers

by Terrence E. McNally

1. **Stories are about people.** (And people have names – even if you have to make them up.) Instinctively, your audience will want to know whom they will be following on this particular journey, and they also will want a mental picture of that person, so it helps to provide at least a few physical details.
2. **One or more of the people in your story has to *want* something:** to *do* something, to *change* something, to *get* something. A story doesn't really get started until the audience knows what the goal is and has a reason to care whether or not it is attained.
3. **Stories need to be fixed in time and space.** Audiences don't need *every* detail, but they want to know: was this last week or 10 years ago? Are we on a street corner in Boston, a Wal-Mart in Iowa, or somewhere else?
4. **While people in a story pursue a goal, they *tend to talk*.** Direct quotes let the audience hear your characters' unique voices, bring the audience into action (which is precisely where you want them), and lend urgency to storytelling.
5. **Audiences bore easily.** Your story has to make them wonder, "What happens next?" or "How is this going to turn out?" As people in your story pursue their goal, they have to run into obstacles, surprises, or something that makes the audience sit up and take notice.
6. **Stories speak the audience's language.** They are colorful (thanks to telling details), concise, and clearly understandable.
7. **Stories stir up emotions.** Human beings (which should comprise the majority of your audience) will not think about things they do not care about. So you have to make them care before you can get them to think about your issue. That's the test your story has to meet.
8. **Stories don't tell: they show.** Intellectually, your audience will understand a sentence such as, "She felt hostility from the family." But when you write, "The family wouldn't look her in the eye," your audience will see the moment and feel the family's anger.
9. **Stories have clear meaning.** When the curtain comes down, your audiences should know why exactly they took this journey with you.
10. **Stories are containers of truth.** At their essence, the best stories are about how we should treat ourselves, how we should treat other people, or how we should treat the world around us.

Resources for Further Learning

Storytelling as Best Practice

By Andy Goodman, available at agoodmanonline.com

Free Range Thinking

A free monthly newsletter by Andy Goodman, available at agoodmanonline.com

The Triumph of Narrative by Robert Fulford

“Story telling is an attempt to deal with and at least partly contain the terrifyingly haphazard quality of life.”

The Fifth Discipline by Peter Senge

“I realize that...many otherwise competent managers in leadership positions were not leaders of the same ilk precisely because they saw no larger story.”

The Story Factor by Annette Simmons

“In a complex environment, people listen to whomever makes the most sense – whomever tells the best story.”

“Facts don’t have the power to change someone’s story. Your goal is to introduce a new story that will let your facts in.”

Storytelling in Organizations by Yiannis Gabriel

“Storytelling comes to the rescue of meaning in an epoch saturated by information in which meaning is constantly displaced and crowded by noise.”

“In [a business] environment, amidst the noisy din of facts, numbers, and images, the delicate, time-consuming discourse of storytelling is easily ignored or silenced. Few organizations are spontaneous storytelling cultures.”

Storytelling for Grantseekers: The Guide to Creative Nonprofit Fundraising by Cheryl A Clarke

All Marketers are Liars: The power of Telling Authentic Stories in a Low-Trust World by Seth Godin

Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screen writing by Robert McKee

Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting; a step-by-step guide from concept to finished script by Syd Field.