
29 January 2015

Dear Friends,

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

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(Resource) Storytelling for Nonprofits: How to Present Stories That Attract Donors, Win Support, and Raise Money

Everyone in your organization needs a good story.

To intrigue a journalist. To inspire a donor to give. To motivate staff to aim higher. To spark an advocacy revolution. To land a corporate sponsorship deal.

Stories are the basic building blocks for reaching our goals.

As fundraisers, it's not enough to arouse sympathetic emotions. We need to motivate people to act on those emotions, to vote with their checkbooks. We need to overcome the painful feelings that come with acknowledging the presence of suffering in our world. Research shows that this is all possible, though it's not always easy. The most powerful tool in a fundraiser's bag is to tell a great story.

Elements of a Great Story

Storytelling is the single most powerful communications tool you have available, bar none. But many good causes tend to have problems telling good stories even though people have been communicating through stories for thousands of years.

So, what makes narrative so powerful?

1. Stories help us remember.

When you have facts you want people to remember, it's much more likely they will be remembered if you contain those facts within a story.

2. Stories influence how we decide.

In 1990 a study was done on how people on juries came to conclusions. According to the study, most construct a story based on the facts offered in the case. Then they compared the stories they constructed with the stories the lawyers presented. The jurist would side with whomever's story matched their own the closest.

3. Stories link us to our sense of generosity.

Studies also show that donors tend to give twice as much when presented with a story about an affected individual as opposed to reading huge abstract numbers of the overall scope of a problem.

Stories make a cause relatable, tangible, and touching. So how do you write one? What is the structure of a well-told story?

1. Character

Character is our protagonist.

Roughly 99% of the time, the protagonist of a good story is a single individual. Try not to focus on an idea or an organization, but on one relatable character. A team led by Deborah Small of the University of Pennsylvania found that people are twice as likely to give a charitable gift when presented with an emotion-inducing personal story that focuses exclusively on one character's plight.

2. Desire

Desire doesn't necessarily mean lust or greed; it can also lead to a burning need to change the character's world: to obtain something, get rid of something, restore order, or escape a threat.

3. Conflict

Conflict simply refers to the obstacles that arise and prevent the character from getting whatever he or she wants. Conflict is a story's oxygen; the more conflict, the more engaging the story. Powerful stories are about suffering and hardship. Readers respond best to conflict they can identify with, but that doesn't mean your readers need experience living in a war zone. They just need to be able to relate to pain, illness, or loss.

Premium Storytelling Fuel: Emotion

Which of these stories is more compelling to you?

a) Story #1

Any money that you donate will go to Rokia, a 7-year-old girl who lives in Mali, a country in West Africa. Rokia is desperately poor and faces a threat of severe hunger, even starvation. Her life will be changed for the better as a result of your financial gift. With your support, and the support of other caring sponsors, Save the Children will work with Rokia's family and other members of the community to help feed and educate her and provide her with basic medical care.

b) Story #2

Food shortages in Malawi are affecting more than 3 million children. In Zambia, severe rainfall deficits have resulted in a 42% drop in maize production since 2000. As a result, an estimated 3 million Zambians face hunger. Four million Angolans—one-third of the population—have been forced to flee their homes. More than 11 million people in Ethiopia need immediate food assistance.

If you answered Story #1, you are like most people, according to a study by University of Pennsylvania's Deborah Small and her colleagues. They found that individuals give more to identifiable individuals who have an emotional appeal than they do to a faceless, statistical group. But those donations diminished when readers began to think analytically about the protagonist. Donations for statistical victims—stories containing characters and statistics—are always consistently low.

1. Focus on the fact that, above all, you are in the happiness business. Your primary job is to find the emotional core of your initiative and connect it to the consumers you wish to reach. Give them the opportunity to feel great by doing good.
2. Don't talk in numbers or statistics. A cerebral case for your cause is less effective than a heartfelt story.
3. Personal connections and stories have a big effect on a person's inclination to help. If you've got 'em, use 'em.

Collecting Your Stories

Stories help donors feel engaged in your work and see the difference they can make in a real person's life. They empower the organization and its supporters to continue on.

But getting good stories is easier said than done. Here are a few tips learned from interviewing hundreds of people who received help from charitable organizations.

1. Start with the end in mind.

Do your homework. Get the "story behind the story" from the program manager before you ever pick up the phone. Think of the story you want to end up with and backtrack from there to draft your questions.

2. Never use the word "interview."

The word "interview" makes people feel like they're being interrogated by

Woodward and Bernstein. It can cause anxiety and stage fright. Instead, ask if you can “chat for a few minutes about the assistance he/she received.”

3. Talk less, listen more.

Use the first minute or so to make the interviewee feel at ease and express your thanks. After that, zip your lips. Closed-ended questions will give you just what you might expect—one-word, dull answers. Ask questions like “what did the help mean to you?” and give people time to think about and respond to the question. Resist the urge to fill dead air as some of the best responses come when the interviewee is given the floor.

4. Veer from the script.

As mentioned in #1, a list of questions is always a good idea. But that said, it’s a starting point. Listen closely to the interview, and be ready to jet off in another direction if needed. Use probing questions to get more in-depth answers.

5. Get approvals.

After you’ve drafted the story, give the interviewee a chance to review for accuracy. Most make no changes, but it’s better to know any problems before publishing it. Keep a paper trail, you might need it.

6. Be prepared for anything

Interviewing for nonprofits is unique. You’re talking to people who were—or are—in crisis. Don’t be surprised if you encounter hostility, tears and any other emotions. Listen and be empathetic, but never say, “I know what you’re going through.” Most importantly, stay calm no matter what’s thrown at you.

The Power of the Picture

Why are visuals so effective at storytelling? Resource Media’s guide Seeing Is Believing: A Guide to Visual Storytelling Best Practices offers three principles of visual communication:

1. Humans are visual first, verbal second.
From the earliest stages of cognitive development, our brains organize the world around us by processing visual information.
2. Our decisions and actions are based more on emotional reactions than rational thought.
Good visuals make people feel first and think second.
3. Visuals are the most effective communication vehicles for evoking emotion and getting people to take action.
So storytellers need to use them intentionally and strategically.
Because humans are visual creatures, images and photos can communicate more

effectively than text alone (think memes and infographics). Visuals help us to understand and retain information better and are more persuasive than words alone.

For the full resource, visit: <http://bit.ly/1yNrN7N>

(Article) Nonprofit Storytelling: Seven Tips for Sharing Stories About Your Work

by Lori Jacobwith

I've been coaching staff from social profit organizations for most of my career, even when I was working alongside them as the Executive Director or Development Director. One of my "soap box" topics has always been share MORE stories.

In the past while helping a CEO and Founder of a wonderful health related organization, I found myself struggling to keep engaged in the words she was using to describe their work. I asked Sara to share more stories to give real life examples so I could stay connected and continue to care about what she was saying throughout her 15-minute presentation.

Sharing client stories wasn't new to Sara, but she struggled with how to use a story in short 3-4 sentences bites to paint a picture. The speech she gave was good, but it could have been even better had she used a few rules about stories:

1. Stories should be about real people who need something, hopefully something that YOUR organization provides.
2. Allow the person in your story to have a real name, age, and to speak for themselves.
3. Minds wander, get real quickly. In about 4-10 seconds your listeners tune out if you haven't grabbed them. Don't tell me you are going to tell me a story about someone, just tell it. Start with the person's name, age and a few descriptive words.
4. Keep your story short. Six words to two minutes is the length I recommend.
5. Allow your story to cause me to feel something. Anger, sadness, happiness, pride—it doesn't matter what the emotion is, I just have to feel something.
6. Your story should have a moment when people see themselves or someone in their own lives. Could be their aging parents, the daughter of the person who made their latte today or their own child.

7. The best stories are told by the person themselves. Clients telling their own stories are the most moving way to share how your organization makes a difference.

A great story versus a good story can make the difference between keeping your donors and volunteers connected or losing them to the next good cause. Make sure to put a face on your work every day.

To view the original article online, visit: <http://bit.ly/1ATTZEt>

(Call for Proposals) PACF Call for Proposals 2015: Small & Large Grants For The Projects Focusing on HIV/AIDS

Deadline: 10 March 2015

The Positive Action for Children Fund (PACF) invites Concept Notes on large and small grants from non-governmental and community-based organizations for the projects focusing on HIV/AIDS that can deliver change at a community level. The Fund aims to support global efforts towards Countdown to Zero: The Global Plan Towards the Elimination of New HIV Infections Among Children by 2015 and Keeping their Mothers Alive.

The Positive Action for Children Fund (PACF) is an integral part of ViiV Healthcare's commitment to communities affected by HIV and AIDS. It supports organisations across four continents , with special attention given to countries with the most need of PMTCT interventions countries.

Focus Areas: PMTCT interventions countries

Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Angola, Burundi, Chad, Tanzania, Kenya, India

The Fund has stipulated that at least 80% of its funding overall will go to projects focused on sub-Saharan Africa.

Grant Size & Duration

- Large Grants: £60,000- £300,000 over three years
- Small grants: £6,000- £40,000 over two years

Priority Areas

- Community interventions addressing loss to follow-up in PMTCT: working with communities to address and overcome causes of loss to follow-up of HIV,

- ANC, PMTCT and paediatric services.
- Community advocacy: for gender equity in education and health, including but not limited to, for positive mothers and their affected families
 - Preventing unintended pregnancies: improving women's knowledge of and access to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services and enabling women living with HIV to exercise their right to comprehensive SRH services.
 - Community intervention to keep adolescent and young women HIV negative: targeted primary prevention in community, home and schools to ensure young girls, adolescents and young women who are HIV negative stay negative; with special emphasis through all phases of adolescence.
 - Early infant diagnosis: using community developed interventions and testing to promote continuing care of infants and young children of HIV+ parents.

Eligibility Criteria

- Non-governmental and community-based organizations working across mentioned countries are eligible to apply for the funds.
- Proposed project must be new, innovative work, not the simple continuation of previously funded activity.
- Smaller Community Based Organizations (CBOs) can apply on behalf of consortia. Larger NGOs are encouraged to name smaller CBO implementing partners.
- Proposed projects must be targeted at adolescents up to the age of 19. Those services or projects may reach older age groups, but their primary focus should be 19 and younger.
- Project must have an objective that is achievable and measurable within the period of funding requested.
- Project must be identifiable as a discrete program of work alongside or within any larger program the organization runs. It should have a name that can be used by the implementer and the funder to describe the project.
- Grant request can be made for at most 25% of an organization's income for the grant request year.

To apply, visit: <http://bit.ly/1egWxB4>

(Call for Proposals) Tiet Foundation Grants for Innovative Human Rights Activities/ Projects

Deadline: 31 March 2015

Tiet Foundation aims to support organizations that maximize impact and create change. Its grant programs seek to support high-impact, low-cost solutions to the world's toughest problems—in particular, social injustices.

Its latest grant cycle is now open and organizations can request funding of up to US \$5000. It mostly supports projects in the areas of:

- Social/economic inequalities
- Marginalized populations (women, older adults, people with disabilities, LGBTQI, indigenous/native people, refugees/internally displaced persons, etc.)

Funding is given to organizations that are either direct service providers or work in the field of advocacy.

Funds may be used for general organization support or for a project.

To apply, visit: <http://bit.ly/1t2paQ4>

As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website:

<http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash>

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org

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