

Workshop on

NONPROFIT STORYTELLING

An introduction

In this packet, you will find a nonprofit storytelling guideline and story prompts to the most common stories needed for any successful organization. This is the outline I use when I give storytelling workshops to nonprofit professionals, board members and volunteers.

I start with an overview of the Nonprofit Storytelling guidelines given on the next two pages of this packet. This includes an explanation of the 4 C's of Nonprofit Storytelling and a graph of a successful Story Structure. These guidelines help when crafting an "Involvement Story", an "Impact Story", and a "Thank You Story".

After walking through the basic components of the Nonprofit Story, I invite the workshop participants to take 10 minutes to fill out the "Involvement Story" prompts included in this packet. Once the imagination has been sparked by the questions, I encourage participants to pair up with another individual. Let's call them "Storyteller A" and "Storyteller B". We then take 5 minutes to allow Storyteller A to share their story. Once Storyteller A is finished sharing their story, Storyteller B reflects back to Storyteller A what they heard. We then switch roles and let Storyteller B get a turn to share their 5-minute "Involvement Story". Storyteller A reflects back to Storyteller B what they heard. The goal is not to have the perfect story. The goal is to push through any fear or hesitation the participant may have in sharing their story. This is an exhilarating exploration. I enjoy watching the energy of the room rise as folks remember and share their passion for their organizations. It is sometimes hard to refocus the attention to the next nonprofit story – the "Impact story".

Workshop participants then get 10 minutes to fill out the story prompts for the "Impact story" which highlights the vital impact your organization has in the community. Once again, we pair up in twos or threes to share these stories with one another in 5-minute increments. Those stories are reflected back to the storyteller. And, once again, the energy in the room is buzzing with excitement.

Finally, we take 5 minutes to fill out the last story prompts for the "Thank You Story" and share these stories in pairs or triads. Often, when the workshop is complete, folks can't seem to tear themselves away from the lively conversations and the new friendships formed.

That is the power of storytelling.

Enjoy.

Overview of
NONPROFIT STORYTELLING
Guidelines

STORY GUIDELINES:

There are two main questions to ask yourself as you begin to craft your story:

1. Who is your potential audience?
2. When you are done sharing your story, what do you want your audience to think, feel, and do with the information?

When thinking about your stories and answering the included story prompts, keep in mind the following 4 C's of Nonprofit Storytelling:

CONNECTION: Connection is the bridge between the audience and your organization. The most common connections are our basic needs, wants and desires: a roof over our head, food on the table, a clean environment to live in, safe neighborhoods, access to education...

CHARACTERS: There are usually two main characters in a nonprofit story. The main character is the person, animal, place, or entity that has been improved by your organization. The second character is your organization and/or the donors who make the improvement possible.

CONFLICT: Conflict is what holds the main character back from achieving their basic needs, wants, and/or desires.

External conflict - the obvious physical barriers relating to health, finances, environment...

Internal conflicts – the unseen barriers relating to thoughts, beliefs, and feelings.

CONQUEST: The outcome of the main characters situation. How the character's problem has been solved and/or life has been improved (with the help of your organization).

Crafting Your
INVOLVEMENT STORY
Story Prompts

This is the story of how you became involved with your organization and why you donate your time, talent and money. The following story prompt questions will help you mold and create your compelling story.

1. When were you first aware of the organization? Where were you in your life? Where were you physically (at a dinner party, at an event, with a friend having tea and baklava)?
2. What one thing stood out to you at first?
3. Did you notice you had any preconceived notions of the organization or any resistance to the organization? If so, how did you overcome them?
4. How did you first get involved (as a volunteer, donor, board member)? Did someone ask you to participate?
5. Why do you personally feel compelled to give to this organization?
6. How has the organization helped you realize your values and goals?

Crafting the
IMPACT STORY
Story Prompts

This story demonstrates the need in the community and how your organization is meeting the need. If you are looking to fundraise, this is the story you will most likely use. The following story prompt questions will help you mold and create this story.

1. Who or what will be the main character? (Which character will best relate to your audience?)
2. What is the external obstacle your main character needs to overcome?
3. What does your organization do to help alleviate the problem?
4. How does your main character mentally cope with the problem/situation?
5. How does your organization help solve the internal problem?
6. Why is your organization the right organization to be tackling this cause?
7. At the end of a story, it is very common to have a “call to action”. What is your call to action?

Crafting the
THANK YOU STORY
Story Prompts

This is the story you tell when you thank a donor/volunteer. The following story prompt questions will help you mold and create this powerful story.

1. Who or what was helped by the donor's personal gift?
2. What was the obstacle the donation helped overcome?
3. Is there a thing (like a picture, testimonial, etc.) that illustrates what the donor's gift accomplished?
4. Is there a quote from the donation's recipient saying how much their life has been changed? Can you pass this along to the donor?
5. Are there any details from the effect of the gift that would be special for the donor to hear?
6. What percentage of their gift went to the client?