

Inspiring Action

A Guide to Crafting Powerful Calls to Action for Nonprofits



INCLUDES:
8 Templates and Worksheets to Mobilize
Support and Drive Donations

a Nonprofit Storytelling Conference Publication

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A Call to Action

You have the power to inspire people to act.

Whether you're launching a fundraising campaign, advocating for policy change, or building community awareness, a strong Call to Action (CTA) is your key to getting people to take action.

A Call to Action is a sentence(s) that encourages your audience to take a specific action.

A powerful CTA does three things:

1. **Provides Clear Direction:** A good CTA tells your audience exactly what you want them to do, whether it's donating, volunteering, signing a petition, or spreading awareness.
2. **Creates Urgency:** Effective CTAs make your audience feel they need to act now.
3. **Inspires Action:** A compelling CTA taps into the emotions and values of your audience, motivating them to support your cause.

A well-crafted CTA can galvanize support, inspire hearts, and drive people to act. History's greatest leaders—like Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, and many others—didn't just talk; they moved people to action. Their CTAs were powerful, direct, and impossible to ignore.

Examples from a few of the greatest leaders who moved people to action:

1. **Martin Luther King Jr.:**

CTA: "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"

Impact: This speech inspired millions and became a cornerstone of the Civil Rights Movement.

2. **Gandhi:**

CTA: "Do or die."

Impact: This rallying cry during the Quit India Movement motivated Indians to seek independence from British rule.

3. **John F. Kennedy:**

CTA: "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."

Impact: This call to action inspired Americans to contribute to the public good and emphasized civic responsibility.

In the next chapter, you'll learn about three different types of calls to action. You'll see examples and frameworks to help you craft CTAs that drive action and support for your nonprofit

3 Types of Calls to Action for Nonprofits

Different CTAs serve different purposes.

1. Fundraising Calls to Action

These CTAs are specific asks for financial or other forms of support. They are direct, clear, and often include a tangible goal or need. Fundraising CTAs are typically used in fundraising appeals, campaigns, and fundraising events.

Characteristics:

- Purpose: Raise funds or gather resources.
- Tone: Direct, clear, urgent.
- Where to use them: Fundraising appeals, crowdfunding campaigns, event invitations.

Subcategories:

- Immediate Need: Highlights a specific, urgent requirement.
Example: "Donate \$5 today to provide a meal for a hungry child."
- Impact-Oriented: Shows the direct impact of the donation.
Example: "Your \$20 donation will supply schoolbooks for a student in need."
- Recurring Support: Encourages ongoing contributions.
Example: "Join our monthly giving program and conserve an acre of wetlands each month."

2. Motivational Calls to Action

These CTAs are designed to inspire and mobilize a group of people or individuals within a group. They evoke strong emotions, create a sense of urgency, and foster a collective spirit of action. Motivational CTAs are often used in speeches, rallies, and public addresses.

Characteristics:

- Purpose: Inspire action, change minds, build momentum.
- Tone: Emotional, urgent, visionary.
- Where to use them: Speeches, rallying cries, motivational messages.

Subcategories:

- Visionary: Focuses on long-term goals and aspirations.
Example: "Together, we can end hunger and create a world where no child goes to bed hungry."
- Urgent: Emphasizes the immediate need for action.

Example: “The time to act on climate change is now. Our planet cannot wait any longer.”

- Unity: Calls for collective action and solidarity.

Example: “United, we can achieve equal rights for all. Let us stand together and make history.”

3. Educational Calls to Action

These CTAs inform and change minds by providing knowledge and encouraging deeper engagement with a cause. They are used to build awareness and understanding, often as a precursor to other types of CTAs.

Characteristics:

- Purpose: Educate, inform, raise awareness.
- Tone: Informative, engaging, persuasive.
- Where to use them: Awareness campaigns, educational content, advocacy messages.

Subcategories:

- Informational: Provides facts and data to build awareness.
Example: “Learn about the impact of climate change and how you can help.”
- Advocacy: Encourages action based on newfound knowledge.
Example: “Sign our petition to demand action on climate change.”
- Engagement: Invites deeper involvement and learning.
Example: “Attend our webinar to learn more about how you can make a difference.”

10 Real-Life Inspirations

Here's how ten historical figures have used these principles to rally support and drive change:

Here are 10 examples of actual calls to action (CTAs) from history that include a clear or implied call for specific action:

1. Martin Luther King Jr.

Call to Action:

"Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline."

Context:

From his "I Have a Dream" speech, this CTA urges the audience to continue their struggle for civil rights with dignity and discipline.

2. Winston Churchill

Call to Action:

"We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

Context:

Aimed at rallying the British people during World War II, this CTA calls for relentless resistance against the Nazis.

3. John F. Kennedy

Call to Action:

"Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."

Context:

In his inaugural address, Kennedy calls on Americans to contribute actively to their country.

4. Ronald Reagan

Call to Action:

"Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

Context:

Delivered at the Berlin Wall in 1987, Reagan's demand became a powerful symbol of the end of the Cold War and the push for freedom and democracy in Eastern Europe.

5. Susan B. Anthony

Call to Action:

"Organize, agitate, educate, must be our war cry."

Context:

Susan B. Anthony's call to action for the women's suffrage movement emphasized the need for organization, agitation, and education.

6. Mahatma Gandhi

Call to Action:

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

Context:

Gandhi encourages people to engage in selfless service.

7. Franklin D. Roosevelt

Call to Action:

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

Context:

In his first inaugural address, Roosevelt calls Americans to overcome their fears and take action to combat the Great Depression.

8. Nelson Mandela

Call to Action:

"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended."

Context:

Mandela's words encourage ongoing commitment and action in the pursuit of freedom.

9. Harvey Milk

Call to Action:

"Hope will never be silent."

Context:

In his speeches and public appearances, Milk encouraged the LGBTQ+ community to be visible and vocal in their fight for rights.

10. Mother Teresa

Call to Action:

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

Context:

Mother Teresa urges people to take compassionate action in their everyday lives.

Call to Action + Storytelling

To see the true impact of a call to action (CTA), it's important to know how it fits into the bigger picture of storytelling.

Effective storytelling draws the audience in by creating an emotional connection. A strong CTA leverages this connection, making the story feel personal and urgent.

Here's how CTAs and storytelling intertwine:

1. Creating Emotional Engagement

Stories connect on an emotional level. They evoke feelings of empathy, hope, and urgency. A well-crafted CTA leverages these emotions, prompting the audience to act because they feel a personal stake in the outcome.

Example: Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech didn't just present facts; it painted a vivid picture of a future where racial equality was a reality. The emotional weight of the vision made the call to action powerful and compelling.

2. Establishing Relevance

Stories make issues relatable. They turn abstract concepts into tangible experiences. A CTA embedded within a story becomes relevant because the audience sees themselves as part of the narrative.

Example: When John F. Kennedy called Americans to ask what they could do for their country, he framed it within the larger story of national service and unity. The CTA resonated because people saw their role in the broader narrative.

3. Building a Journey

Stories take the audience on a journey. They have a beginning, middle, and end, with the CTA serving as the pivotal moment of action. This journey makes the CTA feel like a natural next step rather than an isolated demand.

Example: Barack Obama's "Yes, we can" slogan was part of a larger narrative of hope and change. The journey from the challenges faced to the possibilities ahead made the CTA an integral part of the story.

4. Creating a Sense of Urgency

Stories highlight urgency. They emphasize the importance of the moment, making the CTA timely and necessary. This urgency drives immediate action.

Example: Greta Thunberg's call to act "as if our house is on fire" emphasizes the immediate threat of climate change. The urgency of the story compels the audience to act now.

Example Sequence: Integrating Storytelling and CTAs

Here's how you can combine motivational, educational, and fundraising CTAs into a cohesive storytelling framework for your nonprofit:

1. Motivational CTA:

Story Element: Introduce the vision.

"Together, we can end hunger and create a world where no child goes to bed hungry. Our collective action can make this vision a reality."

2. Educational CTA:

Story Element: Provide context and relevance.

"Did you know that 1 in 5 children in our community go to bed hungry? Learn more about the issue and how we can solve it together."

3. Fundraising CTA:

Story Element: Highlight the immediate need.

"Donate \$5 today to provide a meal for a hungry child. Your support can make a real difference in a child's life right now."

4. Reinforcement:

Story Element: Bring the narrative to a conclusion and emphasize impact.

"By contributing, you're joining a community of compassionate individuals dedicated to ending hunger. Together, we can achieve this goal."

By weaving CTAs into storytelling, you create a powerful narrative that informs, inspires, and compels people to take action. Your audience becomes part of the story, motivated to contribute to a cause they now feel deeply connected to.

In the section, you'll find eight easy-to-use worksheets, each designed to help you create compelling CTAs tailored to your nonprofit's unique needs.

Get ready to transform your words into actions.

Turn the page and let's get started!

Worksheet 1: The Visionary Call to Action

Template:

"If we are to [*achieve a noble goal*], it begins with [*specific action or commitment*]. Our future [*or desired state*] depends on the choices we make today. Together, we can [*visionary outcome*]!"

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Identify the Noble Goal:
 - What is the overarching goal you want to achieve?
 - Example: End hunger.
2. Specify the Action or Commitment:
 - What specific action or commitment is needed to begin this journey?
 - Example: Our commitment to feeding every child.
3. Describe the Desired Future State:
 - What does the future look like if this goal is achieved?
 - Example: A future of abundance where nobody goes hungry.
4. Outline the Visionary Outcome:
 - What visionary outcome can you foresee if the actions are taken today?
 - Example: Feed the world.

Your Turn:

- Achieve a Noble Goal: _____
- Specific Action or Commitment: _____
- Desired Future State: _____
- Visionary Outcome: _____

Complete Statement:

"If we are to _____, it begins with
_____. Our future
_____ depends on the choices we make today. Together,
we can _____!"

Worksheet 2: The Urgent Call to Action

Template:

"We stand at a crossroads. The time to act is now, for *[specific issue or problem]* demands our immediate attention. We must *[specific action]*, and we must do it *[sense of urgency]*. Our legacy depends on it!"

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Identify the Specific Issue or Problem:
 - What is the urgent issue or problem that needs attention?
 - Example: Providing clean, disease-free water.
2. Specify the Action Needed:
 - What specific action is required to address this issue?
 - Example: Build a water filtration system.
3. Create a Sense of Urgency:
 - Why must this action be taken immediately?
 - Example: Because every day people are getting sick from the dirty water.

Your Turn:

- Specific Issue or Problem: _____
- Specific Action: _____
- Sense of Urgency: _____

Complete Statement:

"We stand at a crossroads. The time to act is now, for _____ demands our immediate attention. We must _____, and we must do it _____. Our legacy depends on it!"

Worksheet 3: The Unity Call to Action

Template:

"United, we are stronger. [*Desired outcome*] can only be achieved if we come together as one. By [*specific collective action*], we will [*positive outcome*]. Let us join hands and make history!"

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Identify the Desired Outcome:
 - What is the positive outcome you want to achieve through unity?
 - Example: Achieving world peace.
2. Specify the Collective Action:
 - What specific collective action is required?
 - Example: Fostering understanding and compassion.
3. Describe the Positive Outcome:
 - What positive result will this collective action bring?
 - Example: Create a peaceful world.

Your Turn:

- Desired Outcome: _____
- Specific Collective Action: _____
- Positive Outcome: _____

Complete Statement:

"United, we are stronger. _____ can only be achieved if we come together as one. By _____, we will _____ . Let us join hands and make history!"

Worksheet 4: The Inspirational Call to Action

Template:

"Let us rise to the challenge. We have the power to *[specific goal]*, and it begins with each one of us. By *[specific action]*, we can *[envision a better future]*. Believe in our cause, and let us move forward with hope and determination!"

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Identify the Specific Goal:
 - What is the specific goal you want to achieve?
 - Example: End cancer.
2. Specify the Action Needed:
 - What specific action is needed to achieve this goal?
 - Example: Supporting research.
3. Envision a Better Future:
 - What better future can be created through this action?
 - Example: Create a future where nobody gets cancer.

Your Turn:

- Specific Goal: _____
- Specific Action: _____
- Better Future: _____

Complete Statement:

"Let us rise to the challenge. We have the power to _____, and it begins with each one of us. By _____, we can _____. Believe in our cause, and let us move forward with hope and determination!"

Worksheet 5: The Reflective Call to Action

Template:

"Think of those who came before us, who dared to dream and achieved greatness. Now, it is our turn to [specific goal]. With [specific action], we honor their legacy and build a future worthy of their sacrifice. Let us act with purpose and conviction!"

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Identify the Specific Goal:
 - What specific goal do you aim to achieve?
 - Example: Advance human rights.
2. Specify the Action Needed:
 - What specific action is required to honor the legacy?
 - Example: Steadfast advocacy.

Your Turn:

- Specific Goal: _____
- Specific Action: _____
- Honor the Legacy: _____

Complete Statement:

"Think of those who came before us, who dared to dream and achieved greatness. Now, it is our turn to _____. With _____, we honor their legacy and build a future worthy of their sacrifice. Let us act with purpose and conviction!"

Worksheet 6: The Motivational Call to Action

Template:

"We have faced challenges before, and we have overcome. Now, the time has come to [*specific goal*]. By [*specific action*], we can turn [*adversity into opportunity*]. Let us be bold, let us be brave, and let us seize this moment!"

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Identify the Specific Goal:
 - What is the specific goal you want to achieve?
 - Example: Eradicate disease.
2. Specify the Action Needed:
 - What specific action is required to achieve this goal?
 - Example: Investing in research and healthcare.
3. Adversity into Opportunity:
 - How will this action turn adversity into opportunity?
 - Example: experiments into lifesaving medicine

Your Turn:

- Specific Goal: _____
- Specific Action: _____
- Turn Adversity into Opportunity: _____

Complete Statement:

"We have faced challenges before, and we have overcome. Now, the time has come to _____ . By _____ , we can _____ . Let us be bold, let us be brave, and let us seize this moment!"

Worksheet 7: The Empowering Call to Action

Template:

"Each of us has the power to make a difference. To *[specific goal]*, we need every voice, every hand, and every heart. By *[specific action]*, we will achieve *[desired outcome]*. Stand up, step forward, and take action now!"

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Identify the Specific Goal:
 - What is the specific goal you want to achieve?
 - Example: Secure equal rights for all.
2. Specify the Action Needed:
 - What specific action is required to achieve this goal?
 - Example: Advocating for justice.
3. Describe the Desired Outcome:
 - What is the desired outcome of this action?
 - Example: Achieve equality.

Your Turn:

- Specific Goal: _____
- Specific Action: _____
- Desired Outcome: _____

Complete Statement:

"Each of us has the power to make a difference. To _____,
we need every voice, every hand, and every heart. By
_____, we will achieve
_____. Stand up, step forward, and take action now!"

Worksheet 8: The Fundraising Call to Action

Template:

"Your support is crucial. To [specific goal], we need your help. By [specific action], we can [desired outcome]. Please donate now."

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Identify the Specific Goal:
 - What is the specific goal you want to achieve through fundraising?
 - Example: Provide clean drinking water to communities in need.
2. Specify the Action Needed:
 - What specific action is required from your audience to achieve this goal?
 - Example: Donating \$25.
3. Describe the Desired Outcome:
 - What is the desired outcome of this action?
 - Example: Ensure every child has access to clean water.

Your Turn:

- Specific Goal: _____
- Specific Action: _____
- Desired Outcome: _____

Complete Statement:

"Your support is crucial. To _____, we need your help. By _____, we can _____ . Please donate now and be part of the change."

Additional Storytelling Resources

Nonprofit Storytelling Conference:

The #1 conference in the world to help nonprofit organizations use storytelling to raise money and connect with their community. To learn more go to:

<https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com>

Nonprofit Community of Storytellers:

Wonderful FREE resource. Check out the community of storytellers over at:

<https://nonprofitstorytelling.com>

Tactical Thursdays:

Become a better storyteller in just 10 minutes. Join Tactical Thursdays for a weekly dose of storytelling and fundraising goodness. It's free.

<https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com/tactical-thursday-signup>