

If Your Cat Gets It, So Will Your Donors

Simplifying Stories for Maximum Impact



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Donors are busy, distracted, and inundated with information.

To grab their attention and move them to action, your stories need to be clear, simple, and emotionally resonant.

If your cat can "understand" the story—meaning it's free from jargon and gets to the heart of the emotion—then your donors will get it too.

You're about to learn guide the process of stripping down complex stories to their emotional core, ensuring they are easy to understand and compelling for any audience.

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Why Simplicity Matters

- **Clarity equals impact.** The simpler your story, the more likely it is to connect with your audience.
- **Emotion drives action.** Complex details can muddy the emotional core of your message.
- **Jargon alienates.** Donors aren't insiders—they care about outcomes, not technical terms.

Understanding Core Emotion

Every impactful story revolves around a core emotion—the primary feeling you want your audience to experience. Emotion is the bridge that connects your story to your donor's heart, making them feel personally involved.

Common Core Emotions in Fundraising Stories:

- Hope: "With your support, Maria can continue her education."
- Urgency: "Every day without treatment, Jason's condition worsens."
- Gratitude: "Because of you, a family has a safe place to sleep tonight."
- Anger/Injustice: "No child should have to go to bed hungry in our community."

Before crafting your story, determine the core emotion that will drive action. If the emotion is unclear or diluted, your message will lose impact.

The Three-Step Story Simplification Process

1. Find the Emotional Core

What's the one feeling you want your donor to experience?

2. Cut the Clutter

Remove unnecessary details that distract from the story's heart.

Example: Change "Our multidisciplinary, community-based intervention" to "Our neighborhood program."

3. Use Everyday Language

If you wouldn't say it to a friend, don't say it to a donor.

Example: Replace "We facilitate the allocation of resources" with "We give kids the tools they need."

Exercises to Simplify Your Stories

1. The "Explain It to Your Cat" Test

Write your story, then read it aloud as if you're talking to your cat. If it sounds confusing or overly complicated, simplify it.

2. The "One Sentence" Challenge

Boil your entire story down to a single, emotionally powerful sentence. This helps you find the core message.

Example: "Because of you, Sarah won't go to bed hungry tonight."

3. Jargon Buster Swap

List all the technical or insider terms in your story. Rewrite them in plain language.

Example: Change "food insecurity" to "not knowing where the next meal is coming from."

4. Think, Feel, Do Framework

Before writing your story, ask yourself:

What do I want my audience to think? Do you want them to realize the urgency of a problem or see themselves as part of the solution?

- What do I want them to feel? Inspired, compassionate, or maybe even outraged?
- What do I want them to do? Make a specific donation, volunteer, or share your message.

Example: "Imagine being a mom who can't afford to feed her child tonight. Your \$50 can change that."

5. The "What, So What, Now What?" Exercise

- **What happened?** Describe the situation in simple terms.
- **So what?** Why does it matter to the donor?
- **Now what?** What do you want them to do?

Example:

- **What:** "Dennis walked 12 miles to ask for help for his sick mom."

- **So what:** "Without support, Dennis's family wouldn't survive."
- **Now what:** "Your \$100 can help another family like Dennis's stay together."

Swipe File: Simplified Story Starters

Before: "Our annual fundraising gala supports the operational costs of our comprehensive youth development programs."

After: "Your support helps kids in our community stay safe and succeed."

Before: "Through a multi-tiered approach, we address systemic inequities in educational access."

After: "We help kids get the education they deserve."

Before: "Your contributions assist in the procurement of essential medical supplies for under-resourced communities."

After: "You help send life-saving medicine to people who need it."

Before: "Our organization fosters economic sustainability in marginalized communities through micro-loans and entrepreneurship training."

After: "You help families start small businesses and build better lives."

Quick Checklist for Simplifying Stories

- Have I identified the core emotion?
- Did I remove unnecessary details and backstory?
- Am I using plain, everyday language?
- Does the story make the donor feel like the hero?
- Would my cat understand the main idea?
- Did I use the Think, Feel, Do framework?
- Did I answer What, So What, Now What?

Simplicity doesn't mean dumbing down your message—it means clarifying it so the emotional impact shines through. When your stories are simple and heartfelt, donors won't just understand them—they'll feel them. And when they feel, they give.

Remember: If your cat gets it, so will your donors.

Want to Master the Art of Donor Communications?

If you found this guide helpful, imagine what you could achieve by mastering every aspect of donor communications. The **Nonprofit Storytelling Conference** is the ultimate event for fundraising professionals looking to elevate their donor communications and fundraising results.

At the conference, you'll learn:

- How to craft stories that make donors feel like heroes.
- Techniques to uncover compelling stories within your organization.
- Strategies to connect with donors on a deeper emotional level.

You'll leave with practical tools, insider tips from top experts, and a community of nonprofit professionals dedicated to making a bigger impact.

Ready to transform your fundraising? Join us at the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference and learn how to make your stories unforgettable.

To learn more, go to <https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com>

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