

Spotting Stories That Raise More Money

A Nonprofit Professional's Guide to
Finding and Using Powerful Stories



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Introduction

Stories are the backbone of effective fundraising.

But how do you find the right story—one that connects with donors and inspires them to give?

This guide will walk you through the process of spotting powerful moments within your nonprofit and transforming them into compelling fundraising stories.

There are two primary ways nonprofit professionals use stories in fundraising:

- 1. For Appeals (Bad Change):** These stories highlight a negative change or crisis that needs urgent donor intervention. The goal is to show donors how they can help reverse the situation.
- 2. For Donor Reporting (Bad-to-Good Change):** These stories show donors the impact of their past gifts by moving from a struggle to a resolution, reinforcing their role in making a difference.

Understanding these two types of stories will help you spot the right moments, frame them effectively, and use them strategically to inspire donor action.

Now, let's dive into how to identify and craft these fundraising stories.

Step 1: Spot the Moment of Change

What to Look For:

- A moment of change for the beneficiary, either good or bad.
- A situation that evokes emotion—hope, fear, gratitude, or urgency.
- A turning point where something significant happens:
- Did the beneficiary face an unexpected struggle or setback? (Bad change for appeals)
- Did the beneficiary experience a breakthrough or success? (Bad-to-good change for donor reporting)

Questions to Help Identify a Story:

1. Who is impacted?

Focus on one individual or a small group for emotional resonance.

For instance, is it a single mother struggling to feed her children, a rescued animal waiting for a home, or a student who just received a scholarship?

2. What happened?

Look for a specific event, challenge, or breakthrough.

For instance, did a family lose their home due to a disaster, did a medical emergency leave someone without options, or did a donor-funded program change a life?

3. Why does it matter?

Think about the emotions or values the moment reflects.

For instance, does it highlight resilience, community support, the power of generosity, or the urgent need for intervention?

4. What's at stake?

Highlight the risk or reward involved in the change.

For instance, if no action is taken, will a child go hungry, an elderly person remain isolated, or an endangered species face extinction?

Examples of Powerful Moments:

Bad Change (Appeal Story):

- A child loses access to school meals during the summer.
- A family struggles to pay for medical care after an unexpected diagnosis.
- A local animal shelter runs out of space for incoming rescues.

Bad-to-Good Change (Donor Reporting Story):

- A student receives a scholarship and achieves their dream of going to college.
- A donor-funded program helps an unhoused individual find stable housing.
- A therapy dog funded by donors brings comfort to hospital patients.

Pro Tip: Focus on the before and after of the story:

- Before: Describe the struggle or problem.
- After: Show the potential or actual outcome when the donor helps.

Step 2: Analyze the Story Structure

Use this simple framework to organize the story:

- **Before:** What was life like before the change?
- **Moment of Change:** What event or action disrupted the status quo?
- **After:** What happened as a result of the change? (Good or bad?)

Example Structures:

Appeal Example (Bad Change):

- **Before:** Maria had a steady job, providing for her two children.
- **Moment of Change:** She lost her job during a company downsizing.
- **After:** Now Maria struggles to afford groceries and pay rent.

Donor Reporting Example (Bad-to-Good Change):

- **Before:** Liam was failing his classes due to a lack of school supplies.
- **Moment of Change:** Donors funded a backpack drive for Liam's school.
- **After:** Now Liam is thriving, confident, and looking forward to the next school year.

Step 3: Use Templates to Spot and Craft Stories

Story Spotting Template:

Fill in the blanks to uncover the story:

1. Who is the beneficiary?

- Example: A young student, a shelter dog, a single parent.

2. What happened?

- Example: They lost access to critical services, faced a new obstacle, or reached a breakthrough moment.

3. What's the key emotion?

- Example: Fear, hope, gratitude, resilience.

4. What's at stake?

- Example: Their future, health, safety, or well-being.

Appeal Story Template:

- Maria used to [describe stable situation].
- But everything changed when [describe moment of change].
- Now she [describe struggle or stakes]. With your help, Maria can [describe potential positive outcome].

Donor Reporting Story Template:

- Liam's life was once [describe difficult situation].
- Thanks to donors like you, [describe donor intervention].
- Now Liam [describe positive outcome].

This guide helps you spot powerful stories, but crafting them into compelling fundraising narratives takes skill and practice.

If you want to learn how to structure, write, and deliver stories that deeply resonate with

donors and inspire action, join us at the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference.

At the conference, you'll gain expert insights, hands-on training, and proven storytelling techniques to elevate your fundraising. Don't miss this opportunity to transform the way you connect with donors through storytelling!

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

Take Your Storytelling to the Next Level

Finding great stories is just the beginning.

The real magic happens when you craft and tell them in a way that moves people to action. If you're unsure how to shape your stories into compelling, donor-inspiring narratives, the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference is the perfect place to learn.

At the conference, you'll learn from expert storytellers, fundraisers, and nonprofit professionals who have mastered the art of storytelling for impact. Whether it's writing more persuasive appeals, creating donor-centered videos, or sharing stories in a way that boosts engagement, you'll leave with practical skills you can apply immediately.

Ready to craft powerful stories and 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>

**Get help raising more money. Come to the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference.
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