

**The GiveMN Guide to
Storytelling
for
Fundraising**

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Why Storytelling?

Why does storytelling matter?

Good stories make us laugh, cry, feel inspired, empathize with others, and so much more. Good stories also move people to action! And when the action you want people to take is making a donation, a compelling story is critical.

In a recent survey of donors, GiveMN found that the number one reason people donated to a cause was because they read a story that inspired them to give.

We all want to feel connected – to be part of something. Telling a strong story is one of the best ways you can create community, build empathy, and help your community see the importance of your work!



Emotion & Tone

How should your reader feel?

Before you identify what story you want to tell, consider how you want to make people feel. Every story may have a different emotional tone. For instance, a client success story would have an uplifting, happy, celebratory feel. On the other hand, a story about dire community need might feel more serious and urgent.

What is your organizational voice?

How do you typically speak to your audience? Do you keep a casual, friendly tone? Or do you take a more serious tone and speak with authority?

When writing a story to engage your audience and demonstrate your work, it's important to also consider how your audience usually hears from you. If your organizational voice is usually lighthearted, a very serious story might be a surprise. And vice versa, if you normally take a serious tone with your audience, a funny story might feel out of character.

No matter what you do, be sure to stay true to what feels authentic to you and your audience!



Discovering Your Voice

Our organization usually tries to sound...

Circle all that apply!

Cheerful	Hopeful	Urgent	Humorous
Friendly	Optimistic	Neutral	Curious
Casual	Calm	Important	Encouraging
Warm	Factual	Concerned	Confident
Informal	Serious	Straightforward	
Relaxed	Authoritative	Informative	
Excited	Formal	Nostalgic	...What else?

In the story we're telling, we want to sound...

Circle all that apply!

Cheerful	Hopeful	Urgent	Humorous
Friendly	Optimistic	Neutral	Curious
Casual	Calm	Important	Encouraging
Warm	Factual	Concerned	Confident
Informal	Serious	Straightforward	
Relaxed	Authoritative	Informative	
Excited	Formal	Nostalgic	...What else?

Remember...these tones are a starting point as you brainstorm the story you want to share. Trust your gut - you're the expert on what will resonate most with your audience!



Impact



Impact is generosity in action.

Once you've established how you want your reader to feel and what tone you'll use in your storytelling, now it's time to determine what story of impact you want to share with the world! Showcasing your work is important because it demonstrates to donors, volunteers, program participants - everyone - exactly why their support is so valuable and how it contributes to your mission.

What kind of impact should we talk about?

Many of us jump straight into statistics when we're asked to talk about impact: "We served over 10,000 meals! We helped 500 kids!"

However, we'd encourage you to think about impact through the lens of what *feels* meaningful. What is an example of your work that makes people feel the emotions you identified earlier in this workbook? *Then* we can tie it back to outcomes and output. Stories built around an emotional connection are a lot more likely to be compelling to readers than a list of numbers. Numbers should support your narrative, not be the main character.



Crafting Your Story of Impact

Who has a meaningful story about the work of your organization?

Perhaps someone who participated in your program had a great experience they want to share. Or maybe a family credits some of their successes to your support. Volunteers, board members, staff, and program participants are all good places to start when thinking about who has a meaningful story to share! Jot down some ideas below.

i.e., Last year, Nate came to ABC Arts with the hope of becoming an arts fellow.

What was meaningful?

Once you've identified who has a story to share, it's time to define what about their story was meaningful. What challenge was present? What was important to your storyteller?

i.e., Nate's school district didn't have a strong art program, leaving him without options to access arts education. He felt like his dream of becoming a professional artist was slipping away.

How did your organization make a difference?

This is where you start to connect dots to your programming! Now is your time to shine by describing how you helped your storyteller.

i.e., Each year, ABC Arts offers a 6-month arts fellowship for students aged 12-18. Nate submitted his student portfolio and was able to go through our fellowship program to learn from professionals and hone his craft.



What difference was made?

Your reader is hooked – they are connected to an emotional story, they know what your organization does...now they want to know how the story ends!

i.e., After completing his fellowship, Nate felt confident enough to apply to the art school of his dreams. And he was accepted with a scholarship! He said, “Without the ABC Arts fellowship, I never would have had the confidence or support to go after my dream.”

What’s next?

Now that you’ve described the outcome for your storyteller, it’s important to identify what work is ahead and why your audience should get involved.

i.e., We want to provide arts education support to every young person in our county that needs us. Your donation of \$100 will help support two new fellowships this year.

Pause! If you do use a client or participant’s story, be sure to involve them in the writing process, be clear about how their story will be shared, get explicit consent to share their story, and offer a way for them to contact you if they change their mind and no longer want their story shared. Consent and transparency are a must-have when it comes to ethical storytelling.

How can readers get involved?

We know the type of work you do, why it’s important, what difference it makes, and what the future need is. Now, identify how your audience can support you. (Circle all that apply)

Like/follow your organization on social media

Attend an event

Sign up to volunteer

Sign a petition

Make a donation of food/clothing/other goods

Join a committee/board of directors

Sign up for emails/eNews

Make a financial donation

...What else?



Channels

Which platform should we use?

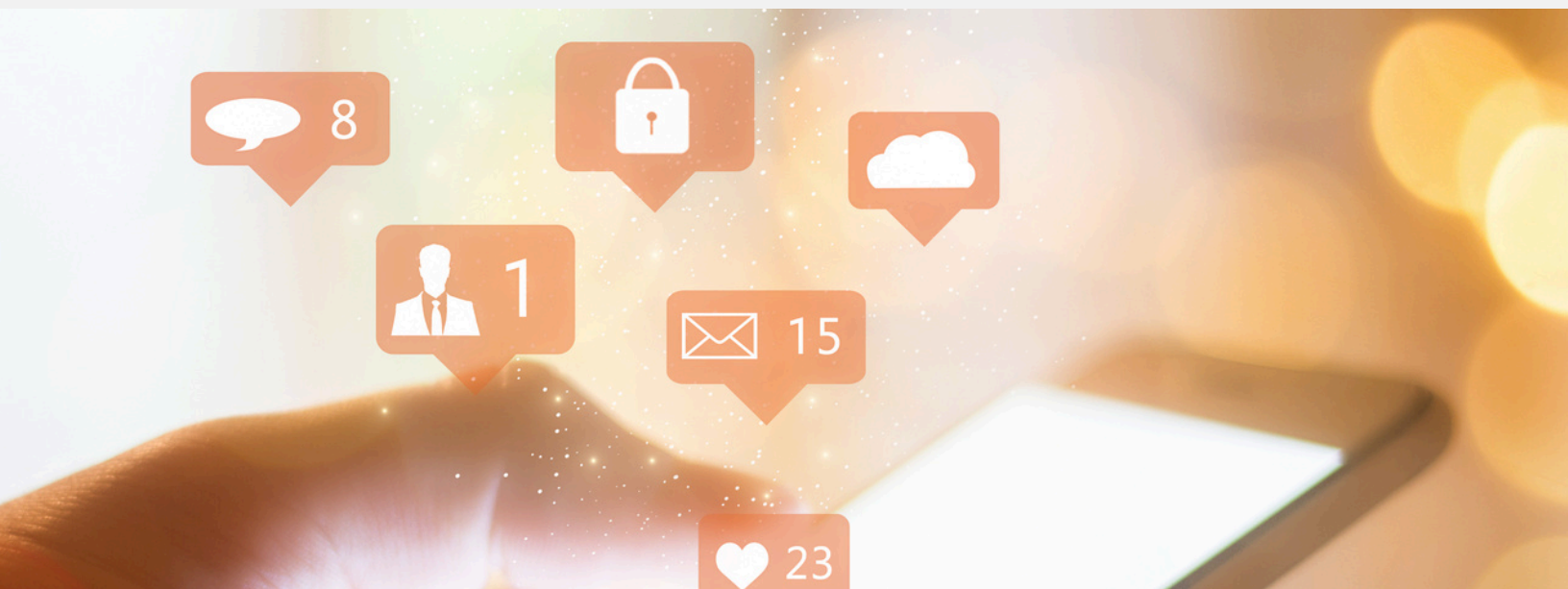
With so many social media platforms, postal mail, email, and more, it can feel overwhelming. When considering which channels to use to share your story, the best channels you can use are the ones your audience already uses.

Instead of trying to write a version of your story for every social media platform, consider what your team has time for and what platform might best serve the message you're trying to get across.

For example, if you want to share the story of a program participant in their own words, a short video might be the best format. From there, you might determine that Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are the best communications channels for you to use!

Another example might be if you're sharing a written narrative story, a postal letter or newsletter and an email/eNews might be the best ways to share a long-form piece.

However you choose to share your story, remember to keep it manageable for your team and select platforms where your audience will see it!



Your Communications Checklist

You've identified your audience, your story, and your goal...now it's time to figure out how you'll spread the word. You know your audience best, so select communication channels that will resonate with them the most.

Which communication channels are most successful with your audience?

Which channels do your audience members respond to the best? Check all that apply.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone or video calls | <input type="checkbox"/> Text messages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook | <input type="checkbox"/> Postal mail letters | <input type="checkbox"/> Recorded video messages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter | <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten notes or cards | <input type="checkbox"/> Your website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Instagram | <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual or in-person gatherings | <input type="checkbox"/> Your GiveMN.org page |

Of the options you checked above, what are the top three most impactful channels for sharing your story?

1	2	3
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What do you need to effectively engage people through your top three channels?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photos (and photo use consent) | <input type="checkbox"/> Organization logos and/or graphics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quotes or testimonials (and story use consent) | <input type="checkbox"/> Images sized for email and/or social media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Story and/or appeal copy | <input type="checkbox"/> Address, phone, and/or emails of your audience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video content (and video/audio use consent) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |



GiveMN tip! Don't forget the power of spending a small amount of money on social media advertising! Investing even \$20 can dramatically increase the reach of your best Facebook posts, including to prospective supporters who don't yet follow your organization!



What's Next?

This storytelling guide can help anytime you need to craft a story! Consider some of these ideas:

- Developing a “fund-a-need” ask at your next fundraising event
- Identify the core story you want to highlight in your next fundraising campaign
- Brainstorm a feature story for eNews or a newsletter
- Identify story examples you can share with donors during meetings or phone calls
- Discover who you might want to develop deeper relationships with in order to better understand their experiences with your organization



**Want additional help developing your story?
We'd love to help!**

Reach out to our team of technology experts at Help@GiveMN.org anytime or visit GiveMN.org for more free-to-access resources and workbooks.

