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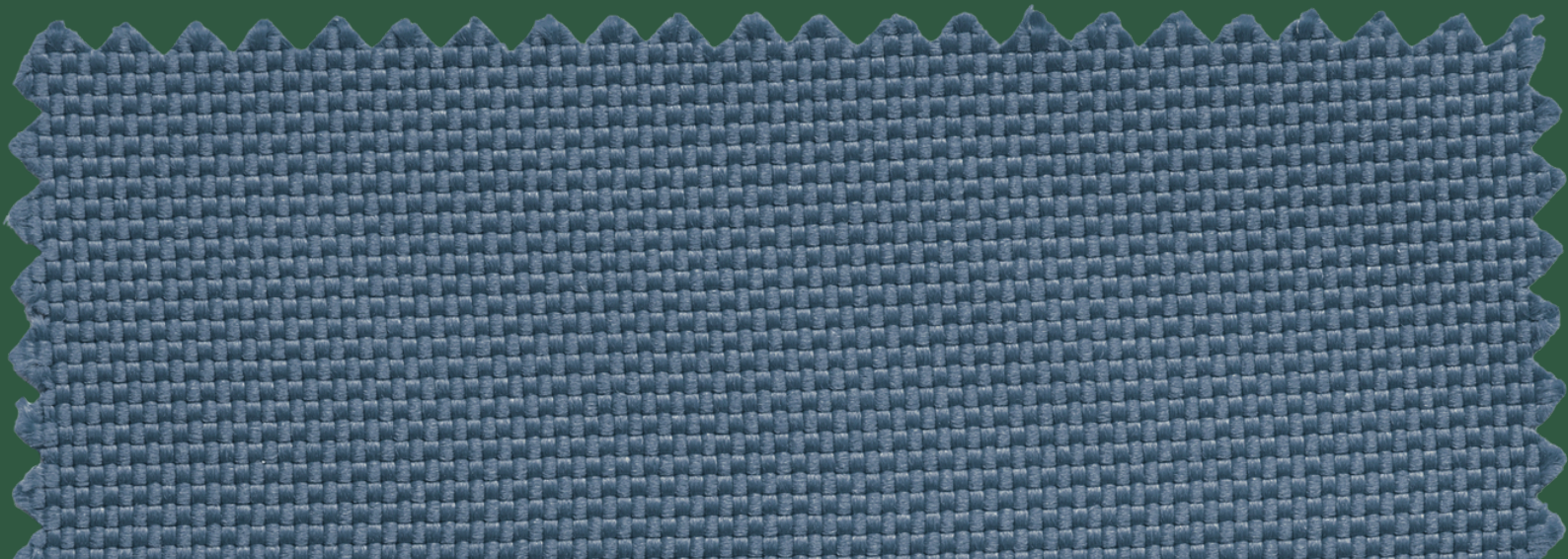
The GiveMN Guide to

STORYTELLING



WHY STORYTELLING?

Why does storytelling matter?

Good stories make us laugh, cry, and feel inspired. Good stories also move people to action! When the action you want people to take is making a donation, a compelling story is critical.

GiveMN has 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 and be a part of something. Telling a strong story is one of the best ways you can build empathy and help your community see the importance of your work!

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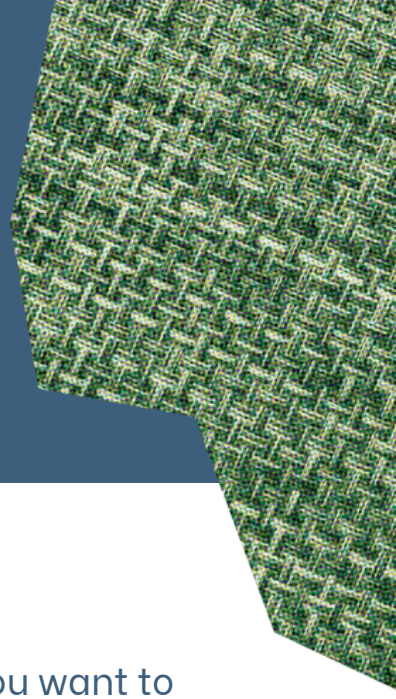
EMOTION & TONE



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! Choosing to be authentic in your storytelling doesn't just strengthen your relationship with your audience, it can also create real change. When we share stories that reflect our true values and voices, we invite others to do the same.

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DISCOVERING YOUR VOICE

Our organization usually tries to sound...

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...

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!

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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.**

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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!

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?

How did your organization make a difference?
This is where you start to connect dots to your organization! Now's your chance to describe how your programming connected to what your storyteller needed.

GiveMN Tip

Your storyteller's safety and privacy come first. If highlighting an individual's experience isn't possible, consider an anonymous quote (with permission) instead.

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CRAFTING YOUR STORY OF IMPACT

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!

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.

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 must-haves 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.

- Like/follow your organization on social media, sign up to volunteer, make a donation of goods, sign up for emails/eNews, attend an event, sign a petition, join a committee, etc.

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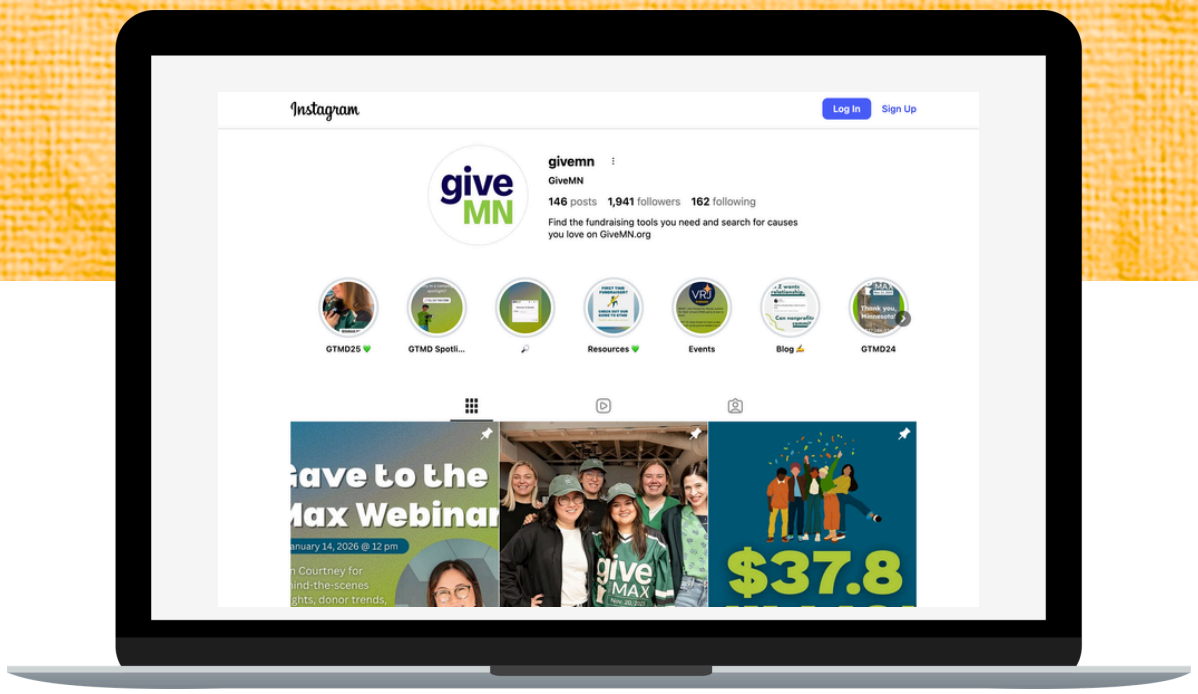

SHARING YOUR STORY

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 platforms 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!

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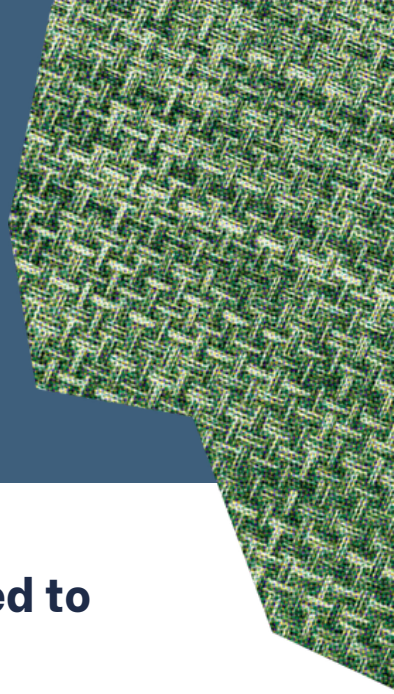
WHAT'S NEXT?



This storytelling guide can help anytime you need to craft a story!

Consider some of these ideas:

- Develop 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

NEED MORE CAMPAIGN HELP?

Reach out to our team of technology experts at Help@GiveMN.org anytime or visit the GTMD26 Resources Hub on GiveMN.org for more templates, guides, and tools to help make your campaign the best it can be.

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