



Telling Your Story (*and making it stick!*)

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Have you ever been asked to...

- Tell your organization's **story**?
- Make the story **compelling**?
- Market your program **outcomes/results**?



Telling Stories

"So many stories, so little telling."

quote from Andy Goodman, author of
"Storytelling as Best Practice" and
"Why Bad Ads Happen to Good Causes"



What You Have to Work With *(a.k.a. components of a good story)*

- Mission statement
- Outcomes/results
- Audiences/People
- Vehicles
- Key messages



Mission Statement

Succinctly states

why you exist

and

what you do.



Outcomes/Results

Change(s) that occurs as
a result of your work

Show **what** your
program activities
achieve and
who is impacted



Audiences/People

The **WHO** of your communications

- **WHO** you're trying to reach
- **WHO** you're talking about



Types of Communications Vehicles

- » Annual reports
- » Newsletters
- » Events
- » Websites
- » Advertising
- » Viral marketing
- » Social marketing
- » Media



Key Messages

- Support your mission statement
- Unique to your organization
- Not meant to be expressed verbatim



Malachi House

Mission =
Malachi House serves persons who are terminally ill without regard to gender, race, religion or national origin, and without cost to the resident or family.



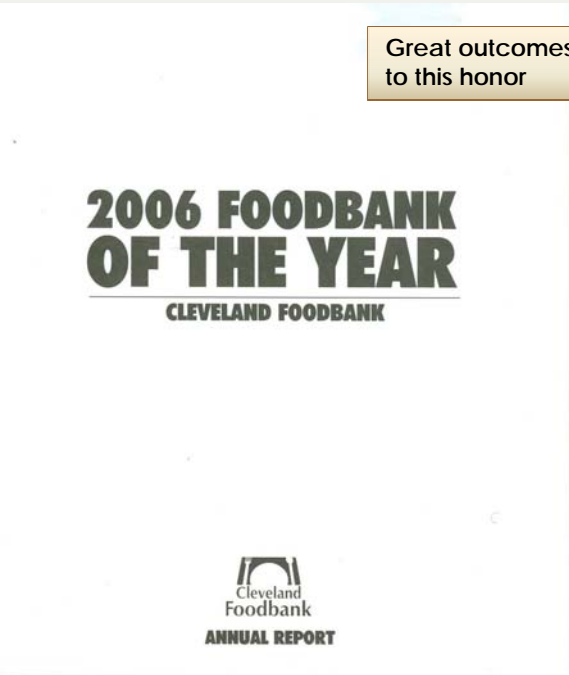
Compelling image supports mission



Great outcomes led to this honor

Outcome =
More efficient operations and enhanced customer service

Outcome =
Increased need leads to more distribution of nutritious foods to local hunger centers



Healthy Kids in Healthy Homes

Vehicle =
Ad created to draw attention to fact that children are ingesting lead

Key message =
Get kids tested





Hitchcock Center for Women

Vehicle =
Annual report
features
compelling
images that
bring issues
to life



Vehicle =
Creative,
keepsake
packaging
to
promote
event, the
subject,
theater
and its
work





Recovery Resources

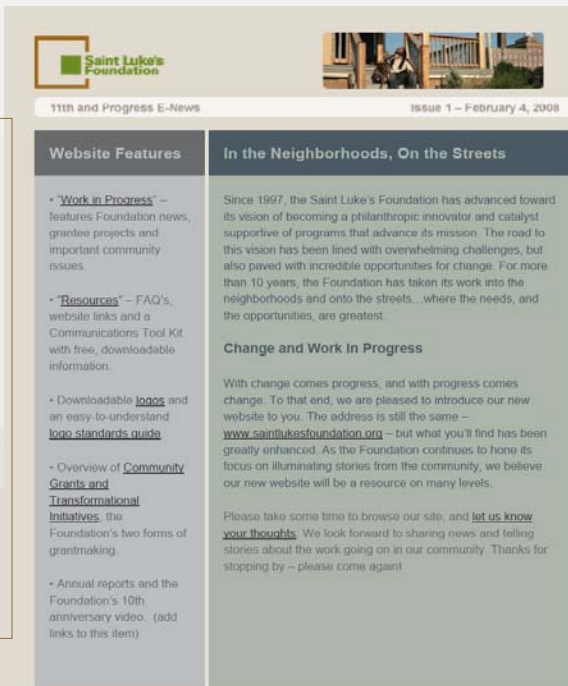
Outcome =
Sustained awareness of the problem in the community

Outcome =
Increased # of calls to hotline and hits to unique blog site



Key message =
Foundation focuses on stories of nonprofits it supports

Electronic newsletter emailed to 1,400 to drive traffic to website





Eliza Bryant Village

Outcome =
Increase
visibility
through
innovative
marketing
strategies

YouTube
Broadcast Yourself™

Home Videos Channels Community

Eliza Bryant Village

ELIZA BRYANT VILLAGE
A COMMUNITY OF CARING
ROOTED IN TRADITION

Rate: ★★★★★ 6 ratings Views: 2,328

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Eliza Bryant Village
A Community of Caring - Rooted in Tradition

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Questions to Sharpen Your Stories

- What is the core **issue/problem**?
- **Who** is the story about?
- What makes it **interesting/unique**?
- Have you included **details**?
- Is the meaning **clear**?
- What's the **"hook"**?
- Where is the **emotion**?



Media Tips

- Nothing is ever “off the record”
- Build relationships with reporters
- Consider what the media thinks is a good story
- **NEVER** lie or exaggerate to a reporter
- Have an angle to your story ideas (*with visuals if possible*)



Moral of the Story...

- Used **Tools** You've Got
- Highlight **Outcomes**
- **Illuminate** Community Challenges and Opportunities



Questions?

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message development

survey says:

MORE THAN 60% OF YOU DO NOT RELY ON AN AGREED-UPON SERIES OF KEY MESSAGES.

WHAT do you want people to know about your organization? When people talk about your nonprofit, what do you want them to say?

Think of the most important points, no more than three, that you want your audience to understand about your organization. These core messages should relate to who you are and why you exist as an organization. For instance, if your mission is to help women with chemical dependencies recover, you may want to emphasize that your services are free, nonjudgmental and confidential.

Are you inspired and motivated by your own materials?

To make sure your audience begins to embrace your key messages, you need to consistently make the same points in all of your communications and you need to keep your messages simple. To be compelling, your messages must be memorable. Nonprofits frequently make the mistake of

devising a dozen complex messages that even their internal audience can't commit to memory. How do you expect those who aren't as close to your organization to remember your messages if those inside aren't able to articulate them easily?

Another test is whether you are inspired and motivated by your own materials. If you don't find your messages compelling, don't expect your audiences to be moved either. You'll want to test your messages on your target audiences to make sure you're hitting the mark.

You may want to develop messages for specific audiences, campaigns, programs and projects. But keep in mind that all messages should relate back to your brand, be memorable and be relevant to your audience. They should include a strong call to action and support your organization's mission. It is also a good idea to develop standard language to describe key programs and projects for use in speeches, letters and proposals; not only does it enhance consistency, but it can save you time.

Once you have developed your messages, you then need to "frame" them so that the individual audiences you want to reach will hear them and listen to them. This means that you might need to change or adjust your messages based on your audience research.

For example, the campaign "Don't Mess With Texas" aimed to reduce the cost of litter removal and keep the state beautiful. The target audience of

15- to 24-year-old males didn't care about either of those goals, so the message was aligned with something that was relevant to them – pride in being a Texan. Similarly, TheTruth.com campaign tapped into the teen psyche by not focusing on the dangers of smoking, but rather on the way the tobacco industry was exploiting the youth market. Instead of it being cool to smoke, it became cool to reject tobacco-industry manipulation.

The “Don't Mess With Texas” and “TheTruth.com” campaigns also are excellent examples of the importance of framing your issue in a way that resonates with the audience you're trying to reach. (Framing is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, under Advocacy.) ■

eliminating jargon

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has developed an online resource to help you eliminate the use of jargon and the confusion it causes. Visit the Jargon Files at www.emcf.org/pub/jargon for a variety of tools to improve your writing, including two book-length essays by Tony Proscio, one of the leading experts in this arena.

storytelling

Nonprofit organizations do important and meaningful work that has the ability to change lives and improve our world. Take the time to harvest the stories that demonstrate the impact your organization has on those it serves. By telling stories of how individuals are affected by the issue you are working to solve, you personalize your mission and goals and make them more memorable.

Storytelling can be used effectively no matter what communications vehicles you employ — from your annual report and case for support to your Web site and direct-mail appeals. The best stories have a beginning, middle and end; establish the heroes and villains; involve a conflict; and have an emotional hook.

seven questions to sharpen your stories

- Who's the protagonist?
- What's the hook?
- What keeps it interesting?
- Where's the conflict?
- Have you included telling details?
- What's the emotional hook?
- Is the meaning clear?

Source: Andy Goodman, *Storytelling as Best Practice*

messages that stick

The most effective and memorable messages are:

- Simple, making use of analogies. (The Center for Science in the Public Interest, for example, refers to fettuccine alfredo as “a heart attack on a plate.”)
- Unexpected, producing a short circuit between two mental frames. (The Ad Council's “buckle up” commercial pretends to be an ad for a new family minivan, until the van is struck broadside by another car.)
- Concrete, using specific language and details.
- Credentialed, relying on authorities or testable ideas.
- Emotional, tapping negative or positive feelings.
- Stories with real people. (Subway's advertisements with weight-loss hero Jared Fogel worked better than “six sandwiches under six grams of fat.”)

Source: “Loud and Clear: Crafting Messages That Stick – What Nonprofits Can Learn From Urban Legend.” by Chip Heath, in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*

roadside assistance

www.frameworksinstitute.org
Frameworks Institute's Web site includes ideas for framing your messages for greater impact.

*The Springboard:
How Storytelling Ignites Action
in Knowledge-Era Organizations
by Stephen Denning (2000)*

*Storytelling in Organizations:
How Narrative and Storytelling
Are Transforming 21st Century
Management
by John Seely Brown, Steve Denning,
Katalina Groh and Larry Prusak
(2004)*

*Storytelling for Grantseekers:
Telling Your Organization's Story
by Cheryl Clarke (2001)*

COST-AND-BENEFIT CHART OF SELECT MEDIA

Matching the right tools to the right job takes some planning. The following cost/benefit analysis chart will give you some ideas about the cost, reach and best use of various media. It's all about finding the most effective ways of reaching your target audiences with the appropriate media for your message and within your budget.

Some organizations will be heavy on high-end fundraising communications, especially if they're launching a major capital campaign. Others will emphasize mass media, including advertising and/or publicity. If you're going to make the kind of significant investment an advertising campaign entails, you've got to be sure you have enough money in your budget to support the kind of repetition and longevity necessary to be effective.

For more details about individual communications tools, please refer to Chapter Four.

VEHICLE	REACH	COST	BEST USE
Annual report	targeted	high	stewarding and attracting donors, foundations, partners, etc.
Donor or membership newsletter	targeted	low to mid	stewarding and attracting donors/constituents
Magazine	targeted	mid to high	building awareness/stewarding and attracting partners, etc.
Event/major (black-tie fundraiser, major conference)	targeted	high	stewarding and attracting donors, partners, media
Event/minor (open house, lecture, etc.)	targeted/ general population	low	attract new constituents, donors
Case for support	targeted	high	attract donors and prospects
Direct-mail appeal	targeted	low to high	attract donors
Web site	general population	low to high	promotional/informational
E-newsletter	targeted	low	reach constituents, donors
Viral marketing	general population	low	reach new supporters and constituents
National media distribution	media/general population	low to mid	building awareness/reaching new audiences
Video news release	general population	mid	building awareness/best for small to mid-sized markets
Public opinion poll	general population	mid to high	benchmarking/testing
Advertising/print	general population (unless specialty publication)	mid to high	building awareness/reaching new audiences
Advertising/TV	general population	high	building awareness/reaching new audiences
Advertising/cable	more targeted than broadcast	mid to high	building awareness/reaching new audiences
Advertising/radio	general population	mid	building awareness/reaching new audiences
Window displays, bumper stickers, etc.	general population	low	reaching new supporters and constituents



Additional publications available from Andy Goodman and Cause Communications:

WHY BAD ADS HAPPEN TO GOOD CAUSES

And how to ensure they won't happen to yours



Whether your work involves creating print ads from scratch or reviewing finished products, *Why Bad Ads Happen to Good Causes* can help you work smarter. Based on an unprecedented 10-year study of public interest advertising, and incorporating interviews with leading practitioners in the field, this book will help you understand once and for all what readers are looking for and whether or not your ads are giving it to them.

The book was funded by The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts and Surdna Foundation. Since its publication in 2002, more than 10,000 copies have been distributed to nonprofits, foundations, government agencies and universities worldwide. To download an electronic version of this book, please visit www.agoodmanonline.com.

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

A guide to navigating communications for the nonprofit world



This comprehensive guide can help nonprofit newbies, veterans, and anyone in between find the resources they need to wage more effective communications campaigns. Based on national qualitative and quantitative audits of what nonprofits need in the area of communications, the book offers an overview of all the possible tools used to develop smart communications.

Individual copies of the *Communications Toolkit* can be ordered at no charge by nonprofit organizations thanks to the generous support of The Annenberg Foundation, The California Endowment, The James Irvine Foundation and the Marguerite Casey Foundation. To request a complimentary copy, please visit www.causecommunications.org.

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