

## **Tell a Story to Change the World – Making a Difference in Two Minutes**

### **What is your story?**

Stories are often the foundation of great communication and can often call people to action. The story about your project can help recruit volunteers and participants, secure funding or a community partner, and create a network of support (community leaders, government officials, etc.).

### **When do we tell stories?**

We tell stories every day. We tell stories to convey who we are, what we stand for and to describe our place in the world. The stories we tell says something about who we are.

As the narrator of the story of your ideas it is up to you to convince someone that your idea can make a difference. Many good ideas never turn to action. Developing a story to bring your idea to life, a story that is tailored to your audience, can be a key tool to find project support.

Stories should be simple, entertaining, easily understood and invoke emotion. Good stories are not a list of excruciatingly detailed facts. A good story highlights the essence of what you want to convey in just a few sentences. Some people are compelled by facts and some by emotion. Knowing the facts about your project and its impact is important, vital, but it is not what will move most people. The best stories connect logic and emotion.

### **Find Your Story**

As you move through this exercise you may be surprised which story best translates your ideas.

*Write the facts related to your project in one page or less.*

Who, what, why, where, how. Use numbers and be specific. How many volunteers? How many organizers? How many people reached? How many volunteer sessions? What do you do? How do you know it works? What evidence do you have that the work is making a positive impact? What is your plan?

Choose *two* of the following questions and answer them in two sentences.

After that, choose a third question and answer in as many sentences as it takes.

What do you love?

What is your personal mission?

Why do you do the things you are doing?

What do you think about when you get up in the morning? And when you go to bed?

### **Telling Your Story by Examining Self**

What is the story you choose to tell yourself? What is your backstory and how does it inform what you are doing now? The gift of your past creates a vision for your future. What story do you tell about yourself? How does it relate to your idea?

*Family and childhood:* Your parents and family, experiences growing up, the community in which you grew up, your role models, your school.

*Life choices:* Schools you went to, the career you chose or hope to choose, your partner and family, your hobbies, interests and talents, challenges you've overcome, your successes.

*Organizer experiences:* Role models, your first experience organizing, your first awareness of the issue on which you want to take action, your underlying purpose.

### **Choosing a storytelling method**

Your story should incorporate your passion with information but what is ultimately the best story structure to convey your ideas? Good stories have ups and downs. Your story should have an arc to pull people along, and introduce tension, just like in a fairy tale. ("From out of nowhere, the wolf jumps onto the path..."). Imagery intensifies the story with vivid language and intonation. Tap into people's emotions with interesting language. What type of story do you want to tell? A classic narrative or founders origin story? Do you want to use a metaphor or analogy to convey your idea? Do you want to violate expectations and do something completely different – use a prop, do a dance, play an instrument? Or does your story have a plot twist?

*The key is to choose a style that feels authentic to you and combines the facts and your passion.*

### **Theme your Story**

Many engaging storytellers have a theme and a lesson to be learned. Consider the following prompts.

- “David versus Goliath”
- “Phoenix Rising from the Ashes”
- “The Leading Edge”
- “The Turning Point”
- “Thriving in Chaos”
- “They Said It Couldn't be Done”

### **Challenge Choice Outcome**

*Challenge:* What was the specific challenge you faced? Why did you feel it was a challenge? What was so challenging about it? Why was it your challenge?

*Choice:* What was the specific choice you made? Why did you make the choice you did? Where did you get the courage (or not)? Where did you get the hope (or not)? How did it feel?

*Outcome:* What happened as a result of your choice? What hope can it give us? How did the outcome feel? Why did it feel that way? What did it teach you? What do you want to teach us? How do you want us to feel?