

Storytelling

that gets more donations.

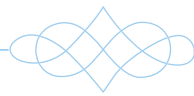


DonorDrive
SOCIAL FUNDRAISING
by Global Cloud

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Storytelling has quickly become a worn-out buzzword.

Even your board members are parroting it. And while everybody's telling you "We must do more storytelling" nobody seems to have a clue how to do it. This eBook was written to clear all that up. But even more importantly, it will guide you in teaching your participants and donors in how to tell their story about your mission, which can have the biggest impact of all.



Chapter One

Are you telling tragedies?



No more unhappy endings.

A big reason nonprofits fail at storytelling is the genre of the story they're telling is wrong. For years we've been schooled that spouting bleak statistics about the number of people afflicted, showing heartbreaking photos of the problem and telling people how sad it all is—will make people feel miserable enough to give. While these sad tales may have once worked, they don't anymore. Causes have a history of telling stories that make donors feel bad as opposed to telling narratives that make donors feel good about the organization and feel good about giving. These old sad plot lines were more focused on the problem rather than on the solution.



BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation



charity: water



Children's
Miracle Network



If you're still telling that tragedy about your cause, you've already been left behind. If you don't believe it, look to nonprofits like [Charity Water](#), [The Gates Foundation](#), [Children's Miracle Network](#) and [OneSight](#). Their stories are about their successes at fixing the problem rather than harping on the problem itself.

Are you talking about the villain?

The nonprofits that are succeeding with storytelling do it in large part because of how they're telling the story. While they still introduce the villain, that character has a minor role. Most of the really successful nonprofits today are telling stories of hope that celebrate the triumph of their solution. In short: their stories have happy endings. These stories help make their organizations successful and make their donors feel a part of that success. And it's not just the donors that desire that. More and more corporate partners want to be tied to that kind of success too.



Chapter Two

Creating an environment where storytelling thrives.



So what's your story?

The first step in good storytelling is to listen to the story you've been telling. Is it a tragedy? Or is it one of hope that tells about the battle that you're winning? Do an honest assessment. If you're not telling your story well, you really can't expect your supporters to either. When your story is a good one, it can resonate from your mission statement all the way down to this morning's tweet. When you whittle your story down to something short and sweet, you can tell it a time or two and your supporters not only know it, but they'll start telling it too.

While telling a hopeful story about your mission is a necessity today, it's just as important to encourage your participants and donors to tell their story. In the past, organizations have been so afraid of what their donors and participants could say, they gave them bullet points to spout. But those are your words, not theirs. And supporters often find them to be too uncomfortable to pass on with any confidence.



Your story isn't their story.

Organizations must learn to trust their supporters to tell a story that aligns with the mission, but to let them say it in their own words. It's not about getting your supporters to memorize and recite. It's about encouraging them to tell the story that got them involved with your cause in the first place. That impassioned, personal tale is what resonates with family, friends and colleagues, increases engagement, boosts donations and ultimately converts supporters into advocates for your cause.

Finding stories is about listening.

Just about every staffer can think of a touching, personal tale about their nonprofit that attracted a lot of attention and generated many donations. We might think of those stories as the rare gems that happen only every so often. But what if they're not?

The truth is: you'll find that there are so many of these stories that have never been told. Encouraging your supporters to tell their story gives your organization a deeper engagement with your supporters, gives you more moving stories to pass on and gives you more validation of your mission. Maybe most importantly, telling their story gives your supporters a good feeling about the good they're doing.

The truth is: you'll find that there are so many of these stories that have never been told.

4 ways to encourage storytelling.

If you feel your supporters are reluctant to tell their stories, here are a few tips you can use to create a culture of storytelling within and around your organization:

» **Ask on Facebook.** On your Facebook page, let supporters know that you'd love to hear about why they got involved with your cause. Explain why you got involved and have your staff explain why they got involved. That way your supporters won't have to deal with that stigma of going first. Personally invite those you already know have a great story to tell it. If you know a detail someone missed or see an opportunity to ask and go a little deeper, do so in the comments. This makes the conversation more visible and keeps it going.

» **Video their stories.** Starting with staff in your office, record these stories and put them up on YouTube or Vimeo. At events, set up a physical space where you can record these. You'll find once someone tells their story, everyone will have a tale to tell.

» **Record stories on SoundCloud.** [SoundCloud](#) is the YouTube of audio. From mobile devices and computers, your camera-shy supporters can record their story. Similar to stories on NPR, these can have a more intimate impact than video.

» **Organize a storytelling week or month across all social media.** You can make it coincide with an event, a national cause month or showcase it on its own. The more you coordinate the effort, the bigger the response you'll get.

Social media gives everyone the power to tell their story to an audience of family, friends and co-workers that are eager to listen and are moved enough to act on it and pass it on. When you make donating easy through peer-to-peer fundraising software, sharing all these stories becomes a real catalyst for more donations.

Nonprofits on storytelling: Paws With a Cause

I think the story is what really drives people in. Either people relate to PAWS because we're an animal agency or because they know somebody with a disability that our dogs can provide assistance for. But either way, it's giving people something they can relate to. Whether they're relating to the dog, relating to the person or relating to their team in an event—those stories are worth so much more than anything I can say to get donors. We work hard with our events to have a strong story so people can understand what we do at PAWS. The story can be so powerful when it comes from a supporter and not just from a board member or a staff member.

Samantha Leonard

Development Administrator

[Paws With a Cause®](#)



Chapter Three

The secret to getting supporters to tell a great story.



Wouldn't it be great if you could say one word and your supporters would just launch into an amazing story about your cause that gets all their friends, family and co-workers to give? Actually, it really is that simple.



The most important thing is why.

To get your supporters to start telling their story you just need to ask: “Why did you get involved?” While that sounds

too easy, the whole story lies in the reason a supporter donates, volunteers or participates in your event. Maybe their niece was just

The whole story lies in the reason a supporter donates, volunteers or participates in your event.

diagnosed with the illness your organization is fighting. Maybe they have a dog they saved from the pound and want to help your animal rescue. Maybe a personal connection compels them to help a suicide prevention mission. Almost everyone involved with an organization has a very personal reason for doing it. When they tell that very personal story about why, people close to them listen.

Putting a face on your cause.

Every reason comes with a face. Whether it’s your niece, your dog or the supporter themselves, that face is what enables others to relate to a nonprofit in a very human and personal way. If a supporter starts a Facebook update with “*My daughter suffers from...*”—it tells a lot. It states why the participant is involved, how they’ve been affected personally and introduces the donor to the person with the illness. It gives them a personal connection to your organization and it ultimately gives those they know a connection to your organization as well. Now your organization has a face that hundreds in that supporter’s social network can relate to and listen to.

Give every story a happy ending.

It's important to ask one more question to the storyteller and that's "What good comes out of this for you?" Even when the story is a tragic one, the real focus needs to be on the positive effect, like progress made, cures and inroads. While people give in the event of tragedy and also in memorial, today's donors are more inclined to give when they can reply, "I like what the organization is doing," when asked why they give. When supporters tell an uplifting story, those close to them are more apt to like what they see happening and donate.

Make sure your storytellers are aware of the great things you're doing. Excessive negative statistics about the problem can make it seem your cause is losing the battle. But positive statistics about the effect you're having make your organization seem like a winner and can make the storyteller feel like a winner too. Here are a few of the positive messages DonorDrive clients are using:

- » This year Children's Miracle Network Hospitals will help 17 million kids.
- » Best Friends Animal Society has helped reduce pound deaths by more than 75% across America and works toward a goal of zero.
- » The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention have saved countless lives through research, awareness and education.
- » Each year, OneSight's trained volunteers and doctors travel to countries worldwide to hand-deliver free primary vision care and eyewear to thousands of adults and children in need.

These stats inspire hope, leave donors with a positive experience, encourage them to give again and motivate them to get further involved with your mission.

The cumulative value of storytelling.

The impact of one story can have a profound effect on a donor. And when they hear another powerful story that mentions your cause, and then another, it has a cumulative effect. As those stories get amplified through social media, the tales can cross again and again. The impact for your organization can go from, “I’ve heard of them”, to “I know all about them”. That listener can change from just knowing you exist to feeling personally invested with your organization.

Nonprofits on storytelling: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Storytelling is putting a face on the cause and humanizing it. It’s going to resonate with people more than if you’re talking negative statistics and numbers. For us, it helps to reduce the stigma. Many times people are uncomfortable discussing suicide. By sharing their story, they’re able to talk about this person that they’ve lost. It helps people connect with one another through the stories they all share. The most common feedback we get is that people are surprised how many other people open up to them once they share their story and say, ‘Oh I lost someone too.’ It affects so many more people because it’s being talked about.

Allyson Dorf

Operations Manager of the Overnight Walk
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention



Chapter Four

Tell me about it.



One stumbling block of storytelling is that your supporters may assume that their story needs to be long and complicated to get the point across, but that's not so. People are getting used to Twitter-length communication and a shorter story may be the most appropriate way to tell it. A simple paragraph with the right elements can be all that's needed.



Where are the storytelling stats?

With all the buzz about “we gotta do more storytelling,” it’s curious that there are no numbers on the value storytelling has on fundraising. Admittedly that’s hard to quantify, but the following selection is based on what we felt was good storytelling that led to the participants beating their fundraising goals. Note that many of the supporters below increased their fundraising goal after exceeding it one or more times, so some percentages are substantially higher.

Storytelling tips for your supporters.

In examining the following real stories, we narrowed down some of the elements that make effective storytelling on a fundraising page:

1. Tell donors why.
2. Show the challenge.
3. Keep it positive.
4. Ask for a specific amount.
5. Show what the money can do.
6. Don’t stop.
7. Give it immediacy.



Tell donors why.

The reason why someone is involved with a cause is one of the most compelling reasons for those who know them to donate.

This is a picture of Me and Cory Conacher, an up-and-coming NHL star, playing for the Tampa Bay Lightning who has Type 1 Diabetes. Medtronic sponsored a hockey camp with Corey and he taught me a lot! He taught me that my Diabetes should never get in the way of doing things I love...But most of all he taught me to always give back and that is why I am asking for your help again this year!

Seth Tonelli

Fundraising for JDRF Canada

Beat goal by 857%

I began participating in AIDS Walk Houston 19 years ago. It was a great experience for a good cause, but when I was finished the walk the first few years, I was exhilarated and a little let down. I had put my heart and soul in to raising money, and when it ended I wanted to do something else to help.

I began volunteering at AIDS Foundation Houston in 1999, and found out about Camp Hope, a summer camp for HIV positive kids. It only took a short time at Camp to realize where my passion was. On my second day at Camp Hope, I was introduced to a very special little girl named Vicki who loved camp and helped me see this special place through her eyes. She made me realize why it was so important to have a place where she could be cared for, accepted, and loved. I left camp that year not knowing if I would ever see Vicki again, but I promised to come back as long as she did. In spite of her failing health, she made it back for the next three summers. Vicki passed away a few years ago, but I return to camp for Vicki and our other special kids, and selfishly for all that they have given me.

Thom McDaniel

Fundraising for AIDS Walk Houston

Beat goal by 14%

Show the challenge.

Many are inspired to give by the adversity that someone faces to achieve their goal.

OH MAN, YOU GUYS! This is an extraordinary announcement indeed – I’m officially signed up for my first half-marathon and I’ll be running on behalf of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals!! For those of you who have known me since my college volleyball days, you know this is a TOTALLY new challenge for me! My lifetime mantra has been something along the lines of: “Short-distance athlete; Volleyball = sprinting 6 feet any given direction, max, and that’s how I like it.” Well, that’s about to change.

On October 28 I will be running in the Rock ‘n’ Roll Los Angeles Halloween Half Marathon as a member of Team ASPCA, a national fundraising and marathon training program. I am excited to be participating as a member of Team ASPCA and honored to be raising the awareness and the much needed funding to support the ASPCA’s programs.

Carolyn Schnurr

Fundraising for Team ASPCA

Beat goal by 11%

In February of this year, I was convinced I was not a runner. Every time I ever tried, I was crippled by shin splints by the time I could run a mile or so. In March, in a moment of partial insanity, I bought new running shoes, downloaded a “Couch to 5K” app on my phone, hooked up the headphones and gave it another shot. (Insert “Rocky” style training montage, complete with sweat, pain, perhaps some cursing, and some obviously happy dogs running beside me). In May, at the tender age of 45, I ran my first 5K race (slowly, but I didn’t walk, and I finished it). In the last five months, I have run in 10 states and two countries, and can currently run 3.5 miles without a bear chasing me or anything.

Trish Loehr

Fundraising for Team ASPCA

Beat goal by 11%

Keep it positive.

As stated in the first chapter, tell your supporters that the focus should always be on the positive. Even in the face of tragedy, focusing on the hopeful, keeping sight of inroads made and emphasizing successes leaves donors with a feeling that they're a part of that success.

Tell your supporters that the focus should always be on the positive.

Anyone who has ever talked to me knows that there are a few things I'm absolutely crazy about next to my family and friends, you know – the kind of passion that you speak from the heart...Those two things are running (yes, putting one foot in front of the other, sweating, huffing and puffing and torturing one's self for hours on end) AND my job - helping animals (I know I'm one of the luckiest people in the world)...So I decided to combine the two and on October 28 I will be running in the Rock 'n' Roll Los Angeles Halloween Half Marathon as a member of Team ASPCA.

Gina Manke

Fundraising for Team ASPCA

Beat goal by 35%

Ask for a specific amount.

Though your supporters may feel somewhat uncomfortable to ask for an amount, it's worth stressing that they should state some amount. For instance, simply asking for \$20 can increase single gifts from what would have been \$5 donations.



Your donation will be put to work immediately to deliver urgent medical care, treatment for malnutrition, emergency surgery, and lifesaving vaccinations...\$20 is a small sacrifice, especially when you think of how we all spend that amount of money in our daily lives. Thank you for getting involved and for your support of my efforts.

Anthanette Wilson

Fundraising for Team Doctors Without Borders

Beat Goal by 204%

Note: All of Anthanette's donations were \$20 or higher and 40% gave larger amounts.

Show what the money can do.

Today a donation is viewed as an investment in good. Telling potential donors how their money will be spent gives them concrete details on the impact their dollar will have.

\$1000 will enable Greenspace groups to plant and maintain 3 trees in urban neighborhoods in great need of shade and greenery this summer. These trees will transform neighborhoods in need by increasing property values, improving air quality, reducing residential energy costs, absorbing stormwater and reducing combined sewage overflow. Such a deal!...How can you help reach this goal? Give \$20 to my page or find a friend to join you in giving \$10 each.

Anna Pickett

Fundraising for Rock to Rock

Beat goal by 42%

To give you an idea of how much your donation to MSF can help people in desperate need of medical care:

\$35—Two high-energy meals a day to 200 children

\$50—Vaccinations for 50 people against meningitis, measles, polio or other deadly epidemics

\$70—Two basic suture kits to repair minor shrapnel wounds

\$100—Infection-fighting antibiotics to treat nearly 40 wounded children

\$250—A sterilization kit for syringes and needles used in mobile vaccination campaigns

Dana Kuefner

Fundraising for Team Doctors Without Borders

Beat goal by 42%

Don't stop.

Fundraising goals were meant to be broken. Once a participant has reached a goal, there's no reason why they can't increase it or raise over their original goal. This encourages them to fundraise more and gives people they know the chance to be the one who put them over the top. There's much more excitement in the anticipation of surpassing a benchmark than in having achieved it.

Wow - So much love in less than 5 hours! I reached my goal! Please continue to donate if you desire as I'm completely fine and willing to earn more money for Angelman Syndrome.

Jessica Weitthoff

Fundraising for Angelman Syndrome Foundation

Beat her goal by 185%

I recently updated my fundraising goal from \$500 to \$1000 because I was overwhelmed by the generosity of my friends and family and wanted to set a new challenge for my efforts. Any donation big or small really does make a difference. I really appreciate the support in my efforts to help my fellow women in the fight against breast cancer!

Elizabeth Huebsch

Fundraising for Friends for an Earlier Breast Cancer Test

Beat goal by 80%

Give it immediacy.

In the same way that eBay bidding becomes contagious, fundraising goals can do the same. As the event fundraising deadlines get closer, the message should be one of action.



You've almost reached your goal!

I truly cannot believe our run is in 11 days!!!! Frank and I have challenged ourselves to raise \$1500 for these organizations. We need to raise \$110 to reach our goal. I'm well aware there are millions of people, groups, and causes to which you can contribute these days. Thank you so very much for considering this one. If you do decide to contribute, words cannot express my gratitude.

Morgan Moss

Fundraising for Rock 'n Roll Half Marathon

Beat goal by 40%

The whole story.

These examples give some solid advice on the elements of a great ask. But it's the overall story that gets people to click that "Donate" button. Here are two stories that put it all together well.

Dear family and friends,

We just learned about and will be participating in a Miracle Walk on Oct 7th to benefit the St Barnabas Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

As you know, we were recently blessed with the birth of our second daughter, Maya. Just like her big sister Lea, she arrived early and will spend some time in the NICU before we can bring her home. The staff at St. Barnabas Medical Center has been absolutely wonderful during this time. They are providing excellent care for Maya and have gone out of their way to accommodate us parents and make things as easy as possible for us during this period. To show our appreciation, we want to support them in any way we can!

The funds raised from the Walk will go towards the purchase of additional state-of-the-art medical equipment, such as the Giraffe Omnibeds, which help make Saint Barnabas NICU one of the best in the world. With your support, the Saint Barnabas NICU can continue to provide the most advanced and specialized care for over 1,200 premature and ill newborns a year, just like Lea and Maya.

We have set a goal of \$921 which represents Maya's birthday (9/21). Please help us reach this goal for the Miracle Walk! We appreciate any support you give for this worthwhile cause that is very near and dear to our hearts. To make an online tax-deductible donation, please click on "Support Me!", and don't forget to check if your company matches.

Efe and Greg

Fundraising for St. Barnabas Foundation Miracle Walk

Beat goal by 86%

Shelly is riding 100km in a biking fundraiser again, and he wants my \$\$ again? What gives with him? Won't he ever stop?

Probably not. Maybe it's the wind in my face. Maybe it's putting out for something I believe in. Maybe it's the high of getting "Rock Star" recognition for Saltman Associates sponsorship of the 5th Annual Rock to Rock Earth Day Ride ("R2R"). Whatever it is, here I go again, and I hope with everything in me that you will help make this great event and movement a success by joining me in support of it.

R2R is really 2 things. First, it is a coming together of 20 great local New Haven organizations to celebrate and support their accomplishments in promoting environmental awareness and action. Second, it is an opportunity for each organization to highlight its work.

My business sponsorship supports the effort at large. Your support of my ride will enable the New Haven/León Sister City Project to continue its programs here in Connecticut as well as in Leon, Nicaragua. As part of its mission, the Sister City Project has recently been working with a group of teenagers in the rural community of Goyena outside of León. They have formed the Goyena Environmental Youth Brigade. They have made great strides in informing their community and raising awareness of environmental issues and climate change. Equally important, they have learned how to be creative in advocating for themselves in the face of pretty difficult odds with minimal resources.

Good work here, good work there. That's what motivates me, and I hope it does you too.

Shelly Altman

Fundraising for Rock to Rock

Beat goal by 26%

Both of these stories are passionate and reveal a clear reason why the participants are doing this. When you inspire your supporters to tell these kinds of stories, they align with your mission, but still tell their own story. As more and more of these personal stories are told, it creates a mosaic that pictures your nonprofit, not as organization, but as a network of all the lives it touches.



Chapter Five

Get graphic.



In our media-rich world, donors are expecting stories to be told visually. Photos are easy for supporters to take on their camera phone and then upload directly to a fundraising page. It's simple to do and it can mean a nice boost in donations.



Photos transcend words.

Pictures speak their own language that can be more powerful than words. Subject matter, facial expression, colors and other elements in a photo bypass verbal areas of the brain to create a direct and strong emotional response that connects us to the subject.



People focus on faces.

A [Usable World study](#) through eye-tracking shows that people spend the most time on a web page looking at faces, particularly at the eyes. It proves that on a screen filled with text and graphics, our eyes quickly search out the most human element. People may even spend more time reading the face than the text. When faces are clear in a photo, they become a

People spend the most time on a web page looking at faces, particularly at the eyes.

strong selling point for clicking the Donate button. Plus, when a supporter shows their face in a photo on their fundraising page, it becomes the face of your cause.

Smile: You're about to get donations.

Research shows that smiles are contagious. A smile in a photo can be very disarming for the donor. It melts negativity and puts them at ease. Smiling also leads to a positive response that's more likely to get donations and it reflects well on your organization's mission.



Tips for your supporters.

The following photos were used by participants in DonorDrive events on their fundraising pages.



» **Show yourself.** It will make your fundraising page more inviting and confirm that it's really you making the ask.

» **Show who you're fundraising for.** Since your story is about your connection to the cause, it makes sense to show who will benefit from the donation. Now the cause has a face that your donors can see.



» **Show yourself with who you're fundraising for.** A photo of you with your dog or a family member in the hospital is doubly appealing. It shows you both and gets at the relationship you have with the beneficiary of the donation.

» **Show your team.** Camaraderie for a cause is very uplifting. For some donors, there will be a validity in the fact that you're showing others who are participating. When friends see others they know, it also encourages them to donate or join up.



» **Show yourself participating.** Showing yourself on a bike, running, walking etc., helps to get across the message of exactly how you're sweating to help a cause.

» **Show success.** Photos that portray victory give everyone the feeling that your cause is winning.



» **Be unique.** Off-the-wall photos can get noticed well beyond the scope of your network of friends, family and coworkers.

Nonprofits on storytelling: Team ASPCA

Telling your own story about why this is important to you helps your success. People are absolutely customizing their fundraising pages with photos of their pet with themselves. We have a lot of cute fuzzy warm imagery with people and their pets, so I tell them to change their photo, not every week, but change it pretty frequently. And use that change to drive people to their page. "I changed my photo. Take a look at it. Fido and I were training today." When they update the story and photo they definitely have an increase in their fundraising totals.

Kymberlee Setterberg

Senior Director, National Community Fundraising

ASPCA



Chapter Six

Making movies.



Part of the reason filmmakers are such amazing storytellers is that movies are so powerful at it. A photo freezes a moment in time, but video's motion can capture mannerisms and sincerity in the story that photos can't. Today's camera phones take excellent videos and most can post instantly to YouTube. Videos don't have to be elaborate productions. They can be simple, heartfelt messages that tell the story.



Upping the production value.

When supporters have the time and skill to create more involved videos, the production factor can add to the success. Here's a sampling of effective videos from participants using DonorDrive:

This video is a recap of the Mizzou Dance Marathon. Dance Marathon for Children's Miracle



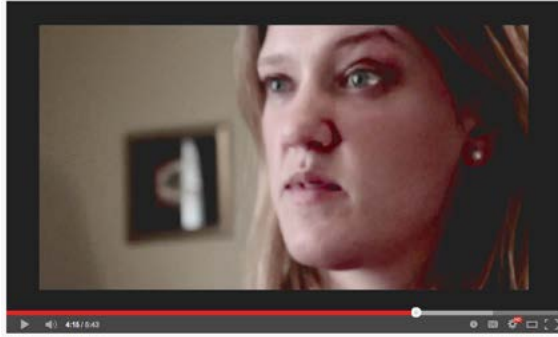
Network Hospitals encourages schools to do videos of each year's marathon. They typically have music and help capture the spirit of this very experiential event. This student-created video was used by many fundraisers to promote the 2013 Dance Marathon.

[Dance Marathon](#) (2,088 views)

This video was done in response to a viral video on suicide. The brother and sister who created it lost their mother to suicide and used the video to promote their participation in the AFSP Overnight Walk. It's emotional, but still fun.

[AFSP](#) (1,514 views)





This woman with Type 1 diabetes had her brother help create a video that promoted her run in the Boston Marathon. She does an excellent job explaining the effect diabetes has had on her life and shows how determined she is to help the cause.

[JDRE](#) (853 views)

It pays to have a talented friend. This video for Bryce riding in Climate Ride is clever and well produced.

[Climate Ride](#) (4,315 views)



Text or video ask? Do both.

The purpose of any fundraising page is get the viewer to click on the “Donate” button. Before that, there has to be an ask, a personal plea from the participant. If using video, it’s still vital for your fundraiser to make the ask in text as well. While video typically has a larger impact on donors, there’s a portion of the population that wants to get to the point and not have to sit through even a 5-minute video to get there. When the fundraiser condenses their ask into a short text-based pitch in addition to the video, it gives donors the information they need to make their decision quickly.

Commercial statistics shows that viewers are 85% more likely to click a Buy button after watching a video.

Commercial statistics shows that viewers are 85% more likely to click a Buy button after watching a video. If that holds true for clicking the Donate button, encouraging your supporters to add video to their fundraising page can dramatically increase giving.

Nonprofits on storytelling: The Cure Starts Now

Every cause has a great purpose and a great meaning. But what’s important is really bringing it down to one single person’s story. For the donor, it’s getting involved, getting invested in that story and understanding that really supporting that person is so important, as important as supporting the organization. It’s getting everyone to understand that it’s bigger than a dollar, it’s a life.

Brooke Desserich

Executive Director

The Cure Starts Now



Chapter Seven

Spreading the word.



Half of storytelling is the telling part. We'd all like to think our stories will tell themselves or that we can tell our story once and everyone hears it. But social media doesn't work that way. Although social channels don't like to admit their stats on this, if someone has 100 friends or followers, the number who actually see any given update is 1 to 15 people. A story needs to be posted multiple times for a majority of people in someone's network to see it.



Talking about their story.

Many supporters don't realize that putting up a fundraising page on the web is only the first step in getting donations. Next they need to share that page with their social network:

1. Encourage them to email everyone in their address book.
2. Urge them to talk about their participation on social media.
3. Have them join a team for camaraderie and competition.
4. Get them to tweet and update their fundraising success.
5. Ask them to update their fundraising page.

1. Encourage them to email their address book.

While email can be overlooked as a social medium, it's still responsible for the majority of online donations. Your supporters may feel very comfortable about posting their participation over their social channels, but may feel shy about telling everyone they know by email. It's important to encourage email, since one message sent to everyone they know is more likely to be seen than a post on social media. One email sent to their contacts could mean an instant surge in donations.

As with other social mediums, people in a fundraiser's network may miss the first email. Encourage your fundraisers to send follow-up emails if they don't see results from an initial request. DonorDrive customers report that participants often get as many donations from a second email as they do the first. You can also recommend that participants add a link to their fundraising page in their email signature.

2. Urge them to talk about their participation on social media.

Although any good fundraising page should have SEO built in to make it easy for search engines to find, a majority of traffic from the Web will come through links in social media. The more your fundraisers share on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+, the more likely friends of their friends will hear about it. Asking for shares and retweets is about four times more likely to make that happen.



3. Have them join a team for camaraderie and competition.

Team members raise about 50% more than individual participants. Participating with others typically generates more social interaction than participating individually. Offer to help individual participants join a team or even encourage them to captain their own. When a supporter becomes a team member, it encourages competition in fundraising and gives them the sense that others are depending on them.

Team members raise about 50% more than individual participants.



4. Get them to tweet and update their fundraising success.

Tell fundraisers to talk about how much they've raised, how close they are to their goal and (if training for an athletic event) how they're progressing in their social media updates. These topics give them another reason to post the link to their fundraising page again. The more excitement they can create around fundraising goals, the more likely they are to surpass them.

5. Ask them to update their fundraising page.

Fresh content gives supporters another reason to talk about their fundraising page and gives their friends another reason to come back. People they know may visit their page multiple times before they donate. The chance that someone will give gets better each time a supporter updates and shares their page. Search engines scan regularly for updated content and rank new content higher in search results.

Your supporters may feel like they're just telling their story over and over, but it's important to let them know that few see it the first time over social media. Even if they send it out multiple times, not everyone they know will see it.



Nonprofits on storytelling: Team ASPCA

My team has a conversation with participants every day. Sending out one email or putting one photo and one story on your page is not going to get the job done. You really have to send out that message and again, it's all about involving people you know in your journey. People will not just go to your page once and make a donation unless they're really on top of it. It takes several message points for them to go to your Fundraising Page and pull the trigger.

Kymberlee Setterberg

Senior Director, National Community Fundraising

ASPCA



Chapter Eight

What makes a captivating story?



In this eBook we've covered many of the basics of storytelling as well a specific tactics that you can use to coach your supporters. All great advice, but it's not just the elements that make a story.



Great stories all have a less-tangible essence that makes them so captivating that we're engrossed in them, can't forget them and (more importantly) move us to tap the Donate button:

» **The story must be real** Sincerity can be more important than storytelling skill.

When your supporters honestly relate their story or their involvement, even in a broken and simple form, it can have a big impact on the reader. The stories that tug at heart strings are those that come from the heart.

» **When it's uplifting, it gets through** People remember emotion. [One study](#) shows that people are more likely to remember facts when there's emotional attachment. When an emotional story has a silver lining it can trigger the release of the feel-good hormone dopamine, which helps us to remember it.

» **Start with a hook** The most intriguing element of a story usually makes the best opening line. But your supporters may not realize how to spot the hook that draws people in. Maybe it's that the fateful day started so normally. Or that somebody gave to them and now they're giving back. Or it starts with a quirky habit of the person they're fundraising in honor of. When it's not our own story, it's easier to help them spot the hook to start it off.

The most intriguing element of a story usually makes the best opening line.

» **Encourage them to build consensus and empathy for their story** Social mediums (especially Facebook) are great places to tell stories. Readers can both comment and share, which increases the visibility of the post. When the supporter comments back on their own story it drives more awareness. Simply thanking people for their kind words or for sharing furthers its life. Since the lifespan of a social post is [only a few hours on average](#), commenting on their own post can help keep it alive for days.

» **Refresh the story** The goal in peer-to-peer fundraising is to drive readers back to the participant's fundraising page where they can donate. This page is not a tale of the past, but a living story. Encourage your supporters to regularly update their page with fresh content, photos and video. Maybe they can add something to the story (like their success in training), give it a new twist or just refresh the media and then talk about these changes on their social channel. Something new gives the supporter's friends and family a reason to revisit the page, donate and share.

Encourage your supporters to regularly update their page with fresh content, photos and video.

It's true that the story is in the telling. Helping your participants become better storytellers will ultimately benefit your organization in an expanded awareness and a broader donor base.

Nonprofits on storytelling.

Facebook is such a great tool to link to. I had one woman who was very nervous and didn't think she could share her story on Facebook. I wrote a blurb for her and said "Do me a favor: put it on Facebook and post it with a picture." She did it and within three weeks she had met her goal. She came up to me at the run and thanked me. "I couldn't believe the people that I heard from that I had no idea were affected by diabetes. It was people I hadn't seen since high school giving \$25, 50, \$100."

Jenn Fishkind

Fundraising Consultant



Chapter Nine

The impact of storytelling on your revenue stream.



Changing your nonprofit to a storytelling culture will take few (if any) dollars. But it does require a commitment of valuable staff hours in planning, implementing and bringing it to life.



Like any fundraising project that a nonprofit takes on: there must be a good return on your investment. Overall what storytelling will do for your organization is:

» **Increase donations** Since people relate to storytelling better than sad stats, you can expect to see an increase in dollars. Nonprofits that have become gifted at storytelling are thriving, while nonprofits communicating their mission the same way they did last century are stagnant or see dollars waning.

Since people relate to storytelling better than sad stats, you can expect to see an increase in dollars.

» **Increase awareness of your mission** It amazes organizations that have been around forever that many potential supporters haven't heard of them or have them confused with another organization. The number of nonprofits competing for attention is bigger than ever today. Good storytelling makes your organization stand out in the crowd.

» **Increase engagement with your supporters** People love to tell stories. Once you start your supporters off, telling their story over social media and on their online fundraising page becomes contagious. This culture of sharing stories will start a more open conversation with your supporters, as well as increase participants, volunteers and donors.

» **Better identify your most engaged and most engaging supporters** It's a fact that it's easier to get a dedicated event participant to raise a hundred dollars more than it is to get a zero-dollar fundraiser to raise a penny. Identifying the advocates for your cause and helping them tell their story can really boost revenue.

That's all great. But how can you track those results to prove that storytelling is actually working for your organization?

Six storytelling metrics.

Here's a set of simple metrics that will help show your organization's effectiveness at storytelling:

1. Create storytelling-based campaigns New campaigns are obviously money you wouldn't have raised otherwise, so these dollars are instantly identifiable as coming from storytelling. Try piggybacking your peer-to-peer fundraising storytelling campaign with a signature event or capital campaign and make the stories you hear part of those events as well. That way you can also track the impact that storytelling has on your existing events.

2. Track your storytelling success on social media Twitter and Facebook both offer good metrics. Compare the success of your individual updates that use storytelling to your updates that don't.

3. Compare storytellers to other participants If you're identifying successful storytellers in your events through your online fundraising software, examine your top 50 event participants. How many are storytellers? What's the average dollars raised by a storyteller compared to other top fundraisers? What's the average that a storyteller raises compared to the average participant? On a granular level, this can show you the role storytelling plays.

4. Compare participants year over year When you've spotted regular participants that you've turned into good storytellers, compare their data in your peer-to-peer fundraising software from this event to their data from past events. The percentage of increase can show you the direct impact that storytelling is having.

5. Check the increase of new donors Since storytelling has a big impact on awareness, it should bring in new donors. Compare the number of new donors to donors from the same timeframe last year.

6. Check communication volume This is an important indicator of engagement. It's easy to check how many more responses you're getting on social, as well as to check how many more responses you're averaging per tweet or per update. You can also evaluate how many emails and letters you got last year compared to the same timeframe this year.

To know the significance that storytelling truly is having on your organization, it's important to measure its success. Only when you can put that significance in actual dollars raised can you see the value it adds to your messaging, fundraising and overall community impact.



Chapter Ten

Your organization IS your stories.



You're probably sick of hearing the word "storytelling."

Like any pop business jargon, far too many people want to cram it into every sentence, but they really don't understand what it means. And while the buzzword will fade soon enough, the process of storytelling won't. It's always been the key to good marketing, the most powerful way to get a thought across and move people to act—no matter what it's been called. That won't change.



In its most basic sense, a nonprofit is an organization that offers services. From that naive view, you're no different from any other organization that offers those same services. But it's all those accumulated stories about your organization that makes you different in the mind of your supporter. The stories they associate with you is what creates that impression of what your organization is.

The stories they associate with you is what creates that impression of what your organization is.

For years, nonprofit stories were pretty boring. They were about sad stats, dollar figures and tragedy after tragedy. Participants and Donors heard so many of those they were left feeling low and saying: *"Well, I can't help everybody."*

Hopefully this series has shown you how good storytelling can have your supporters saying: *"I may not be able to help everybody, but I certainly want to help you."*



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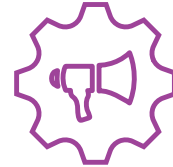
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