Storytelling for Good

2019 Management & Leadership Training Conference

Ketayoun Darvich-Kodjouri
Communications Strategist
Today’s Agenda

1. What makes a story powerful?
2. Learn story building blocks
3. Review ethical considerations
4. Draft & workshop your story
5. Rock on!
What Makes a Story Powerful?
Once Upon a Time...
Once Upon a Time...
Once Upon a Time...
Common Elements?

• Tap into universal **myths**

• **Characters:**
  ✓ Hero (a person)
  ✓ Villian (person, thing, character flaw, circumstances)

• Story **structure** (beginning, middle, end)
  ✓ Inciting incident to propel story along
  ✓ Filled with action
  ✓ Payoff

• Feels “**real**” (setting & details)
"For sale: baby shoes, never worn"
What are the Universal Myths?
“[It] begins with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels there is something lacking…The person takes off on a series of adventures beyond the ordinary, to recover what has been lost or discover some life-giving elixir. It's usually a cycle, a coming and a returning.”
Booker: 7 Basic Stories

- Overcoming the Monster
- Rags to Riches
- The Quest
- Voyage & Return
- Comedy
- Tragedy
- Rebirth
Quiz: What Kind of Story?

Humans of New York
January 10 at 5:00 PM

“I was only sixteen when I got pregnant. I was so disappointed in myself. I thought I’d end up like one of those pregnant teens on Maury. I did finish high school — I will say that. But afterwards I had no good options. My family didn’t have money. My son’s father wasn’t around. It was on me to do something. So I joined the Navy. I was basically gone for the next six years. I had to leave my son with my parents. It was an extremely hard decision. But anything I did... See More
Quiz: What Kind of Story?
What kind of stories do you tell?

- Comedy
- The Quest
- Overcoming the Monster
- Rebirth
- Rags to Riches
- Voyage & Return
- Tragedy
### Your Turn: Getting Started

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Story purpose (goal)</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>The gist (who, what, where, when, why)</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Type of story (quest, rebirth, overcoming the monster, etc.)</td>
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Building the Story
Remember the Elements

1. Tap into universal **myths**
2. Compelling **Characters:**
   - ✓ Hero (a person)
   - ✓ Villian (person, thing, character flaw, circumstances)
3. Story **structure** (beginning, middle, end)
   - ✓ Inciting incident to propel story along
   - ✓ Exciting! Filled with action
   - ✓ Some sort of payoff
4. Feels “**real**” (setting & details)
Compelling Characters

• Have flaws & contradictions

• Driven by an internal force or code

• Red nose or shoes, full of doubt or courage, a name for the ages – or other telling details

• “Human”
A Word about Settings

1. Is your setting a character (hurricane, unsafe apartment, etc.)
   - Get into detail
   - Make it seem alive
   - Give it a personality

2. Otherwise, **keep it brief!**
### Your Turn: Building Blocks

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Main character</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2. Villain/obstacle</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Setting</strong></td>
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Once Upon a Time

BAM!

And then...

And then...

And then...

Road back or ahead

PAYOFF

The end
Great Stories Have…

- A strong **hook**
- Plots that go **deep** not wide
- Many characters but **one protagonist**
- Memorable **details & imagery**
- Writing & visuals that provoke a reaction – **show**, don’t tell
- Audiences wanting more – **don’t give it all away**
Write a story about a time your parents taught you something important. What did you learn? Be sure to include a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion sentence.

Once when I was afraid to jump in the pool, my mommy threw me in. I loved to swim but was afraid of jumping in the pool. I tried and tried but always stopped. My body would freeze. Then one day my mom just threw me in. I was terrified in the air but once I hit the water I was fine. Now I have diving to handle.

WOW! Sorry, this is a great piece of writing! You need good detail, introduction, and conclusion. Great sentences. Nice job!
# Your Turn: Write it Down!

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Once Upon a Time...</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>And then...BAM!</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>And then, and then, and then, and then...</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Payoff</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Road back/Ahead</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>The end!</td>
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Who Wants to Share?
Telling Ethical Stories
“I have heard literally thousands of nonprofit stories over the last 15 years. Here’s every nonprofit story ever told in 30 seconds: ‘People were in pain. We launched this program to help them. They’re better now. Give me money.’”

Andy Goodman
The Goodman Center
What’s wrong with this story?

- Organization = savior
- Client disempowered – no agency in their own journey
- Exploits hardship for easy clicks
- Audiences conditioned to believe solutions are simple
Build an Ethical Culture

• Ask: what **will this story achieve** for the client?

• Make **clients informed partners** in telling the story
  ✓ Their views on the obstacle? What was the success?
  ✓ Seek consent throughout – for interview, final draft, release
  ✓ Discuss cyber safety

• **Who is the hero? The villain? Don’t reinforce stereotypes**

• **Are you setting the story in a broader context?**
Ohio Case Study: Reframing a Story

Nurturing motherhood through challenges

No matter how you look at it, parenting is tough. But when you add financial struggles and substance recovery to the challenges of raising three young daughters, it all can become very overwhelming.

Meloney, a Mansfield, Ohio native, was struggling to raise her children. She had difficulty maintaining a job.

• Find the facts
• What makes the character relatable?
• What are the client’s goals?
• Who or what is the villain?
• What was the impact?
Now What?
Putting into Practice

1. Align stories to **comms strategy** (goal, audience, positioning)

2. Adopt ethical storytelling **guidelines**

3. Develop a **story bank**
   - List categories of stories you need (programs, clients, staff, donors, etc.)
   - Identify sources & enlist help
   - Make a realistic plan to gather them
   - Remember visuals
   - Think about multiple formats

4. Recycle & repurpose stories

5. Continuously **evaluate**
Suggested Resources

- Communications Network (storytelling.comnetwork.org)
- Humans of New York (humansofnewyork.com)
- Stone Soup Films (stonesoupfilms.org & vimeo.com/stonesoupfilms)
- Story Corps (storycorps.org)
- TED Talks on storytelling (ted.com/playlists/62/how_to_tell_a_story)

THANK YOU!
Ketayoun Darvich-Kodjouri
ketayoun@gmail.com