

DSC SPEED READS

COMMUNICATIONS

Storytelling for Impact

Sarah Myers



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Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter 1: Working with stories	5
■ Why bother?	5
■ Where to include stories	6
■ How one story can work in different ways	7
Chapter 2: Finding stories	10
■ Getting colleagues on board	10
■ Other ways to find stories	12
Chapter 3: Preparing for conversations	14
■ Creating story briefs	14
■ Effective questions	16
Chapter 4: On the day	19
■ Getting started	19
■ During the conversation	20
■ Finishing up	21
Chapter 5: Writing stories	23
■ Structuring your story	23
■ Calls to action	25
■ Editing quotes	26
■ Images to support your stories	27
Chapter 6: Looking after storytellers	28
■ Being considerate	28
■ Getting consent	29
■ Storing stories and keeping data safe	30

Introduction

Who will this book help?

This book is a practical guide for charities of all shapes and sizes that want to incorporate the power of storytelling into their work.

Everyone involved in a charity will be working towards the same goal: achieving its vision and mission. Whether that's saving donkeys, beating cancer or tackling the climate emergency, stories have a key part to play in making it happen. So, it's in everyone's interest to get involved in storytelling.

No matter what your role or experience is, this book will help you create stories that inspire your audiences to take action – from making a donation, to volunteering their time, to getting behind your latest campaign.

What will it give you?

This book focuses on written stories, rather than videos or audio storytelling. It aims to demystify the art of storytelling by breaking down the process. Starting with the purpose and power of stories, it considers how they can be woven into a charity's communications. There are tips on where to find people who want to share their stories, example questions to ask that will evoke interesting and emotive answers, and ideas for turning these answers into stories with impact.

The book will help you work together – sensitively and effectively – with storytellers to achieve your charity's goals. Importantly, it includes reminders of the duty of care you have to your storytellers as you become the guardian of their story.

Chapter 1

Working with stories

This chapter helps you to understand the purpose and power of your charity's stories.

Why bother?

People have been sharing stories since time began. Stories bring facts and ideas to life, partly because they give us information in a context we can identify with – other people. As humans, we care about other humans. They interest and influence us.

Top tip



Avoid the term 'case studies'. Instead, talk about 'stories' and 'storytellers' or 'story contributors'.

A story can take an intangible, broad or complex issue and turn it into something relatable – something we can connect with on an emotional level, remember and share with others. We remember stories because emotions stay in our memory longer than facts. According to neuroscientists, when we see something emotive, our brain interprets it more vividly and stores it with greater clarity.¹ So, if you

¹ See Chair Tyng, Hafeez Amin, Mohamad Saad and Aamir Malik, 'The Influences of Emotion on Learning and Memory', *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 8, no. 1454, 2017.

want someone to act, you need to make them feel something first. This is why stories will help you reach people who care about your charity's cause.

Stories can inspire someone brand new to your charity to set up a regular donation, or an email newsletter recipient to start volunteering. A story can seal the deal with a funder or corporate supporter. Whatever action you want someone to take, a personal story has more power to make that happen than facts or information alone.

Powerful stories don't just come from people who've been supported by your charity. They can be from anyone who helps to further your cause, such as a researcher, volunteer, campaigner, corporate partner, fundraiser or event participant.

Where to include stories

Most charity communications will benefit from a personal story or quote. These include:

- Annual reviews and reports
- Direct mail letters and fundraising emails
- Supporter newsletters
- Social media posts
- Press and media campaigns
- Campaigning, influencing and policy work
- Information leaflets or websites
- Awareness-raising communications
- Grant applications or funding bids

Top tip



As well as sharing their story in one of your communications, could your storyteller write a blog, give a talk at an event, take over your social media for a day, or appear in an online film?

'I'm a big fan of reusing and repurposing stories. You might feel like you're going over old ground, but for many people it'll be the first time they hear this story. Even those who've heard it before will be reminded and reconnect with it. Chopping up a story into different chunks for different channels means it can be shared repeatedly and still feel fresh.'



Richard Berks, Freelance Science Writer for charities

How one story can work in different ways

Here's an example of how one person's story can work effectively in several types of communication, each with different aims and objectives.

Below is a brief overview of the story, followed by examples of the types of quote that could be included in each communication.

A quick summary of Rani's story

Rani was diagnosed with a rare blood condition when she was just 21. She'd known something wasn't right for a while but it hadn't crossed her mind it could be anything serious – she was young, fit and had always been healthy.

When Rani finally received her diagnosis, she felt overwhelmed and didn't manage to ask the doctor any of the questions she wanted to. A few days later, she rang Blood Charity's helpline, which she'd seen advertised on a poster in the hospital.

She spoke to a specialist nurse, Dina, and, after a while, felt able to ask all the questions that had been playing on her mind. The nurse also told Rani about a local emotional support group for young women with her condition.

Quotes from the conversation with Rani in action

Information leaflet: *'I was in complete shock. I had no idea I could even get this*

condition when I was so young. If you notice unusual symptoms, such as X or Y, like I did, please go to your GP as soon as possible.'

When you're adding a personal story to information or guidance – for example, a health awareness leaflet – it's important to be clear, succinct and direct. Try to be emotive, as this will help people remember what they've read.

Social media: *'I'll never forget the look on my doctor's face when they handed me the results. It was one of the worst moments of my life.'*

When someone's scrolling through a social media platform, you have barely a moment to grab their attention. Aim for a quote that creates intrigue, leaving the reader curious to find out what happens next.

Fundraising event: *'Dina from Blood Charity's helpline gave me hope for the first time since my diagnosis. She shared information in such a calm, kind and considered way. It made it much easier to take it all in. I finally feel I know how to move forward. The helpline was a lifesaver.'*

Will you take part in the Blood Charity's 10k run so we can be there for more young women like Rani?

Sharing a strong emotional story, which clearly shows the difference your charity makes, can inspire the reader to do something to help. So don't forget to add a 'call to action' at the end of your communication (see page 25 for more examples).

Digital storytelling

When collecting stories, think about how you may be able to use photography, video and audio to bring a story to life for different types of communication and platforms. There is some brief detail on using photography on page 27. However, digital storytelling is a topic beyond the scope of this short book.

Where next?

[www.mind.org.uk/
get-involved/donate-or-fundraise/
resource-centre/
shouting-about-
your-fundraising/
making-use-of-
video](http://www.mind.org.uk/get-involved/donate-or-fundraise/resource-centre/shouting-about-your-fundraising/making-use-of-video)



[www.charitycomms.org.uk/five-
content-marketing-tips-for-getting-
the-most-from-video](http://www.charitycomms.org.uk/five-content-marketing-tips-for-getting-the-most-from-video)

'For me, what's interesting is the difference between 'narrative' and 'story'. "On 7 February 2011, I stepped on a landmine and lost three limbs. I was saved by a medevac helicopter that came and picked me up." That's my narrative – the detail – but it's not my story.



My story is when I tell you about the moment after I got blown up and I looked at the blue sky and heard a bird singing. It's when I tell you about the first time I looked in a mirror, I cried and I wanted to die that night. It's these intimate details, these little moments, that's how we connect with people.'

Giles Duley, Photographer and CEO of Legacy of War Foundation

Chapter 2

Finding stories

This chapter shows you how to find your charity's most compelling stories.

Getting colleagues on board

When you start gathering stories, one of the first things you'll need to do is let your colleagues know what you're looking for and why. You'll need to build relationships, particularly with those who deliver your charity's services, but also with anyone in press, campaigns, fundraising, events, research or social media. If you have an online forum or community, your moderators will be important contacts too. All these people will come across potential storytellers.

Here are four things you can do to get colleagues on board with storytelling:

1. **Visit your services.** Wherever possible, meet face to face with service staff and managers and talk to them about the power of storytelling.
2. **Offer examples of stories in action.** Find a social media post, news story or fundraising communication that includes an effective story. Explain to colleagues how a story like this can raise awareness of a service, event or campaign, attract volunteers or help secure new funders.

3. Include evidence. Demonstrate the impact and benefits of story-led communications. Share statistics on response rates, donations, event sign-ups or social media engagement following the publication of a story. These statistics could help get senior management to fund more storytelling work, or persuade colleagues who produce communications to start including stories.

4. Share knowledge. Consider putting together a short online training session, presentation or factsheet about story gathering. Include key information, such as:

- ❑ Why your organisation needs to regularly find stories and what types of story you're looking to tell. Include a reminder that you'll want to gather stories from diverse groups of storytellers.
- ❑ What to do when someone finds an interesting story and a willing storyteller. Consider data protection and privacy issues early on (see page 29).
- ❑ Which details would be useful for you to know upfront. For example, what's the storyteller's connection with your charity? Have they used your services, taken part in events, fundraised or volunteered?
- ❑ A very short overview of how to brief potential storytellers on what's involved when they share their story. For example: *'Someone will get in touch to arrange a phone call or to meet up. They'll discuss where you'd be happy for your story to be shared (such as social media, a fundraising appeal or an annual report).'*
- ❑ Sensitivities around working with storytellers and issues of consent (see page 29).

'Rather than thinking about what stories you want to tell, consider what stories your audiences need to hear. What do people who use your resources or access your services want and need to know about? Work backwards from that.'



Michelle Sykes, Freelance Communications Consultant

So, you've persuaded your colleagues that stories are important. How can you help keep storytelling at the forefront of their minds?

1. **Arrange regular storytelling catch-ups.** Update colleagues on any story leads they've sent you. Have you had a conversation with the storyteller? How did it go? Where and when will you publish that story?

2. **Plan ahead.** Think about upcoming campaigns, awareness days and events. Ask colleagues what stories they may want to include in their communications. Let colleagues know when you're looking for specific stories and give them as much notice as you can.

Top tip

Make it easy for colleagues to share potential stories with you by creating a dedicated email address or secure online form.



3. **Share successes.** Did a story sourced by your colleague lead to a donation, a new volunteer or an enquiry about a service? Let them know. If they feel good about the part they played, they're more likely to do it again.

Other ways to find stories

You can also communicate directly with potential storytellers. Here are some things to try:

- **Set up a simple 'share your story' form on your website.** Ask for some basic details – name, age, email address – and include space for people to write about their experience. You'll need to get consent from people to store their contact details and include your privacy statement. Keep the stories on file and follow up any you feel would be suitable to include in your communications.
- **Add a call to action.** When you share someone's story in a newsletter or on social media, include a line at the end such as: *'Do you have a story you'd like to share? Get in touch.'*

- **Piggyback on other communications.** Could you add a request for people to share their stories onto a campaigning leaflet, a flyer about your services or an information pack for event participants?

'At Teach First, we created a Storytellers Hub which meets monthly to share story leads, identify storytelling gaps and discuss resources. The hub is made up of marketing and media teams, and colleagues from across the organisation who work directly with the schools, teachers and pupils we partner with. An important aspect of the hub is upskilling. We host sessions on everything from interviewing to editing. Stories are an integral part of Teach First's mission to make our education system work for every child and it's important that the whole organisation understands and contributes towards this.'



'We also put a Story of the Month in our internal newsletter. This links to our storytelling resources on the intranet, which includes a section on stories we're looking for. We find most people like to talk about their work and the people they meet, so we make sure the door is wide open for them to come and share that.'

Emily Babb-Doherty, Copywriter and Storyteller, Teach First

Chapter 3

Preparing for conversations

This chapter looks at how to get ready for conversations with storytellers.

A successful ‘interview’ with a storyteller may feel more like a conversation, which is why it’s referred to as such in this book. Some potential storytellers find the prospect of being ‘interviewed’ intimidating, and calling it a conversation may help them feel more relaxed and comfortable. However, it’s really important to always be upfront and honest about the true purpose of the conversation and what you’ll want to do with the information they share with you.

Creating story briefs

It can be useful to create a mini brief for yourself. This will help you to pin down the aims and objectives of the story and prepare for your conversation.

Here are some things to include:

1. Basic information about your storyteller

- How old are they?

- ❑ Where are they from?
- ❑ What's their connection with your charity?
- ❑ Why do they want to share their story?

Don't worry if you don't have this information, you can ask the storyteller when you speak to them.

2. How you'll share the story

Where will the story appear? For example, is it for your annual report, a fundraising event communication or a social media campaign? What are your aims and objectives for the communication? This will help you focus on the type of story you want to tell and decide what questions to ask your storyteller (see page 16).

If your story is likely to appear in several communications, you might want to jot down aims and objectives for each one.

3. Reactions you want from your audience

What do you want someone to think and feel when they've read the story? For example: *'I want the reader to think our charity sounds like a brilliant ally for someone in the storyteller's situation and feel inspired to find out more about us.'*

What do you want them to *do* next? For example: *'I want the reader to go to our website to find out more about our helpline and support groups.'*

If your reader only takes away one thing from the story, what would you want that to be? For example: *'Our charity runs the UK's leading free helpline for people with questions about diabetes.'*

If you don't have definitive answers to these questions, create a brief for your ideal scenario or preferred communication.

4. Photography, audio and video

Do you need to ask your storyteller about photography, audio or video? For example, will you want them to send you some photos or will you arrange for your charity's photographer to take some? Will you want them to be involved in audio or video content too?

Effective questions

Once you have a potential storyteller's contact details, call or email them to introduce yourself and arrange a time for your conversation. Tell them a bit about what you're going to ask them and why.

This is a good time to ask your storyteller about signing a consent form if they haven't already (see page 29).

Offer to send your questions in advance. You don't need to include every single question, but it's important the storyteller has a sense of the general direction you're hoping the conversation to take.

Here are some tips for drafting your questions:

- **Make sure your questions are open-ended** and will lead to more than yes or no answers. For example, instead of *'Was your support worker helpful?'* try *'How did you feel when you first met your support worker?'* or *'How did they help you to do things differently?'*
- **Show that it's OK to talk about emotions** by mentioning them in your questions. For example: *'What happened sounds really frightening. How did it make you feel?'* Don't be afraid to ask directly how they felt in a specific situation, for instance: *'What was going through your head when you first stood in front of a class?'*, *'What was your immediate reaction when you saw the results?'* or *'How did you feel when you crossed the finish line?'*
- **Find the 'colour'**. Ask people to tell you what things looked, smelt and felt like. What time of day was it? Who was there? The more small details you

collect, the more raw content you'll have to make the story feel real and compelling.

- **Avoid focusing on facts.** Yes, you'll need details like dates, names of services and people involved in the story, but there's no need to interrupt the flow of the conversation to get them. Keep a note of the details you want and ask for them at the end of the conversation.
- **Look for a turning point in someone's story.** You could ask: *'Can you remember when you realised that teaching was definitely the right career for you?', 'What made you finally decide to run the marathon?', 'Was there a specific point in your research where you just knew it was going to be ground-breaking?' or 'What led you to finally ask for support?'*
- **Remember, strong stories illustrate a change.** Ask questions like: *'What was your life like before?', 'How have you changed as a person since then?' or 'What difference could this research make to the future of cancer care?'*
- **Encourage the storyteller to feel positive about themselves.** For example, you could say: *'It sounds like you overcame a lot of tough challenges to get where you are. Can you tell me about something you feel proud of on this journey?'*
- **Chat about your charity.** Try to find tangible examples of the support the storyteller received and the difference it made. Ask things like: *'How did you first discover Charity X?', 'What difference did it make having the charity on your side?' or 'What would you say to someone thinking of making a donation to Charity X?'* If you have a specific campaign coming up or a key message you'd like to focus on in upcoming communications, find out what your storyteller thinks about that issue. For example: *'I don't know if you know but we're trying to change the law around protecting refugees? What do you think about this?' or 'What's your view on NHS waiting times?'*

Top tip



Think about the things you'd be interested in. What would you want to know if you were reading a story in a magazine or newspaper?

Other things to ask about include:

- **Motivations:** *‘What inspired you to volunteer?’ or ‘Why did you decide to leave a legacy?’*
- **Barriers and obstacles:** *‘What stopped you from asking for support sooner?’, ‘What worried you about talking to someone about how you felt?’ or ‘Was it difficult to get the funding or trial participants you needed?’*
- **Memories:** *‘What stands out to you about that time?’*
- **Advice:** *‘What would you say to someone else in a similar situation?’*
- **Anything they want to add:** *‘Is there anything I haven’t asked you about that you’d like to share?’*

‘I have a checklist of questions for different conversations: one for people living with dementia, one for people caring for someone with dementia, one for fundraisers and a different one for researchers. I don’t necessarily stick too closely to the questions during the conversation. If you do, you’re probably not listening properly. But it’s a good safety net, so you can refer back at the end and check you’ve covered everything you need to.’



Jack Enright, Stories Manager, Alzheimer’s Society

Chapter 4

On the day

This chapter is about making the most of your conversations with storytellers and avoiding pitfalls.

Getting started

A storyteller is giving their time and energy to help your charity. Respecting their time is essential to show you value them. Call or arrive promptly. And if you've agreed a set amount of time for the conversation and it looks like it might run over, check with your storyteller if that's fine. Be prepared to wrap up promptly if it's not.

Aim to make your conversation as relaxed and comfortable as possible. If someone is recalling an emotional event or difficult time in their life, it's really important they feel in control of the conversation. Outline what you're planning to talk about. For example, *'I'd like to ask you about diagnosis, how Charity X helped you and your plans for the future.'* But always reassure your storyteller that it's not a problem if they don't want to answer a particular question or if they would like to stop at any point. Ask if they have any questions for you before you get started.

Remember to ask for permission to record your conversation. Explain why you want to record it and what you'll do with the recording afterwards. For example, it might be that you want to avoid taking copious notes so you can

focus on listening, and that you plan to transcribe the conversation and then delete the file.

If possible, record twice, just in case one goes wrong. For example, you could use a voice recording device as well as the audio recording option on your computer.

During the conversation

One of the most important aspects of a good conversation is active listening. When you listen actively, you fully concentrate on what's being said rather than just passively hearing. Active listeners use non-verbal cues to show they're engaged, such as nodding, eye contact and leaning forward. They use verbal cues too, including noises and words or short phrases, such as *'I see'*, *'I know'*, *'Sure'* and *'I understand'*. These are particularly important if people can't see your body language.

Top tip



Practise active listening with friends and family. Observe the difference it makes when you're truly listening rather than thinking about what you want to say next.

Another way you can show you're actively listening is to paraphrase what people have said to demonstrate you've understood. For example, *'It sounds like Charity X helped you to feel stronger again after such as difficult time.'* You could add: *'Does that seem about right?'* or something similar that gives your storyteller a chance to correct you.

Try not to focus on 'getting what you need'. Let the conversation flow naturally and don't worry if it goes off on a tangent. While it's important to have key questions noted down as a reminder of what you want to cover, the conversation can feel self-conscious and stilted if you stick to these too closely. Revisit your questions when there's a natural break. If you can do it

subtly, tick off the questions you've covered so it's easy to see where you are and what else you'd still like to ask.

You can gently guide the conversation when you need to. If you want to move things forward, you could say: *'What you just said reminded me of something else I wanted to ask you...'* or *'I'm conscious of keeping you too long, so can I just ask you about...'*

Avoid the temptation to fill every silence. Give your storyteller plenty of time and space to share their thoughts. If you don't get the answer you're looking for, or if you feel the person has more to say on a matter that's interesting, ask them to elaborate. Try: *'Could you tell me what you mean by that?'* or *'Why do you think that was?'*

Your storyteller might mention a service, event or person you don't know. Always ask them to explain anything you're unfamiliar with as you might find it's important when you're writing the story.

Top tip



Listen back to your storytelling conversations. What are your habits and what could you improve on? For example, could you slow down a bit, or do more to show people you're actively listening?

Finishing up

When you think you've finished, ask your storyteller if there's anything else they want to talk about. It gives them the freedom to share details or thoughts that you may not have considered. Often, when storytellers know the session is ending, they'll share something interesting or significant to their story. So, keep alert and listen carefully right until the end.

Try to end the conversation on a positive note and make sure your storyteller isn't left feeling upset. If you do feel the conversation has brought up difficult

feelings, have some suggestions for support. For example, if your charity has a helpline, you could offer the contact details.

Reiterate how grateful you are to your storyteller. Remind them of the difference personal stories can make, both to your charity and other people affected by the issues you've discussed, who may be feeling isolated or alone.

Send a follow-up email to thank the storyteller for their time and remind them what will happen next. Explain that you'll send over the written story so they can check they're happy with it before it appears anywhere. Factor in time for showing the story to your manager or a colleague first if you need to. Be realistic about timings and never overpromise.

You may have covered challenging or upsetting topics in your conversation. It's important to share how you're feeling. You could talk to your manager, a colleague or friend, or your organisation's counselling service if it has one.

'At Anthony Nolan, we're encouraged to acknowledge the impact stories work can have on us and seek support when we need to. When a story has got under my skin, or I find that I'm worrying about someone I've been speaking to, I have the option to do clinical supervision or speak to a counsellor. Some of our storytellers have passed away, and my colleagues and I do check in with each other when that happens. We're encouraged to look after ourselves and each other and always ask for support.'



Hayley Tomkinson, Stories Manager, Anthony Nolan

Chapter 5

Writing stories

This chapter helps you turn your conversations into stories with impact.

Structuring your story

When you've transcribed your recorded conversation, or written up your notes, revisit your mini brief (see page 14) to remind yourself of your aims and objectives for the story. Before you start writing, it can be helpful to jot down a structure or plan. Your story should include a powerful opening, an informative and emotive middle, and an impact-focused ending. The idea is to take your reader on a journey. You'll need to: pique their interest and draw them in; build tension, empathy and connection with the storyteller; and offer some resolution or conclusion by the end. Go through your transcript or notes and highlight key quotes that fit with each section. Look for the 'golden nuggets' – for example, the phrases that convey the passion driving a researcher to make discoveries, or the sheer determination of a marathon runner to reach the finish line.

Powerful openings

You might start by describing the storyteller's situation before they got involved with your charity and the challenges they were facing at the time.

Or you could open with an intriguing comment that creates some mystery and makes the reader want to find out more. Help people visualise a situation and empathise with the storyteller by painting a picture rather than giving details like times and dates.

Compare: *'It was winter 1997 when I became homeless.'*

With: *'My whole body was shaking. Not just with the cold but the intense fear of what might happen. Nothing could have prepared me for that first night sleeping in the shop doorway.'*

Informative and emotive middles

You can use the middle part of your story to explain the 'solution' to the problem illustrated in the beginning. This might include your storyteller's experience of your charity and how it improved their situation.

Top tip



Always avoid jargon, 'charity speak' and clichés. Your story needs to sound natural, not as if your storyteller has been asked to speak in soundbites or shoehorn in your charity's key messages.

Top tip



There are so many ways to tell a story. It doesn't have to be chronological. You can start with someone's positive situation now and jump back to show how they got here.

Here are some examples:

'By June, we could visit baby Julie in the hospital. I thought my heart was going to explode with joy when my daughter took my hand for the first time. It felt like an epic journey to get here, and I know it wouldn't have happened without Premature Baby Charity's research.'

'It definitely didn't happen overnight. But on the fourth, maybe fifth time at the community garden, I started to notice the difference. As I put my hands into the earth to pull out a weed,

I could feel my breathing slow down. I was nowhere near as anxious as I'd been on my first visit. I had something to focus on and new friends to chat to.'

Impact-focused endings

Make sure you've demonstrated the impact of your charity's work at one or several points in your story. You can do this by letting the reader know how and where your storyteller is today. Compare that to where they were at the beginning of the story and include how they feel about this transition.

Try to 'close the circle' by referring back to something from the beginning of the story.

For example: *'These days I see my family regularly, I have a job I like, and I'm learning to like myself too. The counselling sessions helped me to accept that, like everyone else, I have a past. Learning from it is the main thing. I often think about those nights in the doorway – and I know I'm never going back.'*

Calls to action

You've told a great story that's inspired someone to want to act – don't forget

Where next?

Storytelling Can Change the World
by Ken Burnett



to tell them how to do it. For example, after sharing Marge's story about becoming homeless you could say: *'Every day, we support 600 people like Marge to find housing. To find out more about how you can help end homelessness for good, visit www.homelesscharity.org.uk'* or *'Just £5 a month can help make sure Marge has somewhere safe to sleep tonight.'*

Editing quotes

It's fine to amend people's quotes to make them clearer and more succinct. Just make sure you don't change the overall meaning or cut so much that they no longer sound natural or reflect the personality of the storyteller.

Here's an example of what you could take out:

~~'I think, yes, I remember, I did like her, my support worker called Janine. In my opinion, she~~ **made a difference to my life** ~~straight away, immediately, by doing things like the way she was really just~~ **simply listening to me and to what I had to say.'**

You may also need to add in words or details for clarity. Always ask your storyteller to review the final story you've written, so they have the opportunity to approve any amends you've made.

First person versus third person

First-person stories are told in the storyteller's own words. Third-person stories are when another voice (in this case, your charity's) relays what happened. If you write in the third person, you can still include some direct quotes from your storyteller.

First person:

'It was so hard to admit I was struggling. But at Dad's Club I can talk honestly about how I feel. I can ask questions I've been too ashamed to ask anyone else. I leave each session feeling lighter, more positive about what's to come and confident I can do this for my son.'

John, 29, London

Third person:

Parents' Charity has recently launched its Dad's Club for single fathers. It's somewhere dads can meet up for advice and support. 'I always leave Dad's Club feeling lighter and more positive', says John, who's 29 and lives in London.

Images to support your stories

For many communications, you'll want to include an image of your storyteller alongside their story.

Just like the words you use, an image has the power to draw people in and evoke an emotional response. Each image conveys its own narrative, so think carefully about what you want that to be. For example, if you're trying to get across that your charity has inspired and empowered your storyteller, you may want to avoid images of them looking despairing or downbeat.

Your organisation may have photography guidelines which detail how images fit with your brand identity. If you're commissioning a photographer to take photos of your storyteller, consult these guidelines first.

Make sure you have clear consent to use someone's image and that this appears on your story consent form (see 'Getting consent' on page 29). Discuss with your storyteller where they're happy for their image to appear. For example, some people may agree to their photo being used alongside their story in a specific communication only. Others may be happy for you to keep their image on file, for a set time, and use it to illustrate any aspects of your charity's work.

Where next?



Ethical image use guidelines

www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource-documents/bond-ethical-guidelines-for-collection-and-use-of-content.pdf

Example image policy

www.wateraid.org/uk/publications/ethical-image-policy

Chapter 6

Looking after storytellers

This chapter considers the obligations you have to your storytellers.

Being considerate

The most important aspect of charity storytelling is making sure anyone who shares their story with you has a positive experience. If they don't, it could not only be upsetting for your storyteller but could also damage your charity's reputation.

Trust your instincts. If you feel someone is too vulnerable to be involved in storytelling, you're probably right. If, for example, someone has been very recently bereaved, it might not be the best time for them to share their story. But you could try getting in touch again in the future.

It's important for you or someone from your charity to check in regularly with each storyteller. Do this at least once a year to see if their situation has changed and if they're still happy for you to share their story.

Remember: it's their story, not yours. You should ask their permission each time you want to share it and check any edits you want to make.

Show storytellers they're valued and appreciated. Send copies of communications or links to where their stories appear. Update them on how their stories have helped your charity. If they've appeared in a fundraising mailing, let them know how much it's raised. Ask for their thoughts on the storytelling process. How did they find your conversation and your contact before and after?

You may find you develop a connection with your storyteller and want to keep your relationship going. Be mindful of their feelings. Always be honest and don't make promises you can't guarantee you'll keep.

Getting consent

Every storyteller will need to fill in a consent form. This gives you permission to keep hold of their details. It should also serve as a clear record of where they've agreed for their story (and photograph, if relevant) to be shared and how long for. For example, they might agree to feature in an annual report but not want to be included on social media.

Make sure you're getting *informed* consent. This means making sure your storytellers fully understand the implications of being included in each form of communication before they agree to it. For example, if you're going to tweet about your annual report and put it on Facebook, this is essentially the

same as a story being on social media. You won't be able to control who sees and shares it. There are also risks of negative comments or 'trolling' (when someone makes a deliberately provocative comment or post). Talk to your storyteller about this. And be prepared to support them if the story they agreed to share does receive negative attention.

Where next?



How to deal with trolls
www.charitydigital.org.uk/topics/topics/how-to-deal-with-social-media-trolls-9332

You will need to agree with your storyteller an ‘expiry date’ for using their story and images. Of course, if the storyteller asks you to stop using their story or images before then, you’ll need to change your consent form to reflect this and remove the story and images from your database.

Always talk to your legal team or advisers before producing a consent form. It includes personal data and is therefore subject to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

If you’re working with under 18s or vulnerable people (this could include people with some forms of dementia or learning disabilities), you may need to get consent from someone responsible for their care (who is over 18). Seek advice before asking under 18s or vulnerable adults to share their stories.

Storing stories and keeping data safe

Where next?



Charities and data protection

www.dsc.org.uk/content/how-brexit-will-change-data-protection-for-charities

www.charitycomms.org.uk/case-studies-photos-and-films-can-be-personal-data-under-gdpr-too

It’s vital that you store people’s stories, contact details and consent forms safely and securely – whether you’re using a sophisticated database or a simple password-protected spreadsheet. Check with your legal team or advisers about specific requirements.

Keep a note of every time you contact a storyteller and everywhere you share their story. This will help avoid someone being bombarded with requests from different people in your charity. It’s also useful to see how many times a particular story has

appeared and in which communications. Keep this information with the storyteller’s contact details, so the person getting in touch has it to hand.

If possible, try to assign ‘gatekeepers’ for each storyteller – one or two people who have a strong relationship with them. If all requests go through gatekeepers, it’s much easier to keep track.

Consider making anonymised versions of your stories available for all staff members to browse, so they can see which might be suitable for their communications. However, only allow gatekeepers or very few people access to the storyteller’s contact details.

This is all part of making sure your storyteller has a positive experience when they share their story with your charity. After all, their words have the power to do so much good.

‘Someone’s story is their most precious thing. If you’ve been invited to share it, you should always respect and look after it. You become its guardian. When I’m gathering someone’s story, they’re my boss. It might be a newspaper or a charity that’s commissioned me, but it’s actually the person sharing their story that I’m working for. I’ll do everything I can to make sure they’re comfortable, happy and getting what they want from this experience.’



Giles Duley, Photographer and CEO of Legacy of War Foundation

Storytelling for Impact

Charities have vital stories to tell. This practical guide will help you find, write and share them. Follow the advice in this book, and the stories you tell will inspire your audiences to take action – whether that’s making a donation, volunteering time or getting behind your latest campaign.

Sarah Myers is a copywriter, editorial consultant and creative manager, with more than 20 years’ experience in the not-for-profit sector. Her previous roles include Senior Writer and Creative Services Manager at Macmillan Cancer Support and Managing Editor at a charity communications agency. Now freelance, she works with an extensive range of charities, social enterprises, professional bodies and specialist agencies.

‘Everything you need to tell inspiring stories and put the voices of your storytellers centre stage.’

Adeela Warley, CEO, CharityComms

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