Using storytelling to boost your nonprofit's communications

#CVWebinar
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Nov 22, 2018

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CHARITY VILLAGE

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Specialize in:

- Branding/messaging
- Website content strategy
- Story writing



TODAY'S TOPIC: Leveraging storytelling within your existing marketing communications mix

Using stories to boosts the quality and impact of the content you already need to create.

What we'll cover

- Specific reasons WHY a range of nonprofits are telling stories
- HOW and WHERE nonprofit communicators are sharing their stories
- Where to look for guidance: tips to help you decide which stories your nonprofit should be telling

Is this where you should be for the next hour?

Exercise

Make a list of ideas: stories your nonprofit organization can tell



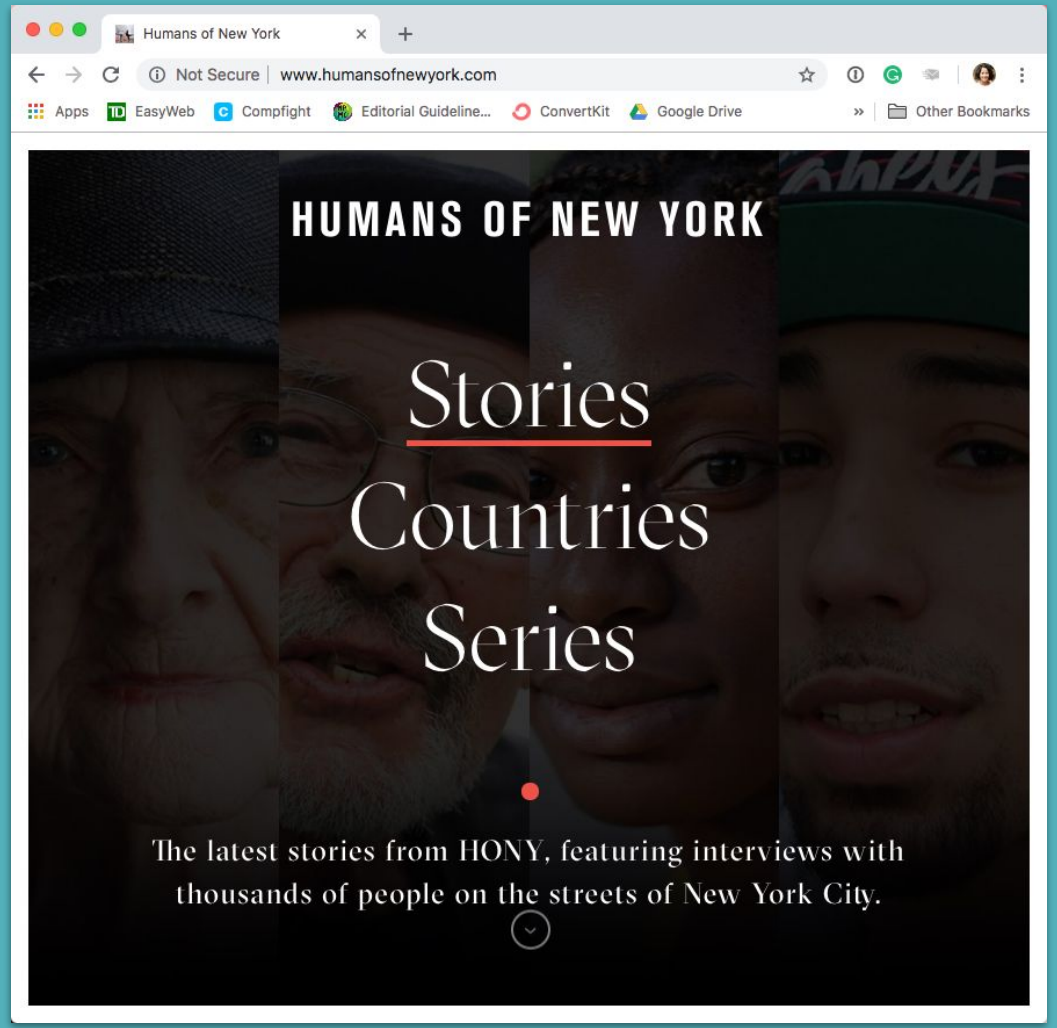
Quick start

Ideas you've had but haven't implemented

Common concerns

"Our cause is boring, dry and just isn't as 'sexy'."

"We don't have cute kids, kittens or puppies to feature."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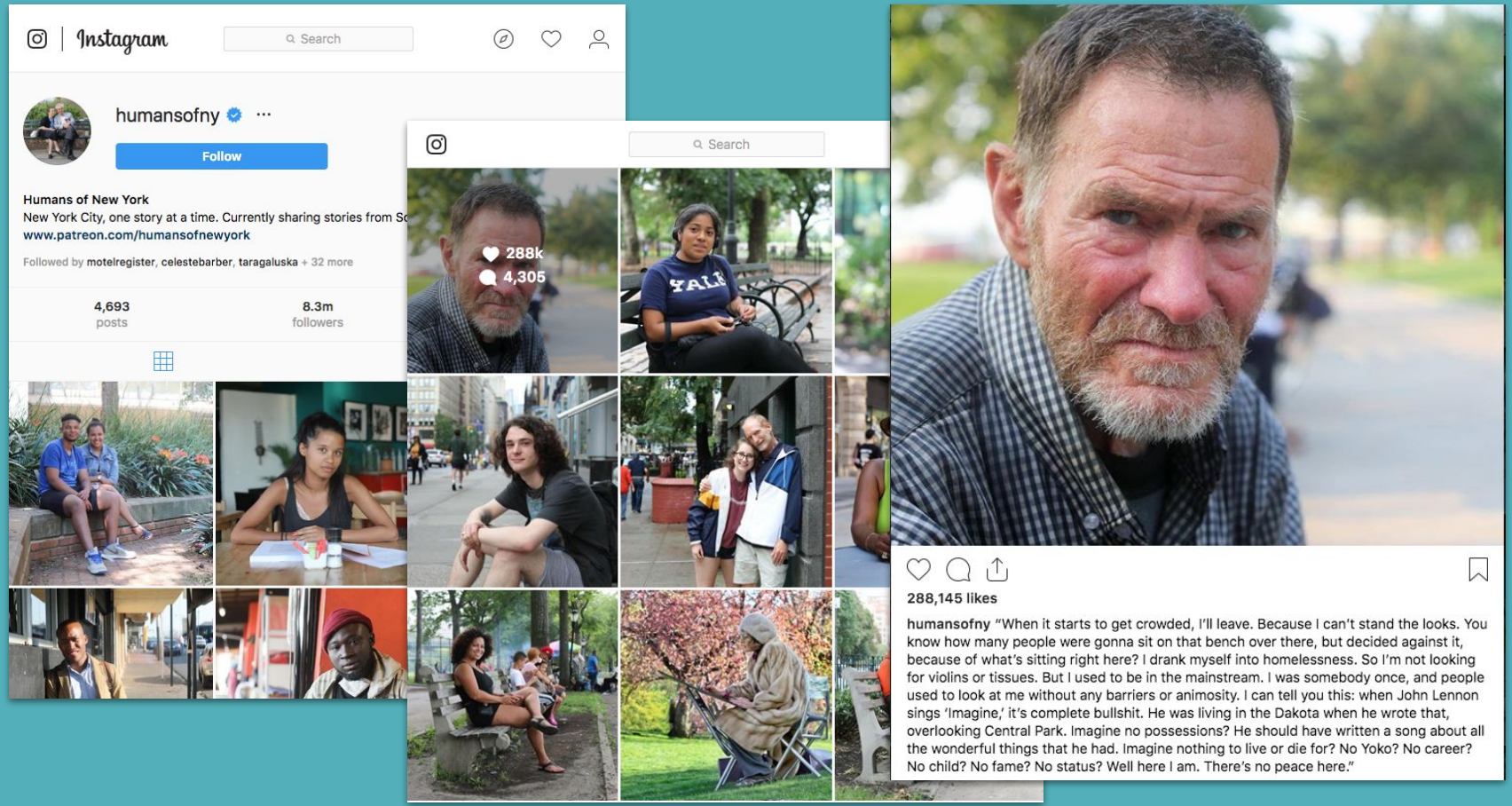
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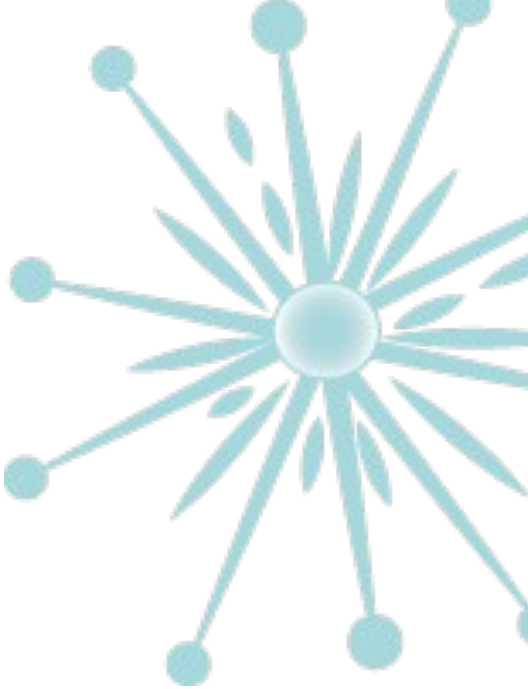
humansofny "When it starts to get crowded, I'll leave. Because I can't stand the looks. You know how many people were gonna sit on that bench over there, but decided against it, because of what's sitting right here? I drank myself into homelessness. So I'm not looking for violins or tissues. But I used to be in the mainstream. I was somebody once, and people used to look at me without any barriers or animosity. I can tell you this: when John Lennon sings 'Imagine,' it's complete bullshit. He was living in the Dakota when he wrote that, overlooking Central Park. Imagine no possessions? He should have written a song about all the wonderful things that he had. Imagine nothing to live or die for? No Yoko? No career? No child? No fame? No status? Well here I am. There's no peace here."

Stories affect brain chemistry

“Narratives that cause us to pay attention and also involve us emotionally are the stories that move us to action.”

~ Paul Zak

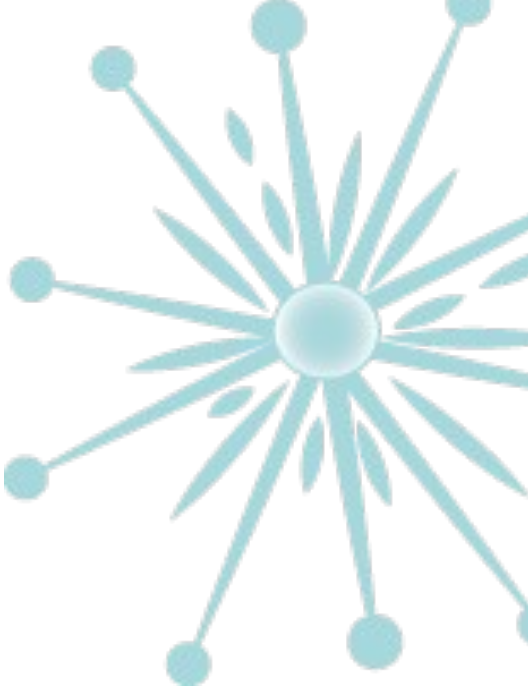


Links to the research: https://moflow.ca/making-a-case-for-storytelling/

Stories compel people to take action

"It's all about putting together a simple, emotionally compelling message. The best way to do that is in the form of a picture or a story, something that purely engages the emotional system."

~ Deborah Small



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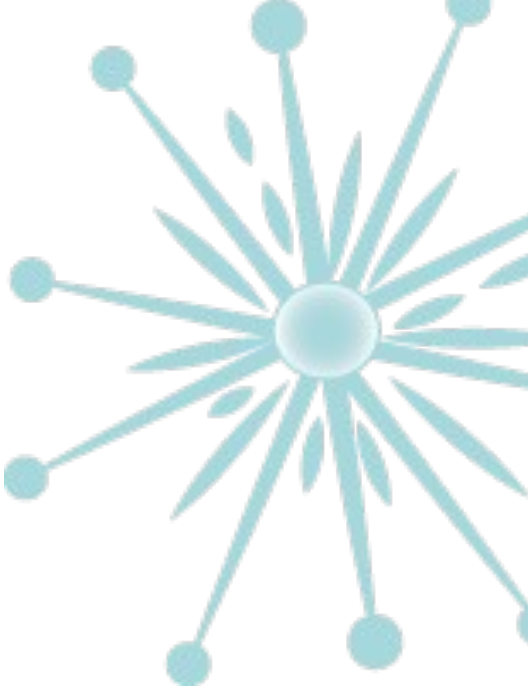
Stories build empathy and connection

Storytelling is an effective way to foster empathy, compassion, tolerance and respect for difference.



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Rich with story options

Members
Students
Alumni
Clients
Grantees
Employees

Program participants
Patients
Campers
Donors
Volunteers
Researchers

Advocates
Sponsors
Artists
Patrons
Ambassadors

Exercise

Make a list of ideas: stories your nonprofit organization can tell



Brainstorm

Ideas you've had but haven't implemented

Story leads your peers have suggested

Pick one story from your list and answer:

What's the story about?



Try completing

[x person] went through [x experience], which resulted in [X outcome].

Smart storytellers know WHY they are telling stories



Tip

Your reasons may be very different from your peers at other nonprofits

Where to look

Dust off existing guides, plans and frameworks

Strategic plan

Organizational goals

Communications plan

Communications objectives

WHY nonprofits tell stories

To demystify complex concepts

The Law Foundation of Ontario

To encourage program registration

YMCA Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer

To answer questions about our work and mission

Spinal Cord Injury Ontario

More details and explanation: https://moflow.ca/storytelling-inspiration-file/

WHY nonprofits tell stories

To explain the needs our organization is filling

Oakville Hospital Foundation

To provide evidence to policymakers

Diabetes Canada

To allow members to learn from each other

Professional Association of Canadian Theatres

More details and explanation: https://moflow.ca/storytelling-inspiration-file/

WHY nonprofits tell stories

To create transparency and build confidence

World Vision Canada

To create space for new voices

Pathways to Education Canada

To connect people working in isolation

AnitaB.org

More details and explanation: https://moflow.ca/storytelling-inspiration-file/

WHY nonprofits tell stories

To overcome skepticism and mistrust

SmartSaver

To inspire people to reach their personal goals

YMCA Canada

To recognize the generosity of supporters

The Oakville Community Foundation

More details and explanation: https://moflow.ca/storytelling-inspiration-file/

To encourage program registration

*"We share **stories about our campers' experiences during camp** and the positive changes families see in their campers afterward. These stories demonstrate the lasting impact summer camp has on our campers' lives, as well as the value of the summer camp experience we provide."*

~Kelly Rembold, Sales and Communication Director
YMCA Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer

To explain the needs our organization is filling

*"We tell **stories about caregivers, patients, volunteers** and **other donors** to illustrate how donations can change a life or even save a life.*

Stories make our cause relatable and personable and turn the focus from what our organization needs to what the people in our community need."

~Suzanne Hallsworth, Chief Development Officer
Oakville Hospital Foundation

To provide evidence to policymakers

“Stories from people with diabetes bring life to our government relations strategies and are critical to our advocacy work; every successful advocacy campaign starts with one **patient story**.

Governments often respond to evidence but it is the experiences and stories that get their attention.”

~Sherry Calder, Senior Manager, Marketing & Communications
Diabetes Canada

To allow members to learn from each other

"We're a membership-based organization, made up of professional producing theatre companies. Our members benefit a lot from learning from each other so we take every opportunity to have our ***members tell their own stories*** *to each other, like how they undertook a successful capital campaign, to a fantastic tour they just completed, or how they're integrating digital technology into their artistic practice."*

~Meg Shannon, Membership and Communications Manager
Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT)

To create space for new voices

*"Sharing personal **stories from Pathways students and alumni** is a great way to create space for their voices. It's also an opportunity to demonstrate how the lived experience of each young person is unique, and how the Pathways Program helps them to address the barriers in each personal journey."*

~Alex Kruger, Manager, Marketing and Brand
Pathways to Education Canada

Where to look

Dust off existing guides, plans and frameworks

Strategic plan

Organizational goals

Communications plan

Communications objectives



Where to look

Dust off existing guides and frameworks

Key messages

Brand platform, campaign, website content strategy

Values or core belief statements

Show how you are living your values

“We can help you position your organization as a leader in accessibility and inclusion in your community.”

Stories about employers participating in inclusive recruitment and hiring program

Key message → story idea example

“You can come to us for a connection to a broader movement.”

Stories about community leaders and activists - how they got started, what they have accomplished

Key message → story idea example

“We help to accelerate the journey of new Canadians as they make this country their home.”

Stories of newcomers and how a settlement program helped them.

Key message → story idea example

Partnership: get more done with others

Stories of alliance or coalition members and the results of that collaboration

Values statement or core belief → story idea example

Strengthening public policy is critical

Stories of volunteer advocates or government relations team members

Values statement or core belief → story idea example

Smart communicators carefully consider their story audiences



Tip

This work is likely in place if you are working from a strategic plan, communications plan, website content strategy or brand platform.

Exercise:

Who is the primary audience for this story?



Where will you look?

Strategic plan
Communications plan
Key messages
Values or core beliefs

Remember: any story you develop must tie back to a strategic WHY



Next step

Not only must every story be strategically aligned, you can prioritize based on strategic *importance*.

Exercise:

What do you need to achieve by sharing this story?



Where will you look?

Strategic plan
Communications plan
Key messages
Values or core beliefs

Exercise:

What programs, events, campaigns or other offerings can you feature in the story?



Consider:

WHY is this a story worth telling, from a business point of view?

Measurable outcomes

- Email newsletter signups
- Magazine subscriptions
- Online donations
- Program registrations
- Requests for information package
- Event registrations
- Meetings secured with policy makers
- Petition signatures
- Community participation (forum memberships, discussions)

Exercise:

What call to action can you feature in this story?



Measurable

How will you assess the success or result of telling this story?



Where to look

Dust off existing guides and frameworks

Strategic plan

Organizational goals

Communications plan

Communications objectives

Key messages

Brand platform, campaign, website content strategy

Values or core belief statements

Show you are walking the talk

Smart storytellers understand HOW they'll use the stories they create



Tip

Before investing resources in developing a story, it's important to understand where you'll use it

Spend 20% of your effort on creating stories, 80% on promoting them



Tip

Leverage a few carefully selected stories.

Smart storytellers integrate stories within existing communications



Tip

Rather than “yet another new thing to do” storytelling can boost the impact of and add interest to your existing tactics.

Where to look

Look to existing guides and frameworks

Communications plan

Ongoing and planned tactics, including campaigns

Editorial calendar

For your blog, newsletter, magazine

Event schedule

Your organization's events, others where your leaders will be speaking

WHERE nonprofits use stories

- Direct mail
- Social media
- Reports
- Media releases
- Mat stories
- Other media relations
- Presentations
- Panels
- Collateral materials
- Events
- One-on-one meetings
- Spokesperson program

WHERE nonprofits use stories

- Blog
- Print newsletter
- Email updates
- Annual report
- Website
- Executive speeches
- Sponsorship kits
- Podcasts

More details and explanation: https://moflow.ca/storytelling-inspiration-file-part-2-ways/

“For the past several years our Foundation has chosen one exceptional and life-changing patient experience and will tell and retell this story throughout the year to donors across multiple platforms. It often starts with a ***direct mail*** *appeal written in the voice of the patient. We then share the story on* ***social media*** *with* ***photos*** *to add more personal details to the story.*

Months later we revisit this patient story to get an update on their progress. This is usually done in a ***video****, or we have the patient* ***speak at an event****. We find in many cases we are reaching different audiences with the same story and for those donors that have heard the story before, they have a stronger connection to it.”*

~Suzanne Hallsworth, Chief Development Officer
Oakville Hospital Foundation

Where to look

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Do you struggle with *finding* stories?

Tips for finding stories

Be clear about how and when you'll be using the stories

Ensure ongoing communication with frontline staff, since they know the stories

Crowdsource stories via contests

More tips at https://moflow.ca/14-tips-finding-stories/

Tips for finding stories

Attend live events to make face-to-face connections

Ask for feedback about people's experiences with your organization

Use one primary channel to begin and to get people on board

More tips at https://moflow.ca/14-tips-finding-stories/

Once you know which stories you'll feature and how you'll use them...

Planning and writing your strategically-aligned story

Audience

Objective

Key message

Featured offering

Call to action



Before you start writing

Get clear about these elements and write them down in a strategic story planning brief

Exercise:

Review the work you've completed in the last hour.



Did you include:

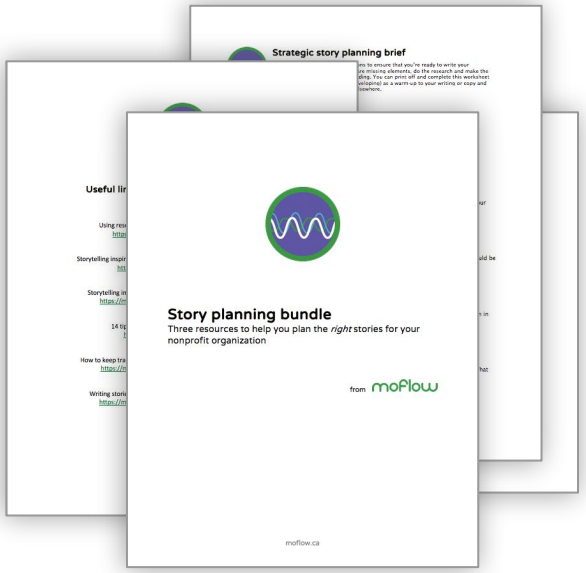
Audience
Objective
Key message
Featured offering
Call to action

Story planning bundle

Three resources to help you plan the right stories for your nonprofit organization:

- Story assessment and prioritization worksheet
- Strategic story planning brief
- Useful links to support your story planning

Sign up >> moflow.ca/spb



Story writing support from me



Now booking story writing projects in
January 2019 and beyond.

Waitlist >> moflow.ca/2019-story-writing-waitlist/

You're ready to use storytelling to boost your nonprofit's communications



Over to you

Smart storytelling decisions aligned with priorities and goals

Thank you!

I hope you've found my strategic storytelling tips useful.

Learn more about my work at moflow.ca

Story writing bundle:
moflow.ca/spb



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