

Generosity Experts are in your corner.



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Motivate. Captivate. Inspire.

Powerful storytelling is a skill worth developing

We all share stories. It's a human trait. And we tell these stories to deepen our connection with one another, to inspire, and to catalyze action. So for nonprofits, whose stories are already compelling and powerful, the art of effectively sharing these stories is a skill worth honing and developing. Whether you're writing an appeal letter, brochure, or speech, a few practical tips may help you magnify your mission:

- 1. Become a story collector.** Nonprofit staff help people in need. They live, hear, and know the stories, but they rarely have time to write them down, annotate quotes, create photographs, and archive them. Add to this, the challenge of anonymity or obtaining permission, and storytelling can stall before it's begun. Consider building a simple, easily accessed story archive and gain client approval at the outset. You'll reap the rewards.
- 2. Think beyond words.** At the outset of any written project, keep in mind that you have both words and images in your toolbox. The images you use to tell your story can be as important as the words.
- 3. Go beyond ordinary.** A quick image search of private schools, child abuse services, or historical preservation (whatever your pervuew is) will show you the ubiquitous sea of messages your donors see. Ask yourself if there is a different way to tell and show your story?
- 4. Start your story with a bang.** Standard brochure language for a food bank might begin: "In fall 2008, the City Food Bank..." If so, Your readers may immediately tune out. This all too common organization-focused intro is missing client-focused impact, something like: "Every day we make food accessible to hungry people in their times of greatest need. And our 'we' includes you."
- 5. Talk directly to your donors.** Every fundraising message is a direct conversation with the good your donors can provide. What is their value? Who will they help?
- 6. Be conversational.** Most brochure language aspires to formality and industry-speak, as if we're writing to colleagues in the industry. Consider writing to a friend or acquaintance, someone who doesn't know anything about your area of expertise. When you begin telling your story, use real worlds and a conversational sentence structure. This will add authenticity to your message.

