

COMPOSING CAPTIVATING STORIES

for Your Nonprofit

An Interactive Workbook





What's Ahead



THE BACK BONE: 5 KEY COMPONENTS OF AUTHENTIC STORYTELLING

1. Once Upon a Time
2. The Path of Your Main Characters
3. Every Story Has a Villain
4. The Battle of Good vs. Evil
5. The Resolution



HOW TO MAXIMIZE STORYTELLING IN YOUR FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

- Social Media
- Video
- Mobile Messaging & Text-to-Donate
- Email
- Peer-to-Peer Campaigns

WHY DO NONPROFITS NEED **COMPELLING** STORYTELLING?

Authentic storytelling makes us feel closer to our fellow human beings and the world around us. With the meteoric rise of digital connectivity, there has never been a better time to raise awareness and engagement around a mission that is close to your donors' hearts. **So why is it so hard to effectively tell your organization's story?**

You likely have plenty of stories to tell about your mission and its impact on the community. But perhaps you're in need of a fresh approach, can't decide which stories are most engaging, or don't yet know the essential elements needed to craft authentic story. Our interactive workbook will explore the backbone of great storytelling and how you can use it to deploy a compelling content strategy that will more deeply connect with and influence your supporters.

LET'S JUMPSTART YOUR STORYTELLING SKILLS!



“The best way to emotionally connect other people to our agenda begins with ‘Once upon a time...’”

- Jonathan Gottschall

THE FIVE KEY COMPONENTS of an Authentic Story

Not every story is the same. Some are funny, some are more chilling or heartwarming. But the good ones all share similar qualities. And the best ones definitely have structure. If your storytelling has been falling flat and failing to launch, this is the perfect place to start. Our Five Key Components, are taken straight from the master storytellers at Pixar, and apply perfectly to nonprofit messaging.

Break away from a simple recap of your organization and learn how to tell your story like it's the plot to a blockbuster movie.

1. ONCE UPON A TIME

Who Are Your Main Characters?

Start by introducing, or re-introducing, the main characters in your organization’s story, namely your beneficiaries or “faces of the organization.” The main character doesn’t have to be a person or group of people. You can highlight the object being positively impacted by your organization (ex: the school district, the city of Boston, the animals, etc.) Supporters want to know who they are giving to, so make this clear from the outset.

DESCRIBE SOME OF YOUR MAIN CHARACTERS. START WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION BUT BE SURE TO BRAINSTORM BENEFICIARIES, BOARD MEMBERS AND BEYOND.

2. THE PATH OF YOUR MAIN CHARACTERS

What is Life Like for Your Characters?

Showcase what happens on a regular basis. If your main character is your organization, update your supporters about the recent programs you’ve launched, or what you’ve been doing this year to advance your organization’s mission. If you’re highlighting a benefactor, detail what a day in their life might be like as it pertains to the cause.

WHAT IS THE MAIN CHARACTER DEDICATED TO? HOW HAVE THEY PREPARED FOR THE BATTLE?

3. EVERY STORY HAS A VILLAIN

What Obstacles Are You Currently Facing?

Every story has a bad guy. For nonprofits, that means any obstacles you are currently facing (and that's usually a lot). What is preventing good from prevailing? Is it a lack of funding to expand a school, or trouble delivering goods to homeless people in rural communities? Perhaps your hurdle is the medical technology, research or access to good healthcare necessary to battle a terrible disease.

WHO/WHAT ARE THE VILLAIN(S) IN YOUR STORY?

4. THE BATTLE OF GOOD VS. EVIL

How Are You Going to Combat Villains?

This is about IMPACT. Create and communicate your plan of action to help good prevail over evil. Propose a solution. Enlist your audience in helping you fight your battle by showcasing how donations and volunteering will help.

DESCRIBE THE BATTLE OF GOOD VS. EVIL:

5. THE RESOLUTION

How Does Your Mission Continue?

You wouldn't stop a movie right before the bad guy dies. Likewise, don't stop communicating with donors simply because your campaign has ended. The resolution is about donor stewardship and showcasing how your mission continues. Keep communicating with donors to thank them and let them know exactly how their gift has made a difference.

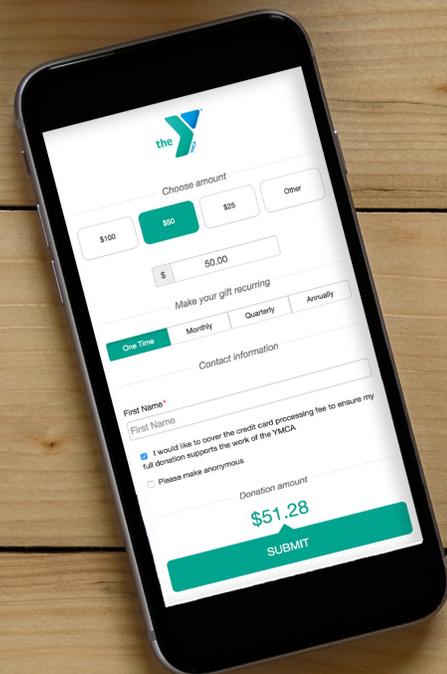
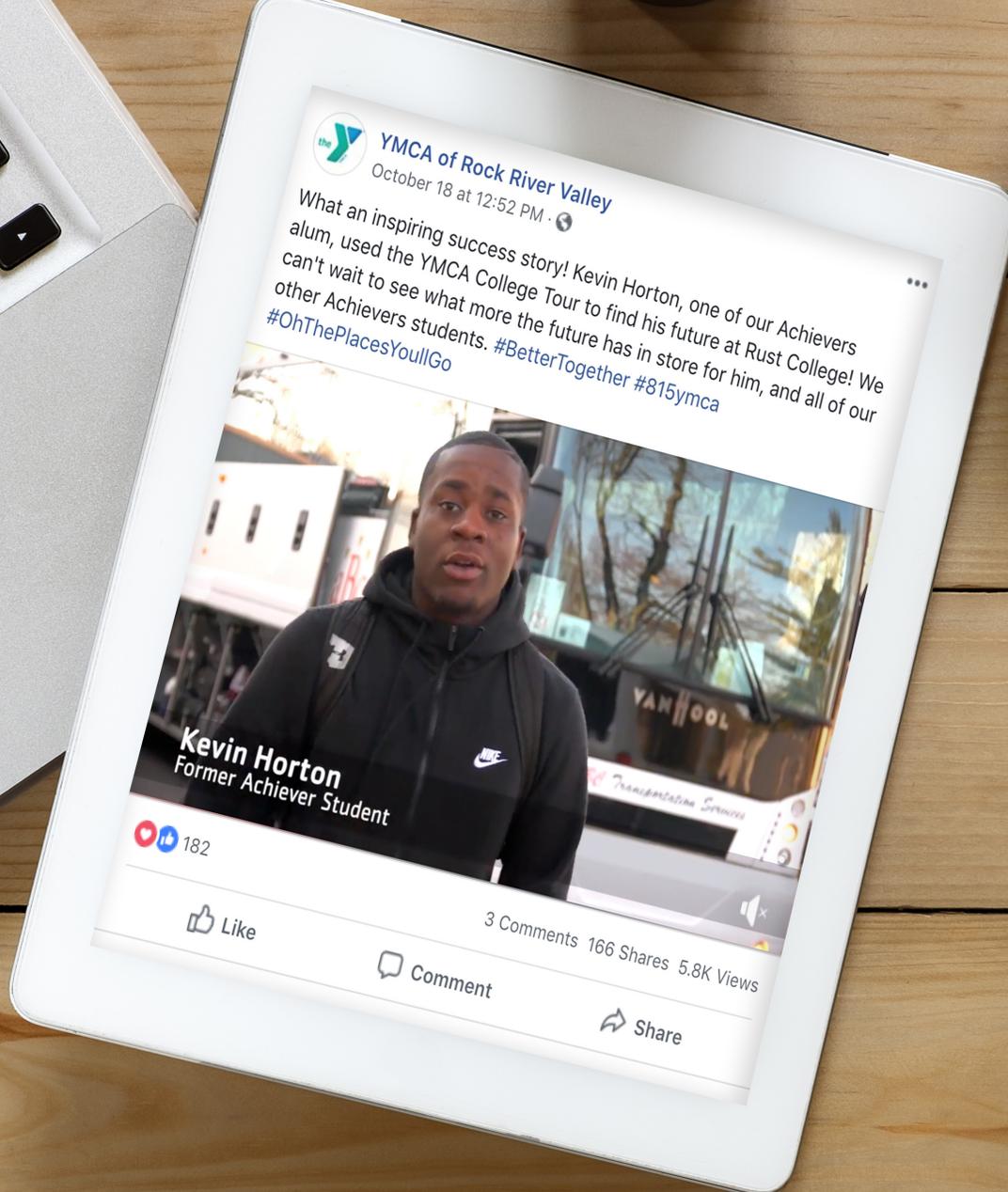
DESCRIBE YOUR RESOLUTION AND HOW THE DONOR CAN COME TO THE RESCUE

COMPOSE YOUR STORY

COMBINE YOUR PLOT POINTS (IN ANY ORDER) TO FLESH OUT A COMPELLING STORY

TIP

Use emotional language to more deeply connect with your audience. Use it in describing your main characters' drive and feelings, and especially in describing your villain. For example: neglected, overlooked, alone, survivor, champion, overcome, empower, heartbreaking, cherish, warrior.



HOW TO MAXIMIZE STORYTELLING

in Your Communication Strategy

Your mission is unique and your story should reflect that. This doesn't mean you can't do some strategic repurposing of your content for each of your marketing channels. In fact, you should! Doing so can help create a cohesive narrative through individualized copy with a similar tone and message.

Let's explore how to best utilize authentic storytelling so that all your communication pieces work together.

SOCIAL MEDIA

47% OF SUPPORTERS LEARN ABOUT A CAUSE/NONPROFIT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

GREAT FOR:

- Quick, shareable updates using images and videos
- Demonstrating impact metrics
- Showcasing meaningful call-to-actions, imagery and graphics

MAXIMIZE YOUR STORY

- Share a behind the scenes as a staff member or volunteer for your organization
- Share a day in the life of an individual positively affected by your organization
- Show a “before and after” story to visually highlight the ‘good vs. evil’ and ‘resolution’ steps of your content

LET'S BRAINSTORM SOME WAYS TO SET UP YOUR STORY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS!

HOW CAN YOU CONCISELY HIGHLIGHT YOUR CHARACTERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO OR BENEFITS FROM YOUR PROGRAM?

WHAT KIND OF IMAGERY POPS UP WHEN YOU THINK OF YOUR CHARACTERS?

WHAT EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE CAN YOU ATTRIBUTE TO THEIR STORY/PLIGHT?

ARE THERE COMPELLING 'BEFORE AND AFTER' STORIES YOU CAN SHARE?

COMPOSE A SHORT, SHAREABLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST BASED ON THESE ELEMENTS

VIDEO

60% OF DONORS WATCH BEFORE THEY DONATE

GREAT FOR:

- Evoking the senses and emotion with compelling images and video
- Creating a relatable story that resonates with viewers
- Casting powerful characters to create empathy

MAXIMIZE YOUR STORY

- Showcase impact in action, out in the community
- Up the authenticity by taking videos on your mobile device
- Use real emotion—it's more compelling than perfection

IDEAS FOR STORYTELLING VIDEOS

- Recruitment videos:** Ask people to join your mission
- Fundraising event videos:** Tell the story of your cause to any first-time donors or attendees
- Mission-specific videos:** Highlight the components of your program and how it helps those in need
- Recipient videos:** Reach the people who benefit from your cause, not just those who support it

LET'S BRAINSTORM: STORYBOARD EXERCISE

WHO ARE SOME GREAT ON-CAMERA AMBASSADORS FOR YOUR CAUSE?

WHAT ARE SOME COMPELLING ACTION SHOTS OF YOUR VOLUNTEERS/STAFF?

WHAT ARE THE EMOTIONS YOU WANT YOUR AUDIENCE TO FEEL?

WHERE CAN YOU SEE YOUR MISSION IN ACTION WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY?

WHAT'S A CALL-TO-ACTION THAT FEELS CONNECTED TO YOUR STORY?

MOBILE MESSAGING & TEXT-TO-DONATE

90% OF TEXT MESSAGES ARE
READ WITHIN 3 MINUTES

GREAT FOR:

- More personalized communications
- Sending quick updates, event details, policy changes and more
- Creating a sense of urgency

MAXIMIZE YOUR STORY

- Include your donor's name to create a personal connection
- Leverage long-form mobile messaging for telling a more in depth story
- Add short video links and photo galleries for more engaging content

LET'S BRAINSTORM CREATIVE WAYS MOBILE MESSAGING CAN TELL YOUR STORY!

HOW CAN YOU DIVIDE YOUR STORY INTO SMALLER PARTS, ASKING QUESTIONS OF YOUR SUPPORTERS TO DRIVE ENGAGEMENT?

ARE THERE RECENT CHANGES OR UPDATES THAT COULD BOLSTER YOUR 'GOOD VS. EVIL' OR 'RESOLUTION' COMPONENTS?

DO YOU HAVE ANY TIME SENSITIVE UPDATES OR NEWS YOU CAN SHARE?

WHAT ARE SOME BRANDED KEYWORDS YOU CAN USE TO COINCIDE WITH YOUR STORY?

TIP

For best results, always send at least four text messages before you ask for a donation.

EMAIL

68% ARE CHECKING THEIR EMAIL
TWO TO FIVE TIMES A DAY

GREAT FOR:

- Important updates about your nonprofit
- Longer, more in-depth narratives
- Easily sending links to other media (video, social, news) and donation pages

MAXIMIZE YOUR STORY

- Ask/survey supporters about their story around your cause
- Tell the story of your nonprofit without always asking for a donation
- Simplify your email composition to let your story shine

DONOR STORY CHECKLIST:

- Create an email with a personalized ask to share their story
- Set up a Landing Page with a story survey form
- Ask for key components of their story:
 - Who they are
 - Their experience in their own words
 - Who or what helped
 - Who or what hindered
 - How was this resolved
 - Ask for consent to share

BONUS

Use email communications to ask donors about their own experience with your cause. Their story is part of your nonprofit's story as well. Send links to a landing page with survey forms to help collect information about their own personal journey. Be sure to ask for their consent before crafting and sharing their story. This is a great way to energize your community and grow your mission.

NOTES:

PEER-TO-PEER CAMPAIGNS

33% OF ALL ONLINE DONATIONS ARE A RESULT OF PEER-TO-PEER CAMPAIGNS

GREAT FOR:

- Acquiring social media brand ambassadors
- Expanding your reach into new communities
- Establishing new donors

MAXIMIZE YOUR STORY

Provide ambassadors with:

- Your most impactful/engaging stories
- Powerful imagery that illustrates your characters, villains, battle and/or resolution
- Branded keywords that continue your narrative

AMBASSADOR STORY CHECKLIST:

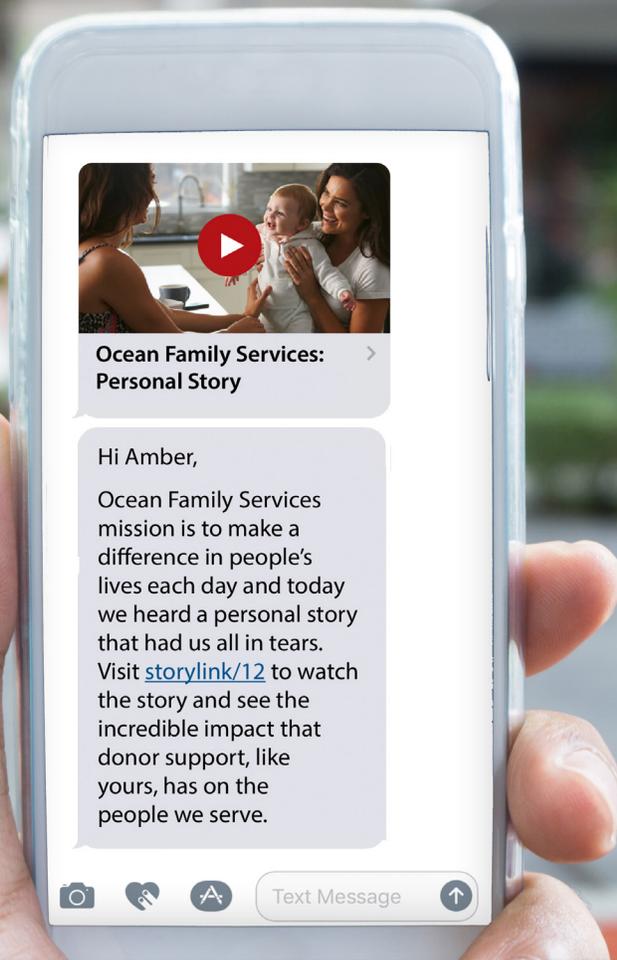
- Recruit loyal followers
- Ask them about their story
- Ask them to share their journey on a personal fundraising page
- Ask them to share a branded hashtag that encourages others to share
- Provide them with your best stories, imagery, language, graphics and more that support your narrative
- Keep ambassadors engaged by providing ongoing, shareable content

LET'S BRAINSTORM ON DIGITAL AMBASSADORS!

WHAT ARE SOME HASHTAGS THAT AMBASSADORS CAN SHARE? CAN YOU GET CREATIVE WITH IT SO IT SUPPORTS YOUR (OR THEIR!) STORY?

WHO IS A DEDICATED SUPPORTER OR VOLUNTEER FOR YOUR CAUSE?

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT THEM IN SHARING OR EVEN RESOLVING THEIR STORY?



BRING YOUR STORY TO LIFE

Compelling content is crucial to fundraising success. And with so many great ways to share it all, it's easy to feel lost or simply stuck in a rut. These are only a few of the ways your nonprofit can combine communication strategy with heartfelt, authentic content in order to engage your supporters and expand your mission. Take some time today and dive into making your story come to life.

Those in need, need you more than ever. Use this workbook to help you refresh your story and make an even greater impact on the world.

About MobileCause

MobileCause provides an innovative suite of digital fundraising and donor engagement solutions that help nonprofits do more good with a full suite of customizable, mobile-friendly solutions including online forms, fundraising events, crowdfunding, campaign promotion, data management, and credit card processing with zero transaction fees. MobileCause is trusted by thousands of nonprofit organizations to successfully manage their fundraising campaigns.

TEXT 4MINTOUR TO 51555 TO WATCH HOW YOU CAN RAISE MORE DURING YOUR NEXT CAMPAIGN

*For more information or a free consultation, visit mobilecause.com, call us at **888.661.8804** or email us at info@mobilecause.com.*

SOURCES

MobileCause Data on File

