

Resources for Ethical Storytelling

Prepared by Emily Hooper Lansana
emlansana@gmail.com

Article

“How Ethical Storytelling Has Changed the Way We Tell Stories”

<https://www.dressembler.org/blog/how-ethical-storytelling-has-changed-the-way-we-tell-stories>

Website

Ethical Storytelling Organization and Website <http://ethicalstorytelling.com>

Ethical Storytelling Pledge <http://ethicalstorytelling.com/pledge/>

We pledge to:

Tell others' stories the way we want our story told.

Always put people first.

Explain to constituents the purpose of the story, where it will be used and answer any questions they might have before photographing, filming or recording.

Find an able translator if we speak different languages.

Ask the constituent if they wish to be named or identified and act according to their wishes.

Use all images and messages with the full understanding, participation and permission of the constituent or the constituent's legal guardian.

Uphold the dignity of our constituents through empowering imagery and messages that motivate engagement and inspire hope.

Truthfully represent a situation or story to educate our audiences of the realities, complexities and nuances of the issues we advocate for.

Not use images, footage or words that sensationalize or stereotype a person or a situation.

Ask for feedback from our constituents and incorporate this feedback into the final story.

Abide by international law, standards and protocols related to vulnerable persons, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Listen to our constituents' voices and respect their decisions, story and journey.

Hold a posture of humility and learning, recognizing that failures can be our biggest educators.

Seek advice if we question whether a particular story, message or image is not in alignment with ethical storytelling practices.

Not tell the story, despite the resources invested, when the story cannot be told with the integrity of this pledge.

Take ownership of our responsibility to uphold integrity in our storytelling and messaging.

As a community of nonprofit practitioners and storytellers we commit to learning from the past and integrating a new standard of storytelling as we journey together into the future.

[Visit the website ethicalstorytelling.com to sign the pledge](http://ethicalstorytelling.com)

Questions to Consider

- How do we “Ethically” Source and Share Stories?

Point of Origin? What story needs to be told?

We remember stories that hold images, emotion, allow us to connect/relate

Who holds the power/agency in the story?

- Organizational Stories

What is unique about the approach, work ethic, survival/sustainability?

Staff? Who are the people that create and fulfill the mission of your organization? What happens when we hear a story from their point of view?

Clients? Which clients? When?

- How is the story collected?

What does it mean to collect stories when people feel empowered?

Make an open call rather than selecting people-create opportunities for people to self select

Who is collecting the story?

Give people a choice about how to share the story-what environment/form feels comfortable to them? Where? When? If the story will be collected in a conversation, can the questions be shared in advance?

Client should have a voice in all aspects of the life of the story.

- How is the story saved? Documented?
- What is the difference in experience with a written story, audio, video? Whose voice is being honored?
- How is the story shared? What form but also how broadly? Public Website, eblast, social media or more private space.
- What is the difference between saying-"Would you be interested in sharing your story to help us raise funds for the organization?" and saying, "We are working to raise funds for our organization. We are hoping to include some stories about the impact of our work. Would you be interested in working with us on crafting a story to be showcased in...way? You will have input throughout the process of determining how your story is shared."
- What if we broaden the possibilities for how stories are told? What if we hire a playwright/actors? What if we animate? What if the story is told through poetry, song, visual art? What are the myriad ways that the stories can be told that might expand the

Canon and create more spaces that can uplift the story while preserving the safety of the individual?

- What role does the storyteller/client play/the NPO? What is the ongoing relationship? What are the power dynamics?
- Does the storyteller feel a part of the work in an ongoing way? How do you keep in touch? What is the life of the story?