

Storytelling for Housing Counselors



MEET THE PRESENTERS



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UPCOMING WEBINARS



AUGUST 21
PRINT MATERIALS

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

\$50 off the full-price conference registration

This won't last long – register by August 17 to save!

** TIP: You can use FPP-G training funds for registration*

LEADING THE WAY

2018 Housing Matters! Conference

October 25 & 26 | Bloomington, IL





TODAY'S AGENDA

- ? WHY, WHAT, HOW
- ” GATHERING STORIES
- ✿ SHAPING STORIES
- 🚀 STORIES IN ACTION

WHY, WHAT, HOW

WHY TELL STORIES?

- They help people understand what you do and why
- They compel people to act
- People remember things better
- People empathize when they hear stories



WHAT IS A STORY?

- Not always a full-fledged narrative
- Elements of storytelling
 - Quotes
 - Visuals
 - Details

STORYTELLING ELEMENTS

QUOTES



FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER (FOC)

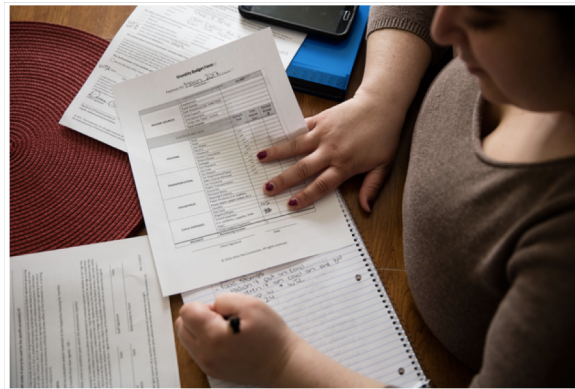
Our FOC is a one-stop-shop to improve your financial wellbeing. Our team of financial coaches, income support advisors, and our workforce development partner, [Cara Chicago](#), will help you boost earnings & savings, reduce expenses, and find employment.

"They're so helpful. They listen at you. They don't judge you. They don't make snap decisions, and they say we're gonna work through this."

— LOUISE EVANS, FORECLOSURE PREV

STORYTELLING ELEMENTS

VISUALS: PHOTOS



Left: Shared with Housing Action Illinois by Project Now

Middle: 'Protecting Families: A Photo Story About Supportive Housing,' *How Housing Matters*

Right: Stock photo

STORYTELLING ELEMENTS

VISUALS: GRAPHICS

In just six months, our Housing Counseling Intermediary network helped...



558

households prevent or resolve mortgage default



6,675

households understand their housing options

847

households create healthy budgets



192

households buy their first home



October 2017 - March 2018



132

households facing homelessness find temporary or permanent housing

STORYTELLING ELEMENTS

DETAILS: NAMES AND NUMBERS

Because of your help

Because of you, Bridge families accomplished these following successes:

- **April** purchased a condo
- **Cashmere** now makes more than \$18.50/hour
- **Jen** moved to daytime shifts at her job and got a raise
- **Rafael** was promoted from temporary to full-time permanent at his job
- **Ivy** moved into her Habitat for Humanity home
- **Maribel** is on track for U.S. citizenship
- **Tatiana** obtained a patient care representative job at a hospital
- **Siomara** started nursing school
- **Gabi** purchased a new house
- **Cynthia** earned her associates degree and is now working toward her bachelors
- **Connie** got a job in customer care
- **Kate** was accepted into the Habitat for Humanity program
- **Buba** accepted a full-time position working at a hospital
- **Tonya** purchased a townhouse
- **Maria** got a 20% raise at work



Congratulations to Bridge kid M, whose tornado project earned him a medal at his school's science fair!



Connecting homeless families to a better future



WHY, WHAT,
HOW

HOW ARE YOU TELLING STORIES?



In conversation



Online



In print



Grants & program
proposals



Events



Fundraising

WHO IS TELLING YOUR STORIES?

- Staff
- Clients
- Board
- Funders
- Media
- Community members

WHO ARE THEY TELLING THEM TO?

- Clients
- Community
- Funders
- Landlords
- Peer organizations
- Friends and family

WHY TELL HOUSING COUNSELING STORIES?

New clients

More funding

Community support

Gain volunteers

Raise awareness

GATHERING STORIES

EVERYDAY STORY COLLECTION

- Collect the stories you have, as they happen
- Create simple processes
- Equip all staff & create incentives
- Lead by example – share stories internally!

Opportunities:

- Client files
- Intake forms
- Staff meetings
- Trainings & events

STORY COLLECTION FORM

Date gathered: _____

Staff contact: _____

Client name: _____ *Okay to share? Y__ N__ Pseudonym _____*

Background (*age, family, interests, general description*):

How they found our organization:

Goals they have:

Programs they've been part of at our organization:

How these have helped them:

Quotes:

IN-DEPTH STORY COLLECTION

Think back:

- Follow-up stories
- Reoccurring clients
- Former staff/board



Think ahead:

- Trainings
- Meetings
- Annual Report
- Fundraising Campaigns
- Grant Reports

BEST PRACTICES

Collection

- Get context—if you don't know the client, talk to someone who does
- Record the conversation & take photos
- Schedule time to meet or call
- Ease into your questions
- Ask for details
- Be patient

CLIENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Organization

- How did you learn about us?
- What was your very first experience with us like? What did you think when you first came in?

Program

- What did you get out of this experience?
- What is one thing you're going to remember?
- What is one thing you're going to do differently now?
- What would you say to someone else thinking about doing this?

Home & Community

- What is your earliest memory of home?
- Where did you grow up? What was your home/community like? What did you think your life would be like when you were an adult?
- Where do you feel most at home? What makes a place feel like home to you?
- What kind of home/neighborhood/community would you like to live in?

Family

- Tell me about your family. How old are they? Where do they live?
- What do your children like to do? What do you do with them?

Work & Budget

- What do you do for a living? Do you like your job?
- Do you budget? What do you think about when you start a budget?
- Tell me about how you got into your line of work.
- What lessons has your work life taught you?

Goals & Future

- What goals are you working toward in life?
- What do you think your future holds? What would you like it to hold?
- If you were talking to your great-great grandchildren, what wisdom would you share with them?
- How would you like to be remembered?

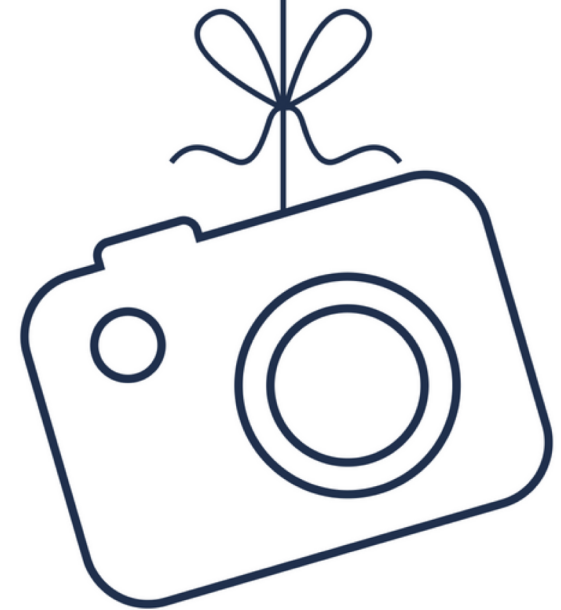
General

- Who has been the biggest influence on your life? What lessons did that person teach you?
- Who has been the kindest to you in your life?
- What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?
- What are you proudest of? What regrets do you have?
- How has your life been different than what you'd imagined?

BEST PRACTICES

Photography

- Any visual is better than none
- Get close to your subject
- Follow the light
- People, places, & things



BEST PRACTICES

Consent



- Always get consent when someone can be identified
- Release forms & opting-out
- Informed consent:
How will it be used? Where?
When? Why?

BEST PRACTICES

Post-Collection



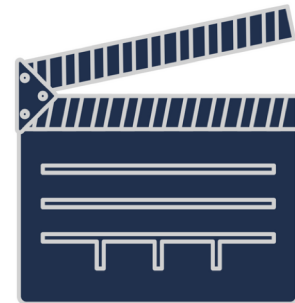
Transcription

If you can't transcribe everything, at least write out a few strong quotes



Story bank

Gather stories in one place that is shared by multiple staff



Active use

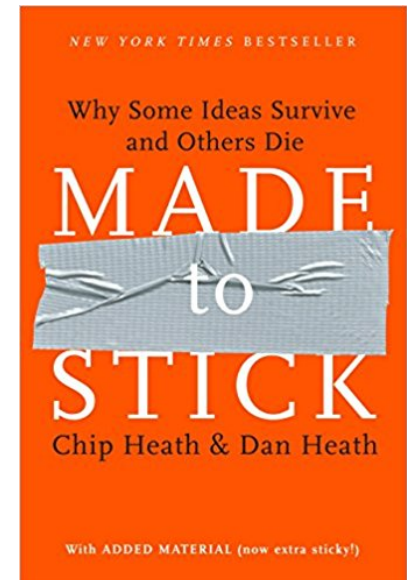
Make sure staff know what stories you're collecting and sharing

SHAPING STORIES

EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING

Qualities that make an idea “stick”:

- **Simple**
Know the core of your message; be focused
- **Unexpected**
Includes a break from the ordinary
- **Concrete**
Includes sensory information
- **Credible**
Personal experience, statistics
- **Emotions**
Give people a reason to care; build associations
- **Stories**
Create a **narrative framework**



WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

- Protagonist
- Conflict
- Journey
- Framing/call to action

WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

Protagonist

Someone to root for



WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

Conflict

What's in the way?

Establish the everyday

Inciting incident

Build tension



Tanya knows she'll be cold no matter what she wears, but she does what she can: she pulls on two pairs of pants and two pairs of socks, then layers on two hoodie sweatshirts.

At the warehouse, she buttons up a white lab coat over all of this, winds a scarf around her neck, and covers her head with both a knit hat and a hairnet. Next come plastic sleeves, a mouth mask, an apron, and two pairs of plastic gloves. Finally ready, Tanya braces herself against the fridity of 35-degree air, and opens the door to the assembly line room.

She takes her place along the line, where she and her coworkers combine chopped lettuce, croutons, and parmesan for Caesar salads and tuck chicken into tortilla wraps. They work for hours, mostly in silence, arms and hands moving with mechanic repetition as they create the grab'n/go foods destined for display cases in Starbucks, Costco, and Wal-Mart.

Tanya never knows much in advance which days she'll work, which hours, or how long her shift will last. Sometimes she's scheduled for an eight-hour shift, but works just four because her assembly line's order is completed early. Other times, she stands for twelve hours on her aching feet and heads home late at night. The unpredictability of her schedule makes it impossible to go back to school, since she can't commit to any class schedule. She can't plan a budget for rent, food, or transportation since she never knows how much money she'll make.

Tanya's heart sinks as she removes her mask and gloves for the day: it's only been five hours, but her line has finished their order. As she's punching out, her supervisor says, "We don't need you tomorrow."

It's the last thing Tanya wants to hear. She only worked 25 hours last week and needs more hours to be able to pay this month's rent. Tanya earns just \$9.25 per hour.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

Conflict

Something happens that stands in the way of a goal

As she's punching out, her supervisor says, "We don't need you tomorrow."

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WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

More Conflict

Things go from
bad to worse

Because Tanya's mother died when she was just a baby, her father raised Tanya and her four older siblings on his own. Now, the roles have been reversed: Tanya does everything she can to help care for him. He's 84 and is battling prostate cancer.

Since she doesn't earn paid sick days—like 80 percent of low-wage workers—she has had to forgo work to take her dad to his doctor's appointments, something she can ill afford to do. But Tanya's father was there when she needed him, and she won't let him down now.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

Journey

What happened?

How did it happen?

Even though her job at the warehouse is temporary, Tanya's situation is anything but. Since her first job as a cashier at Wendy's, she's spent nearly three decades in low-wage jobs. While raising her son as a single mother, she worked as a banquet waiter for a catering company, serving guests at fancy downtown hotels. She whisked away half-eaten salads and steaks during her shifts, but had to rely on food stamps to buy groceries to feed herself and her son. Unfortunately, Tanya's situation is not unique. It's a daily reality for millions. Nearly two-thirds of low-wage workers in the U.S. are women, 80 percent are adults, and the majority are primary or co-breadwinners for their families.

Today, instead of heading home after her shift at the warehouse is over, Tanya goes to see her father. Because Tanya's mother died when she was just a baby, her father raised Tanya and her four older siblings on his own. Now, the roles have been reversed: Tanya does everything she can to help care for him. He's 84 and is battling prostate cancer.

Since she doesn't earn paid sick days—like 80 percent of low-wage workers—she has had to forgo work to take her dad to his doctor's appointments, something she can ill afford to do. But Tanya's father was there when she needed him, and she won't let him down now. Tanya knows she's good at taking care of him, and it's inspired her to change her life. She wants to break out of the food industry by training to become a certified nursing assistant, and then go on to become a licensed practical nurse.



WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

Journey

What did your organization actually do to help?

BE SPECIFIC

Implied journey

We

Volatile schedules are a fact of life for millions of low-wage workers like Tanya, but this is an issue that is not well understood by the public. Women Employed is bringing attention to this problem, mobilizing advocates, and developing and promoting recommendations to policymakers.

Did you know that a full-time worker earning minimum wage in Illinois makes just over **\$17,000 a year**? As part of a statewide coalition of advocates, Women Employed is leading the charge to raise Illinois' minimum wage. WE provided input to a mayoral minimum wage working group that recommended a significant increase. In December, the Chicago City Council voted to raise the wage from \$8.25 to \$13 an hour over the next five years.

Tanya knows she's good at taking care of him, and it's inspired her to change her life. She wants to break out of the food industry by training to become a certified nursing assistant, and then go on to become a licensed practical nurse.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY?

Framing

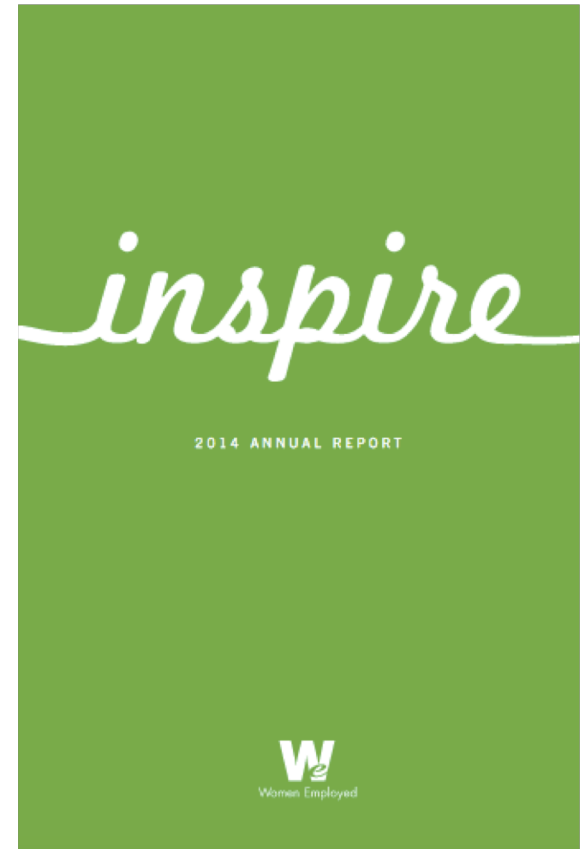
What is the takeaway?

What is your overall goal in telling the story?

Success or lesson learned

Call to action

Clear, specific, ideally immediate thing your audience should do



STORIES IN ACTION



WHO REMEMBERS THESE?



TURN THIS...

***[CLIENT NAME]** wanted **[GOAL]** but **[OBSTACLE]** was in their way. When **[ANOTHER OBSTACLE]**, they thought they would never achieve **[GOAL]**.*

TURN THIS...INTO THIS!

Mary wanted to buy a home, but she had no idea where to begin – the homebuying process was confusing. When she saw the homes that were available in her price range – due to her poor credit – she thought she'd never own a home.

After going through our personalized counseling, Mary was able to create a budget, develop a realistic plan to build her savings, and improve her credit score. Now, Mary has closed on her dream home.

There are hundreds of people just like Mary in our community – make a gift today to help us provide counseling services and increase stable homeownership in our community.

USING THIS...

- ▶ Quotes from homebuyer workshop feedback survey
- ▶ Photos she emailed when asked
- ▶ Basic information from intake form
- ▶ Counselor anecdotes from talking to her

STORY MAD LIBS

- ▶ SOCIAL MEDIA LENGTH
- ▶ MARKETING EMAILS
- ▶ WEBSITE AND BLOG
- ▶ ANNUAL REPORT
- ▶ NEWSLETTER
- ▶ ...for a variety of audiences!

RESOURCES

housingactionil.org/storytelling

Storytelling



Storytelling Presentations:

Strategic Storytelling, Metro East Coalition (Collinsville, Illinois) on July 10, 2018

Telling the Continuum of Care Story, HUD Homeless Programs Institute (Decatur, Illinois) on June 27, 2018

Storytelling Projects & Programs:

- **National Coalition for the Homeless' *Faces of Homelessness* Speakers' Bureau**
 - Bonus: NCH has an [organizing manual](#) to help start your own speakers' bureau!
- **CSH Speak Up! Program**
- **Community Writing Project**

Narrative Strategy:

- **The Opportunity Agenda**
 - [Visions, Values and Voice: A Social Justice Communications Toolkit](#)
 - [A Window Of Opportunity II: An Analysis of Public Opinion on Poverty](#)
- **Frameworks Institute**
 - [Reframing Affordable Housing](#)
 - ["You Don't Have to Live Here" Why Housing Messages are Backfiring and 10 Things We Can Do About It](#)
- **Negating Doesn't: The Downsides of Refutation**
- **Stories Worth Telling: A Guide to Strategic and**

Helpful (FREE) Tools:

- **Design:** [Canva](#)
- **Social Media:** [Hootsuite](#)
- **Transcription:** [Transcribe](#)
- **Video Editing:** [Free Software](#)
- **Audio Editing:** [Audacity](#)
- **Photo Editing:** [GIMP](#) & [Pixlr](#)
- **Stock Photos:** [Pixabay](#), [Pexels](#), [Negative Space](#), [Unsplash](#)
- **Trainings:** [Storytelling for Good](#), [StoryCenter](#)
- **Pro Bono Project Assistance:** [Taproot+](#)

RESOURCES (FPP-G)

- Best practices for storytelling
- Story/photo waiver
- Client story form
- Questions for housing counseling client
- Choose your own adventure?

THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?

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