

Compelling Storytelling

Great storytelling requires forethought and planning, especially when you are trying to get a specific message across. You don't have to be Hans Christian Anderson to spin a good yarn, but you do need to apply basic structure so you don't end up with meaningless ramble. Here is a simple and linear story crafting approach.

Exposition -This initial section introduces the key components and sets the tone for the story. Use this to establish the hero of the story and the context. Important elements to establish include:

- Where the story takes place.
- When the story takes place.
- The characters involved in the story.
- Relevant history and environmental elements.

It's easy to overindulge in the exposition so keep only to the key facts that actually contribute to the emotional connection of the story. Use interesting descriptions to engage the audience.

Conflict – Now that the audience has connected to the hero, it's time to get them emotionally excited. The hero must have a challenge or obstacle that creates dynamic tension. Here are the three common forms of conflict.

- **Human versus Human** – Who is the dastardly enemy or nemesis that makes life difficult for the hero. It can also be more than one person or small group.
- **Human versus Environment** – What evil external elements are preventing our hero's success? It could be society, nature, technology, politics, etc.
- **Human versus Themselves** – The most challenging and emotionally relatable obstacles in our way are generally the ones we create for ourselves.

A simple description here will likely fall flat. Build the tension building from a soft start to a tense and concerning critical point of insolvability.

Resolution – Now that you have created anticipation, it's time to resolve the tension. For a bedtime story you can devise a happy ending. For marketing, your ending must have a solution that exemplifies your takeaway. Deliver the AHA! moment that surprises and delights so they can't wait to share the story and the message.

Storytelling Worksheet

A good story, well told creates an emotional connection between the teller and the audience. *(In the for-profit world, stories are aimed at potential and current customers. In the non-profit world, the audience may include donors, volunteers, contributors, members, constituents, and actual customers. Different types of customers or community members may connect with different story structure and content.)*

Stories should emerge from and connect to the essence of the V.P. in some way, but should be tailored to maximize appeal to the audience for which they are intended. As with the V.P., the ultimate goal is to compel the audience to engage with you.

Briefly Describe specific audience entertainment preferences:

Identify the type of conflict, then note the details:

Describe the key characters:

Create a time line for the events:

Identify 1-3 emotions the audience should experience during the telling:

Write a brief (1-2 sentence) summation of the key takeaways: