Connecting Powerfully through Storytelling

John Capecci

@CapecciCom #storyadvocacy
“Tell me a story from your experience that will help me understand why you do what you do.”
Agenda

• Story Advocacy: why, what, how
• When Stories Work: guiding principles
• Exploring Our Stories: exercises
• 3 Best Practices of Story-valuing Cultures

• Q/A
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Connecting Powerfully through Storytelling

Personal

my lived experience

to explain
mobilize
to bond

teach
motivate
inspire

my cause / mission

to move
convince...

others
Story Advocacy

Scott Harrison
founder, charity:water

Theresa Greenleaf
son has severe allergies

Derek Cotton
cancer survivor

Cycles for Change Interns
lives changed by bicycling

FocusDriven.org
distracted driving advocates
Sharing stories =
- humanizing
- connective
- familiar
- clarifying
- distinct form of communication
- not magic
Advocates =
- speaking on behalf of others
- roots: vocare, vox

Telling stories to do something =
- strategic, intentional
- requiring more than story alone
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Think about the times when someone has shared a story with you, hoping to cause you to act.

When does the storytelling work — and when doesn’t it?

Type your responses in the Questions Box. Begin with either “Works= (comment)” or “Doesn’t work= (comment)”
### When Stories Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>THE RAW STORY</strong></th>
<th><strong>THE EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY STORY</strong></th>
<th><strong>THE CANNED STORY</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underprepared</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td>Over-prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally fragile</td>
<td>Emotionally engaging</td>
<td>Emotionally distanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td>Crafted</td>
<td>Slick, polished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impromptu</td>
<td>Improvisational</td>
<td>Scripted</td>
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<td>Unfocused</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Distanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At mercy of the media</td>
<td>Media-ready</td>
<td>Sensationalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on speaker</td>
<td>Focused on audience</td>
<td>Focused on effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestrained</td>
<td>Genuine</td>
<td>Insincere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience feels bad for</td>
<td>Audience connects with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Notes

- **The Raw Story**
  - Underprepared
  - Emotionally fragile
  - Unstructured
  - Nervous
  - Impromptu
  - Unfocused
  - Vulnerable
  - At mercy of the media
  - Focused on speaker
  - Unrestrained
  - Audience feels bad for

- **The Effective Advocacy Story**
  - Prepared
  - Emotionally engaging
  - Crafted
  - Present
  - Improvisational
  - Flexible
  - Authentic
  - Media-ready
  - Focused on audience
  - Genuine
  - Audience connects with

- **The Canned Story**
  - Over-prepared
  - Emotionally distanced
  - Slick, polished
  - Detached
  - Scripted
  - Rigid
  - Distanced
  - Sensationalized
  - Focused on effect
  - Insincere
  - Audience analyzes
The Five Qualities of Effective Advocacy Stories
1. Effective advocacy stories are **focused**.

The more tightly you link your story to goals and key messages, the more successful your advocacy.

Messages like:

- **We transform the lives of people.**
- **We are called to serve our neighbors.**
1. Effective advocacy stories are **focused**.

“I was advocating for parents of kids with severe allergies. I was also advocating for my son, Jack. I needed other parents to know that the safety of all children is of paramount importance, that their cooperation is necessary and appreciated.”

Theresa
Mom of son with severe allergies
2. Effective advocacy stories are positively charged.

Advocacy stories point to a positive change that is needed and possible.

Question:

What is the positive change, the better world your story points toward?
2. Effective advocacy stories are **positively charged**.

“How do I tell my story in a way that leaves the listener hearing a positive message of triumph rather than a story of victimization?”

“How three years ago I was living in a van in a Walmart parking lot. And today I’m speaking at TED. Hope always, always, finds a way.”

Becky
Advocate for the homeless
3. Effective advocacy stories are **crafted**.

We’re all born storytellers. We may not all be *practiced* storytellers.

**Fundamental Story Skills:**

- Editing. Telling facts *and* feelings. Evocative language.
3. Effective advocacy stories are crafted.

“Jerry cans are the iPods of Africa. Every child has one.”

Scott
Founder, charity:water
4. Effective advocacy stories are **framed**.

Framing refers to the things you say that help your audience receive your story as you intend.

**Question:**

*How do you want your story to be viewed? “This is a story about . . .”*
4. Effective advocacy stories are framed.

“This is not a plea for sympathy. It’s about what we can learn from this.”

Loren
Advocate for distracted driving education
5. Effective advocacy stories are **practiced**.

Being natural, genuine and confident takes practice. Give yourself time.
5. Effective advocacy stories are **practiced**.

“I practice. I practice and practice ad nauseam. And the story will change a little bit and the messages will change depending upon the audience—but I’ve learned to go with the flow.”

Kathy
Advocate for WomenHeart
The Five Qualities of Effective Advocacy Stories

When Stories Work

Effective advocacy stories are

- focused
- positively charged
- crafted
- framed
- practiced
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So, what’s your story?
"Why are you an advocate for your organization?"

What's your reason for:
• speaking out? telling others?
• committing your time and energy?
• standing up?

How would you answer . . . in just 6 words?
Use the 6-Word Reason exercise to:

- jumpstart story discussions
- stay focused on your motivation
- quickly introduce yourself
- headline an interview
- practice being concise
What do I want others to understand?
What do I want others to do?
What are the key messages my story can deliver?
What is important for this audience?
How can I clearly link my story and the message?
Exploring Our Stories: focusing

Story Mapping
First Steps

Five important steps we encourage all advocates to take.

However you enter Living Proof—whether reading from start to finish or by flipping to the most relevant sections—here are five important steps we encourage all advocates to take as they prepare.

1. Complete The Story Map. The Story Map exercise (page x) provides a foundation to which we'll return occasionally. It is particularly useful if you are just starting out and deciding what to tell. And if you're already working as an advocate or spokesperson, this exercise can clarify, reveal new stories to explore, or provide a different way of approaching your stories. The Story Map allows you to spend as little or as much time with it as you’d like.
Exploring Our Stories: focusing

Story Mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>My Goals</th>
<th>Moments That Show Why The Goal Is Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school kids</td>
<td>To make them understand the impact of losing a sibling to a senseless accident</td>
<td>The morning I woke up and realized I had become an only child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in my audience</td>
<td>To make them understand the importance of paying attention to their bodies</td>
<td>How I had not paid attention to my own symptoms for eight months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use Story Mapping exercise to:

• decide what to tell / what not to tell
• make clear links to advocacy messages
• focus
Exploring Our Stories: Pin the Tale on the Mission

Where do you enter with your story?
What word or phrase resonates with you?
Can you share a story that is proof of the importance?

wordle.net
Use the Pin the Tale exercise to:

- draw out less obvious stories
- uncover personal connections
- unify communities around causes
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1. Look for stories around—and within.

There are big powerful stories.
There are small powerful moments.

There’s a potential audience for every story.

Stories encourage stories.
Best Practices: story-valuing cultures

2. Create a story-valuing culture.

Make opportunities a proactive part of your culture, not reactive.

Create environments that encourage stories.

Make specific invitations vs. “casting the net.”

Be clear in intent and respectful of storytellers.

safe  valued  relevant  respected  heard
3. Practice story-listening skills.

Ask for the story you’d want to hear:
• What happened then?
• How did that feel?

Listen strategically.
• Who should hear this story?
• What does that story demonstrate or prove?
Best Practices: story-valuing cultures

1. Look for stories around—and within.
2. Create a story-valuing culture.
3. Practice story-listening skills.
Closing thoughts

“What goes on at the growing edges of life is seldom written down at the time. It is lived from day to day in talk. In scraps of comment on the margins of someone else’s manuscript, in words spoken on a street corner . . .”

Margaret Mead

“…attack it in the beginning the way a puppy attacks an old shoe. Shake it, snarl at it, sneak up on it from various angles…”

Shirley Jackson
Additional resources

StoryCorps.org
Sixwordmemoirs.com
Ourstory.com
Storybasedstrategy.org
Additional resources

- Facebook: LivingProof.TellingYourStory
- Twitter: @LivProof #storyadvocacy

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