

Nonprofit Storytelling: Framing the Message for Compelling Communication

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ABSTRACT

Effectively communicating mission, values and social impact within the nonprofit sector is a complex task that can reflect on and shape organizational success. By capturing the personal experiences of individuals, it provides evidence of organizational impact in ways that statistics cannot, and supports the organizations' overall activities by improving fundraising, developing a brand and raising awareness. The stories developed in the framework of this thesis focus on the specific impact each nonprofit organization has had on the advocate's life, featuring the personal experiences of employees, volunteers and clients. The stories exemplify different approaches to storytelling depending on the nature of each advocate's experience and align with the best practices of this research. The impact of these stories is analyzed using Facebook metrics and analytics tools to determine potential implications of storytelling through social media channels.

STORYTELLING

Storytelling is a narrative communication technique to frame a message that showcases an advocate or character's experiences.

ROLE OF STORYTELLING

- Develop empathy: Neurologically, storytelling has the unique ability to evoke emotion and inspire action through the response that occurs in the brain.
- Build the brand: Stories develop the identity a constituent associates with a nonprofit, therefore shaping the brand of the organization.
- Act as a fundraising tool: Storytelling develops a descriptive outlet for sharing unique programs or models with donors to humanize the approach.
- Raise awareness: Storytelling can be used to shine a light on issues that may be overlooked within society and bring understanding through sharing personal experiences.

METHODOLOGY

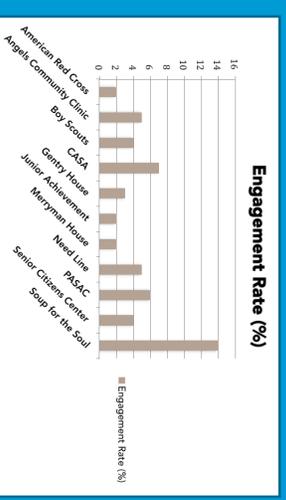
- Interview an advocate from each of the eleven 501 (c)3 nonprofit organizations partnering with United Way of Murray-Calloway County
- Write a brief story for each organization, sharing the advocate's story as part of the Impact Stories series
- Post the stories on the United Way of Murray-Calloway County's Facebook page and the WordPress website, myimpactstory.wordpress.com.
- Measure engagement using Facebook Insights and WordPress Insights

ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

- Communication is the means of survival for nonprofit organizations as it aids in fundraising efforts, highlights mission impact, demonstrates transparency and builds the brand.
- Strategies of measuring social impact are key components of the new centrality of performance management within the nonprofit sector, and must be communicated to prove effectiveness.
- Compelling messaging is necessary for organizational success.

ANALYSIS

- The complexity of compelling storytelling is finding the right character and combining their story with the appropriate communication channel.
- The stories that were shared by the advocate and the featured nonprofit organization received most engagement as it appears on more newsteeds while targeting the audience.
- The page received overall increased engagement and the page acquired more fans during the weeks stories were posted.
- Posts made by other page administrators during the same three-week time span received overall less reach and engagement than the stories.



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