

MARITIME FUNDRAISING CONFERENCE 2025

Mission, Message, Money: Storytelling That Inspires Donor Engagement

Presented by Tia Upshaw



02

Workshop Agenda

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

Welcome & Icebreaker

The Power of Storytelling

Mission Clarity

Crafting Your Message

Linking Story to Money

Live Exercise: Your Donor Story

Wrap-Up & Next Steps



Welcome + Icebreaker

Introduce yourself and your organization
Share your mission in 1 sentence
What's the most meaningful gift you've received
(not money)



The Power of Storytelling

Stories are memorable and emotional
People give based on feeling, then justify with logic
You're not just asking for money — you're inviting people into a story



Why Stories Work



Narratives activate more parts of the brain than facts
People remember stories up to 22x more
Stories build empathy → Empathy builds trust → Trust builds giving



Mission Clarity

?CAN YOU CLEARLY STATE YOUR MISSION IN ONE SENTENCE

Mission

What you do
?now

Vision

The world
you're trying
?to create

Values

What guides
?you





Exercise – Define Your Mission





Draft your mission in one sentence

Ask: Is it clear? Inspiring?

Would a stranger
?understand it

Share with someone beside
you





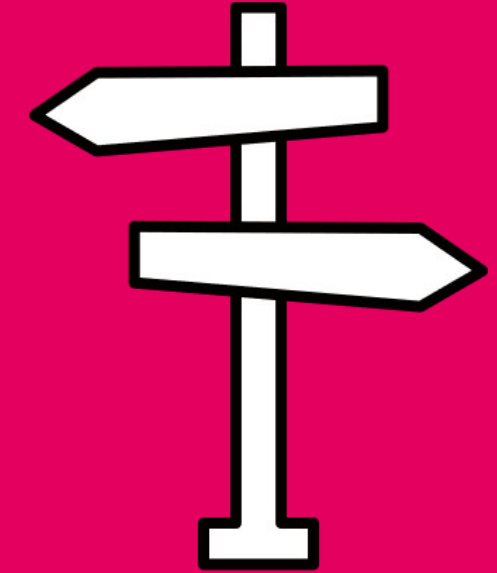
Elements of a 4 Compelling Story





**HERO: YOU TO THE PERSON
YOU'RE HELPING**

**GUIDE: THAT'S YOUR
ORGANIZATION**



**RESOLUTION: WHAT CHANGED
BECAUSE OF YOUR SUPPORT**



**CONFLICT: WHAT THEY'RE
STRUGGLING WITH**



The Storytelling Framework

Before → Struggle → Help
→ After

?Who is the story about

?What was the turning point

How did support make a

?difference

End with a clear call to action



Storytelling Do's and Don'ts

:DO

- Center the client, not your org
- Share real emotion and transformation
- Be specific

:DON'T

- Rely only on statistics
- Make yourself the hero
- Use jargon or acronyms



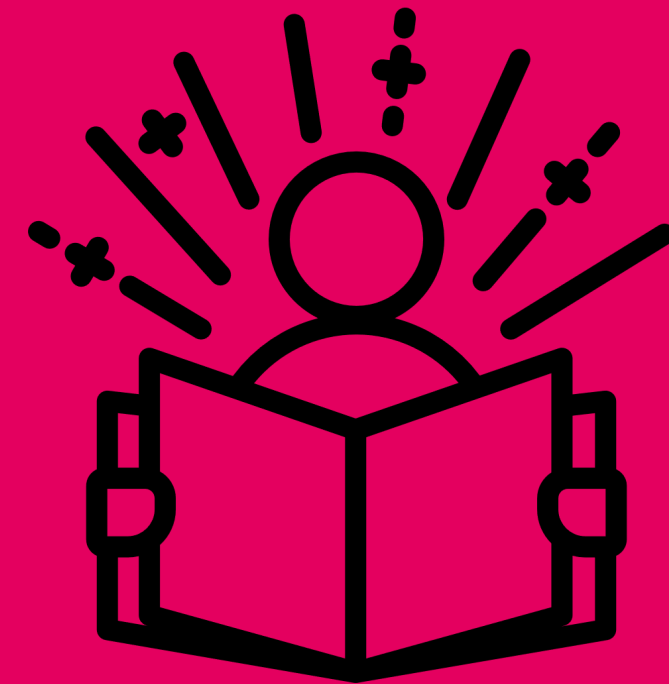
How Story Drives Giving



Emotional connection
leads to action



People give to people, not
programs



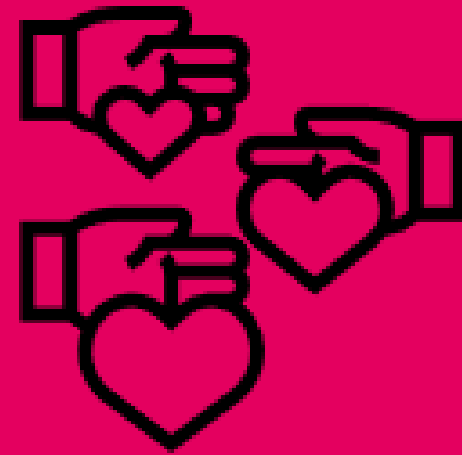
Your story should reflect
your donor's identity and
values



The Donor Journey



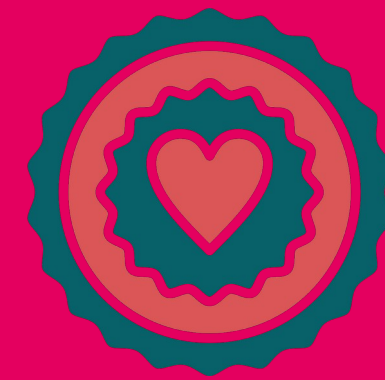
Awareness:
They learn
your story



Engagement:
They feel
connected



Ask: They
make a gift



Stewardship:
They feel
valued and
want to stay
involved





Story-Based Campaigns

Pick one story to drive your whole campaign
Use consistent visuals and messaging across
platforms
Make sure every touchpoint reinforces your
mission



Exercise Time – Your Donor Story

Choose a real client story that impacted you (Choose a real client story that impacted you)

Write it out: Before → Conflict → Help → Outcome

Include how a donor made it possible

Share with a partner



Next Steps (CTA)

**Audit your
current donor-
facing content**

**Rewrite one donor
appeal with
storytelling**

**Use stories
across reports,
social media, emails,
and grants**



Contact Us

Website

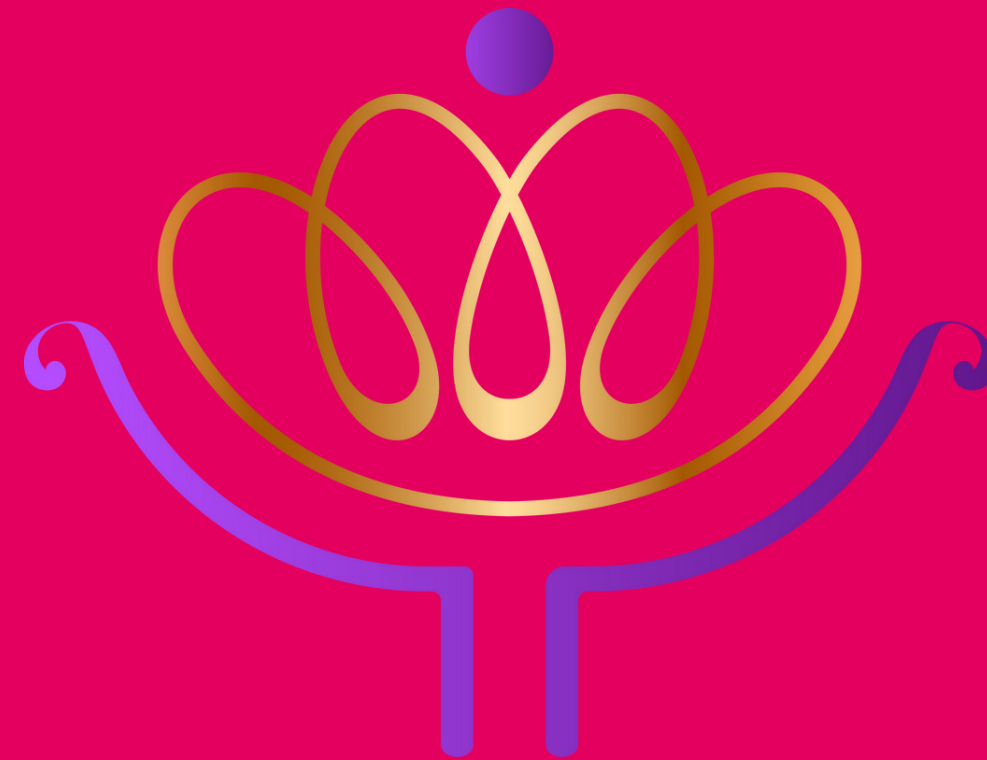
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