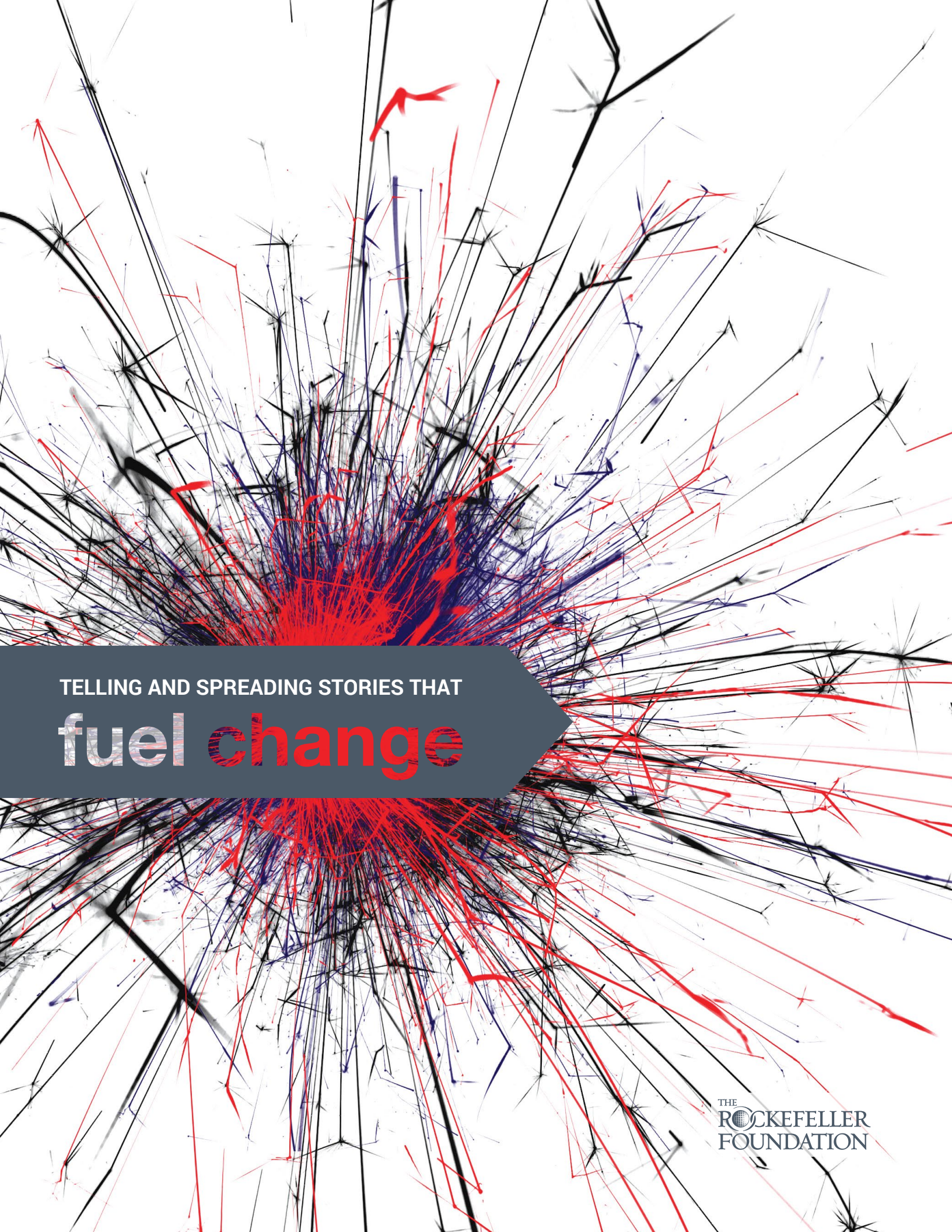

TELLING AND SPREADING STORIES THAT
fuel change
THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

In September 2014, a remarkable group of individuals convened at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center in Italy to discuss how to help those in the social impact sector use the full power of storytelling and infuse memorable, mind-changing stories into their work.

The room was filled with thought-provoking journalists, accomplished documentarians, digital strategists who challenge traditional story construction, practitioners working with organizations every day, a leading voice from Kenya and one from the Philippines who shows how stories light up networks. They came from all over the world to learn and share their knowledge for developing powerful stories that connect people and experiences, win hearts and change minds.

The convening was born from a partnership between Spitfire and the Rockefeller Foundation as a way to further the insights gained from Rockefeller's Digital Storytelling for Social Impact report. The demand for the report clearly shows the sector is hungry for advice on advanced storytelling techniques and best practices.

Inspired by the beautiful Italian country-side, the participants explored what makes a good story; the common mistakes in storytelling and ways to avoid them; the science behind why certain stories work; how to gather, publish, and distribute stories; how to nurture an organizational culture that embraces storytelling; and how to assess the value and impact of telling stories to further causes.

The conversation was rousing, lasting well into the evening after the formal agenda of the day was complete, and conquering even the worst of jetlag. The experts debated the merits of sticking with a classic storytelling structure or trading it in for a gif that might resonate more strongly in our ever-evolving digital world. The filmmakers in the group reminded everyone to think about the last film we saw or story that we heard which triggered that moment when we felt we are all human. Those are the emotions our stories should inspire.

Then it was time to ground the conversation. Participants challenged each other to offer concrete advice, share tools and resources, and make it possible for organizations to improve their storytelling to advance important issues and engage people in social change. Ultimately, the members of this bold team organized the thinking from the gathering into three main categories:

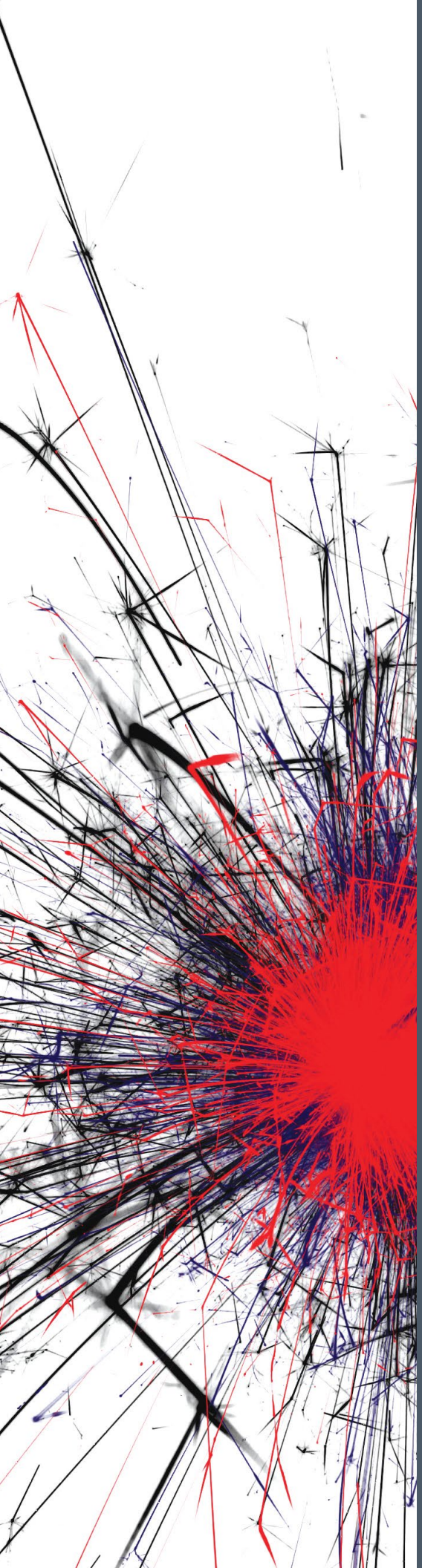
- **WHEN AND HOW TO TELL STORIES;**
- **HOW TO MAKE STORYTELLING PART OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE; AND**
- **HOW TO TRACK AND ASSESS THE IMPACT OF STORIES.**

What do you get when you put filmmakers, cause experts, digital specialists and journalists in a room against a magnificent backdrop of Lake Como? An invaluable resource of wisdom, tools, and expertise that can help everyone, but particularly those in the social impact sector, bring their storytelling to new levels. We are proud to share this collection of resources in the voices of the experts themselves.

We hope you enjoy them!

Kristen Grimm
PRESIDENT
SPITFIRE STRATEGIES

Neill Coleman
VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS
THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION



THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

ABOUT THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

For more than 100 years, The Rockefeller Foundation's mission has been to promote the well-being of humanity throughout the world. Today, The Rockefeller Foundation pursues this mission through dual goals: advancing inclusive economies that expand opportunities for more broadly shared prosperity, and building resilience by helping people, communities and institutions prepare for, withstand, and emerge stronger from acute shocks and chronic stresses. To achieve these goals, The Rockefeller Foundation works at the intersection of four focus areas – advance health, revalue ecosystems, secure livelihoods, and transform cities – to address the root causes of emerging challenges and create systemic change. Together with partners and grantees, The Rockefeller Foundation strives to catalyze and scale transformative innovations, create unlikely partnerships that span sectors, and take risks others cannot – or will not.

To learn more, please visit: **rockefellerfoundation.org**

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Marjan Safinia
Director and Producer

DEPARTMENT OF EXPANSION

Marjan Safinia is the President of the International Documentary Association, a 32-year old organization committed to supporting documentary filmmakers and their craft. She is also a documentary filmmaker who specializes in helping organizations live up to the promise of their work by telling bite-size cinematic stories, designed to solve big strategic problems and move people into action. She can be found in Los Angeles at her company, Department of Expansion.

Would You Sit Next to Yourself at a Party?

"You've got to come and meet this guy," my friend gushed. "You're seated next to him at dinner, and his work is so up your alley. You're going to love him."

Unfortunately, the promise was better than the reality.

"We've been building powerful networks of change-makers and creating hope for the last 20 years," he said. "Eighty-three percent of the developing world's female population is illiterate, as measured against the WRGK index, and we've opened offices in 42 countries to address that. Our work has shown a 27 percent increase in efficacy. In fact, we've reduced the illiteracy coefficient down to 36 in 24 key regions."

"Wow", I said half-heartedly, completely confused and disengaged. "So, what is it you actually do?"

As he droned on in PowerPoint-speak, my attention drifted to the other side of the table. A small group was leaning in tightly around another guest.

"… so I walked into that juvenile lock-up. There I was, this six-foot tall white girl—top of my class at Stanford Law, very idealistic—surrounded by five angry young black kids whose sense of manhood was being shaped behind bars. I was waaaaaay out of my comfort zone, and I knew the little speech I'd prepared was NOT going to go over well. So I decided to just be honest and ask them, 'What could someone like me do to help?' What they told me changed everything …"

I found myself leaning in to hear more. I wanted—needed—to know what she was going to say next. Who was she? And what was she doing in that lock-up?

We've all been where I was—stuck with a stone-cold bore at dinner parties, where the most we can do is do is force a polite smile. How does it make you feel when you're cornered by someone preaching at you or talking in deep jargon? When someone makes listening feel like work? Think about how you'd give anything to be anywhere else, and that's how your audience feels when you bombard them with stories about your organization that aren't well told. Stories they "ought" to care about. Stories that go down like medicine.

Now think about how you feel when you hear a good story. Because we all know a good story when we hear one. But before you decide to embrace storytelling, you have to become a student of great stories. Break down the structure of your favorites. When are you drawn in? When are you confused? Does the story start off with a wallop, or ease you into its world? Does it surprise you? Challenge you? Do you remember characters? Which details make them memorable or relatable? Is the story depressing? Uplifting? Funny? Can you repeat it to others? Does it manipulate your emotions, or leave space for you to color in your own experience? And most tellingly, is this a story you would share? The more examples you look at, the clearer the patterns will become.

Every story you put out there should be an invitation for your audience to engage. And make no mistake: there is heavy competition for their mindshare. If you focus on "cranking out" poorly told facts and badly made videos about your work, you'll never grow beyond the choir of the converted, and you may even lose people along the way. Yes, the tools of production and distribution are cheaper, but it doesn't mean you can forgo craft. Quality must come first. I know we've all been sold the promise of the incredible storytelling reach of the social web, but it simply won't work for you if you're telling crappy stories.

Remember that just as our personal stories define us and offer a portal through which others get to know and care about us, it's no different for organizations. Too often, great groups do the equivalent of walking into a dinner party and reciting their résumé, and they're doing themselves a disservice.

If you need people to stick with you beyond the decorum stage, then it's time to up your game. Your dinner party friends and your organization will thank you.

MARJAN SAFINIA, DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER, DEPARTMENT OF EXPANSION

Andy Goodman
Director

THE GOODMAN CENTER

Andy Goodman is a nationally recognized author, speaker and consultant in the field of public interest communications. Along with *Storytelling as Best Practice*, he is author of *Why Bad Ads Happen to Good Causes* and *Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes*. He also publishes a monthly journal, *free-range thinking*, to share best practices in the field.

The Black Box

(The following is based on a true story. Names and some details have been changed to protect privacy.)

Her name was Sherry. She ran a shelter for victims of domestic violence, and she told me a story I'll never forget.

Actually, it's the second draft of her story that stays with me even to this day. The first draft, which Sherry shared during a storytelling workshop I was leading in Orlando, Florida, got off to a good start, but then it ran smack into one of the most common problems I see whenever nonprofiteers tell stories about their work.

Here's the first version of the story Sherry shared that day:

Joan, a 30-something mother of two, was a repeat visitor to the shelter. Each time she would arrive with her six-year old daughter, Tara, and four-year old son, Jake, in tow, she was an emotional wreck as a result of her husband's latest explosion.

During each stay, Sherry would try to convince Joan to leave her husband and start a new life, but Joan always had an excuse for going back. "He was just drunk," Joan would say. "He didn't mean it." "I don't know how I could do this without him."

Sherry had heard all these lines before, but through patience, perseverance and compassion, she and her team at the shelter were eventually able to get through to Joan, help her extricate herself from a dangerous situation, and begin a new life for her and her children. The End.

Now, at first blush, that may feel like a pretty good story. In Joan, Sherry gives us a sympathetic character to pull us into the narrative, and there's clearly a positive outcome demonstrating the efficacy of the shelter's work. But take a closer look and ask yourself: Exactly how did the shelter help Joan? The answer is hiding inside a black box. It's hiding behind words such as "patience," "perseverance," and "compassion," which are lovely but don't really paint a picture. If we can't see what's happening in our mind's eye, we won't feel anything. And it's the feelings we remember first when we remember a story.

So after Sherry told her story that day in the workshop, I asked her, "What really happened? How did you turn Joan around?"

"Well," she began, "there was one day when I asked Tara and Jake to go play in the children's area while I talked to their mom. The area was set up with a kid's-sized kitchen with a plastic stove, cabinets, table and chairs.

"Tara took out a black plastic pan and mimed preparing breakfast. She put plastic bacon and eggs in the pan, and after a few minutes of shuffling them back and forth, she poured them onto a plate and held it out for her little brother. Jake looked at the plate for a second and then slapped it out of her hands. And he said, 'It's cold, bitch.'

"Tara didn't cry. She just knelt down quietly, picked up the eggs, bacon and pan, and started preparing breakfast all over again. Her mom saw all of this, and in that moment, the full extent of the damage that her husband was doing was finally clear to her."

Now do you begin to get an idea of how this shelter does what it does? Clearly, there is much more to this story, but when Sherry started opening up that black box, she gave us a chance to see, feel and, most importantly, remember.

Take a closer look at your organization's stories, and ask yourself if the essential aspects of your work are hiding in a black box. If so, start writing your new draft, and see what happens when you pry open that box. It may not be pretty. It may even be hard to share. But it's what your audience needs to hear.

ANDY GOODMAN, DIRECTOR, THE GOODMAN CENTER

Lara Setrakian
Co-Founder and CEO

NEWS DEEPLY

Lara Setrakian is the Co-Founder and CEO of News Deeply, an award-winning new media firm that builds in-depth platforms on the world's most important issues. *TIME Magazine* called their work "The Future of News," while *Fast Company* said it "outsmarts the news business, redefines crisis coverage." Lara was previously a foreign correspondent for *ABC News* and *Bloomberg Television.*

Storytelling Strategy: Mining the Mindset of a Publisher

We're all publishers now, whether we know it or not. Content publishing—the production of articles, blog items, photos, and features—has become a core activity for organizations of all kinds: non-profits, think tanks, institutions, and expert practitioners with knowledge to share.

These emerging publishers fall into two distinct camps: those who do it, and those who do it really well. What accounts for the difference? It's a shift in mindset within the organization, toward an ownership of the publishing process. In other words, it means thinking strategically, thinking ahead, and making sure the content you publish creates maximum impact.

The upside to getting it right is huge, from enhanced branding to a surge in fundraising to boundless community engagement. But gone wrong, it can be a missed opportunity, or worse. It can also be a time suck to create token content that is read by few and inspiring to no one.

With such high stakes, it behooves publishers to rethink what they already do—to enhance each step of the publishing cycle in order to become the high-impact publishers they all want to be. Those steps fall into a three-part framework for digital storytelling: collection, publication, and distribution. That framework makes it easy to strategize and optimize through the process, in line with your organizational goals.

Step 1: Rethink What You Collect

How are you collecting stories? Are you sourcing them from your in-house experts? Should they come from the ground and from the constituents and communities you serve? Does your digital audience generate elements of the story?

Determine where your stories are originating and select the tools and messaging that enhance the collection process. For example, if you are crowdsourcing photos of a campaign or event, focus on ways to effectively solicit that content, i.e., amplifying the "ask" by promoting a particular Twitter hashtag or social media channel. If you have the means, consider hiring an editor to intake and curate the material, overseeing how it fits together. One good editor can make a gaggle of contributors shine.

Step 2: Rethink How You Publish

How are you publishing your stories? You may be building a destination site using open-source, freely available software. Alternatively, you might choose to design your own proprietary system, building customized software from scratch so that it better suits your needs. Your publishing strategy may overlap with your distribution strategy if you're putting content directly on Facebook or other social platforms.

Once you know where you're publishing, set a frequency goal with a content schedule that's tailored to serve your target audience. By embracing your role as a publisher, you can put best practices in play—like regularly soliciting story ideas from your team and setting a content calendar. Those steps will save you time and energy while making the most of the opportunity for your content to shine.

Step 3: Rethink Where You Distribute

Finally, how are you thinking about distribution? Blasting out a link on your social streams is an obvious move, but it's the least sophisticated approach. More nuanced non-profits have recast "distribution" as "circulation"; instead of building a one-way pipeline of content, they're casting a wider net of circulating content through partners and key influencers. You can do the same by mapping your community of contacts and asking a set of them to help share your content to their networks. If your goal is visibility, consider offering your stories to mainstream publications, giving away your stories for cross-publishing and extended reach. News sites like *The Guardian* and *The Huffington Post* regularly feature partner content from non-profits and advocacy groups. Find people in your organization's network who can connect you to partnership opportunities with local or global newsrooms.

Moreover, know your audience and what you want your stories to impart. Be strategic in designing your workflow to produce high-value content that leaves an impact on your readers. In doing so, you'll lift up your audience and your organization, bringing you closer to where and who you want to be.

LARA SETRAKIAN, CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, NEWS DEEPLY

Traci E. Carpenter
Senior Speechwriter

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

Traci is the Senior Speechwriter at the Rockefeller Foundation, where she leads the speechwriting process for Rockefeller Foundation President Judith Rodin and oversees development of the Foundation's editorial content.

Previously, she served as the Director of Speechwriting at MWW, a midsize public relations firm, and, before that, as senior speechwriter for President Bill Clinton, where she oversaw speechwriting for the former president's political, personal, and philanthropic affairs.

Beyond the Comfort Zone: Telling Stories that Matter

As a speechwriter in the nonprofit space, I've had the opportunity to work with some of the most brilliant people on the planet. They can recite theories of change and apply analytical models to just about any problem. But ask them to tell you a story, and they freeze.

You know they can tell a good story—you've seen them at happy hour or swapped tales in the cafeteria. But there's something about the prompt "tell me a story" that makes people think more about the limitations than the possibilities. Can I say that? Will people care? What if I don't know the ending … and what if it doesn't end the way we hoped?

As a result, what comes out is often a formulaic anecdote rather than an authentic moment, which are the kinds of stories we should be striving to tell

We can break free of the storytelling rut in our organizations by pushing beyond the comfort zones to tell the stories that matter. Here are three stories your organization should start telling today:

Stories with an "I." It's a constant refrain I hear from people working in the nonprofit sector: "I am not the story." Yet storytelling in the first person is almost always more powerful than in the third. First-person stories are more likely to show vulnerabilities and demonstrate authenticity, and grab and connect with audiences. Encourage your colleagues to start with "I"—to talk about themselves as subjects who have been transformed by their experiences. But that doesn't mean we should forget about our beneficiaries. Rather, empower them to tell their own stories, rather than having them told by your organization second-hand.

Stories of failure. Most of the fairytales we were told as children—often our first entryway to storytelling—had happy endings. But in the world of social change, not everything we try is an instant success. If we're taking risks (and we should be), we inevitably fail, which can generate some of the most valuable stories of learning, evaluating and changing course—all of which is vital to accelerating impact. If your organization is still risk-averse, remind them that every failure has its own happy ending—whether that's a revelation or a transformation. A story without a happy ending is one, frankly, whose ending hasn't come.

And that's ok, because we should be telling more…

Stories in mid-stream. There is a misconception that you can only tell stories once there is a resolution at hand. But given that much of the work we do in the social impact field takes years—even decades—to yield the final results, we do a disservice by not telling the stories of process and progress as we go. As one of my senior colleagues once noted, we should focus as much on publishing "thinking" pieces as we do on thought pieces. The same is true for storytelling. Unfinished stories can compel a reader to action to help write the ending, while others offer cliff-hangers that keep audiences coming back.

Of course, we should continue to tell classic stories of triumph and success. And we should continue to tell our organization's origin stories to evoke our values. But by advocating for stories that make our colleagues (and maybe even ourselves) uncomfortable, we can begin to tell the stories that people want to hear rather than the stories we consider safe.

TRACI E. CARPENTER, SENIOR SPEECHWRITER, THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

Victor Ombonya
Executive Director

COMMUNITY MEDIA TRUST

I am an artist and a scientist. This summarizes my philosophy of life- it's never pure, but an alchemy of one or two or many more things. All my life I have always been an alloy, of science and art, and this has broadened by worldview, sharpened my understanding of it. My outlook is thus the creative fusion and interpretation of this worldview and understanding.

The Storytellers Formerly Known as the Audience

There is pin-drop silence as the video ends and the credits scroll up the screen. The cacophonic buzz that follows is quickly nipped in the bud by the post-screening discussion facilitator, whose presence quiets the crowd. Just as he is about to speak, a young viewer at the front points at him and blurts out, "It is you! You are the guy in the video!! You are Morio!" Thunderous applause ensues, undoing all the order previously restored.

In 2010, FilmAid—with the Kibera community in Nairobi, Kenya—co-created a feature film, *Sita Kimya* (Swahili for "I will not keep quiet") to respond to gender-based violence, which was rife in their community. The film's target audience was primarily unemployed youth, whom had been previously identified as the main abusers. With the intention of making the film really reach this group, the film's creators cast most of the film with youth from this target audience. FilmAid cast Richard Ambani, a community member, as Morio, the lead protagonist, who took a journey of self-discovery and transformed from a perpetrator into a champion for women and girls.

If we want audiences to move beyond just passive consumers of our craft, we have to make our stories intrinsically connect with the audience. Good narratives are mirrors into the souls of society, through which we can find ourselves and reveal our faults. All audiences want to be engaged. They want to contribute, create and share their ideas, stories and vulnerabilities.

Storytelling has evolved over time, in practice, nuance and definition, but what has remained stoically unchanged—either by design or default—is that it remains the story of the audience and their humanity. Richard Ambani and his co-stars became storytellers themselves, building their own community and helping fuel social change as story subjects and campaign ambassadors. By co-creating with their target audience, FilmAid was able to connect its story with its most critical audience and secure their trust, participation and support in reducing violence. Like his character, Richard regained his soul and humanity by being a core contributor of the social transformation of his community—his audience.

As storytellers, we must embrace the convening power that audiences have and amplify their stories and causes. Nonprofits can create their own “Richard” for the virtual space by recognizing that convening power and providing space for participation and contribution. They can empower the audience to become storytellers by listening to their stories.

What do I know about the virtual world? Pretty little. I will limit myself to Richard’s physical world, where my forefathers told stories around bonfires and filled our young and nubile minds with fire and passion, hope and joy, values and customs to guide us to become worthy men and women of the world. May our stories fill our physical and virtual audiences with the same and encourage them to join us on our mission to advance humanity and create lasting and meaningful impact in our communities. Long live storytelling. Long live our wonderful audiences.

VICTOR OMBONYA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY MEDIA TRUST

Justina Chen
Strategist

Story strategist Justina Chen shapes TED-worthy thought leadership so leaders communicate with clarity, consistency, and conviction. Her distinct storytelling style draws from her experience as a multi-published, award-winning novelist for young adults as well as a communications strategist for multiple presidents at Microsoft. When she isn't writing for teens or working with leaders, Justina conducts storytelling workshops and keynotes leadership, social media, and marketing conferences around the world.

Writing Your Epic: Storycraft for Social Good

"You need to create transcendent work!" exhorted the legendary editor overseeing our weekend writing retreat. Twenty authors along with myself were gathered in a tiny port town north of Seattle to learn from Patti Lee Gauch, former editorial director of Philomel Books.

Four-foot-ten-inches of wisdom and insight stood before us. Four-foot-ten-inches of conviction wielded a ruler as if it was a sword in her personal battle against boring prose.

"We need to know"—point!—"all the tools"—slash!—"in our toolkit." The ruler fell to Patti's side, but her challenge sizzled in the silent room. Our job as authors is to create stories that are utterly powerful, memorable and full of truth. According to Patti, if we wanted to create not just good work, but transcendent work, we had to choose with surgical precision the tool we would use to craft key moments in our novels.

This call for transcendence might be even more urgent for storytellers in the social good sector. Storytellers who rely on the emotional impact of stories win donors' hearts and minds.

So try using one of these narrative tools in your next story:

Character

As a character-driven writer, I first hear the protagonist in my head. Before I even begin to write, I try to know everything about my hero. Who is she? What does he want? What is she afraid of?

That same need-to-know-everything about a character is also true for the protagonists of your stories. What do they want? Safety? Survival? Security? Those driving needs are shared across all humanity. Pinpointing the fundamental need is the way you reveal the universal in the specific. Once you do that, the reader doesn't just care about your character—they connect deeply with your character. That is the bridge of empathy.

Quest

Joseph Campbell writes in his book, "Hero of a Thousand Faces," that our most epic tales are quests. So reimagine your organization's mission as a quest—and you'll tap into the age-old well of passion and tension, energy and emotion, trials and triumphs. No longer dry pabulum, you're creating a memorable, rousing narrative filled with adventures, some mishaps and heroes that persevere with purpose. What is your organization's "Lord of the Rings" and "Harry Potter" tale?

Voice

The first thing an editor looks at in a manuscript is voice: Does it have a resonant, authentic voice? Does the written word sound like a real person is speaking in a conversational, "I'm telling you a story" tone?

"Cost-efficient, user-friendly, community-driven" jargon is humanoid—not human. So practice writing in a more conversational tone. Banish as much jargon as possible. And then read your piece aloud. If it doesn't sound like a real person, rewrite, rewrite, rewrite.

Magical Object

Tolkien writes about the importance of objects in his essay, "Tree and Leaf." When you think about protagonists in stories, they all possess an object that holds significant meaning or represents their quest. Take the ring for Frodo, or the wand for Harry.

Objects are just as important in your storytelling. In fact, in the first two weeks as CEO of Ford, Alan Mullaly scoured the company archives to search for his company's soul. And what he found was one of Ford's first ad campaigns: Opening up highways for all mankind.

That ad became a magical object that symbolized Ford's long-standing, forward-thinking call to democratize driving. Just as that Model-T ad rallied Ford's employees yesterday and today to a common vision, magical objects draw people into your story. They become a concrete, tactile and emotional symbol of your quest. So find the magical object that symbolizes your company, your project and your campaign. And try weaving it into a story.

Take a page from your literary cousins: novelists, playwrights and screenwriters. Know every narrative tool at your disposal. And give the world what you've got—your best, most transcendent work!

JUSTINA CHEN, STRATEGIST

Liba Rubenstein
Director of Strategy
and Outreach

TUMBLR

Liba Wenig Rubenstein works at the intersection of mass and social media, cause marketing, civic innovation, sustainability, public policy, and digital activism. She currently oversees Tumblr's partnerships, programming, and outreach for social impact and policy. Previously, Liba founded Myspace's Impact Channel for social and civic engagement and led environmental sustainability at the old News Corporation. She has served as a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Councils on Sustainable Consumption and Climate Change, board member of the civic engagement organization The Bus Federation, mentor at startup accelerator Launchpad LA, and advisor to non-profits Why Tuesday? and Invisible Children.

Build the House and Then Stay a While: Making the Most of Your Best Stories

Upheaval. Disruption. Revolution. These are the words we associate with the Internet's impact on traditional storytelling. It has eroded the power of gatekeepers; rendered broadcast nearly obsolete; birthed new, creative forms and constraints; and put the power of data in every organization's hands. A lot of my work takes place in the borderlands between nonprofits and digital storytelling, where upheaval, disruption, and revolution aren't always taken as positives, opportunities, or signs of progress. In fact, they can place an intimidating burden on nonprofits not only to deliver their core programs, but also to play the role of media companies and publishers, expected to constantly compete with professional storytellers.

Perhaps at your organization, it feels like this expectation is tantamount to suddenly being expected to compete in, I don't know, real estate. Well, we can go with that metaphor for a minute, if you'll bear with me—because carefully constructing a story that both communicates and furthers your mission is a little bit like building a house from scratch. If you approach it like a traditional house with one door and many windows, you'll find yourself with a story most people can merely peek inside. That's the kind of house most journalists, authors, and filmmakers have traditionally built—their industries are used to painstakingly producing great stories … and then immediately moving on to the next ones. But you don't have to get stuck building many houses in quick succession; instead, focus on inviting as many people inside a single house as you possibly can.

And here's where digital storytelling should become an asset—not a burden. With the tools and platforms at your fingertips, one great story can open more doors than ever before. Just keep a few things in mind:

- Design the doors *before* you build the house. If you construct a perfect story without a clear sense of who's supposed to hear it and how they'll find it, you'll limit possibilities and probably even waste your time. Make sure the doors are also as accessible to your audience as possible—data can help you learn where they spend their time, and social media can help you reach them.
- Create clear paths to your doors, designed to attract a variety of audiences to open them and come inside. This is where great headlines, A/B testing, memes, animated GIFs, and listicles come in. Think of them as teasers, but don't let these tactics distract you from constructing the best core story possible.
- There are probably great stories to be told about the building of the house, and about your many builders. Consider versions of your story where your staff, beneficiaries, and allies are the protagonists. Don't be afraid to build doors even to the unfinished or slightly dilapidated rooms: Some of your target audience might better identify with those doors than the ones that are shiny and new, and you want to let those folks in too because they might be able to help you build even more.
- As long as the foundations and the core structure remain intact, be prepared to accommodate some redecorating or even some unintended additions. Ceding some amount of control comes with the territory; better to invite people in to help finish the construction than to shut them out for the sake of keeping your home immaculate.

Metaphor aside, my point is that every nonprofit has access to the emotional ingredients of a great story—an asset that commercial marketers spend millions to invent from scratch—and the luxury of a focused mission that traditional content companies don't have. So, fear not! Today you might feel you're stretching to catch up with professional storytellers, but if you focus on a few great stories and build as many doors into them as possible, you may find the pros will start striving to catch up with you.

LIBA RUBENSTEIN, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND OUTREACH, TUMBLR

Wendy Levy

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR MEDIA ARTS AND CULTURE

Wendy is the Executive Director of the National Alliance for Media Arts And Culture, an organization dedicated to facilitating strategic growth, innovation and cultural impact for the media arts field. She is also a Senior Consultant to the Sundance Institute and the co-founder of Sparkwise, a data-and-storytelling platform for global changemakers. Wendy speaks regularly on storytelling, emerging technology and social justice at venues like Skoll World Forum, the United Nations, Sundance, Tribeca, SXSW and venues around the world.

#Storybanks

I have never been a big fan of banks. They charge me crazy fees, tell me I'm overdrawn and create inside me a profound sense of failure. Once upon a time, my dad got in tight with some bankers. Then he got in tight with federal prison. So seriously, I don't love banks.

But I do love stories. And if you are reading this, I imagine you love them too. Perhaps you also have realized that you are a storyteller. In some sense, we all are, and our stories carry innate value; as Tahir Shah puts it, stories are "the communal currency of humanity."

So I guess they do belong in banks.

I'm putting the call out to everyone who has a story: It's time to put our stories in the bank. A storybank is a mechanism for capturing and sharing stories in a variety of mediums. If we don't capture our stories and share them, they'll disappear.

But stories are more than just currency. They are footprints, chronicles of our collective human experience, exchanges, lessons, memories and maps. Think of the tough, breaking news stories we read: Ferguson. Syria. Child trafficking. Sexual assault in the military. The degradation of the planet. Think of the voices of the world captured in independent documentaries, magazines, photographs, tweets and texts. Think of the stories we share and collect from our communities, tribes, families and co-workers. Stories from the first responders and the last living survivors. Think about all of them. Slowly, and one at a time.

Just think.

These stories are our belongings. They are sacred, and they define our collective imaginary.

In the digital age, we are creating more stories than ever before. If you are telling stories, collecting stories or sharing stories, it's time to think about banking them. If you have a viable storybank, your stories gain value each time they are searched, each time they are found and each time they are told.

Here are some tips for getting started:

- Collaborate within your organization to identify a way to archive your media in a storybank.
- Create a shared taxonomy and use it to tag and organize all content.
- Make the storybank open and accessible to others and searchable by keyword, author, date and place.

Many organizations are already acting as de facto storybanks, like Creative Commons, Getty Images and YouTube. Salesforce has a tool for creating storybanks. Projects like Medium and Cowbird are storybanks too. Families USA has a fantastic, searchable storybank.

We can also take a lesson from the experts at StoryCorps, who maintain a storybank at their offices. The bank is stored on a local server and backed up offsite. Their files are saved in uncompressed formats: WAV for audio, JPG for photos and PDF for scanned documents.

They are also in the process of developing a custom content management system for storing data alongside interview materials. To be effective, stories and the data that backs them up must be kept together. Imagine a place where you can keep not only finished, polished stories, but also the "stuff" the stories were gleaned from—the rough footage, notes, anecdotes and interviews. These are the artifacts that strengthen our stories and bring them to life.

We need a platform where meaningful content can be preserved and exchanged across disciplines. We need a searchable database that includes the original content that was left on the cutting room floor, on the drive, in the ether and on the desktop—from rare documentary film footage to a smartphone video of a story told by a grandmother to her grandson, and all of it in between. We need this bank to model and reinforce the collaborative, creative culture that defines our digital age.

If all storytelling organizations (that's us) put their minds to creating and investing in a shared storybank, we could build a vibrant, living media archive where our stories could inform and inspire the next generation.

This is what makes us rich. This is our collective cultural currency. This will be a legacy we can be proud to leave behind.

WENDY LEVY, NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR MEDIA ARTS AND CULTURE

Justina Chen
Strategist

Story strategist Justina Chen shapes TED-worthy thought leadership so leaders communicate with clarity, consistency, and conviction. Her distinct storytelling style draws from her experience as a multi-published, award-winning novelist for young adults as well as a communications strategist for multiple presidents at Microsoft. When she isn't writing for teens or working with leaders, Justina conducts storytelling workshops and keynotes leadership, social media, and marketing conferences around the world.

Deliver the Shiver: The Art of Inspiration

An open letter to CEOs, Executive Directors, and other Powers that Be: Believe it or not, study after study shows that storytelling is the most effective tool that leaders can use to drive impact. To teach about successes and failures. To unify a team with a shared purpose.

Study after study shows that truly great leaders are mission-focused and that inspirational leadership is the key to their success. It is the reason Dr. Howard Gardner wrote in Leading Matters, "Stories are the most important tool in a leader's toolkit."

All of this means: You as a leader need to be the Master Storyteller—not just of your organization, but of your issue area. You need to touch people at their deepest levels and stir in them a deep sense of belonging and caring. In other words, you need to master the Art of Inspiration.

Three types of stories will help you engage, inspire, and enthrall your employees, funders, and constituents:

FIRST, get personal.

Inspirational leaders, according to one Harvard study, are those who are approachable.

Revealing your defining moment is one of the most powerful ways to showcase your authenticity and humanity at the same time that you define your leadership style. After all, according to another Harvard study, one of the most reliable predictors of extraordinary leadership is a person's ability to conquer adversity and transform. The very same skills that allowed you to emerge stronger after a soul-sapping ordeal are the exact same skills that have shaped you into an extraordinary leader.

So share the story of your biggest ordeal—and what you learned. Tell us about the gnarly obstacles you've overcome—and what you value as a result. And above all, share the stories of your trials—and how they've instilled a greater purpose in you, the same greater purpose that propels you out of bed each morning.

SECOND, share your One Really Big Idea.

Peter Drucker, the management expert, said that one of the most crucial jobs for an executive is to be a thought leader. You need to braille the world and be hypervigilent about spotting both seismic shifts and weak signals of change in your issue area.

To be a truly inspirational leader, you need to distill your thought leadership story down to One Really Big Idea. This is so essential that one of the TED organizers found that the talks that reached not just thousands of viewers, but millions of people, were the ones that articulated One Really Big Idea. Think of your One Really Big Idea as a provocative short story or elevator pitch. Challenge yourself to crystallize your One Really Big Idea into a crisp, repeatable Tweet-worthy statement.

THIRD, mine your organization's origin story.

In the first two weeks as Ford's new CEO, Alan Mullaly trolled the company archives for its heart and soul. He found it in one of Ford's first ads that proclaimed a bold and daring mission: Opening the Highways to All Mankind. Driving had been an elitist pursuit—until the Model-T came along. Suddenly, Ford democratized the road. That origin story became Mr. Mullaly's North Star as he mounted Ford's successful turnaround.

An origin story does more than focus an organization. A shared history binds individuals to a community and imbues a group with identity. It provides the halo of credibility because of those enduring values. What values are illustrated in your organization's origin story? How do those same values drive your organization today?

Before you mine your company archives, I give you one parting thought. Creating inspirational communications is a partnership between you and your communicator. Think of yourselves as the Avengers. Your superpower is leading. You bring your values. Your business acumen. Your insight. And your communicator's superpower is storycraft.

So please, make yourself available. Please invite your communicator to important meetings. And by all means, please flow critical information so your storytelling partner can help you deliver the shiver with stories that engage your funders and jolt constituents into action. The world awaits your inspirational stories!

JUSTINA CHEN, STRATEGIST

Matt Locke
Founder

STORYTHINGS

Matt Locke founded Storythings in 2011 as a creative studio helping clients tell stories in an age of digital attention. Before starting Storythings, Matt worked in digital media for over 15 years, including 7 years as Head of Innovation at BBC New Media. He also runs The Story conference (www.thestory.org.uk) and its partner event The Money, looking at hybrid funding models for culture.

Rhythm—The Most Important Thing about Your Organisation That You Don't Understand

The saying goes that "culture eats strategy for breakfast." The implicit values your team believes will decide whether your explicit plans are successful. But there is something that is even more implicit than culture—rhythm.

Rhythm is also known as tradition, the business cycle, or just deadlines. Rhythm is not something defined by your company—it's defined by the sector or industry in which you work. It can take years or decades to get established, and it can take even longer to change.

Have you ever been on an awayday where everyone got really excited about a new form of storytelling, but afterwards it never went anywhere? Are you a great storytelling organisation, but you're struggling to find ways to tell your stories on platforms like social media? It could be that you're finding it hard because you're working against the implicit rhythms in your sector.

Rhythm is what we do after the awayday. It's what we default to when we get back to our desks. Rhythm is the path of least resistance, like when you realise that the only actionable item at the end of a meeting is that someone needs to organise another meeting.

If you work at a newspaper, your rhythm is the daily edition. If you're an advertiser, it's a campaign. If you work in an art gallery or museum, is the calendar of exhibitions. If you're a publisher, it's the big marketing moments before summer and Christmas. For advocacy groups, it's the cycle of policy decisions and elections.

When I worked at the BBC, there were different rhythms in different departments. In the news department, it was all about producing the day's TV news stories for the 1 o'clock, the 6 o'clock or the 10 o'clock. The Natural History Unit had a much longer rhythm to their storytelling, as making a show like Blue Planet would take five years from beginning to end. I ran a team that had to try and help these different departments deliver new ways to tell stories, and one of the hardest problems we faced was working with these wildly different rhythms. It meant we had to develop specific tactics and ways of working, as no two departments had the same storytelling rhythms.

But rhythms can be useful; they help organisations grow, and they help competing organisations develop sectors and markets together. But they make it hard to respond to changes in audience behaviour or understand changes in the wider world outside your sector.

Your audience might want to engage with your stories in an on-demand stream rather than a scheduled programme. They might want to dig into stories from your history, or collect and curate stories to publish themselves. These new behaviours will challenge they way you tell stories. Meanwhile, startups without these traditional rhythms will respond faster and get all the attention. Does this sound familiar?

Rhythms also make it hard to collaborate or bring in new skills from outside your sector. New staff won't understand why a project manager has set a deadline. A collaboration with a partner outside your sector will fail when you can't both hit the same deadline. Does this ring any bells?

So what can you do to change your rhythm?

First of all, discover and define the rhythms in your organisation. Ask teams to talk through their year, showing the points where they are most busy and pressured. Ask a project manager to walk you through a project, explaining why the milestones and deadlines are set the way they are.

If you're collaborating on a story, ask your partner to walk you through their last project. Ask where the pressure points were, and what caused them. Look for the points where your rhythms will likely be in sync, and where they might clash.

Look for rhythms in the behavior of your audience. Look for unexpected spikes of traffic, conversations or activity around your stories. Reward your team for being curious about these new patterns of audience behavior, and encourage experimentation in the rhythms of your storytelling.

This will be hard. Rhythms are deeply embedded in our organisations, and we don't spend enough time thinking about them. But they have a fundamental effect on how we tell our stories, and they are one of the biggest blocks to change.

So, culture might eat strategy for breakfast, but perhaps rhythm is the clock that wakes us up in the first place.

MATT LOCKE, FOUNDER, STORYTHINGS

Garth Moore
US Digital Director

ONE

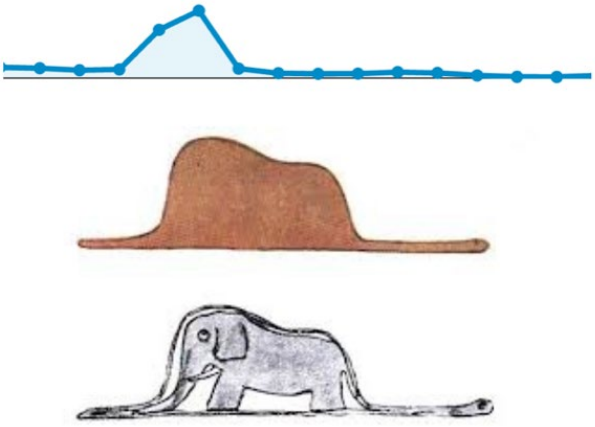
Garth Moore is the US Digital Director for the ONE Campaign, the global grassroots advocacy and campaigning organization, founded by Bono, that fights extreme poverty and preventable disease. Before joining ONE, he worked as the Internet and Communications Director at 1Sky, a climate advocacy campaign and as an online fundraising and social media consultant with Changing Our World. Garth has held advisory board positions with the Convio Partner Board and the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Follow him at @garthmoore.

The 40/60 Content Rule: Less Time Writing, More Time Sharing

"This isn't working," Hector groaned, resisting the urge to bang his head on the keyboard after looking at his organization's online analytics from the prior week.

Hector manages his organization's blog and social media accounts, and he had written, edited, and shared 25-30 stories in one week. Why so many? Because he was told at a recent content conference that volume matters. ("Don't let readers step in the same river twice: keep publishing more, more, more!") He took this advice to heart and spent the week writing original content and editing drafts from staff, partners, and a key influencer.

So when he came in on Monday morning expecting red-hot metrics, he was sorely disappointed to see that most of his stories' traffic spikes looked like the snake eating the elephant from the book *The Little Prince*. Yes, most stories had a small two-day blip in Google Analytics, but then traffic flattened to almost nothing. We call these "snake eating an elephant metrics."



So, what happened? Hector wrote good stories, but where were the readers? Where were the referrers? And most importantly, where were the donations and petition signers that he intended to drive with these stories?

Why didn't Hector's stories create an impact? Because although Hector spent a lot of time writing and editing the posts, he didn't spend enough time promoting them.

And that's where the 40/60 Rule for Content comes in: 40 percent of your time should be spent creating content, while the remaining 60 percent should be spent promoting content. Why? Because it's more fruitful to spend more time marketing a few good stories than it is writing a huge mass of stories.

Ultimately, volume alone won't bring in more readers—circulation matters more. Getting larger and better reach for a few articles and putting content into the hands of readers, members, communities, donors, and newaudiences is what will make the difference between seeing your story sizzle or fizzle.

Organizations also need to learn that "perfect is the enemy of good" when creating content. The more time you spend "perfecting" a blog post, feature, or report page, the less time there will be to promote it. Time management for content creation and promotion is critical for saliency and scheduling. While the 40/60 Rule for Content may not be scientific, it is a simple, effective way to manage time, resources, and focus for when to create and when to market.

OK, so let's say Hector dutifully posts links to his stories on his organization's Facebook page and Twitter account, both of which boast a large number of followers with a vested interest in the organization. Is that enough? In a word, no. First of all, neither Facebook or Twitter is a "one and done" platform; outcome will depend on how often he posts them. Why? Because most of his organizations' Facebook fans only see 10 to 15 percent of posts in their Facebook feeds at any one time, and many Twitter followers are in an attention-deficit universe that requires multiple postings. Other options Hector should consider include:

- Building audiences on LinkedIn, Tumblr, Google+, Medium, Flipboard, Instagram, and other networks. Not to overwhelm Hector, but he should investigate which channels are most likely to reach his target audience and invest time there;
- Identifying and nurturing relationships with influencers and blogger networks on social channels;
- Asking staff and partner organizations to share story links on their networks;
- Marketing content with content curators such as TakePart, Upworthy, Vox, Buzzfeed, foundations, and other curators who can promote good content;
- Creating a weekly email list for the week's best content, which can energize dormant mailing lists or high-action members who want to do more; and
- Using paid opportunities to promote on Facebook and Google.

What will Hector's Mondays look like once he starts using the 40/60 Rule for Content? First off, his publishing and social strategies will work for him. He'll spend less time each week writing and curating fewer—but more impactful—stories. He'll utilize more of his organization's communications channels to make sure each piece gets the social attention it deserves and needs to be successful. But Hector won't have to do it all at once. Circulation can be spread out over several days or weeks, resulting in multiple spikes in the analytics, rather than the dreaded snake/elephant spike. Now, Mondays will be reserved for sipping coffee while reviewing positive analytics, knowing the previous weeks' content and marketing has resulted in maximizing reach and creating more potential for a greater impact.

GARTH MOORE, US DIGITAL DIRECTOR, ONE

Neill Coleman
Vice President of
Global Communications

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

As Vice President of Global Communications, Mr. Coleman leads the Foundation's global communications team in New York, Bangkok and Nairobi. The team uses a broad range of communications tools to publicize The Rockefeller Foundation's work to build resilience and more inclusive economies. Mr. Coleman is focused on how the Foundation can pioneer new ways to hear and share innovative ideas and perspectives on serving the needs of poor or vulnerable people in a time of rapid change.

Vote for Story

As a communications leader in your organization, the need for a greater investment in storytelling may seem compelling. Self-evident even. But the leadership of your organization may need more convincing. To deliver a win for storytelling in your organization, think of making the case as a campaign. You need to be the "Vote for Story" campaign manager. Here's the campaign manual.

1) Research your opponent

There probably aren't many story-haters in your organization, or if there are, they likely harbor their dislike of tales in secret. But successful storytelling requires an investment of time and resources, cultural shifts and additional staff requirements. Your biggest opponent is probably not the storyphobes, but leaders with a tight budget and competing priorities.

2) Identify your supporters

Who are your allies? Who do you need to convince? Who may have a competing priority?

Your CEO is likely to be a power-user of stories, as he or she is the person with the most speeches, media interviews and funder conversations.

Look at your board and their backgrounds—which ones come from organizations that already successfully use storytelling? Maybe some of them have a media or communications background and can be allies.

Then consider your colleagues—how can you convince them that an investment in storytelling can help advance THEIR function? Perhaps the human resources director will see the value of storytelling for staff pride. The development director can be energized by having compelling stories to share with funders. And make sure you have buy-in from your colleagues in the legal department. The more allies you have, the stronger your campaign to Vote for Story will be.

3) Prepare your stump speech

Find examples from comparable organizations with effective storytelling efforts. Envy is a powerful force, so make your leadership a bit jealous and humor their desire for your organization to be seen as cutting-edge as the competition is. Reach out to your peers, and ask them what has worked for them.

4) Nurture your fundraisers

Your board is focused at a strategic level, and they will want to know why storytelling is a good investment and why it will deliver more impact than an alternative use of time or resources. You need to show them how storytelling connects to the organization's overall strategy, as well as demonstrate why it needs to be a priority. Choose your examples with this in mind. One caution: Be realistic in the claims you make for what storytelling can achieve.

5) Get out the stories

Demonstrate to your leadership that if they give the go-ahead, you can make storytelling work. The effort will need an owner—likely you or someone else on the communications team. Identify internal champions, and be clear what will be expected of other staff so the work doesn't all fall to the communications team. This is where support from your leadership will be vital, particularly for requirements like adding a storytelling component to job descriptions. You might consider establishing a searchable online storybank so people can access and use stories easily. Prepare a budget that factors in training and technology needs, and make sure you build those costs into your proposal. By consistently sharing stories, it will help you make your case for Vote for Story.

6) Read the polls

You may face concerns that the impacts of storytelling are fluffy or nebulous. But if you present a specific plan—with metrics—to measure and evaluate the storytelling work, you will instill confidence. But, don't wait for the evaluation to be complete before you start sharing successes—keep your leadership informed from the start.

And of course, as you prepare your case, identify a story that will capture hearts and minds, or that has already helped achieve impact. This will encourage your leadership to say, "We need more stories like that."

With these six campaign strategies—and a great story—your storytelling campaign can be victorious.

NEILL COLEMAN, VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS,
THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

Jay Geneske
Director of Digital

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

Jay directs the Foundation's digital strategy to engage internal and external audiences, champion organization-wide collaboration and knowledge sharing, deliver data that informs organization decisions, and pioneer new ways to hear and share innovative ideas and perspectives on serving the needs of poor or vulnerable people in a time of rapid change.

Previously Jay served as the Director of Online Communications for Echoing Green, a global nonprofit that provides seed capital and support to early-stage social entrepreneurs. His work has been featured in the *New York Times, AdAge, Crain's, Forbes, Stanford Social Innovation Review,* and *The Chronicle of Philanthropy.*

Making Time For Story

Few would deny that storytelling has the potential to drive considerable social impact, but really, who has the time?

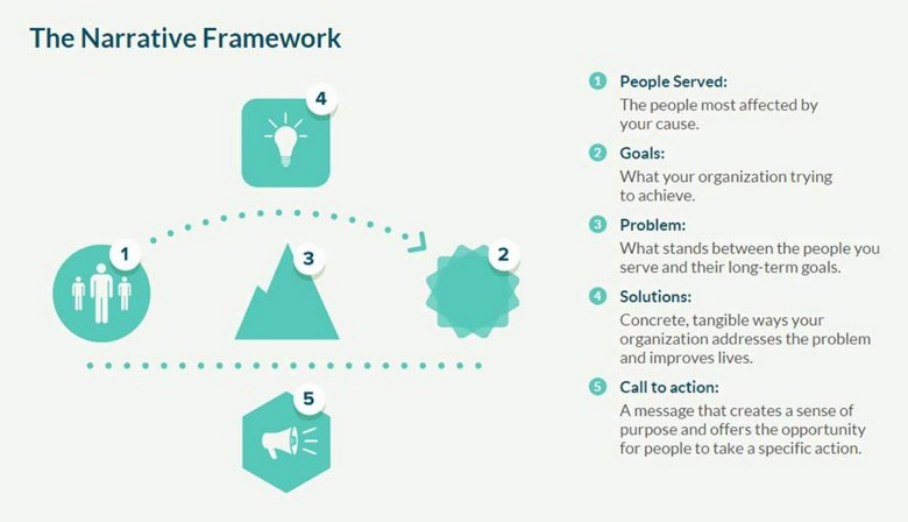
I'm with you.

I've been meaning to write this post all week, but my days overflowed with meetings, emails, and crafting and producing content.

Although you may have different tasks in your daily job in the social impact sector, I bet this sounds familiar to you. I know we're all on board for storytelling, but where do we fit it in?

In our survey of dozens of people in the sector, one of the most common reasons we heard for not focusing on storytelling is the amount of time it takes to produce compelling content. This is especially true for communications staff, who are busy hunting down stories from the program team, writing copy for the website, pitching press, photoshopping an image for Facebook, or working on a speech.

Part of the struggle for many organizations is knowing where to begin, which can often make storytelling seem daunting and more time-consuming than it really has to be. Allow me to propose a solution: The Narrative Framework.



A Narrative Framework is a simple but powerful tool for organizing the ideas that you communicate in stories: It links the people who are the protagonists of the story, the goals they seek to achieve, the problems that stand in the way, and the solutions that can help them succeed. It serves as the overarching story that helps provide structure and consistency for all of the individual stories your organization will tell.

Map out what this process looks like for your organization by describing the main ideas you'll want to convey. You'll turn to this framework again and again over time as you develop individual stories or campaigns that are aligned with the outcomes you seek to achieve.

To be honest, it wasn't until recently that I really understood how important it is to step back and think about storytelling strategically and to see it from the perspective of—but connected to—the communication strategy. If you can invest a bit of time up front to think this through for your organization, it will be a huge time saver in the long run.

I'm a firm believer that the social impact sector is more poised than any other sector to use stories to really connect with an audience. Our stories are honest, hopeful, brutal, funny, scary, visceral, and more human than most sectors could dream of, yet so many of us have a hard time even thinking of utilizing a story and instead rely on bullet points, facts, and jargon.

You can change this, and it starts with crafting a Narrative Framework to guide your efforts.

JAY GENESKE, DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL, THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

Shankar Vedantam
Science Correspondent

NPR

Shankar Vedantam: Shankar Vedantam is NPR's social science correspondent and the author of *The Hidden Brain,* a book about unconscious biases in everyday life. He loves a good story. Learn more about him on Twitter @HiddenBrain

Turning Your Audience into Messengers (The Reason Is Deeper Than You Think)

As I head to work each day, I see a man with a long beard and flowing robes holding a sign at my train station. The sign is about a cause that I know nothing about, and it holds no interest for me. As I pass the man each day, I find myself asking why he holds the sign as people stream by, ignoring him. What's the point of persisting in the face of such futility?

A few weeks ago, it suddenly came to me. Converting people to his cause is not the point. Something else is at work.

To understand what that is, I need to take you back to the work of a psychologist named Elliot Aronson. As the HIV epidemic was starting to spread, Aronson was recruited by the University of California to get students to practice safe sex.

Aronson immediately started scaring students about HIV. He warned students to practice safe sex—or risk catching a fatal illness. The scare tactic worked, but only briefly. In a few days, students began to disregard the risk.

If fear didn't work, perhaps seduction would? Aronson made a film that depicted actors making love while practicing safe sex. Again, students responded to the message, but only briefly. The problem with trying to make safe sex "sexy," Aronson told me, is that the marketing message couldn't deliver on its promise. Fairly quickly, the students realized that safe sex in practice didn't look like the erotic sex in Aronson's film.

Aronson turned to a new tack: Instead of trying to sell students on the message, he wondered what would happen if the students had to sell the message to him. He had students make public-service announcements about the virtues of safe sex, ostensibly for dissemination to other students. In reality, the videos were not meant for others; rather, the targets were the very students who made the videos.

When he examined the behavior of the student-messengers, Aronson found significant numbers were not only practicing safe sex, but sticking to it. The technique worked, Aronson reasoned, because the act of preaching the virtues of safe sex to other students made it difficult for the students to ignore the advice themselves. If they did, it would make them feel hypocritical and create "cognitive dissonance".

This idea has been tested and popularized in a number of different contexts: When you turn into a messenger for healthy living and publicly preach to your friends about how important it is to start a workout program, this makes it hard for you to not start working out yourself. Preaching boxes you in.

Which brings me back to the man at the train station. No one pays much attention to him, but that's not the point: Most people who stand on soapboxes are ineffective advocates, but the act of preaching solidifies and strengthens their own commitment to the cause.

Nonprofits might want to take this idea seriously: If you want to change the behavior of your targets, invite them to become the messengers of the story.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM, SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT, NPR

Robert Medina
Senior Program Manager

The Aspen Institute

Robert Medina is a Senior Program Manager for the Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program at the Aspen Institute where he collaborates with colleagues to conduct evaluations of policy advocacy and social change campaigns. He works with foundation and nonprofit clients domestically and internationally on assessments spanning a diverse array of policy issues. He also sends out a weekly newsletter called *So What? Your Weekly Guide to Advocacy with Impact* with tips and ideas at the intersection of measurement and advocacy strategy.

Storytellers Taming the Measurement Monster

Let's get this out of our system: Measurement isn't exactly what you'd call a sexy topic. In fact, nonprofits considering adding storytelling as a tactic in their toolbox typically don't think of measurement first—that is, not until a funder asks for some stats in a progress report. And many nonprofits believe that the creative process of storytelling should be allowed to emerge on its own, independently of all those numbers. But, and hear me out on this: When measurement is built into the process from the very beginning, it can help you deploy your stories in a more effective way, learn what's working (or not working) with your audiences, and adjust your strategy as needed. All of this to give you the right information to achieve the social change you want to see in your community.

Hastily putting together a story and releasing it out into the world, without a measurement plan, is rather simple to do. You select a topic that you find interesting—maybe a community member who's been raving about your services for years, or a tireless volunteer who keeps coming back over and over again—and begin telling that story. You throw in some facts to make the story credible, and it's ready for primetime—on social media, on your website, or in a newsletter. Then you wait for all the accolades (and hefty donations) to come in. And you keep waiting, until there's only a barely discernable blip in your organization's bank account. Soon enough, you're asking yourself and your colleagues, "What happened?"

(Don't worry; we've all been there.)

Smart nonprofits look at storytelling a bit differently. They're thinking strategically about the story they want to tell, how it aligns with the goals of the organization, and how their target audiences may engage through particular distribution channels. On top of it all, they're also taking the time to carefully identify appropriate metrics for capturing if and how those audiences are interacting. Are they sharing and commenting on Facebook? Clicking your email back to your website for more information? Signing a petition? Donating to your cause?

Organizations need to choose metrics that best match their objectives. Once those metrics are set, even before your story is out there, you're in a good position to grab the right data at the right time—the data that's most meaningful and actionable for you. Equipped with good evidence, you can push forward with confidence if your story is resonating and inspiring action. Or, go back to tweak and revise your original strategy so your next storytelling efforts can gain traction where necessary.

If you've dabbled in measurement, you know that there are plenty of data collection tools and metrics to choose from. Here are three solid practices to keep in mind as you begin measuring the results of your work:

- **Connect your measurement plan to your strategy and vision for social change:** Whether you're concerned about poverty or international aid, you have an idea about how your activities—and more specifically, how the stories you plan to share—can potentially contribute to your desired outcomes. In brainstorming what to measure, stick closely to this vision. Set up your measurement plan to test whether your stories are, in fact, helping you realize your social goals in the way you envisioned.
- **Select metrics that capture what you want to learn:** Don't be seduced by the latest and most popular metrics out there. Whatever metrics you go with, ask yourself if these will give you the information you want to have on hand to make decisions about your work. Take, for example, Facebook Insights. You can download columns and columns of data about your Facebook page. Is all of it useful? Likely not. It all depends on what you're after. And, of course, make sure to read and understand the definition of each metric in your arsenal so you know how to interpret the data later on.
- **Treat metrics as indicators, not silver bullets:** So you've picked a suitable metric and have started collecting data on an ongoing basis. Now what? A thoughtfully chosen metric can indicate if you're making progress (say, if more or fewer people shared your Facebook post, donated on your website, or signed up for your newsletter). But, a metric all by itself can't tell you precisely why you achieved these results. For that, you'll need to look at the big picture of your strategy and tease out what aspects of your story inspired deeper engagement or failed to connect with audiences.

Using measurement effectively is about being willing to experiment and fail. The benefit is that by identifying useful metrics to assess your organization's stories, you're creating an opportunity for your creative staff to learn and adapt iteratively. Yes, there will be a lot of trial and error involved; but now, you're measuring your work in the spirit of getting better.

ROBERT MEDINA, SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER, THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

Maria Ressa
CEO and Executive Editor,

RAPPLER

Maria is the CEO and Executive Editor of Rappler, a social news network which uses a hearts and minds approach to news through a unique mood navigator.

Ms. Ressa has been a journalist in Asia for more than 25 years, most of them as *CNN's* bureau chief in Manila (1987-1995) then Jakarta (1995-2005). She was *CNN's* lead investigative reporter focusing on terrorism in Southeast Asia and wrote *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia* (Free Press, 2003).

To Use Technology Well, Embrace Your Humanity

That's a lesson my co-founders and I learned when we created Rappler, a social news startup in the Philippines. We relished the idea that technology now allows journalists to go beyond just telling stories; now we can move our no longer passive audience to action and help build institutions from the bottom up.

We built this cycle into our DNA: content creation, social media amplification, crowdsourcing and big data.

The same cycle can work for your non-profit group. Create compelling content by telling stories that matter. Share and engage on social media. Aim to scale. Then you're ready to crowdsource action, which just means every person takes one small step to create something that didn't exist before. Monitor the data, and infuse it right back into the mix.

Use stories to build communities. If you do that well, you can create social networks that can be harnessed to act—allowing you to tap into what I think is the real game-changer: social media.

After all, your physical social network is made up of your family and friends. What's social media? Your family and friends on steroids, with no boundaries of time and space.

Social media is its own ecosystem, and to be effective, you have to bring down your barriers. Gone are the days when you can hide behind a voice of authority.

You're not doing well on social media until you're vulnerable.

That's taboo for large bureaucracies, organizations, companies and governments, but today, you can't hide behind your company or institution. People don't listen to monolithic, faceless voices.

So now, you have to step out from under the shadow of your group and be yourself.

Now it's about authenticity. Be real, because that's how you build credibility. That's why people follow you. That's why people believe you.

In a world full of distractions, it's your humanity that cuts through the noise.

Most institutions have a problem with being vulnerable. To them, it means losing control by giving their people freedom to be real, but there are ways to balance organizational risks with its potential rewards.

If you're authentic, you can tell your story.

If your story is compelling, you can move your community to action—what tech people call crowdsourcing.

The easiest form of crowdsourcing on Rappler is our patented user-engagement model, which asks people to tell us how they feel. Why do we care? Because studies show that up to 80 percent of how people behave is not based on what they think—it's based on how they feel.

On Rappler, every story has a mood meter. Working with psychologists, sociologists and the leaders behind our survey groups in the Philippines, we identified eight most common emotions, so people can click how the story makes them feel.

Every vote on every mood meter is an action point and is aggregated to crowdsource the mood of the day. That's the easiest, most frictionless way to use the crowd, but you can do much more.

When an earthquake happens, our community can map the extent of the quake before government has had a chance to report it. We crowdsource real-time help in disasters, combining bottom-up, real-time reporting with top-down government workflows.

This is Project Agos, which we introduced in the 2012 Manila Social Good Summit. About a month later, Typhoon Haiyan, the worst storm to ever hit land globally, ravaged the Philippines. More than 6,000 people were killed, according to officials.

Working with government agencies, civil society groups, international non-governmental organizations and our social media community, we iterated the platform through succeeding typhoons, trying to connect real-time reporting from the crowd with the rescue efforts and responses from authorities.

Crowdsourcing is transparent. It happens fast, by people embedded in their real-world communities.

Many people want to help—they just want to know how.

Finally, each action point can be treated as data—whether structured, like the clicks on our mood meter, or unstructured, like social media.

You can use social network analysis to break down your communities and begin to understand what flows through their connections. This is the reason we developed our in-house analytics tool, Reach which allows you to do just that. Understanding the ties that bind allow you to mobilize specific communities based on its interests and your needs.

You'll be able to identify force multipliers and key influencers.

What is your goal and how can your community help you accomplish it?

Technology provides platforms and tools but now, more than ever, social movements—online and offline—are built on the essence of our humanity.

MARIA RESSA, CEO AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR, RAPPLER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