



What is Storytelling?



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The art of telling stories, fascinating an audience, providing examples, and driving with emotions is one of the key skills that help to exchange information, bring it home, “translate” it into other people's languages, and make our life rich and real.

Storytelling is indeed the art of telling stories. It's not enough to just think a good story through, you need to choose a way of delivering it to readers or listeners, as well as a place and a time when you're going to tell it in any way. A story is a kind of anthropological or ethnographic research into how another person or organisation lives, why they've chosen their activity, and what they want to change.

In our childhood, as you may recall, we all loved listening to fairy tales, then stories of our friends, then we came up with stories for our kids, and in the family circle, we marvelled at life stories of our grandparents. People have always made up stories based on real facts, brushing them with, for example, a touch of enigma, mysticism, humour, irony, or laughter. So folk epos was born (“folk tales”), followed by literature, and today, stories are created by storytelling. However, storytelling is not a story in a direct literary sense.

Storytelling is an effective method of communicating information to an audience by means of telling a funny, touching, or instructive story with real or fictional characters. Moreover, it means timely, relevant, useful, emotional, and entertaining content. We all tell others about ourselves every day – to our family, friends, or colleagues.

Let's learn together how to tell our stories, which help to change lives, have an impact on our society, and make history of civil society organisations for all.

Today, **storytelling is both a science and an art**. It brings together the experiences of specialists from different areas – from journalists and copywriters to digital communication professionals and videographers. Combining psychology, management, and other aspects, it helps not only to communicate information effectively to people but also motivate them to act and achieve the set goals.

Robert McKee, an American screenwriter, the author of "STORY", and a lecturer at Harvard and Yale Universities, distinguishes three types of stories delivery.

- The first type is an **emotional performance**. It's festive and sparkling. It's as if you're raising a glass of champagne greeting a group of people. In this case, you should emphasise emotions.
- The second type is a **rhetorical performance**. You provide facts and arguments, build a system of evidence, and persuade your audience. In this case, logic should be emphasised.
- The third type is a **performance based on a story**. In this case, you should build all the collected facts into a story. This has a powerful impact on an audience.

How to deliver a story

A story can be told through words/texts, both orally and in writing, as well as through pictures, infographics, videos, memes, photo illustrations, or photoshoots.

Application of storytelling

Many people understand the term “storytelling” purely in terms of its application, successfully using it in various human life areas. In what areas could storytelling be applied in terms of CSOs’ activities?

- development of communications, in particular on social media sites;
- digital storytelling in the form of websites, stories, or presentations;
- in media;
- in human resources and volunteering management;
- in training and coaching for future participants of a certain project;
- in all life areas, not just in work environment.

CSOs may inform about their activities via a blog, an Instagram page, a website, or a Facebook page.

These are the tools to communicate, share stories, as well as to engage new people for a project.

For example, the photoproject "**A Girl is Born**" has been presented in Georgia to fight against the practice of gender biased sex selection. In Georgian society, parents often prefer to have a son due to gender-based stereotypes related to the high value of boys. Sons are considered to play a dominating role in a family, to be main breadwinners for their aged parents, etc.

The project "A Girl is Born" **fights against these stereotypes** and for the idea of gender equality. It featured the happy families in which only girls were born. Photos were accompanied by quotes and stories of the families that were happy to have daughters.

The platform of massive open online courses "**Prometheus**" trains over 700,000 students. Online courses have helped thousands of people to drastically change their occupation or life. How to inspire people to enrol in courses? You can do this using stories of those who, for example, have mastered programming or successfully prepared for applying to a university.

Another example – animal shelters. They operate, develop, and find new volunteers precisely through stories, photo materials, and calls for help and action.

Most frequently, and most representatively, storytelling is used in business. In this area, storytelling has been used successfully for a long time as a **marketing tool** that allows to increase audience engagement and tell about a product in an unusual way.

The message of an eloquent and emotional story is always remembered easier, and that means it influences more strongly people's behaviour and their qualitative changes. That's the power of a story! The power that for millennia, starting from cave paintings, has been making us empathise with characters of other people's stories, even fictional ones.

Nowadays, storytelling comes in handy in the work of creative specialists working in advertising and PR, screenwriters, directors, artists, media professionals, teachers, public speakers, rhetoricians, public leaders, speech writers, image-makers, etc.

It's storytelling that is **one of the most powerful tools** in the work of CSOs. It helps to reveal the motivation behind an activity, give examples from the lives of real people who got help or were influenced by an organisation, and engage new participants in volunteering projects.

However, a story is not just information about yourself. It also provides opportunities to reach others, and inspire them to help your project.