Demonstrating your impact with digital storytelling

by Lasa

What digital storytelling is, and how to get started with using images, sound and video to demonstrate your organisation's impact

Here's how your organisation can get started with digital storytelling and show the world in under 5 minutes what you do matters.

What is digital story-telling and why is it important?
Digital storytelling combines narrative with digital content, including images, sound, and video, to create a short movie or set of slides, typically with a strong emotional element, and is a powerful and low-cost way for charities in these times of reduced funding to get their message across.

With many charities working hard to stay afloat, you might well feel you do not have time to spare for digital stories. Equally, you might wonder if your senior managers would support you spending time on what might be seen as non-core activity.

However, digital storytelling provides charities with a powerful way of demonstrating impact without the need for big budgets. Increasingly, charities are having to justify what they do, particularly the budget for communications work.

Now, more than ever, comms professionals need to 'show, not tell', what their charities do to give their organisation the best chance of thriving in such challenging circumstances. The most direct way to deliver that is to hear about it from the people we support. If you are not convinced you have the resources to do it, be reassured by the examples of small charities like childsi and the Family Holiday Association . They have made great use of digital storytelling to raise awareness and funds.

How to tell your digital story - key points

- **Your message** – be clear about your message, who it is aimed at and what you want them to do – i.e. donate, sign a petition, spread the word, etc.
- **Narrative** – all good stories need a structured plot for the audience to follow. Your digital story should fit within 3-5 minutes, so use storyboards to figure out who and what you need to tell your story. Are you going to tell the story or are you going to get service users and volunteers to tell it for you?
- **Space** - with a clear message and structured plot in place, write the script, making sure you leave plenty of space for the picture to tell its story.
- **Audio recording** – low quality recordings may sound 'authentic', but can also irritate, so invest in decent recording equipment, to get the best quality audio. It will also make editing easier.
- **Photos** - think of good opening and closing shots and take several shots of each 'thought' in your story. Try to avoid too much posing and get people looking natural, then follow their lead and just shoot, shoot, shoot. Your 'subject' shouldn't be in every shot, so have a good

mix – wide angle, mid-range and close up. Landscape images tend to work better than portrait.

- **Photo copyright**: If you haven't taken the photos, check what permissions and credits are needed, along with copyright clearance. You may also need consent forms if working with children.
- **Music**: Some digital stories use background music to set the mood. Royalty free music is widely available from sources such as iStockphoto and Royalty Free Music.

Examples

Museum of Childhood: "A Snapshot of My Life" In a project led by the photographer Gideon Mendel, pupils from Kingsmead School were given cameras to record what they saw. Their photos and personal stories offer a child's eye view of family life.

Admiral Nurses, Dementia UK: This digital story highlights how Admiral Nurses support family carers and people with dementia, in the community and other settings.

Top 5 apps for digital story-telling and collaboration

- **Video**: When you've put it all together, upload your movie or slides to Youtube and Vimeo, and point your supporters towards the link.
- **Slideshare**: You can also turn your digital story into a more traditional presentation and share it via Slideshare's free online service.
- **Audio**: Use Audacity it's free and will work on Windows, Mac and Linux – to record and edit audio interviews.
- **Picture editing**: There are plenty of free options ranging from web based picture editors like Aviary, Picnik, and Photoshop Express Editor to free software such as Gimp.
- **Video editing**: Software such as iMovie, Photo Story or Movie Maker will do all that is required.

Where to go for help and support

Check us out on Vimeo and Twitter. Our workshop partners SoundDelivery are also an excellent source of hands-on expertise and training, so be sure to check out SoundDelivery on Vimeo as well.

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About the author

Lasa
Lasa provides a range of services to voluntary sector organisations including ICT Health Checks and consulting on the best application of technology in your organisation. See www.lasa.org.uk – www.connectingcare.org.uk and follow us on Twitter @lasaICT