



STRONG PUBLIC NARRATIVE

TOOLKIT

- Good knowledge of the social problem you address
- Understand the environment you are working in
- Clear purpose
- **Strong public narrative**
- Good governance
- Collective leadership
- Organisational structure for effectiveness and agility
- Marketing strategy and communication plan
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A public narrative is a leadership practice of translating values into action. It is based on the fact that values are experienced emotionally. Narrative is the discursive means we use to access values that equip us with the courage to make choices under conditions of uncertainty, to exercise agency.

A story is constructed of a plot, character, and moral. A plot is initiated by a challenge that confronts a character with a choice, which, in turn, yields an outcome. Because we identify empathetically with the character, we experience the emotional content of the moment — the values in play, not simply the ideas. Narratives become sources of learning, not only for the head, but also for the heart.

Public narrative links the three elements of self, us, and now: why I am called, why we are called, and why we are called to act now. This public narrative work is an effort to tell a story that involves the head AND the heart AND moves people to use their hands and feet in action. The key to public narrative is understanding that values inspire action through emotion (Ganz, 2011).

Following Ganz (2011), the process of creating your public narrative is fluid and iterative and can start at any place. Once you develop your story of self, story of us, and story of now, you'll want to go back to the beginning to clarify the links between them.

A **“story of self”** tells why we have been called to serve. The story of self expresses the values or experiences that call each person to take leadership. A **“story of us”** communicates the values and experiences that a community, organisation, group or campaign shares, and what capacity or resources that community of “us”

has to accomplish its goals. Just as with a person, the key is choice points in the life of the community and/or those moments that express the values, experiences, past challenges and resources of the community or “us” that will take action. A **“story of now”** communicates the urgent challenge we are called upon to face now and what action we are being called to take. The story of now articulates the urgent challenge in specific detail. It also includes a description of the path we can take to achieve goals relative to the mission – the unique strategy or set of ideas that will help us to overcome the challenge we face and succeed. The story of now includes an **“ask”** that summons the audience to a specific action they can do to achieve our collective mission.

Finally, the story lays out in detail a vision for the potential outcome we could achieve if our strategy succeeds. Finally, you integrate these three stories, looking for the link between them – the place where they overlap – to help explain why you are called to this work, why we are called to act with you, and why we are called to act now. This means being very selective about the story you tell—for example not trying to tell your whole biography when you tell your story of self.

The art of storytelling is increasingly seen as an important competence for fundraising.

For example, Professor Jennifer McCrea at Harvard University integrates *“crafting a strong public narrative”* in her course on *“exponential fundraising”*. Telling a personal story also creates a personal connection with the audience.

“Many social entrepreneurs are hesitant to talk about themselves and their personal journeys because they feel that promoting the mission shouldn't

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be about them; it should be about the cause. But opening up about ourselves, being vulnerable and telling our story, and importantly, why we became devoted to the cause, creates a personal connection with our audience.” (Kelly-Janus, 2017)

The story of Edwin Blmqvist, Foreninger Nydansker

The idea to start a mentoring programme arose after Edvin Blmqvist had taken immigrants into internship in Haldor Topsoe, where he was personnel manager. He did this in cooperation with the Danish Refugee Council. Some of them were afterwards employed in the company, and others got jobs elsewhere and move on in the way. In collaboration with two other business people - the auditor Niels Ole Ellegaard and Torben Lund - Edvin Blomqvist wanted to help more immigrants into work. Edvin knew people who had sought hundreds of jobs and never gotten anything. Intelligent people from Kabul or Iran, for example, who had to go and clean up or raise their welfare. But he found it was hard to convince the business community. It was a heavy task. Why would companies take a chance with someone who may not be fluent in Danish? There were also many anxiety neurosis in relation to whether the new employee would create problems in the workplace. Therefore, there was need for an association that could guide the employer. The most energy at the beginning went to giving presentations, attending conferences and sending information out. It was important to influence public debate in a positive direction and that companies had relevant knowledge and insight into the experiences of others.

Mentoring-to-work organisations use also the power of storytelling towards their mentors and mentees. On their websites, in their annual reports, in videos when they present their mentoring initiative to an audience, ... Some mentoring initiatives gather also stories of the partners and stakeholders they work with, but this is much less common and explored than engaging mentors and mentees. It could also be relevant to gather stories from the employers where the mentees have found work. This requires keeping in touch with mentees on the longer term. These stories would bring new perspectives on the sustainability of employment towards mentoring can contribute. It would bring also a more systemic perspective on the impact of mentoring to work. It creates also the possibility to enlighten the kind of mindset that is needed on the employers side to develop a trajectory towards sustainable employment and learn us what is necessary to create the social impact we want.



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HOW TO TOOLBOX

CREATING A COMPELLING STORY

Kelly Janus (2017) proposes the following questions you can ask yourself regarding the creation of compelling stories. We adapted the questions a little for mentoring-to-work initiatives.

Story of self

What is the key message your mentoring-to-work initiative wants to convey?

Story of us

What is the story of self that connects you to a cause and creates intimacy with your audience?



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Story of now

What is the story of us that connects the audience to the cause?

What are we called for?

What are we called for?



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CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO CRAFT AND TELL STORIES

What opportunities do you create for your...

... employees to practice their own stories?	... mentors and mentees to create their stories?	... partners and stakeholders to tell stories on behalf of your mentoring initiative?

When mentors, mentees, partners and stakeholders tell stories, do you work with them to help them practice in a way that is respectful and honours their story?



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TIPS FOR AN ELEVATOR PITCH

When meeting politician, funders, stakeholders you often have only a small window of opportunity to present yourself. Crafting an elevator pitch can help you to present who you are and what you are doing. An elevator pitch is restricted to 30 – 60 seconds; the time it takes to ride an elevator. The purpose of an elevator pitch is to describe your mentoring-to-work initiative so compelling that the person you're with wants to hear more, even after the elevator ride is over. Smith (2016) developed 6 elements – 6 C's – to craft your elevator pitch.

Make it compelling

share your passion for the cause. You may have a personal story. Use a story that lights you up when you tell it.

Customize your story: if you know your audience, design something that will connect with their interests. The goal is to create a positive connection based on similar interests. If you do not know your audience, you might want to ask them questions. "What issue are you most passionate about?" and find a way to connect your cause to their passion.

Keep it concise: your pitch should be short, no longer than 60 seconds. Engage people in the conversation. Don't share everything, but focus on one thing.

Be clear: practice your pitch as if you are speaking to your family.

Be credible: use data, results and stories that is memorable and clearly supports your case.

Close with an invitation: share what you need in an interested way that doesn't feel transactional.

Write down your elevator pitch:



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Stepping stones for wiser action

What are the key learnings?

What are the actions to take?

Who is responsible?

What is the deadline for the first step?

Who will notice the difference?

How will we notice and evaluate the difference?

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