



Improve Your Donor Communication in 5 Steps

[The Story Framework](#)



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The Story Framework

As a ministry, you share about your work in the form of newsletters, emails, events, and even social media. To keep up with all these forms of communication, you need an effective strategy to tie them all together.

One of your most practical tools to simplify communication is to tell stories. By sharing about your history and people served, it gives a common theme to build communication around, and it adds meaning and emotion to what you communicate. When you share stories with your donors, they see the values that you have implemented, the lives you have transformed, and the eternal difference you have made.

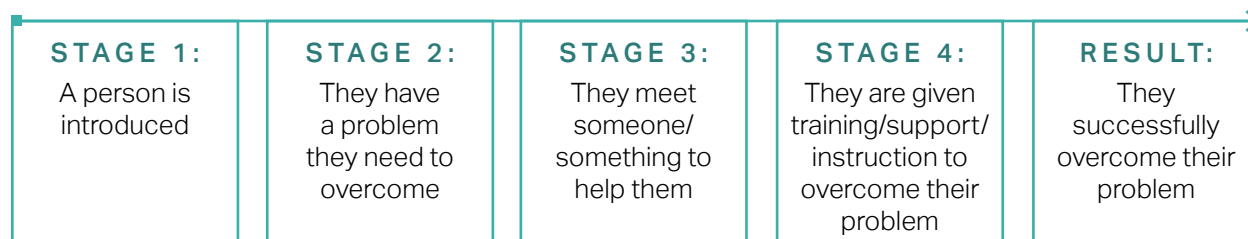
The ultimate purpose of storytelling is to give God glory. The lives you have touched by the grace of God, the passion He has granted you, it's all part of this larger Kingdom story God is orchestrating. Share with boldness!

[Follow this simple framework to craft purposeful stories.](#)

Part 1: How a Story Works:

Think about your favorite book or movie. What were the general sequence of events? Can you think of another story you liked with a similar plot? The best stories are often told through a very similar set of stages. Your ministry can leverage this same pattern in your communications. The diagram below illustrates the general framework of stages that every story uses:

The Story Framework





Part 2: Using the Story Framework to Craft Your Story:

Using the framework from above, we have created a 5-step process to craft your own story to show donors why you exist and why their help is essential to fulfilling your mission.

1. Cast Your Character

Every story begins by introducing a main character. For a story meant to improve donor support, the character is usually an individual who your ministry has helped or is currently helping. To identify a character, use these questions to help think through potential ideas:

- Who is someone that you have seen grow since coming to your ministry?
- How did a donor's support allow you to make a difference for specific individuals?
- What are some of your favorite moments at the ministry? What were key victories you or someone you serve experienced?

Example: "John, who is 44, suffered from chronic hunger and lived alone on the streets of the inner city."

2. Tell Their Story

The next step is to add detail about your character and what problem they were facing. Donors want to know that your ministry is impacting your community and that they can be a part of changing someone's life. When you tell a story, it puts a face and emotion to the projects you've asked donors to support, and it honors what God has done. Use the following questions to guide you through the stages of your character's story:

- Who are they? What did their life look like before finding your ministry?
- What key problem(s) were they facing?
- How were you able to help them?
- Where are they now?

Example: "John is a military veteran and former retail clerk who was laid off from his job. He had distanced himself from family and friends and lived on the streets of downtown Chicago. He was experiencing chronic hunger and was struggling to survive. This all changed one Saturday morning when John was found outside of ABC Ministry's back door. He was invited in, given food to eat, and a place to stay, but he quickly became a close friend. We saw his heart soften towards Jesus, and he flourished as he took part in programs, including weekly bible study and self-sustainability classes. Just two months after being brought into the ministry, John has been able to get a new job and begin working towards living independently again."



3. Explain Your Purpose:

Here is where you explain who you are as a ministry and why you matter in the context of the main character's story. Explain what brought you to serve where you are and why you help in the way that you do. Donors want to know that you are educated, qualified, and prepared.

- Describe your ministry: What is your purpose? What is your mission and vision?
- Why is the main character's problem important to you? Why did you help?
- Why are you as a ministry an essential part of the main character's story of triumph?
- How and when did you step in to the character's story?

Example: "ABC Ministry is a Christian organization that has operated in the Chicago area for 25 years and is on mission to combat hunger and homelessness within the community. Our goal is to offer spiritual, relational, and professional support to get our neighbors in need, like John, back on their feet and able to support themselves."

4. Make Your Point:

Explain how your ministry makes an impact in your mission field through donor support. Make a case for why donors should care about your cause and why they should partner with you to make a difference. Walk them through the story to show how they are essential to helping the main character overcome their problem.

- What are you able to do to help solve the key problem the main character is facing?
- What sets your ministry apart from other organizations combatting this problem?
- Why should donors care about the main character in this story and the larger cause that they represent?
- When looking at how the story unfolded, why is the donor's support essential for the ministry and ultimately the main character being able to overcome their problem?

Example: "Through donor and volunteer support, ABC Ministries is able to operate a foodbank and a recovery center where they offer free food, shelter, and professional services to guide people like John towards an independent lifestyle and closer to Jesus. Without the generosity of their supporters, hundreds of homeless and hungry citizens of Chicago will go without food, shelter, and hope."

5. Determine Your Ask (Your Call to Action):

Once you have explained the problem and how your organization can help, you need to ask donors to take the next step. Explain how they can get involved, describe the impact they can have, and call them to action. Explain why it is essential for them to act now rather than later. To be effective, you need to keep your 'ask' simple, clear, and concise. Keep in mind that the level of detail needed may vary depending upon the form of communication and the ask.



No matter what your ask is, whether fundraising or more general such as asking donors to sign up for a newsletter, your stories play an important role in this. Use the following questions to think of impact examples you can share that were made possible by donors and then conclude with the desired action you want the audience to take:

- How have donors made an impact in the past?
- How can donors partner with you on your mission? Where can they go to get involved?
- In order to effectively fulfill your mission, what do you need your donors to do?

Example: "ABC Ministry cannot help people like John without the donations from our passionate supporters. John came to us in need and now, thanks to supporters like you, he is living an independent, productive life with a reason to be hopeful for what tomorrow holds! Will you consider signing up for monthly donations today to help restore people like John in our community?"

Part 3: How to Use Your Story in Your Communications:

To paint a larger story of how your organization serves your community, you can implement these individual stories in varied forms of communication. Utilize these best practices for common modes of communicating with ministry supporters:

Proposals: The best way to implement storytelling into a proposal is by introducing it at the beginning so the conversation of generosity is based around the individuals who will be impacted and not simply on the donation itself.

- Use the first 4 steps of the story framework above to start the conversation by telling a character's transformative story, introducing your ministry's purpose, and emphasizing the donor's importance.
- Through any financial asks, be sure to emphasize how this helps more people like the main character.

Email: Email audiences want messaging to be simple and to the point, so you should consider adjusting the way you tell your story.

- Write a compelling subject headline to draw the interest of the audience.
- Present a brief version of your story by highlighting the key points.
- Offer website links to the full story and sources for more information.
- Include pictures that illustrate the impact your ministry has.

Events: Any of your ministry's fundraising or celebratory events are a great place to share your story. You have captive audience of individuals focused on your message.

- Choose a story that makes sense for the occasion and audience type.
- Once you have chosen the story you want to share, tell it in full detail and emphasize the points that reflect the event's purpose as well as your ministry's values.
- Provide brochures or other materials to enable the audience to engage right away.



Website: Adding stories to your website adds content that inspires direct action, it demonstrates your ministry's values and mission, and it will likely drive visitors to the rest of your site for more information.

- Consider adding an "Our Story" page to house all of your different stories.
- Draw attention to key points or quotes that reflect your mission and what the audience will care about. Use images, icons, varied text styles, etc.
- Include photos and/or video testimonials.
- Link social media channels to this page to drive traffic to your website.

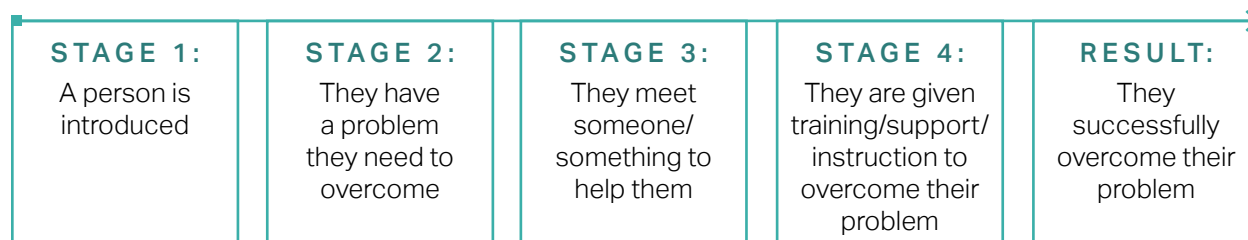
Social Media: Every social media platform requires a unique content strategy, but all major platforms can follow these points:

- Use key points/quotes from the story as hooks to drive users to engage with your story content.
- Include photos or videos of the ministry/main character to increase engagement.
- Include a link to your "Our Story" page to drive traffic to your website.

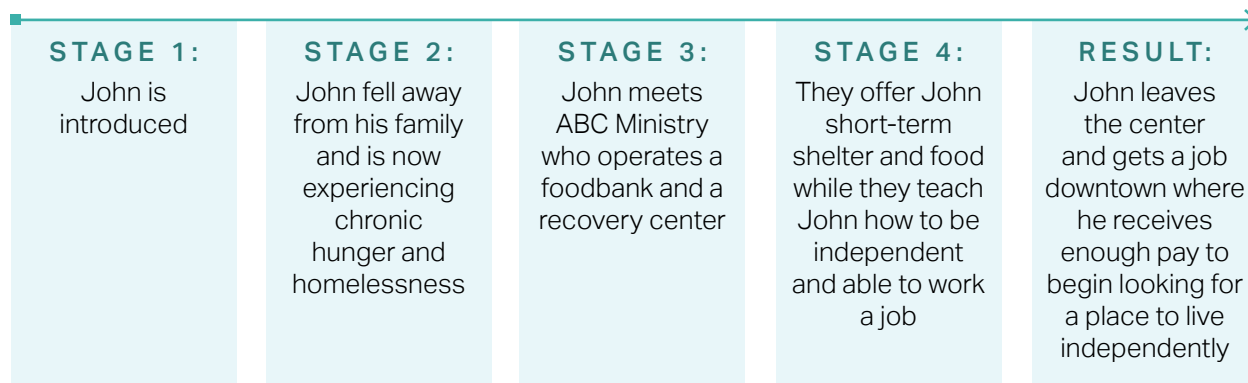
Your Next Steps

A quick recap of the tools you can use:

The Story Framework



Example of a Story Framework





Use these 5 steps to shape your storytelling:

1. Cast your character
2. Tell their story
3. Explain your purpose
4. Make your point
5. Determine your ask

In your journey to becoming a purposeful storyteller, remember to stay connected to the creative vision of God the Author. Sometimes you need a refreshed perspective to see what He is doing. Sharing stories can be a good reminder of how He has been faithful and give you hope for what's ahead.

To lean into that hope, take time to celebrate. While you may primarily be sharing stories to call volunteers or other supporters to action, it is good just to pause and rejoice together over those stories. We all want to feel like we are doing something that matters, and it is wonderful to share those victories as a community.

Whether you are ministry veteran or just starting out, your story matters. May you speak boldly and proclaim God's goodness!

About Us

At The Signatry, our ministry friends are our heroes in this Kingdom work. The stories you share are what motivates us every day to serve donors and help fuel what you do. Through free online resources, solutions to simplify your fundraising, and consulting services, we stand ready to equip you as you do battle for the Kingdom. We have many years of experience as a nonprofit but also serving nonprofits, so we provide a unique expertise and perspective as someone who knows the challenges you face.

Have more questions? Need some help getting started?

Connect with us at thesignatry.com
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