

# STORYTELLING

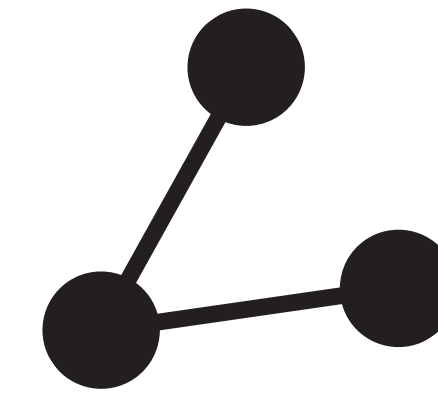
Any organization (small or large) can fall victim to ineffective storytelling while managing the consistent job of fundraising and program execution. Below, we outline ways you can capture your supporters' attention, share more information and get them more involved with your inspiring work:



## Tell Your Story with Intention

Be intentional about which stories you choose to tell and how you will tell them. What is the goal of the story? What is it attempting to convey? Think carefully about what you are seeking to accomplish. Is your story intended to persuade, motivate or influence a particular action? Common storytelling goals:

- Fundraising
- Growing your membership base
- Education
- Improving conversion or traffic to your website or social media
- Raising awareness
- Thank you to donors, members and/or supporters



## Connect the Dots

Make connections to your work for your reader so they are connected to your cause. Highlight how donor support impacts the lives of your population, or how you define your theory of change.



## Empathy is the Key

The best stories are those that make us feel something. They give the reader empathy and research has shown that emotions evoked actually triggers a chemical reaction in the brain that promotes prosocial behavior<sup>2</sup>. For nonprofits and those engaged in social change work, the work itself is emotional and inspiring, so stories must hit the readers in an emotional way. Your story should include the following components in order to pull at readers' heartstrings:

- **Vocabulary**

Don't skip the emotional tense of your story. If you're telling someone's story, ask your subject to talk about *how* they felt alongside the facts.

- **Engage the Senses**

Connecting details for all five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch) helps the readers fully immerse themselves into the story as if they are also experiencing it as well.

- **Who's the Protagonist?**

Readers will more easily connect with a single person rather than a group. Be sure to focus on your subject's experience. This allows your reader an opportunity to root someone on and more closely identify with them.

- **The "Hero's Journey"**

Arrange your story in a creative and engaging way. Much like the "[Hero's Journey](#)" developed in some of Hollywood's most popular films, this structure provides an interesting roadmap to include your subject's origin story, the adversity they faced and the road to reclaiming their power.



## Diversify your Storytelling Platforms

Now more than ever, your online and digital presence is where supporters, donors and interested parties can find you and learn more about your work. Aside from your website, a strong social media presence is the easiest way to tell compelling stories at little to no cost. Not only are you able to share compelling stories, but the right platform allows your organization to set your stake as experts in your area of advocacy, promote your program through posts and digital ads and share your visual brand identity. Remember, only pick social media sites that are the perfect fit for your organization. The goal here is to maintain engagement and content there, so if you have low capacity and can only maintain 1-2 social media platforms, choose a platform where your constituents engage most.

### Social Media Platforms to Consider:



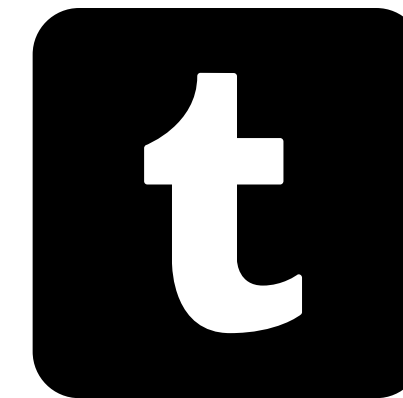
Facebook



Instagram



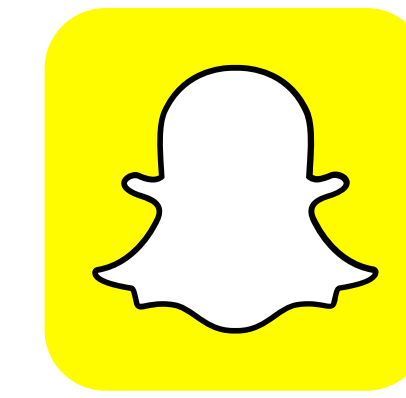
Twitter



Tumblr



TikTok



Snapchat



LinkedIn



Youtube



Nextdoor



What's App



Messenger



Pinterest



Twitch

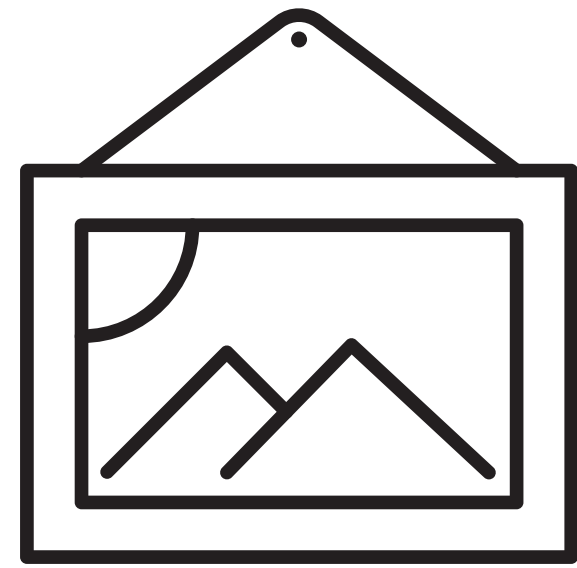
Learn more about the most popular social media platforms by clicking [here](#).



### Plan for the Future

The best part about having an online and digital presence is the ability to plan future content for release. This tactic is helpful for small teams who wear multiple hats (although this tactic is helpful for large teams with communications departments as well).

Calendar out social media posts, visual content, themes and key dates that are important to your organization and to your target population. If you have the capacity to set your calendar a month out, that's great! If not, always attempt to calendar your content one week in advance.



### Visuals, Visuals, Visuals!

Photos, videos, infographics and images boost your story's impact and has great benefits:

- **Make it Memorable** – Visual aids help readers remember the accompanying content. When you hear information, you may remember about 10% of what you learned three days later. Add an image and that percentage jumps to 65%<sup>3</sup>.
- **Visual Aids Help Build Your Brand** – Visual elements unique to your brand like logos, colors and typography establish your organization's brand making your content more instantly recognizable so you can stand out. Visual elements also validates your organization as a trusted, professional source for your focus area(s). If you have not developed a brand story, it is highly recommended you invest in developing that for your organization. You heard it here, first.



### Utilize the Media...Often

[Medium](#), a free online publishing platform, allows you to read and publish original content for a variety of different interests and industries. Unique content and articles published often helps others learn more about your work and possibly develop loyalty to reading your story. Find ways to stay in the news by sharing good content, whether it is local news or national. Pitching stories, writing op-eds, articles, letters to the editor, hosting media roundtables and sharing press releases are all great ways to generate new and evolving content.



### Enlist Help

Don't have the budget or capacity to develop your storytelling and messaging? That's ok! There are free to low cost options available to social justice leaders, groups and organizations. Consider offering a paid internship or fellowship program that gives a young person or student an opportunity to put what they learn in school into practice with your organization. Additionally, Greg Kaufmann who leads SEAP's media/narrative change work is a trusted resource who can help support your efforts.

Greg may be reached via the information below:

# SOUTHSTRONG RESOURCE PARTNER:

## GREG KAUFMANN

SEAP MEDIA/NARRATIVE CHANGE  
WORK: GREGOKAUF@MAC.COM

**If you are interested in enlisting Greg to help support your work, consider the following questions:**

Are there ways SouthStrong can help you with your media work from a capacity perspective? For example, providing editorial support for articles, drafting tweets and other social media, providing talking points or messaging on key issues, or any other areas of need?

When you think of the media's coverage of the issues you care about in the South, what are they missing? What needs to be covered a lot more and/or a lot better?

