Non-Exploitative Storytelling

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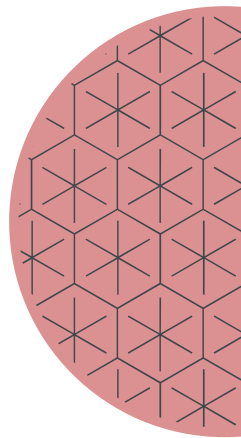
Outside the Frame

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As we adopt Community Centric Fundraising practices, many organizations are choosing to shift away from individual and client storytelling, into organizational storytelling...
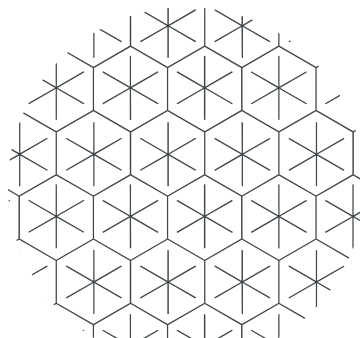
Traditional fundraising practices can cause harm

- Editing someone's story for grammar without checking with them first erases their original voice

- Improper media training can lead a story owner to reveal more than they're comfortable with

- The way we position stories can reinforce stereotypes or power dynamics

- In some cases, the story we share could put someone's safety at risk

Ethical Storytelling

- Storytelling mistakes and lessons learned

- Case Study: Personal experience of exploitation as a program participant

- Non-exploitative approaches to storytelling

- Storytelling equity lens

- Discussion

Affordable Housing, 2017, 1:00

Link

Made during the 2017 Affordable Housing Bond campaign.

Totally grassroots effort.

The Circus Project

What did you notice?

Becoming Raven, 2020, 5:43

Link

Reached out to offer help to Street Roots during COVID.

"How about a movie?"

Queer Affinity Safe Rest Village, 2021

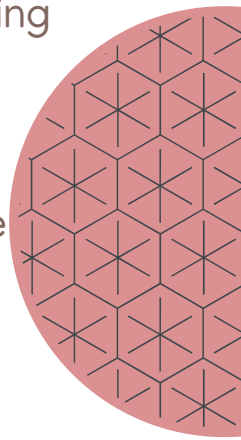Project fell apart because of Hubris. Mine.

Too fast

Agreed to 100% consensus
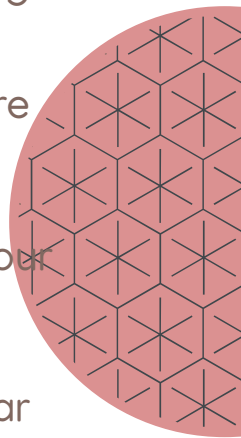
Worked on it during a family vacation

Storytelling Equity Lens

- Who are we speaking for? Can they speak for themselves?

- If we are featuring an individual's story, have we included them in the drafting process? Did they approve the final draft? Did they get to use their own words?

- If you are featuring an individual's story, do you have a backup plan in case they revoke consent?

Storytelling Equity Lens

- Are we using strength-based language? Are we using person-first language? When we are talking about a client or the community we serve, are we using active asset-based language?

- When we are talking about a client or the community we work alongside, are we using active asset-based language?

- Who is represented in your images? Who is active and who is passive in your images (i.e. who is serving/who is receiving, who is smiling/who is not?)

- Is the imagery you're using intended to elicit feelings of sadness or joy, fear or confidence? Does it challenge stereotypes?

Housing Multnomah Now, 2023, 1:00

Link

Focused on strengths

Invited him to work on a youth project

Music From the Inside, 2022/23, 5:50

Final film

Previous version.

Riders on the Storm, 2021, 9:11

https://vimeo.com/otfpdx/riders

- Pre Existing relationship
- Contract in place
- Nimble
- Trust
- Endorsement

More films at outsidetheframe.org

Collection of our housing policy related films here.
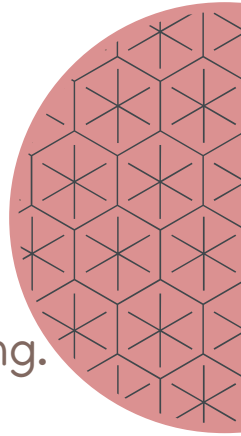
7 way to tell stories ethically

Recruiting stories

1. Put out an open call for folx to offer their stories

Asking someone directly can make it hard to say no, power imbalance

2. Meet this individual in person (or via Zoom)

Create a real, authentic relationship with the person you are highlighting. Watch their body language and facial expressions for discomfort or excitement. Hold real, safe space for them to share.
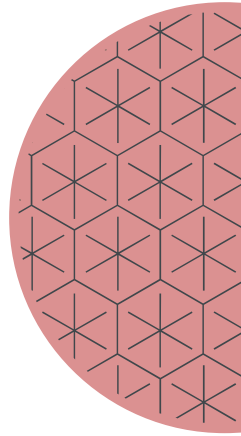
Set the tone

3. Introduce yourself and set expectations

Make it very clear why you're asking for this story. How will it be used? Who will see it? What is the goal? Get very specific.

4. Ask permission

Say these things: "May I write the first draft and send it back to you?" "May I record this interview?" "I noticed you shared something rather personal, may I include that in the letter?" "May I use your name? Your pronouns? A picture? Other identifiable information?"
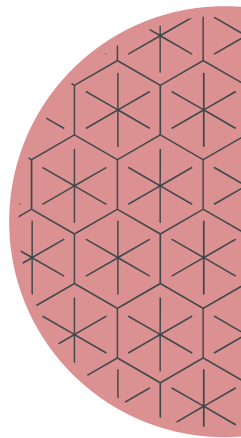
Practice true collaboration

5. Involve them in the drafting and editing process

Send them each draft to edit and approve. Notify them of any major changes. They should have final approval of everything.
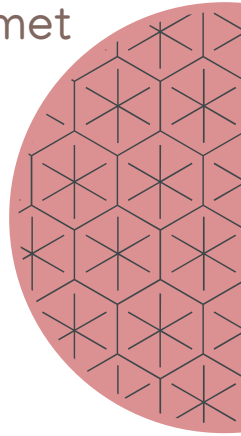
6. Have a back-up plan

Remember that someone can revoke consent any time they want to. Create a space where it is OK for someone to change their mind and have a back-up story ready to go, just in case.

Keep story owners safe

7. Manage donor interactions

Give the power to the owner of the story. Ensure that their needs are met first, rather than centering the donors needs. Field questions and inappropriate topics, create space to check in and make sure that everything still feels comfortable for your story owner.
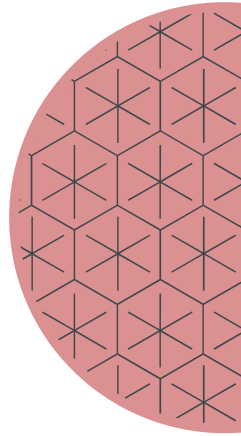
Group activity

In groups of three, share how you could implement one of these practices in your storytelling

7 Practices

1. Put out an open call for folx to offer their stories

2. Meet personally

3. Introduce yourself and set expectations

4. Ask permission

5. Involve them in the drafting and editing process

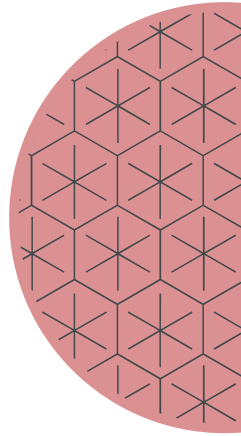6. Have a back-up plan

7. Manage donor interactions

Equity lens download

To get in touch

Thank you!