

3-DEVELOP AND UPDATE YOUR STORY

Equipping Notes

Fundraising Resources

SYNOPSIS

Take the time to explore what God has done and is doing through you to craft a powerful story that will connect people between you and the need.

METHODS

Consider the following methods as you craft your story. You will most likely need a version of your story to fit in all the below.

- **Letter.** When donors receive letters in the mail, they are twice as likely to respond and donate in multiples of what they would if they received an email.
- **Elevator Pitch.** You see an old friend or colleague. They ask you what's been going on. You now have 1-minute to tell them about this.
- **Social Media Campaign.** Many of our fundraisers plan months-long social media series laying out a crazy adventure they want people to know about and be a part of. How would story come out as part of a series like that?
- **Others.** You text a friend to meet up for coffee. Another friend texts you looking to donate or sponsor, how would close the deal pitching more than they originally came for?

EXPLORE YOURSELF

Conduct your own personal story-telling session. Ask yourself the following questions and explore your story more deeply. Write down or type what comes to mind. You will need these notes later.

- **Name 1 to 3 moments of life change or significant transformation that occurred in your life.** Know that the more real and authentic you go with this, the more that prospective donors/sponsors will connect. Describe the most significant elements of those seasons/processes. If you are a seasoned fundraiser, think of more recent events or updates to that ongoing process going on in your life.
- **Was there a leader, mentor, pastor, or coach involved during that process? What affect did they have on you during the process?**
- **Did a spiritual turning point occur?** Describe how the physical and spiritual worked together. What was the impact?
- **Did you overcome a significant challenge during this process? What was that like? Why was it so difficult? How was it unique for you personally?**
- **Did you ever feel discounted or marginalized during this process? In a way that you would feel connected to kids in communities where World Vision works?**
- **Have you ever seen poverty in a real, personal way? Have you ever felt like your future was hopeless? Basic needs may not be met?**

GET STARTED

Begin organizing your thoughts into a formulated story to share.

- **Choose one of the stories from the previous section.**
- **Write down how you experienced this transformation.** Are you now on the other side of it or still going through it?
- **What specifically changed in your life as a result?** What details stick out now.
- **Take the time to get it all out.** Don't worry about writing a final version just yet. Get everything out in such a way that you pick and choose what goes into the final version.

HOW TO CONNECT THEMES

Considering your prospective donors or sponsors, they may only remember two or three things from your story that stick out to them. It is important to highlight themes that stick out throughout your story that can continue to stick out as you share about why World Vision's work matters to you.

- **Any common themes or threads?** Write those down.
- **Why did you join up with a World Vision program?** How do these themes connect to why you run?
- **How are your heart strings plucked?** What hurts the worst and what feels the best?
- **How has World Vision changed you?** What part does working on behalf of World Vision play in your story of transformation?
- **How are you moved to action?** What drives and compels you?

THE STORY ARC

It's time to organize your story in a way that will inform but draw in your prospective donor or sponsor into what matters most, you and your story.

- **Exposition.** Lay out the setting and background to your story. Be brief.
- **Rising Action.** Build up the energy and tension as you share your story, so that the audience will want to know what the conclusion will be. Draw into your emotions. This is the meat of the story of transformation in your life.
- **Climax.** This is the turning point of the plot, where everything the reader was thinking was going to happen, gets flipped. Don't get stuck making this too fancy. It can be one line if necessary to make it clear to the listener or reader that things could go any way.
- **Falling Action.** As the back end of the climax, these are the immediate moments where everything seems to be spiraling out of control.
- **Denouement.** Where all the unravelling gets solved, ultimately through God's work in your life or is still getting solved through your participation with World Vision.
- **Invitation.** This is where you close and is also where most fundraisers make their greatest mistakes. See the next section for specific instructions.

CLOSING WITH THE INVITATION

The biggest mistakes people make are not being direct and specific with their asks. They are worried that by asking too intently, they will not appear humble or thankful or will look too “salesy”. The problem is that your donors and supporters don’t know exactly what you want them to do unless you ask them to do it, AND most importantly, they WANT TO DONATE OR SPONSOR. By this point in the story, they are saying “skip to the end”, tell me what to do, “waiter or waitress, please give me the bill; I’m ready to pay”

- **Close with the ask.** Your story must always end with the ask. Leaving it open ended may mean you never get another chance.
- **Ask must be specific whether tied to goal or amount.** If you ask for a cash donation, be specific with your goal or an amount you ask the donor to donate, especially if they have given before and want to know how they can help you hit your goal.
- **What is their specific role here?** Remember, that you want them to be a donor or sponsor and they want to be a donor or sponsor. Everyone wants the relationship to go further.
- **“Will you donate?” or “Would you like to bring hope to a child?”** It may sound crazy, but the ask can be as simple as that.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Now it’s time to finish writing things down and improving it with feedback and rehearsal.

- **Finish writing your story.** The easiest place to start is writing your story for a letter or email. From there, you can pare it down for other versions.
- **Read it out loud as if speaking it to someone.** Pretend you are a friend reading it for the first time.
- **Is it one page or less and fit in a letter?** The answer should be, yes. If your story is longer than one page on one side, then there is a good chance people will not read it. If they do not read the end, then they will not read the ask or they will skim through it.
- **Invite friends or family to read it.** Get feedback. Now is not the time to be bashful if you want your story to be as awesome as it can be.
- **How long does it take?** If you read the story through, time yourself. This will help you know how to pare down to a shorter version.
- **Paring it down.** If you had 1 minute or less which points are essential? How would you share it in 15 seconds?