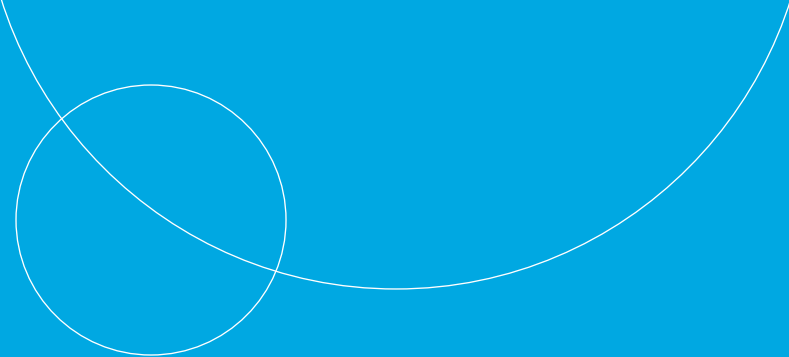




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Tell Me A Story: The Indispensability of Storytelling in Effective Fundraising

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Telling Stories That Matter

Storytelling is important to every culture to preserve and pass on knowledge



The stories we tell the interview committee get us the offer.



The stories we tell the staffs we work with and supervise build *ethos*.



The stories we tell our colleagues engender support and collaboration.



The stories we tell donors and alumni build enthusiasm and affinity.



The stories we tell prospective students elicit excitement and interest.



Stories that lack a sense of the audience, a purpose, a strategy, and an exigence waste opportunities to build consensus and engage our targets.

The Arrival Story

what has brought us together at this moment?

Arrivals should be:

- **Participatory**
- **Embodied**
- **Sensory**

(Stevenson, et al., 2015)



- Effective for building *ethos* (why should you be trusted?)
- Effective for generating *pathos* (shared experiences can build trust and establish commonality)
- Works with alumni, donors, and prospective students

Presenter/Storyteller

an arrival story

Three generations of public regional university graduates.

25 years of higher education experience

Professor, Executive, Scholar/Ethnographer

Over 120 years of service to public education

“Education is the family business”



Groundings

what must we know about our audience to understand their motivation?

- To know our audience we must meet them where they are and *listen* (practice “thick description”)
- To motivate our audience we must speak their language
- To gain trust, build coalition, and generate alliances, we must *show* (and not merely *tell*)

(Rodney, 1969; and Geertz, 1973)



The Anthropology of a Major Gift Proposal

moving a prospect into major gift territory

I was informed that a donor and Foundation Board member was interested in **making a large gift**. He had shared this information on **several occasions** with major gift officers and with multiple chancellors **over the period of a decade**.

We **brought the donor to campus** to meet with major gift officers and Deans in each college, and **toured spaces** where major projects, if funded, would be featured.

We **observed** their reactions to questions and **documented** the stories they told in each location after hearing proposals.

90X

The deep emotion the donors displayed during one visit made the choice obvious. The result? The largest gift they've ever made to renovate a campus facility that means the world to them.

...and a gift ninety times larger than they'd ever made to the university.

The Rhetorical Situation

What must we know in order to create persuasion?

Persuasion requires knowledge of:

- The audience – both physical and invoked;
- A purpose – what is this specific message's objective?
- A strategy – what is the most effective means by which we can create persuasion in this given situation?
- ***Kairos*** – an opportune moment to create new solutions.

(Bitzer, 1968)



Analysis of Effective Fundraising Rhetoric

the right proposal, the best prospect, the perfect moment

Over the course of a decade a university built a robust network of student emergency resources available to assist students facing unexpected financial hardships.

The university received a substantial grant from a foundation to take the program to the next level, but it only had a two-year window.

University advancement would need to increase its fundraising two- to four-fold to meet students' needs.

200%

Targeting young alumni (millennial/Gen Z) donors and local businesses/non-profits interested in their donations having an immediate impact with proposals to support students facing food/housing insecurity in need of grants >\$500 as COVID lockdowns made these needs crystal clear jumpstarted emergency needs fundraising.

What Do We Do All Day and How Do We Feel About What We Do?

If we agree that words mean things, and the ways we talk about what we do matters to our families, co-workers, and colleagues ...

WHAT DO WE DO?

- Can you answer in six words?
- What's your elevator pitch?
- What is your mission statement?



Story and Counterstory

what stories do we tell to correct the record?

Counterstory/counternarrative attempts to, by focusing on historically marginalized voices and exposing stereotypes and injustices, offer additional truths through a narration of the researchers' own experiences.

“Autoethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, meditation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, vernacular expression” are literary genres in which counterstory is employed (*Pratt, 1991*).



Fundraising at Public Regional Universities

Under the Radar, Below the Fold

William J. Broussard



Questions and Dialogue



“The mystery of storytelling is the miracle of a single living seed which can populate whole acres of human minds.”

Ben Ori, Nigerian novelist & Booker Prize winner

...holler at me

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