



Tell me a story

Using storytelling to inform, inspire, and advance public health

Karen Grasmon | Cory Couillard
Rural communications specialists

Learning objectives

Learning objectives:

1. Understand the value and benefit of storytelling as an effective communication technique to help achieve agency goals.
2. Identify how to get story ideas and secure partners to support creating, distributing, and amplifying stories.
3. Demonstrate storytelling skills, including developing a clear message, empathizing with others, and articulating a call to action.



Whose job is storytelling?

In your organization, who is responsible for communications?

We have a
communications staff
position(s).

We share the
communications
work among multiple
team members.

I do communications,
along with my other
work.

Why storytelling matters

Stories are how humans connect. Data alone won't change minds. Emotions are needed, too!

- Personal stories and gossip make up about 65% of our conversations (Scientific American, University of Liverpool)
- People are 22 times more likely to remember a story-based statistic (Stanford)
- Only 5% of people remember statistics, but 63% remember stories (Dan and Chip Heath)
- A 5–10% retention rate for information jumps to 65–70% when paired with a story (Stanford, Forbes)

Check out more stats on [21 Storytelling Statistics That Get The Message Across 2023 - Soocial](#)



Planning ahead to save time

- Think about critical questions to develop your stories:
 - What do you get asked about most often?
 - What one thing would make the biggest difference for your community's health?
- Define your audience
- Create an editorial calendar – plan for stories that will help promote your goals, events, etc.



Sharing your community's voices

Tips from MDH Cultural Communications team

- Actively engage all communities.
- Consider a set framework for questions that center the community-first, rather than MDH, and tailor the questions for each person/organization interviewed.
- Interview a variety of people to get a diverse lens, not just one perspective.
- A best practice is to compensate the people/organizations interviewed for their time, lived experience, and work of being part of our storytelling (unless it's part of their job).
- Provide time for community review.



Making a clear call to action and measuring results

- What do you want people to do or learn through your story?
- Use your call to action for determining how you will measure success of your story.
 - Form sign ups, contacts collected, website traffic
 - Social media engagement, shares
 - Visits/consults/requests received
 - Media/partner promotion tracking
 - Over time, look for patterns in your storytelling
- Revise your stories based on results.



Practicing your delivery

- **Block off time:** If writing a story, block out 15 minutes and write down everything you can. Leave it and come back to it for another 15 minutes to tighten up, send for approvals.
- **Listen to stories:** Improve your storytelling skills by listening to more stories! Read different types of books or articles than you usually are drawn to. Watch different movies and shows. Listen to podcasts.
- **Repeat:** Tell a story over and over so you're confident in public speaking.
- **Use your head and heart:** Public health professionals are critical thinkers. Lean into empathy and emotion about your topic, too.



Practicing your delivery

- Find ways to add storytelling into your regular tasks, but in new ways.
- TIP: Use the CAR technique.

Context/challenge you faced

Action you took

Result it achieved

- Try it in different settings, from your board updates to your dinner table



Promoting your story

Find partners to amplify your storytelling!

- Partner with your local high school or college literature teacher to have students research and write stories about your programs or work
- Host a story hour at your local public library or offer ideas for a local book club read
- Talk to your local newspaper about running a regular column
- Do an interview on your local radio station's public affairs program
- Print coloring/activity sheets for kids and pass out to local businesses that have waiting rooms
- “Sponsor” a local high school sports night or activity with a theme or pre-event



Radon and Lung Cancer video story

- How are community voices represented?
- What is the call to action?
- How would you amplify this story?
- What stories could you share like this?



[Radon and Lung Cancer - YouTube](#)

Thank You!

Karen Grasmon

karen.grasmon@state.mn.us

651-201-4703

Cory Couillard

cory.couillard@state.mn.us

651-201-4009