

Video: A sensitive storytelling approach.

A common thread amongst fundraising organisations is the need to share stories. To emote, connect and inform, in order to drive awareness and raise funds. A powerful and effective way to do this is to call upon the people impacted by the organisation to share their stories. However, when someone generously offers to share their story we enter into a territory that requires genuine care and sensitivity. And this is something that we shouldn't take lightly.

“Alongside the privilege of telling people’s stories, we assume a great responsibility.”

Winnie Byanyima
Executive Director, UNAIDS

At Laundry Lane, our ‘Video with Heart’ philosophy is underpinned by a sensitive storytelling approach which puts the storyteller at the centre of the production process. Storytellers are often vulnerable and need to be treated with empathy and respect. There are so many circumstances that can make their stories challenging to tell including:



When it comes down to it, your storytellers are critical voices for your brand, so they need to be nurtured. And we know that when people feel comfortable and well informed they tell their best stories.

“Sensitive storytelling is about listening to people, understanding their emotional boundaries, and validating their lived experience. It’s about giving people the room to relax in front of the camera, and to find their voice. And that takes time and patience.”

Will Cordukes
Director, Laundry Lane



Here are some key elements of a sensitive storytelling approach:

Consent: Make sure your ‘storyteller’ fully understands how the shoot will be conducted and where the video / photos will be used. Talk them through the consent form both over the phone and in person. It’s good practice for the client to share the video with them for final approval before circulating.

Consultation: Whilst you might have a clear vision about what you want to achieve with the story we suggest talking with your storyteller prior to filming and asking them how they would like to share their story. By doing this you will enrich your storytelling process. All people are more than their circumstances depict and a story that really captures the whole person will resonate more strongly with your supporters.

Empower: Create a comfortable space and opportunity for people to share their stories. Sometimes a standard interview format may not be the best approach. In the example below we wanted to capture what “having a place to call home” meant to Inala residents (people living with a disability) - but interview formats were too confronting for them. So we found a way to put Simon in the driver's seat!

<https://vimeo.com/741737877>

Listen, don’t lead: We go into an interview wanting to hear certain things but it’s so important to take a step back, listen and validate. The interview should be well prepared so that they can maintain eye contact and not constantly reference their notes and questions. Particularly because interviewees in these industries can be in a vulnerable place or discussing an emotional topic.

Build trust: This means allowing plenty of time before and after the filming process. From our experience it is very therapeutic for people to share their story with someone who is fully listening and validating them. Sharing personal stories can be emotional and triggering so a calm, relaxed and unrushed approach is essential. Once the cameras have stopped rolling, our storytellers often like to talk further and reflect on their experiences. Ensuring the storyteller

feels valued comes from being present and showing gratitude for giving up their time and sharing their story. A rushed crew can leave someone feeling exposed and vulnerable.

Don't stereotype: Show the whole person and don't define them by their situation. Your storytellers shouldn't be portrayed as victims - they should be portrayed in a dignified manner. This is often challenging but can be overcome by really involving your storyteller in the process. You will be surprised by how much people have to offer that will ultimately bring greater depth to your campaign. By responding to the way Uncle Jack wanted to share his story, this video became one of humour and a beautiful relationship between two friends as opposed to a story of victim and carer.

<https://vimeo.com/731627923>

A sensitive approach begins as soon as you contact the person who has offered to share their story. This means acting with empathy and respect throughout the entire production process from creative, planning and production through to editing and delivery.

If you would like to learn more about how to apply a sensitive storytelling approach to video and animation please contact:

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