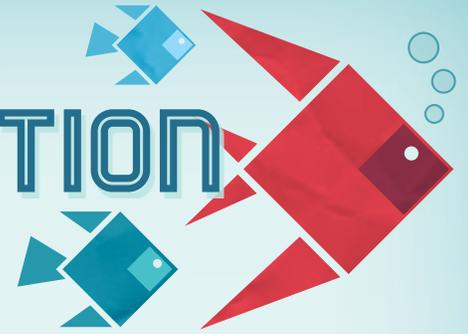


DRIVING PARTICIPATION

with Beth Brodovsky



SESSION 033

TURNING AN INTERVIEW INTO A COMPELLING STORY

WITH MATT HUGG

Beth: Hello and welcome to Driving Participation. This is Beth Brodovsky and I am here today with Matt Hugg. Matt is a Marketing and Fundraising writer for nonprofits and I wanted to bring Matt on today because we've done some speaking about storytelling, but Matt is a great person to talk to about how it's actually done. We haven't really gotten into that yet, the actual process of taking something and turning it into a real compelling story. Matt and I have known each other for many years and so I thought he was the perfect person to come on and share that with you so welcome Matt.

Matt: Thank you and I'm glad to be here.

Beth: Matt, let's start a little bit with how you ended up meandering into this life. How did you come to being a writer for nonprofits?

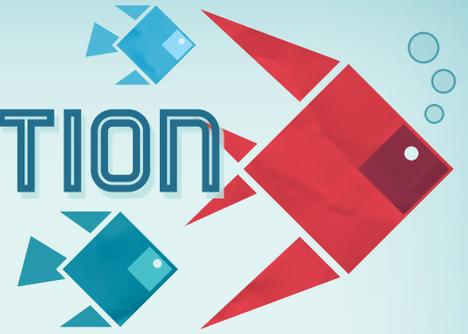
Matt: Yeah, I scratch my head on that one myself. My degree from Juniata College is in Natural History so I studied biology, geology and anthropology and right out of school jobs were scarce.

Beth: You're joking!

Matt: Yeah, really. Well whoever was hiring, wasn't hiring at that point and so I started working for the Boy Scouts and eventually for colleges and universities where I became a fundraiser. Along the way I got one of the first actually I think it was the first class in the first degree for philanthropy and development from St. Mary's University of Minnesota and for a number of years I led fundraising programs at University of Cincinnati, [unintelligible] and eventually I decided that at some point I wanted to go on my own. I come from a small business family so it was kind of the thing to do and I started very much in a broad consulting basis, but honestly I just followed the market. More and more people called me and asked me

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for written material. They liked, they saw something I wrote, they said “can you write some more of this” and I just stopped doing the other work and focused on this and it’s been good.

Beth: I’m always interested in how people ended up coming to what they’re doing now especially because many people, you don’t necessarily think I’m going to go into nonprofits. That’s been my dream, but you now also teach because more and more people are starting to see this as an interesting industry.

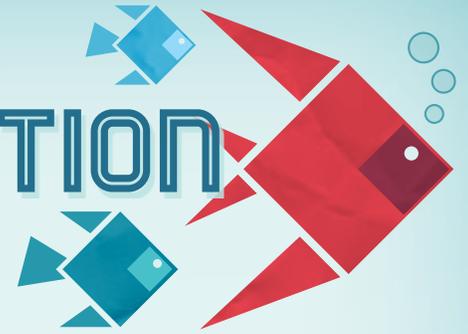
Matt: Yeah, I teach at Eastern University in the hybrid program and I then also teach at [unintelligible] a more traditional program and then Thomas Edison College in New Jersey and Juniata College online and it’s fascinating to see how all three while they’re different, actually online is probably the toughest for the students and it’s more self-directed and so I’ve got to bring those expectations back into my live classes. It’s been a really good experience. I’ve enjoyed all that.

Beth: That’s really interesting. Telling stories is something that we’re all talking about right now and I’d love to know your perspective on how the work that you do, all the different types of writing that you do, serves its purpose in getting people involved in creating that feeling of participation. Why does it even matter? Why is it important to the people that you work with to get people involved?

Matt: Well, for nonprofits, for most nonprofits we’ll say, involvement of volunteers is huge. Involvement of other people is actually one of the two advantages a nonprofit has, right? They can involve volunteers and they can get charitable gifts, at least these three can. Being able to involve people, get participation leverages the resources they already have so that then they can carry out their mission much more effectively. It’s really essential to figure out how to engage people particularly where they are. Nonprofit people like we all do in any industry, we live in our own bubble and so we think that everybody should be involved and everybody is going to be involved and that’s just not the case. I know a lot of people who have no contact with nonprofits or even think about having contact with nonprofits, don’t realize they do so how we use our tools to bring them into the fold is really important. One of the things about storytelling is it’s interesting at least to me that more and more anthropological and particularly biological brain science is showing that stories is how people learn. I always tell

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my class stories beats stats. We're human and we relate to information in contextual ways and so stories are how we do that, how we get context information. I'm not saying we can't have stats. We need to have stats in order to justify things, but you hear on the news "here's the statistics, here's the story behind them" that there is this idea and it's true, we need to engage people in the numbers differently than just pitching out a number to them.

Beth: That's such a good point especially because we're recording this right now in November, which is right in the heart of the end of year fundraising season for a lot of nonprofits and I know I find myself talking a lot right now to nonprofits who are writing annual appeal letters and they all want to throw in more of an annual report than an annual appeal. They want to throw in "here's what we did this year", they want to fill their letters with stats. Can you just talk a little bit about that, where that urge comes from and what you would say to somebody that wants to do that as their end of year ask?

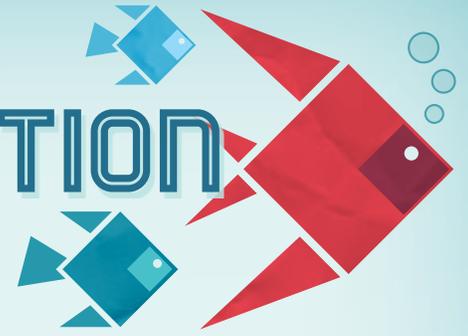
Matt: Stop!!

Beth: Yay!

Matt: I know it's tempting because again in our bubble, we want to justify everything we do, but you know what? The human brain can't take it. One of the things that I came up with for my class is this little thing called 1-2-1-4-1 so if you write it down, the numbers 1, 2, 1, 4, 1 and all fundraising needs to be this. It needs to be 1 to 1. It needs to be partially engaging for the person or the objective that you're trying to meet, the one objective. So as much as we can narrow and focus people into what it is that we want them to do and that doesn't mean saying that we helped fifty people, that means we helped this girl. This girl whose face, whose one face you see on the picture, this is a letter or an email from me to you so it's 1 to 1 for this one person, it's not the our organization sending it to your family about those thirty people. It's interesting that numbers, I mean you want to talk about statistics, the stats show us that people don't respond as well to stats and they don't respond well to multiple people either being signatories or being the object of where we're giving. They respond to one person and that's just how our brains work. We need to leverage that.

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Beth: I think we can take a moment to just enjoy the irony that there is a statistic that says that people don't respond to statistics. That is so true and it's so hard because people have worked so hard all year and they've accomplished a lot. Is there a place for that in nonprofit communications? I mean I agree with you completely. It's not in that annual appeal, that letter where you're trying to evoke the emotion and get people to give so when people have accomplished all of those things, is there a way to use that information in a productive way to drive participation as opposed to what really happens is when someone sees \$10,000 they think "you're good. You don't need me".

Matt: There is so you can in a direct mail piece maybe put it as the buck slip or now when I say the word "brochure", you don't throw in the standard brochure off the shelf. It has to be focused on the ask so you're not getting rid of what you have left over on the ...

Beth: That's a really key point right there that you don't want to use your brochure to put in all the content you had left over that didn't fit in your letter.

Matt: Yeah, well you know I do this little demonstration in my classes when I talk about direct mail. I have this wonderful piece from an international relief organization that pairs up the letter and I give them my, I just pick a student and give them the whole package and I say "open it up" and what do you know? The first day they look at the letter, they put it aside and then they start opening up this big brochure and they might spend five minutes on this brochure and they've totally forgotten the whole reason why we're doing this is because we want someone to read the letter to engage them.

Beth: That's really interesting especially because my background, I was trained as a designer so based on that sort of behavioral action that people are taking, what do you suggest to people when they're sending out things? Don't include a brochure or make sure that your brochure enforces your letter. What would you say based on that sort of behavior would be the best form of a package for somebody sending out an appeal letter?

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Matt: Either of those is fine. Honestly if you don't put in a brochure, that's just fine. That's not a problem and a lot of times that's preferred. If you feel compelled to be able to say more, you've got to have a custom brochure that has to reinforce the appeal, it has to talk about what's going on in the appeal.

Beth: Exactly. I completely agree with you. I'm working on one right now for an art center and wrote a beautiful letter about how their program makes kids happy and excited and proud of themselves and on the third round of revisions to the letter, somebody asked "well can't we put in that we have an arts fair in June". No, no, no, no. It's hard because I totally understand that feeling. We do this amazing thing and we don't have a lot of money to mail lots of times so this is an opportunity. We're getting this mail out so let's put in everything that we're doing so people know so that we don't have to tell them again, but it just doesn't work. It distracts the people.

Matt: Convince them to do basic high school science 101. Do a split test. Have a control. Have a variable. Split your list and you'll see the results. I mean if you have to convince yourself on that. An alternative on that brochure might be a buckslip, but again

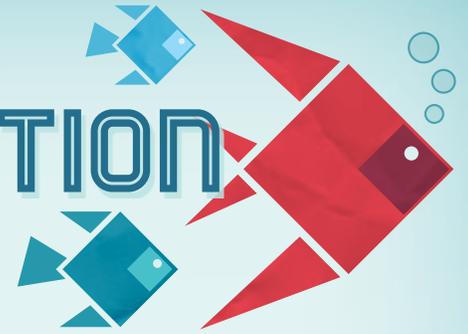
Beth: I have to tell you, that's an old school term. You might have to explain to us what it is.

Matt: Okay, thank you. It's taken from the size of a dollar, right? Although they tend to be bigger, but the idea is just a small slip of a piece of paper. Now effective buckslips might be one that says like we talked about 1-2-1-4-1. Well in this case, you have one person writing, but then you have somebody else saying "Hey when Bob told me he's going to write a letter to you, I wanted to endorse it" so you can have like an endorsement piece, but also it could be a little, small piece of paper that just gives the basic stats that again supports the letter itself if you really feel compelled to do that. I personally prefer the other kind though.

Beth: I love that. I think that's a really, really key point because when people want to put a brochure or a slip or other information into their packages, they want to use that to say "here's all the other stuff we do". The idea of using the additional piece to say "this visual piece might compel you to read it" or the letter might compel you to read it, but they're both about the same thing is a really, really crucial point.

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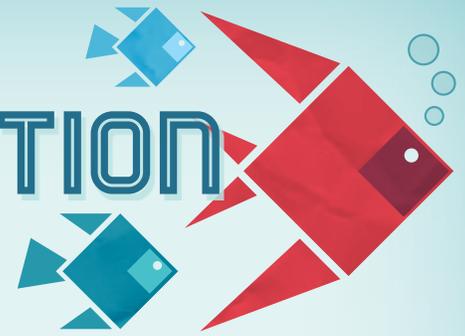
Matt: One of the things to consider, what did our mothers say, right? It's not what you say, it's how you say it. In the letter itself, and again this again goes across emails and social media or any kind of communication, you want to be able to write on multi-levels so one of the big issues see is that two page letters or more pull as opposed to single page letters. Well nobody reads multiple page letters. Actually that's the difference between what people think they do versus what they actually do and if you write it right, if you have sufficient write space, if you underline passages so that when they scan through it the first time, they can kind of pick up the story that you're telling already. It has a lot to do with getting into how people think and how they learn and so what you'll find is somebody will scan it, they'll flip it over and look for the PS, they'll see who sent it, they'll look for the PS and then they get the gist and then if you grab them, they'll read deeper and those letters pull. They get more gifts than the single page thick here is just from us, we don't want to waste your time kind of letter.

Beth: Absolutely and the challenge of doing a letter, of doing any kind of communications this way is you kind of have to have stories to be ready, to be able to communicate, to put that letter, to put that brochure or whatever you're going to do, you need to have the stories available to include in these pieces. Let's talk a little bit about how you do that, that sort of meat of what we're going to talk about today. Okay we know now that we need to have stories. I think you and I have said that today. I've said that on a number of podcasts that I've had, our second, third and fourth podcasts were all about storytelling so go back and listen to those, Episodes 2, 3 and 4 with Vanessa Chase, Pamela Grow and Chris Davenport are all phenomenal episodes to listen to. If you haven't, go back and listen to those. Now Matt and I are going to talk about what that process is like because he does this every day. He works for people to help collect their stories. It's funny and as we were talking about this earlier, he said to me "let's see. How do I do that"? It'll be interesting to have the writer actually go through and talk about what his process is and where an organization does well and where they can need help to take content and turn it into a story. Matt, let's start with when people know they want to have stories, where do they begin?

Matt: Well the first thing to say is that personally I hate last minute and I think it is great if you can develop a story bank. Just over time, start collecting stories from people and put them away. Put them away to a place on your hard drive that you can always go back and pull from and talk to the people and maybe we'll talk about permissions or not, but you get permission

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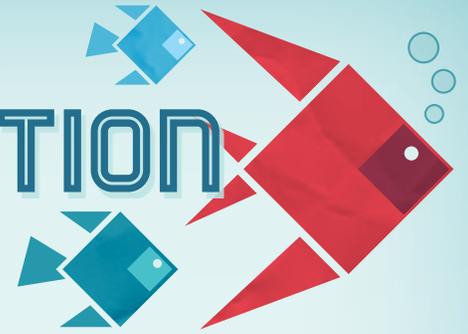
to use them and you just have it because often what will happen is “oh I need to do this and I have to find somebody” and you end up panicking. You don’t want to panic. You want to be able to do this in a systematic way. Number one, just work from a pool that you already own, but a lot of my clients will come to me and they’ll say “we want to do a letter”. I had a client that go us to start to talk about this. Beth and I met at a conference and I was telling her about a client that had me write tons of stories. They’re doing some big event. They’re honoring all these people and they wanted me to write all these stories for them. Little and big, like a little thumb nail and big ones. We had to go through this process which was sort of an expansion of what I typically do for one story is you have to identify who they are, you have to get times with all these people, you have to set them up, you have to write them and it kind of forces some systematic work and like all my clients, the first step is for them to try to identify people among their constituents and really that comes down to what’s the objective. Where are we going with this? Is it an annual fund letter? Is it a brochure piece? Is it a website? Also more than the media, what action are we trying to elicit because none of these stories mean anything outside of their own context. They have to be connected to some call to action, some objective that you want, something to do as a result of this story even if it’s just feel good, although I would prefer feel good to write a check or send your credit card number. So question number one is why are we doing this? Let’s just say for arguments sake that it’s an annual fund appeal. It’s some sort of direct mail, direct response solicitation. Then the question becomes who is out there? Who is benefiting from your services? Some of the mechanics here is they will identify who they want me to talk to, but I will not reach out. I never make cold calls to interview subjects. I always leave it to my client to make the first step. They need to talk to the person who we’re interviewing to get their permission to go with this.

Beth: I think that’s an important point that the nonprofit needs to make the direct connection because they’re more likely to get a yes if they’re getting the request from someone that they know, rather than being cold called by a consultant.

Matt: Well yeah for sure and there’s all sorts of privacy issues, their suspicion. Some of my clients their people are anonymous. I am by the way so I don’t forget to say so later, but everybody I talk to is real. We don’t make up stories or anything. I never do that. However, I am happy as they used to say on Dragnet, change the name to protect the innocent. I think

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that's really important to do for privacy sake. One of my clients deal with women who have been having trouble and does not want their images or their stories to be out there so their children might see them some day. It's a really good thing to say. One of my clients has this index of made up names we can work with. It's great. Kids, when you're dealing with kids you have to get all sorts of permissions on that. You have to make sure, I want the parent right there listening on the phone and all of that so that it's not, you have to clear all that stuff and then we're talking about maybe in the same realm, permissions are important too. Some clients have a form, it's almost like a photography permission form. It's a story permission form.

Beth: I haven't heard of that before. A story permission form.

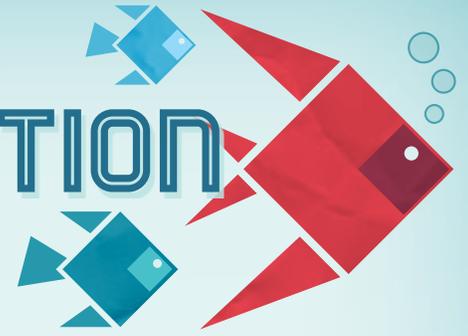
Matt: I'm a little ahead of myself here, but the idea though is you have to nail down a lot of those basics one at a time. You have to assure people that if confidentiality is an issue, that will be addressed. You have to make sure that they're comfortable with what you're doing and a little more of that in a second. They make the call and kind of set it up or email is fine a lot of times. Then I typically like to follow up with an email. I typically don't like to call to make an appointment because I don't want people to think we want to talk now. I don't want to talk to them, but a lot of older people still don't have emails or don't check them so I'll give a call. We set up a time that's good for them, of course watch your time zones. Don't call them at 8:00 your time when it's 5:00 in the pacific.

Beth: Yes, I've made that mistake more than once.

Matt: Then off to the races. Start with the call. The first thing I ask whenever I start a call "is this still a good time". Almost always it is, but I want to show some respect for their time in case something comes up or whatever. There are times when people don't answer the phone, which by the way, I always try to—you have a couple of options here. I always try to use my land line on this because it's just clarity of the call. However, I'm a big advocate of FreeConferenceCall.com, you can have people call in and that way you can record it if you want and there's a little handy intro on that that says "this call is being recorded". You can do

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that although the irony there is it would cost them to call even though it's call free conference, but I typically do not record calls. I find it a little bit cumbersome and I find it inhibits the people I speak to and of course if you do record calls, a good number of state laws will say that you have to let them know. Of course that's just the right thing to do, but it adds another level of cumbersomeness on this.

Beth: Absolutely and what we're using here today is I'm using Skype and I use a tool called Tool Recorder, which is by a company called ECam and I can put a link to that in show notes as well. It's incredibly not cumbersome. It's literally a click of a button. What I always do and what Matt and I did to start is we had a little preconversation and then I said "I'm about to start the recording. Is that okay" to get permission, which helps because I agree. You never want to be recording somebody without their knowledge that you're recording them.

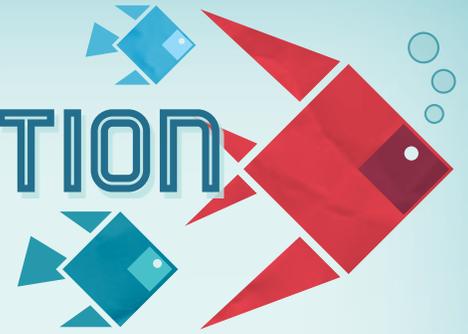
Matt: Exactly and yet I find that I'm personally able to take notes enough to work. I typically don't record folks. I often will come in, like with this big project I have, I want to be consistent across the board with everybody so I had a list of questions. Again back to the objective. Why are we doing this? You just talked in the beginning of this about how I got where I am. A lot of times, even if it doesn't have anything to do with it, I will ask them about personal background stuff just to give context, but also to warm them up for the interview.

Beth: Throw them the soft ball first? Is that it?

Matt: Yeah to make them and me feel comfortable about what we're talking about and the fact that they're getting to know me a little better. I will share things that if I've had similar experiences to them or if I've lived in the same place or whatever. I find that you need to set up kind of a personal connection with people because that just brings them out a little. Talk about your questions, whatever they might be. They might be helpful. I'll tell you the one part that always, all along I'm looking for some sort of hook. I kind of have in mind "what's my lead line going to be" because when you write one of these, you have to grab people to start and so it's kind of always in the back of my mind. What is the hook on this piece going to be. I tell you a lot of times I find it at the very end when I do this kind of free form. I say "so have

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I forgotten anything? Is there any more you want to say? Is there anything else we didn't talk about" and suddenly the flood gates open.

Beth: I've had that happen too.

Matt: They just start thinking and I don't think they expect it, but that's where I get some of my best stuff. Just an open end what do you think, what else should we be talking about.

Beth: Do you have any trouble keeping people on topic or is your goal to keep them on topic? I know what we do for this podcast is we get a sense of what we want the subject to be because we want them to be very, very focused on a specific thing. Have you found that to be helpful? Do you ever go in and interview somebody and say "we're going to talk about this" or do you keep them open? What's working?

Matt: Well they all know the context of the discussion. I don't go in and say to somebody "I just want to talk to you" and then suddenly spring on them the other end "oh and this is for [unintelligible] letter".

Beth: Right and you don't go in and say "how you doing".

Matt: Yeah, right. There are some perimeters, but they're pretty broad. I find that the more I let them kind of just talk about things with somewhat broader perimeters, the better information I get and that's huge. That makes a big difference.

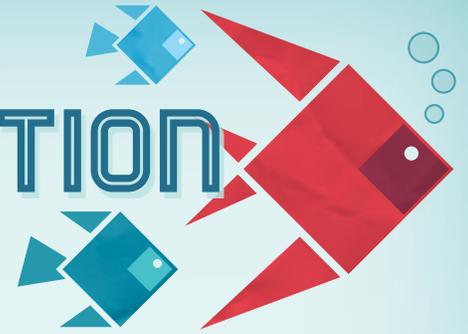
Beth: That's terrific. So you've now found the right people, identified what you're looking for, identified what kind of a story you're looking for and found the right people, scheduled the interviews.

Matt: Through the organization and I should say here that sometimes the organization will want to set up the interview. I will encourage them to use Doodle if your listeners already know it.

Beth: I'll put a link in the show notes. That's great.

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Matt: Which is an online scheduler that is really helpful.

Beth: It's free.

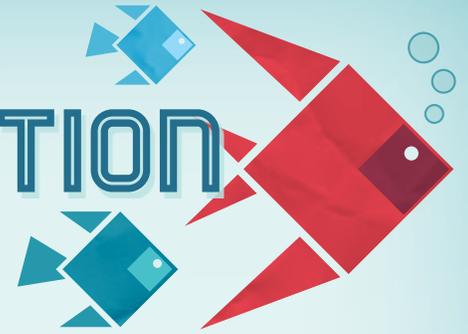
Matt: Right, it's free. It gets us all on the same page about when available times are because there are times when people will, let's say if it's a politician or if it's somebody who is important, the other board chair, they're really careful with that. I mean one of the things I also feel I could bring to this, which I think everybody needs to keep in mind is that I've been in fundraising. I know what I am doing if you were to follow Dave Lunlap [unintelligible] management concept, this is a move. This is could potentially be given to whoever I'm talking to, a potential step toward a gift of some sort so the notes I take are more than just for the piece, but often times will be background information, like if I'm talking to a big donor or a board chair or something, I will write up a note separately for them to have so they can put that information in their file because a lot of times I get information they don't have and they don't know about. That is really important to keep in mind. You're not in a vacuum just doing this stuff.

Beth: Are you finding people using this idea of inviting someone to share their story more than just share the story so I can put your story in the annual appeal letter, are they at all using it as a way to build a deeper relationship? Are they consciously going in and saying "I'm going to ask Bob to be one of my stories because I want to get to know Bob better because I think Bob has the potential to be more deeply involved in our organization". Are people looking at it from that perspective? Is it appropriate to look at it in that perspective?

Matt: Yes, yes and yes. In fact, that's what I meant about the [unintelligible] management was that that's part of that process, so we'll pick say the board chair to be interviewed for this about why she supports xyz organization and that for sure this is an engagement point. A lot of times you do things not just for the apparent objective, and I'm not saying we're doing anything behind folks backs, but you can have two objectives. One is to cultivate a relationship and the other one is to solicit dollars in this case or it's the same reason if you're going to honor somebody and put them up in front with other people, they're there because they're serving the function they're supposed to serve, but also it's an honor for them to sit up

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at the head table and to be exposed in that way and so that will lead to gifts later on. Yeah, this is all part of the game.

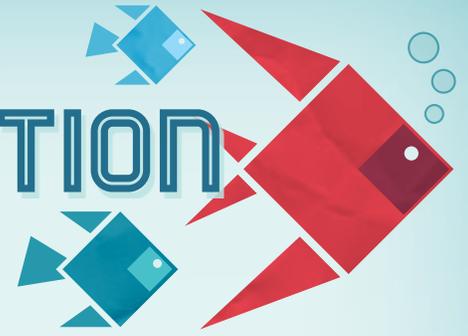
Beth: Anybody who listens should know I am a huge fan of anything that serves more than one purpose. If doing this story and collecting this story lets you have content for your communications today, but begins to build a bridge and a relationship for somebody to tomorrow, that's time well spent when you're a nonprofit that has a limited staff and many times the same people who are doing the fundraising are the people that are doing the communications. You have to maximize things so just strategically think about who you should be interviewing both by who has a great story and where is there an opportunity to get to know someone better. Sometimes I even suggest to people when they're using their meetings, you know if you're going out and doing a visit, just a site visit to a fundraiser, that's a great opportunity to say "I haven't seen you in a while and I'd love to visit you and while I'm there would you mind if you told me a little about why you're involved and took some notes because we'd love to share your story about why you're involved with us". It's such a great way to let people feel that they're important at a deeper level than just showing up and taking them out to lunch.

Matt: Well, actually first of all, "no money, no mission, no mission, no money" so you have to keep both in mind as you report on this, but back to the concept I talked about in the beginning about a story bank, I mean you could any time be [unintelligible] anybody and say I'm collecting things and just explain what the story bank is all about and that we'll definitely talk to you when we move this further, but I want to get what if you like to use the word "fodder", but fodder for the story bank and just use that as a reason to get more in depth with somebody on an interview.

Beth: I love that idea. Especially if you really create like a culture in the organization. If you say "we have a story bank and we're committed as an organization to keeping it full and brimming with great experience" if you can get that into the consciousness of everyone you're connected to, your staff, your board, your fundraisers, your volunteers, your online ambassadors, to get everyone thinking of like having their ear tuned towards what's a good story, it's so helpful. One of the things I say all the time is I always ask "is everyone's board

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doing exactly what they want them to be doing” and everyone typically rolls their eyes, but a lot of times board members aren’t super comfortable with the idea that asking people for money or doing that right away, but if you can say “actually the first thing we need from you is to go out and identify great stories” it’s so great.

Matt: Well, actually it’s funny. I can tell you a bit of a story on this where I worked at a university getting people, faculty particularly, but anybody to kind of identify folks is always a problem because they think “you’re going to swoop in”. There’s a lot of comfort that has to come with employing the development office to raise money for somebody that somebody in the institution has identified. Well instead of doing that, I remember going to a faculty member and saying “we’re just doing stories and I want to make sure we get the stories of people who are important to you”. Now it’s perfectly appropriate. We want them to be able to tell their stories so now I’ve got entry into these doors that I wouldn’t have had otherwise because I wasn’t there to raise money, I was there to collect their story and along the way after that we start talking not directly with that person, but that qualifies them or not to do more work with the fundraising.

Beth: Exactly and what I love about it is it is totally authentic. You really do want that story.

Matt: Oh yeah.

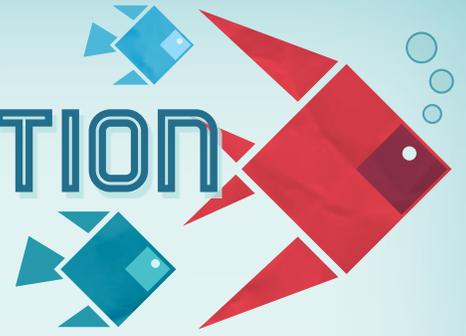
Beth: But it turns everything you do from a phone call into a warm purpose even. It’s like when your phone rings and like your initial reaction is to look at the caller ID and be like “do I recognize that number” and your voice is totally different based on whether you recognize that number or maybe it’s your mother. Okay, maybe not your mother, but in general. Things like this are such a great way for you to get in front of people and do you think that when you’re asking someone to share their story, do they feel that they’re being asked for something or do they feel like they’re having an opportunity to give something?

Matt: It’s interesting. A lot of people are honored. They really feel like “wow, you’re going to tell my story” because what’s everybody’s favorite topic? Themselves.

Beth: Absolutely [unintelligible] honor the people that are valuable in your organization.

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Matt: Yeah and so it's really a very helpful thing. Folks will like I said be honored, they often will talk about aspects of their life that they wouldn't otherwise talk about, they have a real, especially if they're engaged in your organization or want to be or think you have a good cause, they will go this is a good way for folks to in effect volunteer.

Beth: Okay, let's talk now about you've gotten the people, you've collected these stories. How do you take the stream of consciousness or the linear aspects because people probably start to tell stories either this happened first or this happened second or they tell it like somebody who is describing a dream that they had and they start telling you something and they back up and they forgot this thing and then there was this other thing that happened.

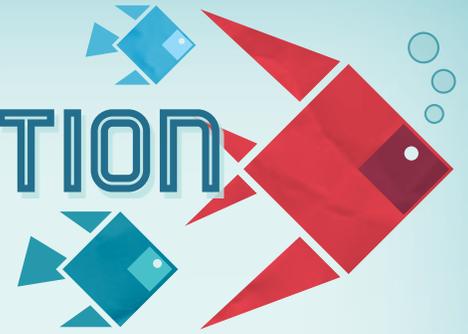
Matt: I think of Abe Simpson on The Simpson's.

Beth: Yeah, it's like we've all gotten kind of lost in somebody else's story. How do you take all of that chaotic information and back story and detail and turn it into something that's engaging?

Matt: Well it starts from the start. Back to what I was saying about the hook. Anytime you're doing any kind of work with this, you have to have something that engages people right away and so I'm teaching a class on nonprofit marketing. In fact, the class is tonight and we're talking about social media marketing and what's the first thing on a website? You've got ten seconds. You probably don't even have that long. If somebody doesn't see something they want or doesn't want to be engaged with what they see straight of from a website in the first couple of seconds, they're out of there. Same thing with this kind of writing. You have to grab them by either saying something different, by putting something in a way that they hadn't considered, by even just playing xyz organization saved your life. Whatever it is to pull them into the story and start engaging your reader. Think of all the stories that, you want to go back to the stories that you have seen. Think of what you see on television, what you read in books. There are ways of getting into this like starting in the middle or starting in the end, giving them the end and telling them how they got there or like you said, being more linear about it. Start from the beginning and give them a sense of where things are going. Whatever it is, you have to get into it and then one of the things particularly fund writing is, we don't ask.

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You have to ask. You have to kind of tell a little bit, stop, ask. Say “hey, you’re reading this story. Don’t you want to give here” and then do it again and again because there’s a purpose behind this. You can’t forget the purpose, but then get back into the story and tell more of the story and then pause it again. People remember the beginning and people remember the end and so you have to really be strong in those places. Not to say you can afford to be weak in the other places, but those are the places where you’ve really got to engage people the most. I’m thinking about what else to tell you.

Beth: The next thing I’m going to ask you, I’ve got it all lined up. Writing is a quick and easy thing that takes no time at all, right?

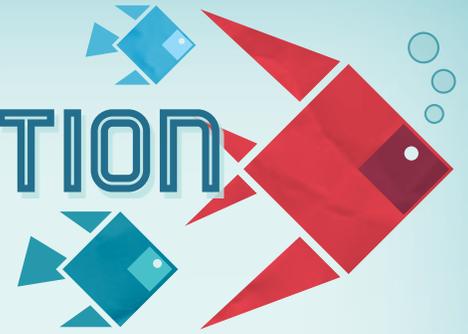
Matt: Of course. Yeah, right. Samuel Clemens said that if I had written less I’d have taken more time or something like that.

Beth: Exactly. Something like that. A lot of organizations really want to be doing this, but they’re overwhelmed with time. Well the opposite. They don’t have enough time, but they don’t always have the resources to completely go outside and use somebody else for things they can do themselves. You talked a little bit about how the organization can get involved and kind of line up and set up all the calls. In the scope of this storytelling process, what else can an organization really be doing themselves or how can they handle doing some of this by themselves and where is it helpful maybe to get some outside perspective? What can having some outside perspective have on those stories bring to this process?

Matt: When you were talking about this, it crossed my mind that every once in a while I get a client who comes to me who has notes and I’m able to interpret the notes or something else has been written to build a story out of that. A lot of my students have this problem too. The biggest fear a lot of people have is a blank page. They just can’t get their stuff started. Before the call started recording Beth and I were talking about speech to text software, Dragon being the most familiar. I find a lot of times if I can get a client to just talk about what they wanted in the notes, they may have sat there and talked to somebody and they’ve written a lot of notes. Okay now sit in front of the screen with a headset on and just spew the notes onto the computer. Get something on the page, then start editing. You’re going to do it yourself and I

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think that's a good way of starting. Don't sit there and worry about what you're going to say, just throw stuff on the page.

Beth: That's great and tell me again what is the software that you're using to do that?

Matt: Oh Dragon Naturally Speaking. It's about \$100 standard. If you get the premium it can also run your internet and other things with the voice, it's like \$200. Actually I will tell you, I got turned onto it by, I've known about it for a long time, but I have a client who deals with clients with spinal cord injuries and I have seen quadriplegics use this software to totally manipulate computers and do anything they want with it and write amazing work. I kind of figured "I can do this".

Beth: That's amazing. I should probably look into it myself. One of the things I joke as I started the podcast is I finally learned that I like to talk more than I like to write and it was not a surprise to anyone who knows me.

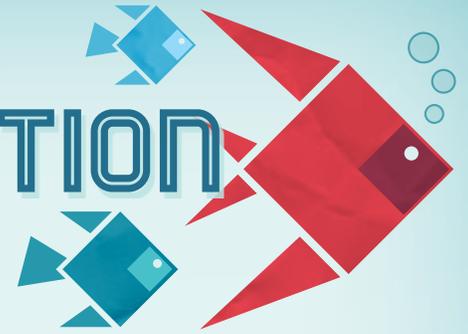
Matt: We could have told you.

Beth: Exactly. You could have told me that. This has been terrific. Like I say, is there any last tips that you think would be valuable?

Matt: A couple of things. You have to remember also that a lot of people aren't skilled at this and that's okay. Not everybody is a writer and you want to engage, like if you're going to engage somebody like me just because they don't have that skill. That's alright. They're busy, you need a fresh perspective or voice, that's an important reason too to get somebody else in there even to look over stuff that you have and kind of critique it. One other thing I will tell you as far as processes, there is this little chicken and egg game at the end, which is really—you have to clarify with the client, and that is who sees, so I finish a piece and they know it's like an annual fund letter or something like that, more profile piece, do you show it first to the person that you have written about or do you show it first to the people who is your client? Some clients want to see this stuff straight off and others are like no, no, no I want to be able to look at this first before the subject sees it. Sometimes they say no they want everything nailed down and the subject's approved everything and then send it over. In the end though,

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it's important for me to tell the people I talk to, the subjects, that this isn't [unintelligible] journalism. This is making you look good, making your organization look good. It's win/win stuff so I want them to be comfortable about what we're saying and I think that reflects well on the organization that makes these people much more willing to engage in this process because they'll know they have some measure of control, but also that it's going to make them look good and that's important.

Beth: Are you saying it doesn't really matter who sees what first, whichever the organization and the person are comfortable with is fine as long as the subject knows they have ultimate say in how they're represented?

Matt: Yeah, well I wouldn't say ultimate say, but I'd say they have input into this. One project I had a 150 word limit and every time I'd give it back to them they'd give me "oh I want to add all these things" and now it becomes 200 words. I had to trim it back, but that they are engaged in the process, it's not just them having to take it on faith that whatever is going to show up is going to be out there.

Beth: That is terrific. We are at time so thank you so much Matt. This has been really, really helpful. How can people get in touch with you if they have more questions?

Matt: Yeah, I've got a website. MattHugg.com and I've got a blog there called "copy that compels" which I put out every other week that talks about largely marketing and fundraising tips for nonprofits and well specific to writing and then it's Matt@MattHugg.com to pop me a note.

Beth: And we can find you on Twitter at?

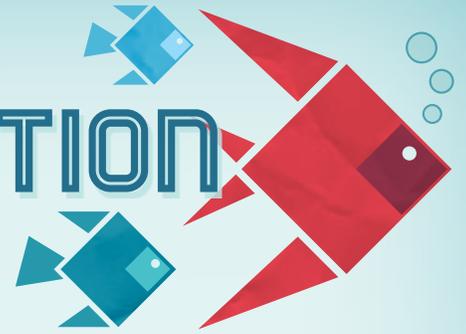
Matt: What is it?

Beth: Isn't it just Matt Hugg?

Matt: Yeah, it's just MattHugg.

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Beth: Two "t"s and two "g"s.

Matt: Yep, two "t"s in Matt and two "g"s in Hugg.

Beth: Perfect name for nonprofit.

Matt: I try.

Beth: Thank you so much Matt. This has been terrific. I really appreciate your time and I am sure that the nonprofit community will really learn a lot and benefit from you sharing your story so I greatly appreciate it.

Matt: Thanks Beth. I'm honored to be here. I really appreciate it.

Beth: Bye.

Matt: Bye

Questions or comments? Contact beth@iriscreative.com