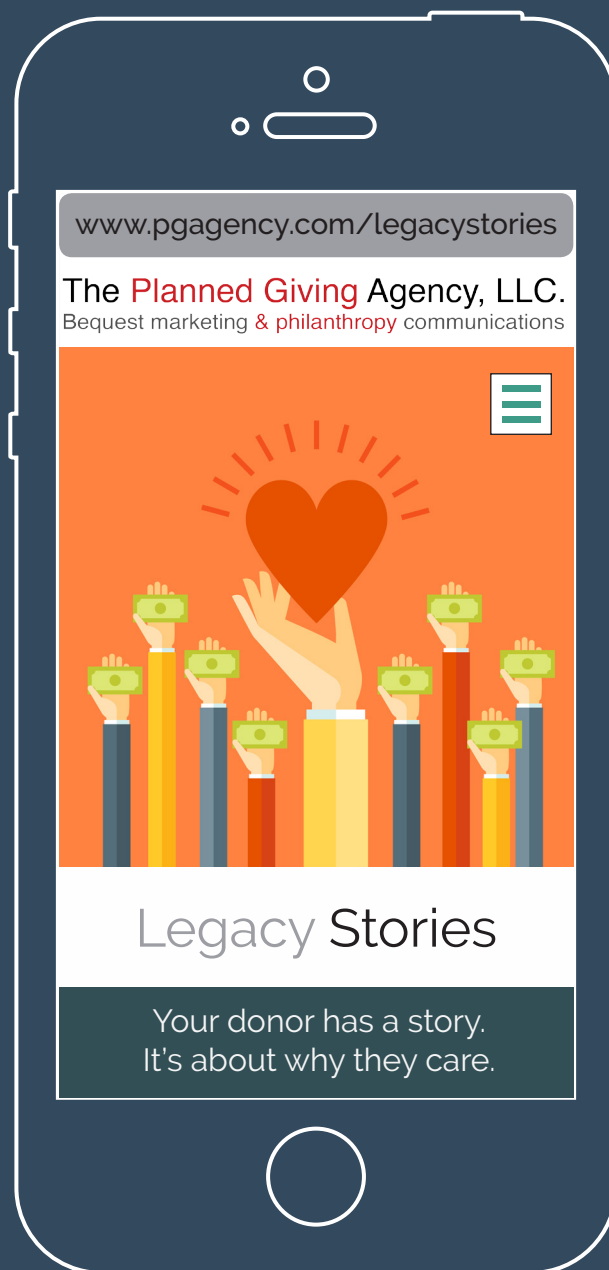




LEGACY STORIES

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO PRODUCING GREAT NONPROFIT DONOR FEATURES

Time to write another “donor profile”?
Be strategic, keep it short & get to the point!

Your donor has a great charitable story to tell. It’s about why she cares - not how your nonprofit serves its mission. Stick to the heart of the story, listen for a few great quotes and keep your story very brief. Your goal is to draw attention to key planned giving messages and the all-important “call to action.”



*Here are the
important elements:*

Headlines that surprise draw in the reader and promote your planned giving message.
(Tip: “Donor Story” isn’t a headline.)

A high-quality, relevant photo helps tell your story!

Quotes are heartfelt comments that add meaning, color and context.

Feature a specific call to action. Consider using a question, which is more engaging.



Why do planned giving donor stories make such great content? **SOCIAL PROOF!**

Showcasing an “everyday philanthropist” is an effective way to communicate the idea of a planned gift. “She did that? I could do that.” You’re also giving your featured donor a tangible talking point to share with others who may be potential donors. Finally, stories about people leaving a gift to your charity show your nonprofit is “a safe bet” and worthy of such an important gift.



HELPFUL TIPS FOR PRODUCING GREAT DONOR STORIES:



YOUR FEATURED DONOR

Think donor first, story second. A donor may have a great story but if they say “just don’t use my name” or don’t want to be photographed -- move on.



YOUR INTENDED AUDIENCE

Identify the type of supporter you’d like to reach and tailor the story for your “niche” audience. Your story won’t appeal to everyone -- and that’s OK.



YOUR MEDIA PLATFORMS

Once you have a great donor story -- use it! It’s perfect for social media, direct mail appeals or anywhere you need engaging, authentic content.



FOCUS ON THE PHOTO!

Nonprofit donor stories are notorious for awkward or just plain bad photos. The photograph is a crucial part of the story -- not an afterthought. Please hire a professional to photograph your donor. This can also be a wonderful way to steward your donor.



Do feature your “everyday philanthropist”

A retired teacher or nurse is a good choice for a profile because they’re relatable. A wealthy donor may say “just don’t make me look rich.” Refer to them as a “retired businessman” or don’t mention their occupation.



Don't gush about the person!

You may be tempted to say glorious things, but referring to your donor as “a community leader who sits on many boards,” sounds boastful. Most people are modest, so don’t create content your donor may be embarrassed to share.

Handling the approval process. This can be the trickiest part of producing a donor feature. Your donor will probably ask to see the story before it goes public, so it’s important to set expectations early on. If possible, show them an example of a previous donor story. Explain that their story will be “brief.” When it comes to getting approval at work, if you keep your story SHORT, there’s less to approve. Others will be less likely to tinker with your text if it’s mainly quotes and things the donor said, because -- well, that’s what the donor said!

About the Author & The Planned Giving Agency

Claire Meyerhoff is a nationally-recognized nonprofit communications consultant who specializes in helping philanthropy professionals with marketing and stewardship projects. She started The Planned Giving Agency, LLC after years of success working with well-known planned giving marketing firms.

As a broadcast journalist, Claire brings a unique perspective to the charitable sector. She's a former reporter, radio host, producer and news writer for organizations such as CNN, CBS Radio and Sirius XM. She's also an on-air fundraiser for a PBS affiliate, frequent contributor to Nonprofit Marketing Guide.com and featured planned giving outreach expert for Gail Perry's Insider Series.

Based in Washington, D.C. and Raleigh, NC, Claire presents at conferences and to AFP and PPP chapters nationwide. She hosts communications workshops, board sessions and seminars on a variety of topics.

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This just in! Writing tips from a broadcast journalist.

Claire has spent many years interviewing, reporting and writing on deadline for top news organizations. She says there are many broadcast news skills that translate into the nonprofit marketing and communications world. Here are a few tips.



Listen closely & note the good stuff.

When interviewing a donor, listen with your emotions. If the donor says something that makes you smile, laugh or moves you - that's probably a good quote. Whether you record the interview (always ask permission to record a conversation), or take notes, make sure you write-up your notes and impressions immediately after.



Write light, bright & tight!

Your readers can tune out at any moment, so write in a one-on-one engaging and conversational style. Keep it short by losing flowery descriptions and using single words instead of phrases. "Ahead of schedule" is just a longer way of saying "early."



Ditch the jargon!

Nonprofit writing is full of jargon like "capacity building" and "leveraging stakeholders." Even the word "youth" is organization-speak. When was the last time you said "Wow, there were a lot of youths at that party." Try "young people" instead.

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