TELLING YOUR PERSONAL STORY

WORKSHEET

Background

In order to get people involved in your issue campaign, you will be building relationships with partners, donors and volunteers around shared interests, values and issues. You will be asking others to step forward, get involved, and take action.

As organizers, we need to build trust, inspire hope, and move people to act. Stories are a powerful way to do this: they are how we communicate who we are and why others should trust us, what is at stake, and why there is such urgency and need to act together.

Effective organizing starts from your own individual interests and values – the why and what that moved you to act—but as organizers we need to connect our story with the story of others to create common ground and purpose for why we must act together now. This is simply another way of telling a collective story:

* We are faced by a challenge (what our shared problem is or what needs to change)
* We have a choice (the bad choice or our alternative better choice)
* We have an outcome (results of that decision) and,
* We have an ask (opportunity to act - there is hope that working together we can bring  about the better alternative)

In this exercise you will focus on creating your own organizing story using the framework of challenge, choice, outcome and ask. We’ll break it into four parts:

1. Reflection
2. Writing Down Your Story
3. Sharing Your Story With Others
4. Sharing with the Whole Group

Step 1: Reflection

Think about the experiences that have helped shape you and have moved you to become involved in organizing.

You chose differently than a lot of your friends, co-workers, and neighbors. By virtue of being in this room, you took another path. You didn’t become isolated, but decided to become involved. Why? Look deeply. What motivated you? Why did you become an activist in the first place? When did you decide that politics and building power mattered? Where did your motivation come from? What had prevented you from acting before?

Your motivation might be related to your family, your faith, events in your childhood and youth, your work life, or your schooling and leisure activities. They may have been shaped by your race, ethnicity, economic and social circumstances, where you started in life, and where we are now.

Take some time to jot down some notes on the key experiences that helped shape who you are today.

Some people feel like they have several moments or challenges they’ve faced that have led them to organize. That’s okay. Feel free to use this space to brainstorm and write down multiple answers. Before you move on to the next step, you will want to hone in on one challenge that seems most representative of your path to activism. You will spend the rest of the exercise working on this one challenge.

When did you decide to become involved?

What was the challenge you faced? How did you choose to respond to that challenge?

What core values are reflected by your experience(s)?

Step 2: Write Your Own Organizing Story

Use the space below to write your own brief story that connects your challenge, choice, outcome and ask. Try to include specific detail - what did each moment in your story feel like, sound like, and look like?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Challenge** | **Choice** | **Outcome** | **Ask** |
|  |  |  |  |

Try to make your organizing story no longer than two minutes. [Use the back of the page if you wish.]

Step 3: Share Your Story With Others

Find one or two partners and take turns telling your stories.

What themes or values do you find you have in common? 

What is your collective story of hope that connects you together and moves you to act?

Step 4: Share With the Whole Group

We will share as many of these stories that we have time to share with the whole group.