Storytelling Template

Why Storytelling Is Important
As an active participant in a Community of Practice, you have resources to share. One of the most important resources is members' knowledge and experiences.[1] Storytelling allows members to communicate the important details surrounding their participation and allows relationships with others in the Community of Practice to grow. Storytelling also helps demonstrate the value of your community and express its knowledge in qualitative, not quantitative terms.

How Do I Create a Story?
In creating a story for your community—whether to share with other members individually or collectively—follow a specific process to ensure you stay on target. Consider the following steps and questions.

1) What is the main idea? The main idea, critical to any compelling story, should be the focus of the story. For example, the main idea might be the successful adaptation of an outbreak management communication protocol.

2) Gather the details. As the storyteller, you probably played a role in the story. Gather the details as you remember them. Then, speak to all of the "characters" involved in the story and ask them for the details as they remember them—the who, what, where, when, and how.

3) Why was this important? Telling a story about the who, what, and where of something is usually not a compelling story. A more effective story is an engaging description of both what happened and the impact it had on one or more people. Take the details you gathered and decide what matters most. To use our example, was the quick timeframe of the adaptation the accomplishment? Was it the way people who had not worked together in the past started working together? Was ultimate outcome a reduction in the amount of time it takes to communicate a potential outbreak to the public?

4) How do I gather this information and begin to structure the story? A template to help you can be found on the next page.

Where Do I Start?
You can gather basic information for a variety of success stories with one basic collection tool, and tailor it to create a set of success stories. These stories can attract the attention of specific audiences and reflect the progress of your initiative as it unfolds.

Your community may consider developing a set of materials, to be updated frequently, that includes each type of success story:

- Elevator Story
- The Spotlight
- One Pager
- Annual Report

Stories can be used to convey:
- Positive experiences
- Organizational and/or partner achievements
- Promising practices
- Infrastructure development
- Lessons learned

You can use these stories for:

- Recruiting new participants
- Building relationships
- Passing historical community information to new members and other interested parties
- Enlisting support or raising funds

Planning your Story

The key steps to ensure you have gathered the best information for telling your community's story are:

- Define your target audience (e.g., public health leaders or decision makers, health care providers).
- Define your purpose (e.g., recruiting new members or partners, securing funding).
- Develop a written plan for collecting information.
- Assign staff responsible for collecting, organizing, and analyzing and writing the stories.
- Use the data collection tool to pull together the information you will need to write the stories.

Telling the Story as it Unfolds

Your story will change and evolve throughout the life of the effort. Plan to update and revise the stories regularly to incorporate new developments and achievements and to track the evolution of the issue addressed by your Community of Practice.[2]

An Upstream Story celebrates early success of your community in influencing change, building new partnerships, and reaching new audiences.

A Midstream Story conveys the progress your Community of Practice is making. It includes promising stories and examples of early changes. It can include both data and anecdotal elements.

A Downstream Story describes how things have changed because of the work and relationships of the Community of Practice.

Develop Specific Types of Success Stories

The Elevator Story. Take advantage of an unexpected moment of opportunity to share a 10-second snapshot of your Community of Practice's recent progress or achievements. Consider developing different Elevator Stories for audiences such as prospective members, decision makers, or funders. Your Elevator Story should be prepared and practiced out loud before you deliver it. Include these elements in your Elevator Story:

- Highlight a specific event or achievement that has occurred no more than 2–3 months ago: significant change within the domain because of your CoP work or influence, process outcomes (number of people reached with your Community of Practice), or new partnerships formed.
- Describe the reach of your effort.
- Close with a promise that you will deliver more information (e.g., a One Pager) to your audience promptly.

Remember, an Elevator Story is brief; provide just enough information to interest your audience. Your follow up can include the technical and detailed information.

The Spotlight. Create a convenient piece, one to two paragraphs long, you can send in response to requests from publications, newsletters, web pages, and other media sources. A Spotlight Story sums up what a Community of Practice is, who can join your Community of Practice, and how the community benefits its members and others. Include these elements in your Spotlight Story:

- Create a title that grabs the attention of the reader, identifies the issue, and includes the name of the Community of Practice

- Define the public health issue addressed by the Community of Practice.

- Highlight a recent success the Community of Practice has achieved and explain the impact.

- Give contact information for the Community of Practice.

The One Pager. Identify the issues addressed by your Community of Practice and present a brief explanation of the work, then give your readers a call to action. Successful One Pagers refer to current events—old news will not draw the attention of readers. Consider developing different One Pager Success Stories for audiences such as prospective members, partners, decision makers, or funders. Remember to:

- Use a title that attracts attention

- Identify the public health issue addressed by your community.

- Define the impact of the issue.

- Highlight the solution your community has created.

- Include pictures and graphics that tell the story visually

- Include quotations from those who benefit from the work of the community.

- Include logos from partner organizations.

- Include your contact information.

> **Story Formatting Hints**
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> - Avoid the use of acronyms in titles
> - Avoid wordiness, passive language, grammatical, and spelling errors
> - Use bullets whenever possible
> - Avoid public health or technical jargon

The Brief or Annual Report. Expand on the scope of the One Pager and put together a comprehensive feature on your Community of Practice. In this context, an annual report concentrates on the changes effected by the Community of Practice instead of laying out the financial reporting as an annual report for a business or non-profit does. Target audiences for the Brief or Annual Report include funding agencies, thought leaders in all levels of public health, and decision makers. Accomplishments of the Community of Practice are tied to health outcomes for population groups, advancements in knowledge, and knowledge-sharing among members of the Community of Practice. The Brief or Annual Report should:

- Use a title that attracts attention

- Identify the public health issue addressed by your community.

- Provide state, regional, or local information about the issue.

- Define the impact of the issue on specific populations.

- Highlight the solution(s) your community has created.

- Append any knowledge products developed by the community

- Include pictures and graphics that tell the story visually

- Include quotations from those who benefit from the work of the community.

- Include logos from partner organizations.

- Include your contact information.

Putting your Stories to Work

Planning for distribution is just as important as creating your Community of Practice Success Story. Regardless of the format you develop, consider multiple distribution mechanisms. Possible venues include a website or webpage, information kits, news releases, marketing brochures and newsletters, yearly reports to funders, or a take-home piece for senior decision-makers.

Finally, keep the stories current by updating them regularly. By providing stakeholders with the most up-to-date information, you are demonstrating the relevancy and timeliness of your CoP's activities.

Success Story Data Collection Tool	
Community of Practice Information	
Success Story Item	
Contact name:	Address: E-mail: Office number: Cell phone:
Focus of the Story	
Proposed Title of the Success Story:	
Focus/Theme of the story:	
Audience(s):	
The public health need for this Community of Practice:	
Background of the Story	
Time period of achievement:	
Location of the story:	
Target group:	
Name and contact information of one participant to interview:	
How did the CoP accomplish success:	
Environmental context and barriers to success:	
Key results or implications of success:	
Quote from a participant:	
Impact of the CoP to members or the domain:	
Implications of the Story	
Next Steps:	
Lessons learned:	
Publication Information	
Do you have a photo? Please attach photo (.jpg file) and release form.	Yes No
Do you have a program logo?	Yes No

	If yes, please include an electronic copy with your submission.

By submitting this form, I am agreeing to allow (Insert Community of Practice name here) to use this information to develop a success story to be used in presentations and written forms of communication. I have reviewed all of the information above.

Signature:

Title:

Date:

Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Oral Health. Impact and Value: Telling your Program's Story. [online] 2007 [cited November 2008]. Available from URL: http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/publications/library/pdf/success_story_workbook.pdf.

References

[1] National Park Service. Community Toolbox: Storytelling. [online]. 2002 [cited 2008 November]. Available from URL: http://www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoolbox/gatinfo_story.htm.

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Oral Health. Impact and Value: Telling your Program's Story. [online] 2007 [cited 2008 November]. Available from URL: http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/publications/library/pdf/success_story_workbook.pdf.