**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Using Storytelling to Share Your Program Successes**

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LAURA CASERTANO: Again, I want to welcome everyone to today's webinar. And in case you haven't done so yet or you joined a little bit late, make sure you introduce yourself in that chat in the bottom left-hand corner of your screen.

Now, I'm going to turn things over to your moderator today, Richard Morris. He's a senior advisor. Richard?

RICHARD MORRIS: Thank you. Thank you very much, and good morning. I should say, depending on where you are, it could be afternoon. It is our pleasure today to welcome each of you to the Department of Labor sponsored webinar entitled using storytelling to share your program successes. As we all know, stories and storytelling can be really great conduits of expression.

There are lots of things that we think are important that actually don't stick in our minds at all, but stories create sticky memories by attaching emotions to things that happen. For example, stories that tell of one's failures that subsequently led to success can be very interesting emotional entry points to a story.

It is said that one of the main reasons we listen to stories is to create a deeper belief in ourselves. It's probably worth noting that stories are the original viral tool, that is once you tell a very compelling story, the first thing any of us do is think, who can I tell this story to? Hopefully, by the end of this webinar you'll be asking yourself a similar question, who can I share this training with?

Now, without further ado, it's the department's pleasure to introduce Lenora Thompson and John Rakis. Now, please sit back and enjoy. Thank you.

JOHN RAKIS: Thank you, Richard, and greetings, everybody. This is John Rakis, and Lenora and I are really excited about sharing what we know about the art of storytelling. In a world where evidence-based strategies determine the design of your program, you may be wondering, why is storytelling important? Well, the research tells us that you can give a person a few facts and they will remember that information for only a short period of time but, if you put those facts in the context of a memorable story, they are likely to remember it – remember those facts for a long, long time.

Being able to tell stories about your program and your efforts, whether it's to a live audience, on your website, using social media, on a podcast, or via video or photographs helps you in many, many ways. It will help you recruit participants by inspiring them to sign up for the training you have to offer or for the guidance you have to offer. It can help you retain program participants by continuing to inspire them as they progress through the training and services you have to offer.

Storytelling can help you engage employers in your work by attracting their interest and providing them with incentives to learn more about the benefits you have to offer them. Now, effective storytelling can also help you get the word out to the community and engage volunteers in your efforts. It can help you build support for your program with the general public, with legislators, with the press, foundation officials, and others who can help sustain your program if it – if you have a federal grant and that grant period is ending.

Storytelling is a skill – and I really believe that – that can be learned through practice. Everyone working for employment and training programs, your project director, a case manager, a job developer, a trainer, anyone that has contact with program participants and the public needs to master this skill. So by the end of this session you're going to have the basic tools needed to tell a great story that evokes emotion and builds support for your work. We're going to illustrate how to use these tools by sharing stories with you. All are true, although we may have changed the names in some cases for privacy reasons.

Now, my background is in criminal justice, and I've worked with people, justice-involved individuals who were reentering the world of work. So most of my examples are from that world, but they apply to any training program in a number of different fields.

By the way, this is a very – (inaudible) – subject. I know an advertising executive, a owner of an ad firm, that's actually changing the name of the company. They no longer want to be considered an advertising firm. They want to be considered a content development firm. And the owner of that company said – they have contracts with some really big companies like Google and some major motion picture companies.

It's all about storytelling now. If you want to market a product, an organization, you need to be able to tell stories. It's no longer advertising. So this is a really current subject and we hope to share with you what we've learned over the years and hopefully you can put that to use in the work that you do.

Lenora is going to share a poll with you that we'd like you to answer, and we're going to talk a little bit about developing a story bank. Lenora?

LENORA THOMPSON: All right, John. Hi, everybody. Nice to be with you today. So Laura has just put a short poll up that is just going to give us a little bit of information. I'm pretty sure all of you can see it. Do you maintain a story bank that you can tap into when engaging participants, employers, and the general public? So your choices are, yes, we have a story bank, no, we don't have a story bank, and no, we don't have one but we're interested in setting one up.

So we just want to take a minute for you to respond to that. I'm really glad to see that a lot of you are saying I don't but we're interested in how to set one up. So we're just going to give it a few more seconds, and then we'll take the poll away. OK, Laura. So I think you can take the poll down now. So most of you said, no, I don't have one but I am interested in learning how to set one up.

So one of the things we're going to talk about first is just what is a story bank, and a story bank is using stories to advance your cause. These stories are prepared. They're in one place. They help to tell things about real people and real time. They help us to look at complex issues like policy issue, but the important thing is that they talk about the – they illustrate the everyday struggles of individuals.

A story bank. There is a well-known guru who tells stories, and his name is Andy Goodman and he says that every organization should have a story bank because you need a place that you're not always going to have time to run around, to talk to someone, to interview someone, and you need a place to have these things already banked. So they have releases with them. They have a system for checking the facts, and they also are important so, when you get a call from an employer or reporter or anyone else, you have to be ready to say yes and send your story forward.

Now, I know some of you are probably saying, with all that I have to do, now, you want me to keep a story bank, keep stories on hand, and things of that sort. Well, one of the things that the literature talks about is that it doesn't have to be you. You can look at a journalism student, a retired person, someone who is in graduate school, someone who is maybe working on their masters or their PhD. Any of these people would be interested in probably helping you to keep a story bank.

The other things I'd like for you to keep in mind is that, when the whole healthcare issue became under the Affordable Care Act, it was a company called Healthcare Families U.S.A. that had so many stories that they were collecting across the country that was pivotal in having the Affordable Care Act funded and also become law for the country. So everyone is affected by stories. Everyone is affected by how you tell your story, and it's just important for you to have a story bank.

So if nothing else at the end of this time today, you consider having a story bank, putting that bank in place, having those stories ready so that, if you were given the call, if you get a call from the White House, the governor, the mayor, anybody, that you have this bank of stories ready; not just one story but a bank of stories because you would not necessarily have the same story ready for an educator or an employer or participant. So you need to have a bank of stories that has a variety of stories in it. And remember, always make sure that you have checked the facts in your story and that you have all the proper releases that you should have before you put someone's story in your story bank.

So the other thing is is that John and I are hoping today that at the end of today, if you think back on today's session, that you will be able to say, yes. I learned at least one new thing or I had one new idea or I will think about doing something differently as a part of this conversation that we have today. So, John?

MR. RAKIS: Well, you're so right, Lenora, about being prepared because, when a reporter calls, he or she is going to – has a deadline. They're going to want to know, do you have a story for me? Can you share something? I'm on deadline right now. It has to be now. So if you have to scramble looking for that story and trying to find it and get the releases, you're not going to make the deadline.

I once had a call from the White House right before the State of the Union address and they needed an example to give during the State of the Union, and I had several ready. Now, sadly, I wasn't chosen or the client that I selected wasn't chosen, but the bottom line was that I was ready to go and I had the stories already prepared.

And the point you made about volunteerism is also a really good one. I once had a volunteer who was the bank vice president, and he applied to a notice that we had in Volunteer Match seeking a volunteer to help with our newsletter. And I asked him, why would you want to do this? You're a bank VP. And he says, well, I went to the Columbia School of Journalism as an undergraduate and as a graduate student, but I never got a job in the newspaper business. I always wanted it but I ended up in banking and that's where I've earned a good living.

Now, I want to get back to some storytelling. So he volunteered and helped out, and the positive thing about that, another positive thing was that at a certain point in time, once he got to know us, he became a supporter of our organization as well financially through that bank. So we had two wins there. So being prepared and seeking the help from the outside to develop your story bank is a great thing to do.

MS. THOMPSON: And I just want to add one last thing, John, that you want to make sure you have quality work, you have quality photographs, you have quality written work, and if you're going to have a video, remember you need a quality video.

We had a situation one time that I was a part of it and people were asked to bring their stories on video, and the quality of the stories were so poor because, when they had to be projected on screens, they did not have the proper resolution. So keep in mind that you have to have all of these things worked out, and you're not going to have an opportunity to go back and fix them if someone needs them at the last minute.

OK. Back to you, John.

MR. RAKIS: Lenora. Well, I'd like to share a story with you that demonstrates the power of story. For more than a decade I managed a program that helped justice-involved individuals secure training opportunities at the full-time employment. Many of their stories were quite remarkable. Very often I was asked, what does it take to turn someone's life around if they've been using drugs and have a history of arrests and little family support, inadequate housing, or work history, health and mental health issues?

One way I could have answered that question was to talk about our in-depth assessment practices, how we addressed each barrier to employment, our support groups, our ties with social service agencies. All of those elements of a program were essential, as they are with any training program worth its salt, but it doesn't tell a story that evokes emotion. Let me share with you one that does.

We had a client who had been a crack addict for more than 10 years. She had no history of working and had spent most of her adult life in and out of jail before going through a jail-based drug treatment program. And with our help, she successfully entered the world of work upon her release. Within a year she was promoted to a supervisory position. At that time I asked her if she could remember the moment that she knew that she would never use drugs again and she smiled and she said, yeah, I remember that very exact moment.

I had been out of the program for just a week and was really struggling when I got a call from a program staff member. I told her I was afraid to leave the house, and she invited me to lunch. We met in a nice restaurant, and I looked down at the table and saw a napkin. I saw the linen and the silverware and I realized that this was the first time I had eaten in a restaurant that wasn't a fast food place. At that moment I thought, I would not have been invited here unless they thought I was worth something, and I realized that I was. And from that moment on I knew I did not want to go back to using drugs.

Well, the story I just shared with you took less than two minutes to tell, but I believe it spoke volumes about a staff member's act of kindness and what it takes to change a life. Of course all the things I mentioned earlier, assessments and training and addressing barriers are all critical to the success of your efforts, but often than that it's the intangible things like an invitation to lunch that can make a huge difference. Whether you're addressing five people or 500 in a two-hour speech, people will remember a two-minute story.

Now, many of the people we work with have backgrounds that may have little appeal at the general public or employers. If you're a job developer, how many times have you heard, I don't hire ex-offenders? But an effective story can change the way program participants are perceived, and people will remember it.

We're all in the business of changing perceptions, whether you work with the criminal justice population, single mothers on public assistance, or perhaps older workers, senior workers. Your job is not only to prepare them for the world of work but to dispel the stereotypes that the general public or employers may have about them. Never doubt the power that stories have to shatter those stereotypes.

Lenora has a great quote she'd like to share with you. Lenora?

MS. THOMPSON: Well, Mr. Rogers – this tells my age and tells how old I am – but Mr. Rogers was a television personality who carried this quote in his wallet. And perhaps the most important rule of the story is making it better for the listener to care. Mr. Rogers – the quote said, "There isn't anyone you couldn't love once you've heard their story."

We often work with people that nobody cares about. Often they've been neglected, abused, and pretty much discarded by their community, but you can make people care about them by telling their story and telling their story well.

For those of you who are younger, the new person that is out there is a little animal called Daniel Tiger. And so if you have children or grandchildren, they don't know Mr. Rogers, but they know Daniel Tiger. And Daniel Tiger does the same thing that Mr. Rogers did. He puts on his sweater, he puts on his sneakers, and he goes about the neighborhood and he goes about telling stories. And that's all Mr. Rogers did. He was telling stories.

So, "There isn't anyone you couldn't love once you've heard their story." Even people who seem to be a little prickly, not so lovable, once you've heard their story, because usually behind that prickliness is a story that they – that is a good story.

So your job is to find those stories and to use them to help your audience appreciate the importance of your work because all of you are doing very hard work, very difficult work, and many times – sometimes the public doesn't really appreciate what you're doing because they don't understand and they don't know the story behind – some people say the story behind the story. And so this is your job, and remember that quote. "There isn't anyone you couldn't love once you have heard their story."

So we're going to talk about the power of stories for a minute. People respond to stories. Richard started off telling us from the beginning you may not remember the data or the statistics, but you will remember the story. And there are individual stories, those that contain more than just numbers, and stories bring that invisible and that abstract to light. I can think of many a times that I've been somewhere that when I left I didn't remember all the data, but I surely remembered the impact of that story. And even if you have all the evidence in the world, people are quickly bored with the numbers. We are wired to love stories, which bring the invisible and the abstract to light, and if you want to connect with your audience, tell them a story.

Andy Goodman, who I did meet several years ago, what he does, he goes around the country and he helps companies tell their story. And he tells the story, and there's a TED Talk video where he talks about a woman who approached him and she could not understand, with all the wonderful work that they were doing, why their story just didn't seem to resonate.

And when she would look out in the audience, she could tell that people were no longer paying attention to her. Well, when Andy Goodman heard how she was presenting, he immediately knew that what she was saying did not connect with the audience, and she was not able to tell a story. And so he taught her how to tell a story.

And for those of you who are interested in his work, he has written something called Storytelling as a Best Practice, and it talks about how stories strengthen your organization, engage your audience, and advance your mission. And your story should be told on a regular basis. Post it regularly to either your website, your Facebook, a newsletter, flyers, when you do radio interviews, television interviews.

No matter what you do, you should always try to interject a story in there so that people will remember you and what you're saying. And keep in mind that there's no better way to do this, that it is not the same story for every audience, and you may have different stories for funders and employers, but what you want to do is try to tell a compelling story. John?

MR. RAKIS: Yeah. I think, Lenora, that we're all genetically – oh, I'm getting an echo here. I think we're all genetically – are you getting an echo in your –

MS. THOMPSON: No. I'm not getting – no.

MR. RAKIS: OK. I'm getting an echo on my phone. I think we're genetically predisposed to hearing stories and – or listening to stories. I think 20,000 years ago in France there were men that were painting on the caves stories of animal hunts and I think we love hearing stories and I think that's part of the power of stories.

So let's give some examples, and let's go over – what I want to do now – what we want to do now is touch on the elements of a good story.

There are no fixed rules. I don't want you to think that you can't break a rule. You can break rules, but there are some general rules to follow, and I think your story will be much more effective if you consider some or all of these elements. And I also want you to remember it does take practice. Stories need to be developed over time. You need to practice them in front of people before you actually deliver them. Hone them down, and that's how you get the best story out there.

So what's one of the first things we want to recommend? Well, stories are about people, not about concepts or ideas, and the leading character in your story should be a person that the listener can picture in their mind. It's important to provide a physical description or some other information that describes them. This helps your audience form a mental picture. You want to consider including your character's name. If you have to use a pseudonym, you might want to do that to protect their identity.

Let me give an example. People often ask me, what's the best way to prepare a person with a criminal record for a job interview? And I always like to say, KIS, keep it simple. Start out by saying, I made some bad decisions in the past, but I learned from those bad decisions. And while I was incarcerated, I got my GED, and I got some job training as a welder. I don't want to go back, and if you hire me, I can promise you that I'll be the best person you ever hired. Well, nothing could be simpler than that, could it?

I once worked with a young woman – her name was Mary – who had spent more than a decade in prison. Little work experience and was quite nervous about her upcoming job interview. She was a petite woman – (inaudible) – no more than five feet tall, but she had a determined attitude. She wanted to make it and we felt she was ready for a job interview and we sent her out. But the employer called us and said, why did you send her to me? I asked her a few questions and she started to cry and then she ran out. Are you sure she's ready?

Well, we talked to the employer, and I said, look, let's give her another chance; let us work with her a little bit longer. Well, when she returned to our office, we gave her a pep talk. We had her put on some fresh makeup and we did a few more practice interviews using the technique I just described to you and we sent her out to the employer the same day. We were a little nervous about sending her out and kind of anxiously awaited the call from the employer.

When he did call, he said, what did you tell her; what happened? Well, she marched into my office and before I could ask her a question she said, you have got to hire me, and if you do, I'll be the best person you ever hired. Well, and he did and he told us, what else could I do?

Can you see that woman walking into that interview? Can you relate her experience to your first job interview perhaps when you were nervous? She later became a supervisor and spoke to an audience of more than 300 people at her annual award ceremony. Now, in summary stories are about people and you want to focus – the focus of your story to be about a person who your audience can relate to.

Well, stories need to be fixed in time and space. The audience wants to know, did this happen last week, a year ago, 10 years ago? Where are we in the story? Think about this. Most children stories begin with, once upon a time. (Inaudible) – they're a mystery to the story. You want to find out more. Well, you're not going to start your stories with once upon a time, but you can fix your story to a moment in time. Let me give you an example based on true experience.

It's the middle of the winter, one of the worst snow storms in the city's history. The busses have been pulled off the road, and only the subways beneath the city streets are working. Our office is operating with a skeletal staff and a handful of the residents of a nearby work release facility made it to our program and they wanted to work. An employer calls and says he has an immediate hiring need that we can fill and – with one of our program participants and we had the right person for that job.

But the business was at the end of the subway line, as far away from our office as you could get, and then it was three miles away from that subway stop and there were no busses running. But we had one client who was determined to get a job, and we sent him out, keeping our fingers crossed that he would make it through the snow drifts. Well, we called the employer at the end of the day and I asked if he interviewed him and he said, I didn't bother. Anyone that can make it on a day like today is going to be a great employee. I hired him on the spot.

Well, you can see how placing this story on a winter's day in the middle of a snow storm fixes the story in time and place, and it really brings it to life. What a wonderful story to share to demonstrate the extra yard a motivated person will do to secure work, and he was a motivated person.

Now, Lenora has some information she would like to share with you about the message your story is going to tell. Lenora?

MS. THOMPSON: John, earlier you spoke about how we are genetically wired to tell and listen to stories, and I just want to add that probably all traditions have someone who tells stories. Storytelling is not new, and in the west African culture the person is called a "griot." It's spelled g-r-i-o-t, but it's pronounced "greo."

And ever since we started preparing for this webinar, it just seems that every place I turn I am seeing something about stories. And so last Sunday in our local paper called The Tribune, there was a full-page ad about a woman who is a nationally-known and internationally-known storyteller and how she uses stories to inspire and preserve culture. So when you think of preserving culture, you can also think about preserving the work that your organization is doing, but everywhere I turn now it's like I'm seeing stories or something about storytelling everywhere – everywhere that we look.

So if you ask yourself, who is my audience and what is the message I want to share with them, each decision about your story should flow from those questions. What you want to share with them, what you want to say, but you should never make a promise of a story that leads nowhere that wastes a person's time. A story is like a train ride on which you invited others to join along, and those who come along want to feel that they're headed toward a particular destination.

Always keep in mind that the absence of information or – that you want them to begin the story where the audience is, and you want your story to have some kind of hook that keeps you listening and keeps you wanting to come back for more. Your story should have a clear moral and reason for taking the journey, and you need a story that explains what it means and makes us feel like we fit in there somewhere.

Recently, I came across a story from one of my grantees about a man named Stanley Andrisse, A-n-d-r-i-s-s-e. And he had a very, very troubled childhood, but he went on. Today he is an endocrinologist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and if you want to learn more about his story, you can go to fromprisoncellsstophd.org.

But his story is so fascinating that he was a young man who did not give up, and he got rejection after rejection. And he served quite a long time in prison, but he also – when I first heard his story from someone who shared it with me, it made me start thinking about that there is more to this young man's life than the fact that he is an ex-felon and he served time in prison and that he is really doing some wonderful things in life today.

So not only did his story have a promise, but it took me along. It wanted me to learn more about him. It answered some questions about his life, and you can learn more about his story and other stories like him. He is a wonderful – I don't know him, but from what I've read he seems like he is a remarkable young man. And for him to be an endocrinologist at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine means that he has come a mighty, mighty long way.

So the people – in our next slide John is going to talk about the people in your story have to want something.

MR. RAKIS: Lenora, one of the things that I encourage people to do when they're developing their stories is, first, identify what your message is and take a little yellow sticky and perhaps – and just – or a flip chart and write your message on that board in one sentence. So if your message is that we provide employers with no-cost recruitment services that can save them time and money, that's your message.

And then use that message to craft your story. That's the point of – the point of your story should be that employers learn how you can save them time and money. So by having that message up there on the flip chart or on a yellow sticky and keep focusing on that message, it will help you shape your story to make sure that it keeps its promise to take someone where they need to be. Let's go on and I want to talk about the need for having the people in your story want something.

A story truly doesn't begin until the audience really knows the goal of the central character in your story and has a reason to care whether or not it is attained. So in the beginning of the story you want to make sure that your central character wants to do something and they want to change. Give you an example, someone that actually I worked with.

Fred had served a few years in prison following an armed robbery conviction. He was a tough guy who made a living robbing drug dealers. It's a really high-risk occupation. But he was smart and he was motivated to succeed and I actually hired him upon his release from prison for a position that required some typing and computer skills, both of which he had. But he didn't do well in that capacity. He was counseled and written up by his supervisor several times, and he had literally one foot out the door when he was brought to my office for a final warning.

I say, what's the problem? You're a bright guy. Why aren't you doing well? And he told me that he was bored and he wanted a job that was exciting. And I said, well, what might that be? He said, well, I want to be an ambulance driver. I don't want to sit behind a desk. I want to be outside saving people's lives. Well, given his background, I don't know; sounded like a bit of a stretch but I knew people with criminal records who became lawyers and physicians and I knew that almost anything was possible in the long run, if you had the brains and if you had the motivation.

So I call the head of EMS, Emergency Medical Services, and learn that – what was needed to be done, and Fred developed a plan with our guidance. He started out by getting certified in CPR and first aid and then volunteered on a part-time basis with a volunteer ambulance service, which led to his first job, a part-time job with an ambulette service. And eventually he became a full-time employee and acquired more certifications along the way to becoming a paramedic. I lost touch with him for a while, but then one day I received an e-mail from him which included a photo. It was a picture of him in the ruins of the World Trade Center serving as a rescue worker.

I believe that this story speaks to the need to connect program participants to training and careers that are matched to their interests. That's the message. In Fred's case, he wanted a career that did not require him to sit behind a desk. He wanted a job that was exciting, and becoming a paramedic really fulfilled that need.

Another thing you want to do in your stories is you want to let your characters speak for themselves. You notice in some of the stories that I've told thus far, I've had quotes from the characters. So you want to try to use direct quotes. By allowing the central character to speak in their voice, it gives your story authenticity. Let me give you another example.

More than 40 years ago I began my career as a counselor in the Bronx House of Detention, which at the time was a few blocks away from the old Yankee Stadium. Neither the jail nor the old Yankee Stadium are still there, but I am. I'm still here. I was brought into the warden to be introduced. He was a short, stalky guy. Had gray hair and looked a little bit like an elder James Cagney.

So I kind of meekly asked him if there was any advice he could give me, and he looked at me and growled, yeah, I got two important pieces of advice for you. First, don't give the inmates gum. Well, I kind of looked puzzled, and he said, they use it to jam the locks, and that's bad for us. Then he went on to give me the second, probably the most important, piece of advice. Whatever you do, don't make any promises you can't keep. Do that and everyone in the jail will know and your credibility will go down the toilet. I never forgot those words, and that advice is as good today as it was more than 40 years ago.

Well, do you see how that description of the warden and the quote make the story, as well as the important message that it gave? One must keep one's word. I think that's true in any program and in any line of work. Both make the story come alive and kind of give it a sense of authenticity.

Now, audiences bore easily. People don't have the time to wait for your story to get interesting. At the very beginning – and that's why I always favored short stories as opposed to longer ones. But at the very beginning you have to make them wonder. What's going to happen with this story? What happens next? How is it going to turn out? Is this person going to succeed? Are they going to fail?

As the people in your story pursue their goal, you want them to run into obstacles, surprises, something that makes the audience sit up and take notice. You want to have a hook for your opener, and a hook is an attention-getter, a question or a quote that really gets your listener and reader interested in what you're going to say. If you can make it unusual or mysterious, that's great. Let me give you an example of a hook.

Do you believe that gratitude and optimism can overcome any obstacle? Well, I do, and so did Marissa. She applied for a job as a receptionist in my office after learning word processing skills in a senior employment training program. Before that she had worked for a lifetime as a sewing machine operator in a sweat shop. She had a great smile and a very heavy Spanish accent, which really made her difficult to understand; perhaps not the best person to hire as a receptionist.

I asked her why she wanted the job, and she cheerfully said, America's a great country. I was kind of surprised when she said that. She worked in a sweat shop for all those years, had no pension, and had to start from scratch again at the age of 60. Well, she went on to say, what other country would help a person like me go back to school at my age, and what other country would have a program to help people coming out of prison get jobs? This is a great country.

Well, how could I not hire a person with that sort of attitude. I did, and she was the best receptionist I ever hired. Here she enrolled in college at the age of 61, and everyone, and I mean everyone, who came to our office was encouraged by her to go to school or enroll in training. She was a great influence on all the people who walked through our door.

Well, the hook for the story was a question. Do you believe that gratitude and optimism can overcome any obstacle? It was meant to make you think and to draw you in. I hope it did.

Now, go ahead, Lenora.

MS. THOMPSON: One of the things we talked about is also for those of you who have staff to do – I know you all know what speed dating is and speed questions are, and one of the activities that was mentioned in some of the reading that I came across, it talked about have your staff spend some time doing hooks. Think about all the clients that you have. Think about them and their story, and try to think of what is the hook? What is the thing that captures that particular client, that makes you think about him?

And this is something that all of your staff can participate in because this is not the responsibility of one person. And I think that the more that you have people involved in what you're doing, they will take ownership in what you're doing. And, as John has said, that this whole issue of trying to identify hooks, something that draws your attention, is really important, along with the details that – about the story that you're telling.

MR. RAKIS: And the way to practice that is to just give an assignment to your staff, whether it's five people or six or seven or 20, and say, we want you to tell a story but we want – we just want you to do an attention-getter for two minutes, to think about it during the evening and then come in the next day to deliver it and then to get feedback. Have your staff give feedback for that attention-getter, and let people actually practice it.

Whether they're job developers or whether they're counselors or trainers, they should be able to have a good attention-getter that they can use to get people's attention, to hook – the hook, so to speak, to draw people in to hearing their story. So it's a good exercise to do. It's good practice. As I mentioned earlier, you need to practice this stuff, and having people actually deliver attention-getters to their colleagues and get feedback from their colleagues is a great way to learn that particular skill.

Now, let's move on. We'll talk a little bit about details, including interesting details. A single telling detail, I should say, can really become the heart of a story. You don't want to overwhelm the listener with details, but you want them to remember the details that you provide. Many years ago I took a course with Robert Reich, who later became the secretary of labor in the Clinton administration. Reich strongly believed that a new leader should do something symbolic at the beginning of a new job or a new project that clearly signals what direction they intend to take. That was his message.

When I began my tenure as the executive director of a non-profit in June of 1989, the first thing I noticed when I went to the office, that it was hot and stuffy, that every desk had a fan, and the fans were blowing papers all over the place, and really not helping to cool things off. The carpet was frayed, and the paint was pealing. It's not a good place to work or train our program participants. Turned out that there had been dispute with the landlord over who was going to be – who was going to fix the air conditioning system, which was broken, and the dispute had gone on for more than two years.

I also found out that our lease was expiring in nine months, and we needed to find a new space. We were being kicked out. Well, we were at a stalemate. Nobody wanted to spend the money on the space because we were going to leave pretty soon, except for me. I crunched the numbers with my fiscal officer. I found some money in the budget. I think it required $10,000 all totaled, but we needed to make it happen in less than two weeks, the end of our fiscal year.

So I gave the marching orders, get three bids to fix the carpeting, get three bids to paint the place, get three bids to fix the air conditioning. Let's make it happen before July the 1st, and we did. On July the 1st, a hot and humid day, I directed the staff to remove the fans from their desk and bring them to the dumpster. Well, that was my symbolic act, and my message was that going forward our agency would take care of its staff and its clients.

Now, I could have told that story without mentioning the fans, but the detail I provided about the fans and the image I painted of those fans being thrown into the dumpster is the detail that makes the story. So consider whenever you are telling a story, what's the detail that people will remember? What detail can I provide that people will remember, and what kind of an impact will that detail have on them? Well, knowing your audience –

MS. THOMPSON: The last two slides, John, the one about details and the hook, it's important – there's a book that I'd like to share with the audience, and it's called "Be the One," and it was written by Byron Pitts. Some people might know him from Nightline.

"Be the One" is the title of the book. Why this book was important to me in terms of storytelling, he interviewed over 200 people. These are all young people who had different obstacles in their life, but when I heard about this one story, when you speak of the hook and the details, I went out and immediately bought the book.

And the one detail was is that in the book he talks about six – out of the 200-some interviews he did, he chose six stories to tell because he thought the six stories were compelling and that they resonated and represented all the ones.

And the one that just jumped off the page for me – none of his stories are that long. I read the book in one night about all six stories – was about a young man who walked from the Congo in Africa to South Africa, which is approximately 2,000 miles, and it took him three years. And the reason he walked is because the war in the Congo had just broke out, and his father wanted he and his brother and another friend to get out of the country. And so they set out, and they walked.

And when I heard that in Byron Pitts' book, "Be the One," I just couldn't imagine a young person and all that he had to have gone through to walk from the Congo to South Africa. Now, at the time I didn't know that it was almost 2,000 miles, but I knew that from the Congo to South Africa was a plane ride. And you're absolutely correct. It was the hook and it was a short detail that made me go out and buy the book. The other stories are compelling, and they're very, very interesting too. But that is the story that made me want to go out and buy the book.

The other thing that I learned about this young man who walked from the Congo to South Africa was the work of Angela Duckworth, who is a award-winning author, and she talks about "Grit" – g-r-i-t – "The Power Of Passion And Perseverance." And her book is a number one book on the New York Times Best Seller, and I kept thinking about the six people in this book because they all had passion. They all had perseverance. They had stamina. They had a future that they were looking forward to, and they also realized that what they were involved in was a marathon and not a sprint.

And so for me, this book is something that I've recommended to other people, to other grantees because I think that in the six stories that Byron Pitts tells, that you can identify with them some way, somehow. He talks about being bullied. He talks about being abandoned as a child. He also talks about someone that had a lot of health issues, but again, it just ties in. It doesn't have to be major detail, but I was hooked. I buy very few books, but I went out and bought Be the One and now have passed it on to other individuals that I think that this is going to help them have a different look on life.

So on the next slide we talk about you have to speak the language of the audience. So good storytellers always have a keen ear for the colloquium and the local slang that quickly establishes a common ground between the teller and the story. That's why when we talked about the story bank, we talked about that you have to have different stories in the bank for different reasons, because one of the things that participants may resonate with is not how you would talk to an employer. It's certainly not how you would talk to educators, and it's also not how you would talk to government officials. So the stories have to connect emotionally, and they have to use a language that people will be familiar with.

I have a colleague that, when we do training and we talk about being a mentor and she's trying to help them to resonate with the mentee, she always talks about how you have to speak the language and understand the language of the audience that you're dealing with because, when you don't, there is a direct disconnect and people just don't pay attention to your story. So it is important for you to be able to speak the language of your audience, know local colloquialisms, be able to relate to who you're speaking to, and know that one size does not fit all, that what you say to one group doesn't necessarily work for another group. John?

MR. RAKIS: OK. Thank you, Lenora. Talk a little bit about stirring up emotion. People are not inclined to think about things they don't care about. So even when you have tons of evidence on your side, you really want to make them [inaudible] feel something before they glance at your numbers. You want them to pay attention to your story and the message. You want to stir up their emotion.

I've been asked on many occasions how I got involved in the field of employment and training, and the earliest part of my career was a mental health worker in a correctional facility. And at several counseling sessions with, Jose. It was a young Latino male who did not want to return to prison. He had a wife who was expecting a child, and he was fond of telling me that he really wanted to do the right thing and raise his family.

The word "re-entry" did not exist in those days, except perhaps when we talked about space vehicles returning to earth. So when he left the jail, I kind of lost contact with him, but several months later I saw him in the receiving room of the jail. He'd been arrested for selling drugs. He felt kind of badly about returning, embarrassed, and told me that he was not able to get a job and that selling drugs was the only way he knew how to pay the rent. I felt discouraged to see him back and – but like many of the people I had worked with, it was not an uncommon occurrence.

Well, a week or so later I'm in the counseling office at the end of the day. I was the last person there, and the facility commander called and said, we have some bad news to give an inmate and the chaplain is not here and we need your help. It was Jose, and I had to give him the news that his wife had died while delivering their child and the child had died as well. I spoke with him for several hours, and I remember putting him on suicide watch that night.

He later went to an upstate prison not long after that, and I lost touch with him. I don't know what happened to Jose or where he might be today, but many years later, when I had the opportunity to work in the field of employment and training, I recall that experience and I knew that this was an opportunity I did not want to pass up.

Well, I have no doubt that that story touched an emotional chord with you. Every story needs to touch an emotional chord. It could be joy or happiness or any emotion, for that matter, but it has to touch an emotional chord. You want to set the stage by describing –

MS. THOMPSON: John, before we go on, I just want to share a brief story that I think has touched a lot of emotion in a lot of people. I know someone who works with a group of – who is a volunteer who works with 10 teenage boys, and those boys are now young men. They have actually formed a family among themselves, and they started out by reading a book every month and attending activities. And now, seven years later those young men are still together. They were once disruptive in school. They were the ones disruptive in their behavior, but today they're doing well in high school. Several of them are on the honor roll. One is in college.

And I think the thing that stands out with this story is that many people thought that they would not beat the odds, and they have. They have beat the odds and they are doing well and people are always amazed at seeing them and their accomplishment. But on the other hand that you need in telling your story, when you tell the story well and you share with people, people will resonate with your story. And I know for a fact that this person has been able to get contributions and money and bulk and computers and meals and trips. And all of these things are available because of being able to tell the story and tell the story well.

And for those of you who are thinking, while all this is great and I surely wish I had time to do it and the research that we were doing to prepare for today, the National Storytelling Network actually gives grants. And those grants are in small denominations up to about $5,000. So if you don't ask and if you don't ask and if you don't share your story, you'll never be able to know what help is available for you.

So I would encourage you to really take all of this about storytelling very, very seriously and know that there are people out there who really want to help you as you tell your story. But I think $5,000, if you were able to win the award, might help an organization go a long way of putting that story bank together, looking at those stories, videotaping them, writing them, getting good photography done for them. So there are people out there who are willing to help you tell your story.

So don't forget. Go to the National Storytelling Network website, and then you can take a look and see if you're eligible and if you're interested in applying for one of the grants. OK, John?

MR. RAKIS: Thank you for sharing that, Lenora. That certainly is an attractive proposition. And if you don't try, you just may not get.

Well, setting the stage, describing the scene, letting the listener picture themselves in it are really important to storytelling. This will allow your audience to feel what the character's feeling and become more involved in the story.

Well, some time ago NBC did a documentary that followed four men being released from New Jersey prisons. Jamel was the youngest. He was released in January on a day when the temperature was 19 degrees. In his eagerness to get out, he did not ask for a coat and doesn't know where the bus stop is. Within a few minutes he's shivering, he's only wearing a thin white shirt, and he can't find the bus stop. When he finally does, he learns that he's missed the last bus, and the only way to return to his neighborhood is to take a cab. He does that and spends virtually all the money he has in the world on the cab fare.

Well, I don't think anyone that watched that scene, which only took a minute or two, and would not feel either a sense of sadness or outrage. You couldn't watch it without shivering and feeling what he was going through. So we showed – that NBC producer that produced that piece showed people. He wasn't just telling them about re-entry, but he was showing them some of the impact that the failure to plan might have. And video can be a very, very powerful, powerful tool.

And stories need to have a clear meaning, and, Lenora, would you like to speak on that? Lenora? We're not hearing you, Lenora.

MS. THOMPSON: Can you hear me now?

MR. RAKIS: Hear you now. Hear you now.

MS. THOMPSON: OK. All right. Fine. I said that – yes – stories have to have clear meanings, and it is – I know we have a wide audience here today, and I'm excited about the fact that we have people all over the country. But when the final line is spoken, your audience should know exactly why you took this journey with us, and at the end – at the end the most important thing is for them to understand the meaning of the story.

I just want to share one with you very quickly about MK Asante, and some of you may know him. You may not know him, but you can look him up. His last name is spelled A-s-a-n-t-e, and he wrote a powerful memoire called Buck, B-u-c-k. And MK Asante was a troubled youth. He was kicked out of several schools, and who would have thought, if you looked at how we look at young people sometimes or make decisions about them, where he would be today.

Today he is an award-winning author. He is a filmmaker, and he is a tenured college professor at a university in Baltimore called Morgan State University. And by the way, it's my understanding that he is the youngest African American male in the history of this country to ever receive tenure at a major university.

Now, for me the clear meaning of this story is don't judge the book by its cover because, when he was growing up, he sold drugs. He got into trouble. He was kicked out of school, and no one would have believed that MK Asante would be the person that he has become today. So we never know what someone will become and his story is a powerful story and it is resonating with people all over the country. Schools are bringing him in. Lecturer series have him in, and if you go to TED Talk, you'll be able to listen to him and hear his story.

So his story for me, again, represents that for those of us who are dealing with youth and young adults, we never know. We never know how they will turn out, and we have to get behind what is going on in his life. And the one thing that turned him around was a teacher in a school that, when she told him to write on a piece of paper, he said, I don't have paper. So she gave him paper. He said, I don't have a pen or a pencil. So she gave him something to write with.

And then he wrote some expletive words on the paper, and instead of her becoming upset over that, she said, OK. Tell me about that. Well, he said he didn't write that day, but the next day when he came to class, he couldn't stop writing because he knew that this teacher, this teacher saw more than what people were seeing on the outside of him. And he credits her with really turning his life around, and he is now Dr. MK Asante who is not only known in the United States, he's known internationally for the work that he's doing. John?

MR. RAKIS: That's a great story. Well, good stories have a moment of truth. Usually reflects what the character's achieved or learned, and when you hear it, when you hear that moment of truth, you really recognize it very quickly.

So for many years I was an instructor and a master instructor for the offender workforce development specialist training program. It's 160-some-odd-hour credentialed course instruction that was sponsored by the Justice Department. The course took place over the course of three weeks, roughly a month or so between each week to allow for practicum activities. And trainees included probation, correction, criminal justice non-profits, workforce development systems, a wide variety of different types of people.

Well, many years ago we did the training in Oklahoma City, and as was our custom we asked the participants at the end of the first week to give us some feedback verbally actually. So one probation officer rose and said, I have to be honest with everyone. I didn't want to come here. I was ordered to come here by my boss and I follow orders but I think this is nothing but B.S.

Well, having said that, he just sat down and not a great start, I thought. Well, a month later he came back. Week two – at the end of week two he rose again to give some testimony, and I said, well, I still don't think this will work with the people under my supervision, but I did learn a few things this week. I thought progress.

Well, a month later, the final week, third and final week, he rose again to speak, and I kind of held my breath. Didn't know what he was going to say. Well, I've been doing this work for 20 years now, and I've come to realize now that I've been doing it the wrong way all that time. When I go back, I'm going to change the way I advise my probationers. It's going to be about careers, not just simply jobs.

Well, he kept his word and he took on a really difficult case load, actually, of nothing but sex offenders. He helped develop an employment readiness program that's being used around the state, and he took an additional three days of instruction to become an instructor for the course.

Well, the moment of truth in that story is the statement he made after the third week of instruction. His thinking had been transformed by the training, and it was revealed by what he said at the end of the third week.

As I said earlier, you've got to practice your stories. Reflect after you've told the story or shared it with someone. Did it have a hook or an attention-getter? Did you have a point to make? Did you have the right details in it? Was there a message of interest to your audience? Do they understand what they're supposed to get from the story? Try to answer those questions and see whether you've covered all of the bases and get feedback from your colleagues, from your friends before you deliver that presentation to the outside world.

Now, we've invited a grantee, and Lenora is going to introduce her to tell – and that grantee will share her story with us. Lenora? Lenora, we don't hear you.

MS. THOMPSON: The grantee that I'd like to introduce is Janet Chaney, and Janet is the project director for the DOL Training to Work III Reentry Program. She and her staff have extensive experience working with the re-entry population and so there are many stories that Janet could tell but she has chosen one to represent the many faces of the people that she works with. And so with that, Janet?

JANET CHANEY: Thank you, Ms. Lenora. I really appreciate it. I want to tell a short story about one of our students. His name is Michael. Michael is an African American male that grew up in north Philadelphia but Michael has always been very determined and had a great work ethic and he decided that he wanted to make some money fast.

In the fall of 1997 Michael was arrested for drug possession with an intent to deliver. Michael was sentenced to 17 years in prison. Can you imagine what it's like to be ripped away from your family and your home at the age of 30?

Michael returned back to his neighborhood in this year of 2017. Upon his arrival buildings that were there, homes that were there were no longer there because they were town down. Nieces and nephews that were babies when he left now are going to college or graduating from high school. Family members had passed away. Sickly, his mom, his father, and he was devastated to return now to a world that he had never known.

When he was released from prison after 17 years, he was referred to a halfway house. He had no idea what to do, where to go, or where to turn after returning to a world that was no longer familiar to him. In his stay at the halfway house, his case manager referred him to Connection Training Service, and as Lenora stated, it was a fantastic program funded through the Department of Labor. Michael began to realize that he had missed so much of his life in the past 17 years. During – being at Connection Training, Michael decided to open up through his life skills classes. His thinking had changed. He replaced his fears and being confused and changed how he looked at his environment.

Michael was accepted into Connection Training Services' plumbing class where he received a national certification in plumbing and he was awarded the perfect attendance award. Once Michael completed all of his classes, graduated, he started looking for employment with the assistance of the employment specialist.

Michael was very determined, and he wanted something that was out of the ordinary. Michael landed a job at Temple University here in Philadelphia. He started making $12.50 an hour, but with that tenacity that he had he decided he wanted to go higher. So as of today Michael is still employed at Temple University and he has been promoted to maintenance supervisor making $19.50 an hour and he has the opportunity to go to college for free.

MS. THOMPSON: Janet, that is a wonderful story and I had the opportunity to meet Michael a few months ago and he was impressive. He was impressive, and his story, I just didn't forget him.

And John's point or our point throughout today's discussion is I may not remember how much he made an hour or some of the other things but he was an impressive young man and he certainly embodies the things that were discussed and the research about grit and determination and where he's going to end up in life. And so thank you for sharing that story with us, and thank you for being a part of today's session.

MR. RAKIS: And thank you very, very much for sharing that story.

MS. CHANEY: You're welcome.

MR. RAKIS: One of the things that I really liked about it was that you really gave some really good detail there, and I love when you asked that question, can you imagine?

I mean, that really – what it's like being torn away from your family for a number of years, I mean, that really allows the audience to think, what would that experience be like if I was separated from my family for all those years? So that was a good hook. That was a good way to get the emotional involvement of the audience. A really nice job, and thanks for sharing that story. That was very inspiring.

MS. CHANEY: You're welcome. Thank you.

MR. RAKIS: Well, we have assembled some resources for you, and you can download this document by clicking on the file share box, the storytelling resources. You can also download today's PowerPoint, but there's some great resources here that we really did – these are – we took a hard look at what's out there and some of them are actually several pages, 20, 30 pages long. So some real good detail here. Some real great guidance on storytelling. So please take the opportunity to download it.

We do have a lot of questions, and I want to answer as many as we can. So –

MS. THOMPSON: John, I'd like to just add a couple of things before we move to the questions. I would encourage you – those of you who are listening, if you're not familiar with TED Talks, that you do spend some time looking at some of them. Take a look at the story of Marcus Bullock who is also someone who is a returning citizen that now has a company that allows ex-offenders across the country to send postcards – to receive postcards in real time with a photograph of a family member on it. So it's a compelling story with Marcus Bullock that's not on the list.

And also, I would encourage you, if you're not familiar with NPR Story Corps, that NPR Story Corps is a great place to listen to a format of story. I love Story Corps. All of the stories follow the same format. So that's NPR C-o-r-p-s, Story Corps. And then also, ever since we started preparing for this webinar today, my eyes have also been opened to how much is out there.

This weekend in New York there is a festival that's three days called The Future of Storytelling Festival, which is in New York, and then also the National Association of Storytelling. Some of you may not know that there is a national association of storytellers, and you will find storytelling information all over the country in the month of October. And they just held the national meeting in Kansas City, Missouri.

There's also a magazine on storytelling. So there are so many resources out there, and a colleague of mine just went to a conference in Philadelphia for the state – it was for the women in the state of Pennsylvania and she sent me a snapshot at one of the workshops and there were thousands of women there. Michelle Obama was the keynote speaker and there were thousands of women there and one of the sessions was titled Storytelling Round Table. So there is so much information out there.

Sometimes it's overwhelming because there is so much information out there, but those are a few extra resources I would like to add to the list that you have there that John and I have talked about.

So, John, I think we have some questions, and maybe we can take a few of the questions now.

MR. RAKIS: I'm going to jump around a little bit, but I'm going to try to answer – we'll try to answer as many as we can.

Question number three, why are – "What are some good questions to ask to prompt someone to tell a story?"

And I've got some suggestions for that. If it's the people that you're serving, you can ask them, what was your life like before you came here, or how have we helped you? And maybe what was your life like now? If it's a donor, for example, perhaps you want to have a donor story. I think if you've got people that have given money to your organization, there's some questions you can ask them. Why did you make your gift to us?

What is special about our work? Did you have a special mission moment you remember about someone you met who was helped by our organization? These are all questions I think you can ask. You can ask the staff the same questions, actually. Did you have a special mission moment you remember about someone you met who was helped by our organization? That's a great question to ask.

Question number one. I'm sorry. Lenora, anything you'd like to add to that?

MS. THOMPSON: No. I was going to give the information to someone asked, who was the author of the book she cited, Storytelling as Best Practice? His name is Andy Goodman, A-n-d-y G-o-o-d-m-a-n. He is on the list, and his website is www.agoodmanonline.com. So www.agoodmanonline.com. He is considered one of the country's leading gurus on storytelling as a best practice, and he is also the one who talked about a story bank and having a story bank available.

MR. RAKIS: Thank you, Lenora.

"How do you get the return on investment ready if you don't know who will be asking you at the last minute?"

Well, obviously, you want to do your homework as best you can, but if you're making a presentation or telling a story and you get a question that you can't answer, don't try to wing it. My advice always is, that's a great question. I don't have the answer for you right now, but allow me 24 hours to get the answer for you and I'll get back to you as quickly as I can. So don't try to make it up. Don't try to wing it, but acknowledge that you don't know the answer. Indicate that it's a great question, and tell them that you'll get back to them as quickly as you can.

Question here about video.

MS. THOMPSON: Before you go on to that one, John, as you do your story bank, just always remember have stories by category, so stories about participants, story about employers, story – that – not about employers but stories that resonate with employers, stories that resonate with funders, the community. So you want to have different kind of stories for different needs when you talk about their return on investment. Go ahead, John.

MR. RAKIS: Thank you. Question about how to capture quality video with limited technology. I'm actually an amateur. I've done some professional video over the years, and the most important thing you can do with any kind of a camera, whether it's a cell phone camera or a very inexpensive camcorder, is to hold it steady, to use a tripod of some sort or try to use some device to hold the camera rock steady. For a cell phone or an inexpensive camcorder, the closer you are to the speaker, the better the sound will be.

The one thing that you want to do is you want to make sure that there are no distracting sounds in the background. So try to get the quietest room that you can. Throw as much light on the subject as you possibly can by turning on all the lights or have the person face the window and then use natural light coming into the window to illuminate your subject. But the most important thing is to hold that camera steady, whether you use a tripod or some other device so that it doesn't move, and then get as close as you can to the subject so that the microphone can hear the person as clearly as possible.

There is free software out there. I've never used it, but there's inexpensive software I think that can be bought for under $80 that would be quite good to use. One other piece of advice that I would give, if you are near a local college that has a video department, talk to the chairman of the department or talk to a professor at the department. This might make a great project for a student project that they could use a much better camera and much better sound equipment than you can possibly provide.

Lenora, we had a question about the endocrinologist. Did you –

MS. THOMPSON: Yes. And I just want to add on the one you just spoke to, technology is definitely not my forte, but I am on the other end. I can definitely tell when something is well done.

And if you pay attention to NPR on Story Corps or TED Talks, they all follow a similar format, and I think you mentioned earlier, John, about rehearsal, rehearsal, rehearsal. I personally know someone who did a TED Talk, and the amount of time that the TED Talk professionals reviewed his TED Talk was just very interesting to me. But when I saw the final project, I knew – I knew in terms of what had been done to get this individual ready.

In terms of the question, "What is the name of the endocrinologist?" his name is Stanley. His first name is Stanley, and I'm going to spell his last name. His last name is A-n-d-r-i-s-s-e. OK. A-n-d-r-i-s-s-e. OK, John.

MR. RAKIS: Thank you, Lenora. "This is all well and finding good, but don't policymakers, funders want data, number stats, etc.? What's the role of stories in a presentation to policymakers?"

MS. THOMPSON: Oh, that's – (inaudible).

MR. RAKIS: Great question. I mean, do you want to go in – if you're making a presentation to a decision maker, a potential funder, you want to have the facts, but you want to start off with a brief story to get their attention. Many of the stories that we gave today, actually, most of them were less than a minute or two long. You need to get their attention first, and then you present them with the facts. You make it a three-part presentation.

You give them a hint about what you're going to say. You start out with an attention-getter, a great story. Then during the body of the presentation you make your main points, supported all by data, and then the third part of your presentation you repeat what you said in the first part in summary and then you make the pitch for what you want. Now that you've heard our story and the facts, do we have your support for the project that we want to initiate?

A question about the templates. And if you download that document, storytelling resources, those documents, several of them there provide some great templates you use to develop your story.

MS. THOMPSON: I just want to add to the one about the policymakers. That's how John Goodman started his work. He was approached by organizations who were presenting to policymakers who were boring them to death, and the organizations that were doing good work couldn't understand why the policymakers didn't relate to what they were doing.

So it's not either/or. It's not either/or. Yes. You need the data. You need the background but, again, people remember a good story and they do remember stories that are told. And I would encourage you to go to the TED Talk to walk Andy Goodman, how he took a company – he is hired by national policymakers, corporations all over the country to help them better tell their story. So I just wanted to add that to it.

MR. RAKIS: Thank you. And I think – Lorena, I think we answered question 10 during part of your presentation. "Are there real situations where the stories have changed policymakers', funders' minds resulting in – (inaudible)?"

MS. THOMPSON: Yes. And that is the organization called – I believe it was U.S. Families, and they are giving credit for helping to shape how legislators looked at the Affordable Care Act and the stories that they have. I went on their website, and they maintain at all times about 400 stories in their story bank. So yes, that is a very tangible example of how it affected a policy in our country.

MR. RAKIS: Another great question, "Do you see a role for stories to help participants to see themselves differently, to help them feel more hopeful about themselves?"

Absolutely. And I've used this technique many, many times. There are two ways people learn. I think one of them is through positive and negative reinforcement, and the second way that people learn is through associative learning. That's where you learn by observing other people, and then those people serve as role models for you. So nothing can be more powerful, I think, than having a former client tell his or her story to a current training program participant.

You can have them come in and do it live, but if that's not possible, have them record their story on video and play that at the beginning of a training. It makes a powerful statement, and people can identify with what that person has to say. I know that in my field I had somebody come in and would say to the clients, I know what it feels like to sit in that chair because five years ago I sat in that chair that you're sitting in.

And I thought that no one was going to give me a job and I thought that I didn't have a career ahead of me but I was wrong and I did have a career ahead of me. I know if I can do it, you can do it. A really powerful statement and a great story to tell.

A question about –

MS. THOMPSON: I'm going to respond to one I think we skipped over. Someone asked earlier how often or how recent should a story be. You're going to constantly be adding new stories. So I'm not so sure, depending on the purpose.

If you have 400 stories in your story bank like this organization does – and by the way, the name of the organization is Families U.S.A. That is the name of the organization, and they are experts in the field of health. But you have to keep them fresh, and so you want to constantly be adding new stories. And if you're doing this work, you're going to constantly have new stories anyhow. So I just wanted to respond to that.

MR. RAKIS: If you have a great story that's old and it's an effective story and it's impressive, you can keep telling it. I mean, there are parables that are thousands of years old, and they're still as fresh today as they were 2,000 years ago. So it all depends I think on the story itself, but Lenora's right. You do want to keep freshening up your stories, getting new stories in to make them relevant to changing times.

Let's see.

MS. THOMPSON: The question about is it – should be oral or in writing, it's both. It's both. That's what our – stories that are told orally are passed down through history. You can use writing. You can use video. I mean, I don't think there's an either/or, and I think you want to do what's appropriate for the audience that you're going to be with. If you're a national storyteller, then your story is going to be an oral story.

I was in Maryland recently at the Harriet Tubman Museum and the woman was a nationally known storyteller and if you – the children who were there, they were middle school children sitting on the edge of their seats because, if you didn't know Harriet Tubman was no longer with us on this earth, you would think that this was Harriet Tubman in front of you. So in that case it's an oral story. If you're making a presentation, it could be both. You might bring out someone who tells a brief oral story to the audience along with what's written and along with facts, along with facts.

MR. RAKIS: Thank you, Lenora. "What's the strategy when someone doesn't buy the story?"

Good question. Now, it's time to listen. If somebody's not buying your story or seems resistant to the story you have to tell, it's time for you to start listening. What are your concerns? I have the feeling or I have the sense that you don't believe that we can help your program or help your business. Why is that? Tell me a little bit about why you feel this way. So when people aren't listening to you, it's time for you to listen to them to find out what their concerns are.

Another really good question, "To what extent do cultural differences affect any effect that stories might have? We don't want to show crocodile tears."

Lenora, you spoke about the need to know your audience and to adjust your story –

MS. THOMPSON: Absolutely.

MR. RAKIS: – to meet the audience.

MS. THOMPSON: And it does have some effect of cultural difference on how we tell stories. I would dare to say that different cultures respond and receive stories differently. So that's all about knowing your audience. And you're correct. We don't want to show crocodile tears. What we do want to show is real people, real struggles, and a real – real things that are happening with them.

An easy one to respond to, someone asked is, "What was Marcus' last name?" And his name is Marcus Bullock, B-u-l-l-o-c-k, Marcus Bullock.

MR. RAKIS: "Stories have led to fraud, e.g. fraudulent Go Fund Me pages. How do you avoid skepticism?"

Tough question, actually. In a world where there are many people, especially now on the internet there are so many scams out there, I think the best way is to establish a long-term relationship with the people you're seeking support from. Invite them to your organization. Allow them to see how your organization works. Invite them to serve on advisory boards. Invite them to serve on your board of directors, if that's possible, but get them engaged some way in your program as a volunteer, perhaps, but have them visit.

I think visiting a program is probably one of the best things that one can do to win support for the work that you do because once people see what you're doing and they realize how legitimate it is, then they're going to support you. Doing things totally from a distance I don't think works. I don't think people are going to give your organization money or support based on what your website says. It may happen, but that's really rare. People need to actually see, visit, and get a close – and get a sense of what exactly you do and how you do it to support you, and that can – I believe can help avoid the skepticism that people might have.

I think have we – have we done all the questions, Lenora? Have we missed any?

MS. THOMPSON: I think we have. The last one I see is, "Where can you get a good story template?"

There is no one place. If you go to Andy Goodman, he'll give you a template. If you go to other resources, they'll give you a good template. If you go to the International Storytellers, they have templates. If you go to TED Talk, there's a template. If you go to MC – NPR Story Corps, there's a template. So there's no one template.

MR. RAKIS: And look at the document. Look at our storytelling resources document. There's some really good information there as well. So there's no one template, but there's information that's available to help guide you. This PowerPoint will be available for – is available for download as well, and the resources, I think you'll do – I think will be very, very, very helpful. It's a great list of resources that we've – that we put together for you.

So I think I want to turn it over to our host, and I just want to thank everybody for participating and joining us today. I hope this was useful to you, and I wish you all the best of luck in your work and that you can tell stories that win support for your organization.

Lenora, anything you'd like to say to the group?

MS. THOMPSON: I just also want to say thank you to everyone, and I hope someone or all of you there was at least one new thing that you learned today, one new thought, one new aha moment, or one new thing that you'll think about. So that is sort of my mantra whenever I do work or training or teaching because some things you probably already knew.

And not saying that you didn't, but hopefully this will have you go back and ask some questions of the work that you're doing and maybe learn from the resources that we have given you today.

So thank you all very, very much, and it was certainly my pleasure to be a part of this webinar today.

(END)