

Matthew S. Friedman

STORYTELLING

**The Art of Inspirational
Public Speaking**



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INTRODUCTION

About Myself

My name is Matt Friedman and I am an international human trafficking professional with more than 35 years' experience as a manager, program designer, evaluator and frontline responder. I am currently Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The Mekong Club, an organization of Hong Kong-based private sector business leaders who have joined forces to help fight human trafficking in Asia.

I was previously Regional Project Manager at the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) in Thailand, a coordinating body that links the United Nations system with governments and civil society groups in China, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Prior to this, I worked for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for 17 years in Thailand, Bangladesh and Nepal where I designed and managed country and regional health, human rights and human trafficking programs. I also offer regular technical advice to numerous governments and corporations working to stop slavery and am the author of 13 books.

So why write a book on this subject? For the past ten years, I have given up to 100 presentations annually on the topics of modern slavery and other relevant subjects throughout the world. As a development professional who focuses on these issues, I believe that one of the biggest gaps we face is a lack of general awareness. To help people understand these issues and what needs to be done, I have tried many different presentation approaches.

After years of using a traditional presentation style, I came to realize that I held an audience's attention more when I was telling a story than when I was simply lecturing. Armed with this insight, I began to experiment. Instead of offering basic information, I started using stories to communicate content. In fact, my most effective presentation represents ten consecutive stories linked together to illustrate a final unifying message.

I have found that when a story is included in a speech, those listening are able to relate their own experiences to the content. In this way, stories help us to make sense of the world.

In order to tell stories effectively, one must use the right structure, content, emotion and tone of voice to make the message compelling. When this combination works and the story comes together it can be very powerful.

In writing this book I aim to show that:

- Telling stories is a highly effective way of communicating information;
- For most presentations, (e.g. fundraisers, implementation updates, awareness raising events and board meetings) stories can leave a significant and lasting impression; and
- Everyone can master the art of good storytelling.

To Begin

I was once asked to give a presentation on the importance of interpersonal communication at work. In a dysfunctional setting poor communication can contribute to an organization failing to reach its full potential. I decided to open with the following personal story:

A few years ago, at a major international conference, I decided to attend the evening reception. Not knowing anyone there, I strolled up to several people I had chatted with during breakfast. Over morning coffee, we exchanged superficial comments about the weather and our food options.

What happened next really surprised me. They clearly had no idea who I was and continued their animated conversation, which was all about me.

"He is trying to take over the human trafficking sector singlehandedly," said one person. "He wants to build an empire."

"I heard he turned the Vietnam delegation against the Thai delegation," said another. "He must really be out-of-control."

As the conversation progressed, what they were saying became more and more outrageous. Apparently, I was notorious. I didn't know what to think. Part of me wanted to storm away but I was so intrigued that I simply stood there and listened.

As their perceived case against me continued to grow, so did my anger. Most of what they were saying was simply not true. Deep down inside, I felt my voice gaining strength. 'I should take a stand and challenge this attack on my character and integrity,' I thought. As I was about to respond, another internal voice intervened. It was a simple counter-message: 'try to understand.'

Finally, I found my voice and hesitantly I said, "Please excuse me for interrupting but I need to tell you something. My name is Matt Friedman, the person you are talking about. I'm sorry I didn't say something sooner but I guess I was intrigued to hear what people are saying about me. I am surprised to hear how infamous I am." I laughed.

My words were met with complete silence. Clearly, they were embarrassed and mortified. It made me feel a bit uncomfortable to see them squirm like this.

Not knowing what else to do, I finally held out my hand, smiled, and said, "Hi, my name is Matthew Friedman. If you have the time, I'd like to re-start this conversation and get to know you properly."

What followed was amazing. They each shook my hand and we had a wonderful talk that lasted nearly an hour. We discussed

how rumors get started, how things like this had happened to all of us and how slandering a colleague was often an accepted distraction creating division and reducing our potential to work collaboratively. Our mutual insights proved invaluable to us all.

I also clarified and answered some of the allegations against me. I realized that some of their impressions had been caused by my own behavior. This was a sobering reality that helped me to address some of my shortcomings.

I had the audience's attention from the moment I began telling this story. I could see them leaning forward in their chairs, with smiles of recognition, their heads nodding in agreement from time-to-time. As my drama unfolded, they were keen to know how it would end. I'm sure that they were evaluating what they might have done in the same situation. Why? Because everyone has been affected by gossip at some point. Having shared my personal story, I then summarized as follows:

Let's face it, human beings have a tendency to gossip. Gossip is speculation based on limited information passed from person-to-person. If left unchecked it results in distortions and misinformation. As we talk about other people, it is safe to assume that others talk about us. We should not take this personally but should use every opportunity to engage with them to correct misconceptions. We all have good and bad elements but gossip offers little in the way of a fair perspective. It is also important to take an honest look at how we act and how our behavior impacts other people.

I received a lot of useful feedback from this talk including:

"I had something similar happen to me. I overheard some people talking about me while I was in the bathroom. It really hurt my feelings. I never said anything. In some ways, I wish I had."

"I think if it was me, I'd have blasted those people. It is not right to talk about people behind their back. I would have told them so. Idiots."

"While I don't recall anything like this ever happening to me, the story really spoke to me. It made me think about the things I say about others. We all need to think about how we discredit others with our malicious comments."

"He who has never engaged in this kind of thing, let him throw the first stone. That would eliminate all of us pretty fast. I'm afraid, gossiping is in our DNA."

I have used this particular story many times in different presentations. It is a relevant, real-life example of an interpersonal engagement that demonstrates how people often behave. It also revealed something about myself. Whilst it made me feel very uncomfortable and vulnerable listening to gossip about myself, it also made me face up to some of my own failings. Everyone in the audience has their own reaction but they are all compelled to stop and think how they would respond in the same situation.

Had my opening sentence been; "Interpersonal communication can sometimes be hurtful and result in misunderstandings," followed by "Let me now go through a list of reasons, first" – the outcome would have been far less effective. Stories convey meaning and emotion far more powerfully than other forms of communication and enable an audience to really engage with the subject matter.

Public Speaking and Storytelling

Public speaking is one of the most important forms of communication. It allows the presenter to stand up in front of an audience to create awareness, form connections, influence decisions, and motivate change. This activity can range from a presentation at a formal conference with a large audience, to a small pitch being made to a group of colleagues who you are hoping to win over.

While many people engage in public speaking, a good percentage of these presentations fall short of reaching their full impact or potential. The reason for this is that most people mimic a traditional presentation style and approach. They use a series of PowerPoint slides to simply rattle off facts, figures and basic information. While these presentations may have some value, many often fall short of really informing and influencing an audience. We have all experienced presentations that are long, tedious and boring. Sadly, this is often the norm, not the exception.

One effective way to add significant value to a presentation is to include stories like the example above. Storytelling represents a traditional form of communication that has existed from the beginning of time. There is something about a story that ties a series of events, actions and outcomes together in a way that provides true clarity and meaning. We relate to stories because our lives are made up of them. Whenever we describe an event in our own lives, we often use storytelling to do so. In this way, this form of expression is very familiar to us all.

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WHY TELL STORIES?

During my time working at the United Nations, I once had a situation where one of my country coordinators was not getting along with a program officer. To help resolve this issue, I had a word with both of them. What I learned was that there had been a misunderstanding during one of our conferences. It was a simple thing but it escalated because it had never been fully resolved.

Several times, I sat down with them both and tried to explain that sometimes these situations happen because of a lack of basic information. I thought this would be the most logical, practical way to address the problem. But it didn't work at all. So, I decided to use another approach – to tell a personal story to get my point across. This is what I said.

During one of my many trips to Bangladesh, I was invited to a post-conference reception at a private home. It was a lovely place, with plenty of space for the 60 people who attended. I chatted with several of the participants before finding an empty seat on one of the many couches. As I was sitting there, a small cat jumped on my lap. I pet it for several minutes. Then, without warning, it jumped from my lap to the lap of the woman seated next to me. I thought nothing of it. A friend joined me and we began to chat.

Later that night, Ali, our host, came up to me and asked, "Matt, what is it between you and Zareen? She is telling everyone how rude you are."

Not knowing what he was talking about, I asked, "who is Zareen?" He pointed to a woman across the room, the one who had sat next

to me on the couch. "I have no idea what you are talking about. I never spoke to her," I replied.

"She said that you picked up my cat who was seated on your lap and tossed it onto hers. She called it one of the rudest things she had ever experienced. She hates cats."

I was baffled until I remembered the cat jumping from my lap on to hers. When I went to her to explain what had actually happened, she kept repeating that I was a rude man and then stormed off.

I tell this story because sometimes things happen which can be misunderstood. Many misunderstandings occur because of limited information or false assumptions. In this case, the cat decided to move and it had absolutely nothing to do with me or Zareen.

Do you see what I mean? I think this is what happened in your own case.

My previous efforts to resolve their conflict had failed. It wasn't until I told this story that they both finally understood what I was trying to say. The story illustrated how a simple misunderstanding can arise. I was able to reach them on a personal level. They could relate to the situation, the events and the outcome and were finally able to talk openly to each other and move on.

Why Are Stories So Effective?

A good story allows us to take abstract ideas and relate them to real life. This makes the content and the message simple to understand. If told well, a story can achieve several goals simultaneously, as the following list shows:

- **A Natural Form of Communication:** Telling stories is one of the most effective ways to motivate, teach and advocate. We all enjoy stories and can relate to this form of communication. In fact, we are all experts at using this form of communication because we

use it every day. Whenever we describe something that happened, we use anecdotes. For example, at the end of the day, we might ask our partner, “How was work?” The natural response is often to tell a story.

My day was great until I attended the afternoon marketing meeting. David got up and went on and on about his project. He wouldn't allow anyone else to say anything. I wanted to tell him to shut up. He is such a loudmouth. I walked out of the meeting with a headache.....

- **Common Experiences:** Because many of us share similar life experiences, as a story unfolds, there is often instant recognition. We understand what is being said because we have experienced similar things ourselves. We have more in common with each other than differences and this allows us to relate to most stories. How often does this happen when we hear a familiar story?

I had to laugh when I heard her story about the burnt toast. I can't tell you how many times this has happened to me. I thought I was the only one stupid enough to make this mistake over and over. So funny.

- **Chronology:** Stories offer chronological details to help the listener understand and remember a series of events, steps or actions leading up to a specific outcome. The details of the story will reinforce the point you are trying to make.

A story is also a form of communication that explains not only how but why something happened:

It wasn't until after hearing Mark's explanation that I fully understood why the final decision was made. From his description, it was clear that he tried every option possible before pulling the

plug on the final deal. The back story clarified it for all of us. I would have done the same thing.

- **Expectations:** As human beings, we are naturally curious. When a story is being told, we want to know what the outcome will be. We wonder, “Where is this story going? How will it end? What happens next?” Our sense of expectation keeps us listening. Few other forms of communication instill this “need to know” anticipation. It draws the listener in.

His final statement about the baseball coming straight at him in the wake of his prayer was unbelievable. I was on the edge of my seat throughout the entire story. I never would have guessed this would be the ending. What an amazing experience.

- **Emotional Response:** Stories allow us to relate emotionally to what is being told. Stories can evoke any number of different emotions. Injustice can make us angry; someone being killed or badly injured can make us feel sad. We can be inspired when someone does something extraordinary. We can laugh out loud at absurd situations. Simply put, we are drawn to stories because they trigger our emotions.

Triggering emotions can be used to motivate action, change and other responses:

I cried when he told that story about those little boys from Bangladesh being trafficked to race camels. All I could think about was my own son. It made me so mad that people can be so cruel.

I got really angry when I heard how those dogs were abused. Something needs to be done to stop this. After attending the event, I went home and sent a check to the local animal shelter. It was the least I could do.

- **Connecting with Others:** Stories help us to connect with other people. As a story is being told, we relate to both the content of the story and to the storyteller. When a story is told well, it communicates, “*We share a common experience.*” This process helps us to better understand the character and values of the person telling the story. This can lead to us feeling empathy, compassion and sympathy. It also allows us to form a connection with the presenter.

Her testimonial was so inspiring. I don't know if I could have survived everything she endured in that terrible marriage. All I wanted to do was walk up to her and offer a big hug. Her story touched me deeply.

- **Learning from Others:** Through storytelling we can learn a great deal from the experiences of others. If a story describes how a person got themselves into a bad situation, it can be used as a warning to stop people making the same mistake. For example, after the 2004 tsunami in Asia, we all learned that if a person is at the beach and the water unexpectedly retreats, this might be a sign that something terrifying is about to happen. We know this because so many stories came out of this natural disaster. We are inherently drawn to forms of communication that teach us about life. Stories have this power.

His prostate cancer story was really depressing. After hearing it, I set up an appointment to see my urologist. I had experienced similar symptoms myself. Luckily, I got a clean bill of health. But now that I know about the prevalence of this disease, I'll keep an eye out for any changes. This talk should be a wakeup call for all middle-aged men.

- **Entertainment:** Watching and listening to stories is another form of entertainment. A good story can make us laugh, cry, cheer and feel happy. According to international media surveys, the average

television consumption in developed countries around the world ranges from 154 to 292 minutes per day. People seem to prefer watching dramas, comedies and soap operas. Episodes often end on a cliffhanger and then everyone watching wants to find out what happens next.

Popular speakers are the ones who make their talks entertaining:

I have watched Ben present at least a dozen times. Every time I hear him speak; I walk away feeling much better about myself. He really does have a way of telling stories that is enjoyable and fun. I can't get enough of him.

- **Validating and Comparing our Values:** Stories allow us to relate to common opinions and feelings. If the outcome of a story is inconsistent with our views, it challenges us to reconsider those views. At the end of many of my presentations, I have people coming up to me to argue a specific point. This is a typical exchange:

An audience member may say, "I don't agree with you that poverty isn't the most relevant factor in a person getting trafficked. When you told that story about the boy who ended up on the fishing boat, it didn't make sense to me. It must have been his poverty that forced him to get trafficked."

My response in this case, "It wasn't. He had work in his village. He was just bored and wanted to get out and see the world. He didn't have to work to survive. While poverty is certainly a significant factor, it is often one of many. Not all people who are poor are desperate. Many accept their situation and make the best of it. It has been like this for centuries. Contributing factors often include poverty and one or more other factors."

His response, "Wow. I never thought about it that way. This is new to me."

- **Escapism:** Some people live vicariously through the people who are profiled in stories. This might include someone on the front line. Stories allow their struggles and experiences to come to life – a fireman, a paramedic, a police officer, an emergency room attendant, etc. Their experiences are dramatized to offer a form of escapism and entertainment. We can feel connected to the experiences of our heroes and it may inspire us to follow their lead.

As I sat there and listened to his adventures, I must say, I got completely lost in the story. I even closed my eyes and imagined what it must have been like to be in the Nepalese hills. This will give me a pleasant daydream, a form of escape when I'm having a rough time at work.

Depending on the setting and the story being told, any number of these factors may be in play. This is why stories are so compelling. They address so much of what we seek in life.

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TRADITIONAL PRESENTATIONS VERSUS STORYTELLING

Traditional Presentations

I recently read an article that said that on average a woman speaks 20,000 words per day, while on average a man speaks 7,000 words per day. OK, so let's assume an average person says somewhere between 7,000 and 20,000 words. This is 13,500 words every day.

On average a public speaker utters approximately 135 words per minute, an hour-long speech can comprise 8,100 words. This is more than half the number of daily words spoken by an average person. With this much content, it is important that the material is interesting and in a format that people can absorb. If not, the talk is a waste of time. Engaging your audience, therefore, is essential.

At too many conferences there is an over reliance on PowerPoint presentations. After a while you become bored, distracted and stop paying attention.

Even when I do my best to concentrate and try hard to focus on the material being presented, I often fail miserably. If the delivery is boring and uninteresting, I will tune out. This is simply human nature.

So why is this so? Even a subject as riveting as human trafficking between Nepal and India can become tedious if not presented in the right way. A typical PowerPoint slide might look something like this:

Sex Trafficking Between Nepal and India

- Girls from remote Nepal villages
- Traffickers from India
- Many tricked – Nepal to India
- Average age (12-14 years old)
- Many are physically and sexually abused
- Many acquire diseases
- Some make it home

The statement related to the first bullet point might go something like this.

Throughout Nepal, there are a few hill districts where human trafficking takes place. They include Nuwakot and Gorkha. The people who live there are from hill communities and don't have much exposure to the outside world. Many of them do subsistence farming.

The statements that follow would be expressed in a similar manner – as a series of facts related to the bulleted information.

The reason for this approach is, we assume that all we have to do is provide a person with a collection of facts and figures and this will somehow result in clarity and understanding. The problem with this assumption is that it is simply not true.

First, assuming we are listening carefully, our brain only absorbs approximately 30% of the content on offer. Second, if information is presented as units – in this case a series of facts – much of this information will not be retained because there is no means of connecting it all together.

This approach also tends to focus on emphasizing every fact, every figure, and every related nuance. The outcome is that we often provide too much content, we talk too long about things that don't matter and

we forget about the needs of our audience. This approach has been called “data dumping”. The consequence of this process is that we lose the audience and our ability to inspire, connect and persuade. These three elements greatly contribute to our understanding of an issue.

There are other factors that result in a PowerPoint presentation falling short of its intended objective – to educate and inform. Below are some common mistakes made with PowerPoint decks:

- **Focus on the Slides:** Some speakers feel that their slides are the presentation. In other words, they conclude that the appearance of the slides is more important than the actual statements being made. To meet this high standard, the slides are often professionally designed by public relations companies. While I have seen many slide decks that have a very professional corporate appearance, in some ways these slides become more of a distraction than an aid. Instead of listening to the speaker, the audience spends much of the time studying the awesome visuals.
- **Too Much Information per Slide:** Some speakers offer too much text and information on slides to make them useful. If a list of bullets is filled with a long, detailed sentence, it is difficult to describe the point without reading it because the essence of the message is buried in the text. A good bullet statement should include two or three words at most. The speaker can use this as a cue to talk from. As a general rule, presenters should never read statements from slides. We all come to a speech to hear someone talk, not to have statements read out to us. Reading from a slide is what insecure or inexperienced presenters tend to do.
- **Too Many Slides:** Some speakers feel they need to have a slide for each point they are making. If a talk has both main points and sub-points, this can result in a deck that has over 70 slides for an hour's talk. Each time a new slide is presented, the audience looks it over. If there are too many slides, they will be spending much of the time watching the slide show instead of listening to the speaker.

This also leads to the audience anticipating the next slide. This expectation reduces a person's attention.

- **Slides Replace Preparation:** Some people don't spend time practicing their presentation because they feel the slides will guide them through it. This results in the speaker talking to the slides and not to the audience. Whenever a new presentation is being given, it should be thoroughly practiced.

Companies like Apple and Google have learned that using slides to convey their message is not as effective as a person simply standing up, telling stories and talking from a simple visual that contains no words. This communication style has proven to be more effective since the audience feels more engaged and part of the process.

Sex Trafficking Story

So, what if there was a way to provide all of the facts, combine the content together, and at the same time, keep the audience listening? There is. Below is a story that I use to open nearly all of my talks on human trafficking.

When most people think about human trafficking, they think of forced prostitution. For good reason; there are over 4.8 million women and girls in forced prostitution around the world. My first exposure to this was about 30 years ago. I was a public health officer living and working in Nepal. My job was to translate resources into healthier people.

One of my portfolios was the HIV/AIDS issue. During that time, we were finding girls as young as 12 and 13 with this disease. Now if any of you have ever been to Nepal, you know that it is a very conservative culture. We should not have found children in this age group with the virus. At first, we wondered if this was caused by infected drug transfusions. To understand the problem, we went

from shelter to shelter to see these patients for ourselves to hear their stories. We heard the same thing over and over again:

A trafficker, often a young, handsome man in his mid-twenties, would enter a village and begin flashing money around to show that he was rich. While hanging out at tea stalls, he'd tell people that he was looking for a village wife. He would state that he didn't want an urban wife; they were "too much trouble." After locating a young girl, he found attractive, he would befriend her and eventually ask for her hand in marriage. Seeing this as an opportunity to benefit their daughter and the entire family, the parents would often agree without hesitation. The wedding would take place a few days later, with the entire village in attendance.

After the marriage, the trafficker would tell the family he was taking their daughter to the capital, Kathmandu, to live. He'd say, "Don't worry, I'll be back in three or four months for a visit." But instead, he'd take her to Mumbai, India. Since this girl had never been more than 20 kilometers away from her home, when she arrived in Mumbai, she thought she was still in Nepal.

After taking her to the red-light district, the man would put her in a room and tell her to remain there. Many would say, "No, don't leave me. What is this place? Why is everyone dressed so funny?" His response was, "Don't worry. It is OK. I'll be right back."

The man would then go off to meet the madam to collect the US\$600 for selling her to the brothel, he also had the gold from the wedding, and he would hand over the wedding photos. After this, he'd return to Nepal to do the same thing over and over again – maybe 40-50 times a year.

The madam would then enter the room and tell the girl, "Guess what, your husband just sold you to me and you will have sex with up to ten men a day, every day because I say so. You can imagine this young girl's horror. "No, this can't be so. My husband loves me."

The madam's stern response would quickly bring this attitude into check.

After the young girl finally comprehends her fate, many of them would say, "I'll kill myself before I do those shameful things." In response to this, the madam would pull out the wedding photos and start pointing to the girl's family: "Is this your mother, your father, your brother? If you hurt yourself, we will hurt them. Do you understand me?" At this point, the girl begins to truly fathom that she has been trapped in a living hell with no hope of escape.

To transform her into a prostitute, five or six professional rapists will be brought in to "break" her in. During this process, they beat her, swear at her, rape her and do everything they can to humiliate and shame her. The more she resists, the more they push back. Within 48 hours, she might be raped up to 30 times. The objective of this process is to completely destroy her will so that she will lay back and accept whatever happens. Nearly all the girls I interviewed suffered a variation of this appalling "training" process.

Once the girl has been broken, she will be forced to have sex every day with numerous men. She will receive no respite, not even during her menstrual period, not even if she is ill.

Why Tell Stories?

I begin my presentations with a story like the one above for several reasons:

First, it is important to immediately capture the audience's attention. According to Plato, *'The beginning is the most important part of the work.'* Starting off with a strong, emotional story draws the audience in straight away. When a person rambles at the opening of a speech, the audience carries on talking among themselves or checking their phones. By the time I'm describing the marriage, I often see people looking up. When I begin talking about the brothel, I have practically everyone's attention. I know this because I always take my cues from

the audience – they are making eye contact with me, nodding their heads and leaning forward in their chairs. These are all positive signs.

As the story continues, the audience becomes more curious. Many of them begin visualizing the drama unfolding and want to know what will happen next. This empathy creates an emotional bond between the observer and the victim. They begin to imagine what this child actually felt, thought and experienced. Many begin to relate to the victim's plight. The story makes it real. Before long they are feeling a range of emotions – sadness, anger, depression and powerlessness.

The story I tell takes the content of all of my PowerPoint bullets listed above and connects them, transforming a series of random facts into a format that is memorable. To validate this, I have done both traditional presentations and story presentations. After both, I have asked people from the audience to relate what I just said. Most could rattle off a few of the random facts from the traditional approach but those who heard the story were able to remember most of the content because the many details were part of a compelling narrative.

Stories help to solidify ideas in a way that factual statements encapsulated in bullet points or numbers simply do not. Each of us learn in different ways. For some, we learn by visualizing information. People in this category prefer to learn from images. Others respond better to auditory learning. Finally, there are others who learn best from experiencing emotions. This is known as kinesthetic learning. Stories work for people in all of these groups because visual learners can conjure up pictures in their minds, auditory learners can focus on the words, and kinesthetic learners can relate the content to their emotional responses.

Interestingly, both types of presentations take about the same amount of time – around four minutes. Given the choice, wouldn't you tell a story?

Giving an Issue a Face and an Identity

When giving this presentation, I often show a picture of a young girl enslaved in prostitution. The photograph doesn't have to show the girl's face. It could be a girl in a bar looking down at her phone. As I'm telling the story, the audience begins to imagine her face and can really begin to see her. She is young, vulnerable, innocent, afraid, and helpless. Our imagination has the ability to fill in the details.

Attributing these feelings to the victim stops the subject from being abstract. My stories have this effect: she is a person, she is like us, and she is real. We make a direct association between the pain and suffering in the story and the person experiencing it. This, in turn, leads to empathy, compassion and sympathy kicking in. Our outrage motivates us to care, to feel and to want to act.

Finding the Right Balance

However, there must be some limits. During many of my early talks on human trafficking, I came to realize that too much pain and suffering in a story can have a negative effect on an audience. I recall doing a 60-minute talk in which I spent 45 minutes describing the terrible abuses that trafficking victims endure. At the end, I realized I had created a room full of zombies. They were so disturbed by the excessive horror I described, they seemed to be in an emotional coma. Two audience participants offered these comments:

I was so shocked and disturbed by the topic, I could hardly breathe. Everything about the description hurt me deeply. It was like pins being placed into my soul.

The thought of those little boys riding on camels! It gave me shivers. I kept thinking about my own son.

Realizing that this wasn't a good thing, I began to experiment with how much "shock and awe" was needed to sensitize an audience without shutting them down. I started with 30 minutes. This was

still too much. I then tried 20 minutes, 15 minutes and 10 minutes. I came to realize that the optimal amount of time spent focusing on the suffering should be about 9 minutes.

What I realized was that this period allowed me to help them open their heart and mind to the subject, without it taking them over a line. With this much content, they wanted to hear more, but they were not too emotionally traumatized to take it all in.

Thank goodness the sex trafficking stories didn't go on for a long time. If they had, I'm not sure I would have stayed. It would have been too painful to listen to.

Victims' Stories

Below are a few more of my stories. Each one takes less than two minutes to convey. I offer a range of examples to demonstrate a variety of scenarios. You can use similar examples to support any cause.

These simple stories tell the audience that there are several characteristics common to most cases of modern slavery: the use of fraud or deception to trick a person into an exploitative labor situation; debt, violence or threats to hold someone against their will; and the lack of any payment in exchange for services or labor provided. In essence, the victim totally loses control of his or her life and toils in slavery.

When Noy turned 18, her family borrowed money and gave it to an employment agency to get her a job overseas. Since there were passports and plane tickets involved, the costs were high. She was excited because she was told she'd earn US\$120 per month. After the paperwork was done and she completed a one-week training to become a house servant, she flew overseas. At first, she was excited. She was proud that she'd earn money for her family. But when she got there, everything changed. Nothing they said at the agency was right. They made her work from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00

p.m. every day. She was never allowed to leave or have any contact with her family. They beat her every time she did something wrong. Since she didn't understand their language, she was forever making mistakes. When the mistress of the house was away, her husband would force himself on her. While she tried to stop him, there was nothing she could do. Since they deducted money for everything—her food, board and medicine—her monthly salary was no more than US\$10. She was a slave in that house and wanted to die. When the contract came to an end and she went home, her family blamed her for everything. The agency said she was lazy and talked back. But it wasn't so. It wasn't her. She often wondered "Why doesn't anyone believe me?"

Pong was 16 years old when he was forced to work on a fishing boat. He was told that the job was easy and that he'd be paid a good wage. But instead, he ended up working 18 hours a day, every day. For food, he ate nothing but fish and rice twice a day. Even when he was sick or injured, he had to work. He had seen others who had fallen ill and the captain simply threw them over the side of the boat. He still remembers their pleas for help as the ocean carried them away to their deaths. He was beaten if he didn't work hard enough, or even if he did. Days often went by with only a few hours of sleep. He was so tired sometimes he felt he'd go crazy. To keep him working, they would force him to take powerful drugs that destroyed his body. When he finally returned to port after four years at sea, he was not given any pay. The captain told him that he was an illegal migrant so he didn't have to give him anything. Having no way to communicate with his family while he was away, his mother and father assumed he was dead. They had moved away and he didn't know where to find them."

When Tith arrived at the construction site, he was so excited. The foreman told him that he could get a good job but he couldn't pay him for the first three months. Tith didn't mind because the foreman seemed like a respectable person. Every day Tith worked from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The work was hard and dangerous

but that was OK. After three months he went to get his pay but the foreman told him that he'd have to wait another two months. While he wasn't happy, what else could he do? He borrowed more money from his friends and continued to work. Each time he asked for his wages, he was given the same answer—next month. After 12 months, Tith was desperate. He was heavily in debt with no money. When he heard that there were others in the same position, they all got together and as a group they approached the foreman. This made him very angry. The next day, a van pulled up and the police took them all away. The foreman stood there and smiled. He called the police. At that moment, Tith realized that he had never intended to pay any of them. Two weeks later, he was deported. For an entire year he had worked for nothing. For an entire year, he was a slave.

Proposed Criteria for Storytelling

The following are useful pointers when telling a story:

- **The Pace of a Talk:** Storytelling is best when it is done slowly. If a story moves too quickly, the audience finds it hard to keep up. I often have to tell myself to slow down as I'm talking. I also encourage speakers to pause regularly. While many of us feel that we should be talking continuously when we do a live presentation, this is not the prevailing advice. In fact, the opposite is true.

A pause can be an effective way to help an audience follow your story, process the meaning in their heart and mind, and increase anticipation. This fuels curiosity. There is no such thing as a pause that is too long. If you have any doubt about this, experiment with your audiences. Tell a story and pause repeatedly. When you are making an important point, pause longer. To validate this process, please read the text below slowly. Pause for two seconds when instructed.

The madam would then enter the room (pause) and tell the girl, "Guess what, your husband just sold you to me and you will have sex with up to ten men a day, every day because I say so (pause). You can imagine this girl's shock (pause). "No, this can't be so. My husband loves me." (pause) The madam's stern response would quickly bring this attitude into check. (extended pause)

After the young girl finally comprehended her fate, many of them would say, "I'll kill myself before I do those shameful things." (pause) In response to this, the madam would pull out the wedding photos and start pointing at the girl's family members – "Is this your mother, your father, your brother? (pause) If you hurt yourself, we will hurt them. Do you understand me?" (pause) At this point, the girl began to truly fathom that she had been trapped in a living hell with no hope of escape.

Avoid the tendency of having your speech be like a runaway pony. Take your time, speak slowly and give the audience a chance to breathe. Offering these pauses might feel uncomfortable at first, but if you watch the audience's response, you'll see that they welcome this process. Try to use pauses in these three ways: before and after a major point you are making; before and after you are making a transition to the next topic and between your opening statement, the main body of your talk and the ending.

- **Tell Stories from Your Own Experience:** The best stories are personal ones. This allows the audience to feel that the message being conveyed is credible and true. This also allows the speaker to add the emotions and reactions they felt at the time. The story line is also easier to follow because we can describe content from our own experience better than content that someone else experienced. It really brings the material to life.
- **Length and Basic Message:** It is important that your opening story is no longer than five minutes. It should also make a specific point. In the story above, the point I am trying to make is: traffickers use

a series of techniques to deceive people, they play on the victim's innocence and naiveté, the outcome is a brutal initiation, and the victim must endure this horrific scenario for an extended period of time. And what makes this even worse, is that so many millions of victims throughout the world are involved in this abhorrent crime against humanity every day.

- **Use Simple Language:** Some speakers feel they need to use long words and complicated statements to appear knowledgeable. The beauty of a story is that the opposite is true. Stories should be told in a conversational manner, as if talking to a close friend. With any good story, the listener is adding their own content and visualization as it unfolds. By painting a picture in their own mind, the story is much more memorable.

4

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF STORYTELLING

The Foundation

According to conventional wisdom, a basic story is supposed to have the following core elements: characters, a setting, a plot, a conflict and a resolution. But since most of the stories told within a typical presentation don't have time to develop in this way, the criteria must be cut down significantly.

For me, there are four key elements essential to a good story used in a speech: a relevant context, a series of events, interesting content and a worthy message. Below is a story I told at a conference that focused on the importance of having integrity in public health programming:

During my time stationed in Bangladesh, I worked for an agency that spent millions of dollars to support a major clinical program. On the surface, it seemed highly successful. It supported hundreds of private health-based clinics across a poverty-stricken country. To verify the efficacy of this program, we commissioned a major study.

When the study results arrived, we were dismayed. While the facilities provided quality care to the middle class, they failed to help the poor.

When I read the report, I initially thought the information would be buried. Why? If we acted on the report's recommendations, the massive program would have to be significantly changed. Something previously seen as a major success would be deemed

a failure. I had encountered similar situations before, thanks to a pervasive bureaucratic mentality: “Don’t try to fix something that everyone thinks is not broken, even if it is.”

This time, however, something very different happened. When my boss asked me what I thought about the report, I said it was pretty damning. He agreed. I asked him what he was going to do. To my surprise, he took several of us to see the organization’s overall director. Within five minutes, my boss laid out the case that our program had failed and should be completely overhauled.

Many emotions surfaced in me that day. I felt shock and surprise at my boss’s honesty and candor. I felt absolute pride in him. Instead of hiding behind the program’s reputation, my boss did the right thing and faced the reality.

That moment stays with me—one where I saw “the right thing to do” being played out before me. His decision caused a myriad of changes and headaches. But it was the price that had to be paid to reach the poor, disenfranchised people who needed affordable healthcare.

In the end, millions of people benefited from this change over time. His courageous choice demonstrated the importance of integrity in addressing this kind of work.

While I could have simply stated that “it is essential that everyone who works in public health should have integrity and honesty and be willing to accept failure,” this story offered a real example of how this principle was played out in an actual setting. Below is a discussion of the four key elements I listed above:

- **Relevant Context:** Since public health integrity was the focus of the conference session, I used this story because it was directly relevant. Many health managers face similar situations in their day-to-day operations. Telling people to do the right thing is never enough. What the story does is highlight the positive dividends that

come from a display of integrity, including: offering a mentoring moment for young staff; reinforcing the fact that significant revisions should be made to help those in need even if this will result in major program changes; and demonstrating that the use of data for decision making is a good example of how integrity should play out. I also felt that it shows how doing the heroic thing results in the best outcome. My boss certainly demonstrated his heroism that day.

- **A Series of Events:** A story really isn't a story without characters, actions and an outcome. In the example above, the characters include the group of health professionals who work for a donor agency, including myself. When using characters, they need to be relatable to us. This helps to ensure we can empathize with the story. The events focus on what happens when a potential problem arises – in this case, bad news about a major program. The ending focuses on the resolution of the problem. Within a speech, there isn't time to go into a lot of detail. A good story has to present enough content to get the point across, without getting bogged down in irrelevant details. I sometimes see speakers make the mistake of including every detail they can think of when telling a story. This isn't necessary. Conveying the final message is the main purpose. The events help to lead the listener down a path to achieve this outcome.
- **Interesting Content:** When I was growing up, my mother would often urge me to visit one of my elderly neighbors who was lonely. While I was very young at the time, I did this task without hesitation because Mr. Barns was a master storyteller. During every visit, he told the most amazing stories about his childhood, his time in the war and his business experiences as an insurance agent. I went because he entertained me, educated me, made me laugh and gave me a glimpse into a world that had come and gone. For stories to be effective, they must create enough interest to allow our mind to ask the question, "*What is going to happen next?*"

While the expectation in the story above isn't huge, the audience is wondering where I will take the story. This keeps them listening.

- **A Focused Message:** For a short story used in a speech, it is essential that you know what you are trying to convey. It should be something that helps the audience to move from the context and content, to a relevant conclusion. The message I wanted to deliver in this speech was:

It is important to have professional honesty and integrity, especially when it involves the health and well-being of others. The outcome of my story was meant to be noble and it demonstrated we really should care about the people we serve.

Example of what NOT to say

How many times have all of us attended a conference in which the presenter tells a long rambling story that doesn't really have a main point? Below is a typical example.

I remember being in a meeting in Bangkok when this same health issue was discussed. There were many managers there. I think it was in June 2017. No, it was the month earlier. I was giving a presentation. The other presenters took longer than expected so I didn't have as much time as I needed. The equipment didn't work either. I had to wait nearly five minutes until they uploaded my slides.

I focused on health care reform, ethics and the need for positive contributions. I went through my presentation quickly but felt I got my points across. Actually, it was in August. Now I remember. I recall I went on my vacation immediately afterwards.

The audience didn't have many questions immediately after the slides. I guess my presentation was pretty clear. I focused on ethics and the importance of accountability. I could tell they liked the

presentation because they were watching me. This is an important topic and must be presented as much as we can. A few people asked me about tools after the talk. This seems to be something people are interested in. It was a good event. I'm glad I attended.

Not all stories are effective. The issues with the story above include the following. There are too many irrelevant details. The exact month when the event took place is not important. Bringing it up repeatedly uses up valuable time. It doesn't matter if the technology worked or not. It doesn't have anything to do with the point the speaker is trying to make. The statement about the quality of the presentation is also irrelevant. The story should have focused on the main point. Another way of presenting the material could have been as follows:

During the summer of 2017, I gave a presentation to health professionals in Bangkok. The conference included a large group of managers interested in the subject of health reform and ethics. Following the talk, I had several people come up to me to ask questions about the content of my speech. Most were interested to know if I could share the tools I described. Based on their genuine interest, I walked away feeling that this issue and the remedies used are relevant to the work of health professionals who are looking to find ways to improve their outcomes.

A good story will hold an audience's attention. A bad story will have the opposite effect. The audience will lose interest and tune out. When developing a new story idea, it is essential that you do what is needed to create, refine and deliver a story that is worth telling. Below is an outline of the steps I often take to craft a story:

Developing an Idea

There are four basic steps I follow when I am developing a story to get a message across. Not all stories are appropriate for every presentation, the one selected should have the right combination of relevance, timing and interest to educate and inform.

- **Step One: Identifying the Message:** If a person is seeking to use a story in a speech, they first need to know what point they are trying to convey. For the example above, once I decided I needed a story to explain the importance of ethical decision-making in public health, I spent an afternoon thinking about the many experiences I have had over the years. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that this example had the most potential to get my point across. If I can't find my own story, I sometimes borrow someone else's. Both approaches are effective.
- **Set Two: Write the Story Down:** There are some public speakers who decide they are going to insert a story in a speech but don't go to the trouble of writing it down. This step is important because it allows us to see the amount of detail, the order of events and the relevance of the conclusion. I write all of my ideas out because if I don't, the content can come out muddled and the story's impact is lost. I also find that if I don't do this, I tend to forget important details. Standardizing each story by documenting it first, often results in a much better outcome.
- **Step Three: Test Out the Material:** I seldom tell a story to an audience without first sharing it with at least a half dozen people. The best person to share it with is a friend who isn't afraid to offer their honest opinion. This avoids the tendency that most people have of only offering positive feedback to avoid hurting your feelings. But don't simply rely on this feedback. If a photo of kittens playing is shown to a diverse group of people, you will get a full range of reactions. We all look at the world differently. I use whatever feedback I receive to improve the story. In some cases, I ignore views that I don't agree with. I find this process results in a more refined story.
- **Step Four: Test Out the Story on a Small Audience:** If I'm going to give an important speech, I seldom use a new story. I often test new material on a smaller, more intimate crowd. This allows

me to gauge their reaction. I have even gone back to some of the participants to ask for feedback. Most people are happy to offer their opinion.

Story Variations

One effective technique is to begin a presentation with a story but leave the conclusion to the end of the speech. It is important to explain what you are doing. I usually say, “*I’ll come back to this story later.*” This creates audience anticipation. It allows me to introduce the issue, familiarize the audience with the subject, then lead them to the resolution. The end of the story then reinforces the point I am making. I once presented this story during a speech on “*caustic effects of office politics*”:

As a manager, I sometimes had to make choices that my staff didn’t like. These decisions were based on funding levels, program priorities, and donor expectations. While I hoped never to offend or disappoint, this was sometimes unavoidable. As a result, at times some staff members resented me.

During one of my management assessments, one of my country offices was asked to conduct an internal review. After two weeks, a 30-page report outlined activities and future priorities. After sending it to me, I reviewed the report and made a dozen or so comments, none major. They had done a great job.

After reading my comments, many staff members were clearly not happy. In response, they circulated the report amongst themselves making comments intended to poke fun at me and the process. As more people added to the text, the remarks became increasingly mean and disrespectful. Of course, this version was not meant for my eyes.

Unfortunately, a member of their staff accidentally sent this unofficial draft to me instead of the formal, sanitized version. I

read the text and realized their true feelings. Wow! It was far from flattering.

I read the comments several times and reflected on them. I felt anger, resentment, and an intense desire for revenge. I had no idea what to say or do.

Many managers face situations in which their staff rebel against their authority. In this speech, I will address the issue and offer some helpful tips for what to do when this happens.

I stopped at this point in the story. Using this content as a springboard for my talk, I then spent the next 20 minutes outlining what can be done to identify and address a similar situation in their organization. I recommended that managers do the following:

- Help employees understand each other;
- Address conflict in a positive, supportive manner to avoid escalating the issue;
- Encourage respect as an office norm;
- Provide training on the negative impact of office politics and what can be done to stop it;
- Emphasize the destructive nature of gossip; and
- Put in place policies that offer grievances to be identified and addressed.

I then ended my speech by concluding the opening story:

Now that I have provided some suggestions on how to deal with office politics, let me finish the story I opened with.

Two days after receiving the report, I traveled to that country and called a staff meeting. After some small talk to set the stage, I handed out copies of the report. I asked them to turn to page five, where they realized I had their “internal” version of the document. Their expressions revealed sheer horror.

Though I initially wanted to blast them, I confessed that at times I had written similar comments about bosses. I even offered examples. I told them I understood they had issues with me and asked if we could discuss each problem in detail. What might have been a bloodbath turned into a conversation that healed wounds, offered clarity, and fostered forgiveness.

As an additional note, it is important that I say something for the record. Over the years, I have made many mistakes as a manager. I have allowed pride, jealousy, resentment, anger and more to cloud my decisions. At times I've had favorites. I have engaged in politics and power plays that sometimes failed and sometimes succeeded. I have hurt people and been hurt myself.

As these things happen, we can either become bitter and hardened, or we can learn to be better human beings. In my case, I always strive to improve. So, let me be clear—while some of my stories may seem a bit idealistic, they come from many good, bad, and challenging experiences.

When we allow true feelings to be expressed, we can work together to achieve the best outcome. What is the most important lesson here? A positive approach always trumps a negative one. It opens doors and fixes things. This is something I learned over time.

The best storytelling comes from the heart.

5

INCLUDING OURSELVES IN THE STORY

Confessing Our Own Inadequacies

One very powerful way to reach people is to tell a story that reveals our vulnerabilities and shortcomings. Many speakers are introduced as experts in a particular field. Likewise, sometimes speakers spend too much time talking about how great they are or how great their program is. This dynamic alienates the presenter from the audience.

One way to avoid this is to humanize the presentation by telling authentic stories that highlight our failures and hardships, along with the lessons we learned from these experiences. This approach helps the audience to relate better to the presentation and the presenter. It also creates empathy and sympathy. There have been many studies that show that when someone reveals their pain and suffering in a personal story, this helps to promote solidarity and unity with the audience. The following is a good example:

Every time I heard about forced prostitution, I was troubled but it wasn't until I actually went to Mumbai that I came to understand the extent of this evil. Years ago, I accepted an invitation from the Government of India to carry out public health checks in the Mumbai brothels. I was accompanied by a police officer.

At one of the brothels, upon entering the waiting area, an eleven-year-old Nepalese trafficking victim saw me and ran up to me. She

wrapped her arms around my waist and cried, "Save me, save me, they are doing terrible things to me!"

I looked down in shock at this child. She had straight black hair cut in a simple style that reached her shoulders. A dress, ten sizes too big, hung on her tiny frame. This was a child in an adult world. I will never forget the pleading desperation in her light brown eyes.

I turned to the police officer and said, "We need to take this girl out of here now."

"No, we can't do that," he said.

I said, "Why not? You're a cop!"

He replied, "Because they will kill us both before they will let us leave with her."

We left, frustrated, but returned with more police officers. But of course, the girl was gone. I will never know what happened to that precious little girl but I am sure it included beatings, torture and a drastically shortened life full of misery.

Every once in a while, each of us is given a "life test." This was mine and I failed miserably. I should have found a way to get that girl out of that awful place and I didn't.

For weeks after encountering this child, I had nightmares. I was haunted by the stricken expression on her face, along with those pleading eyes looking up at me. I would wake up in a cold sweat with my heart pounding in my chest.

I also started reflecting on my own life. I had been doing public service work for years but I finally came to realize that, to a certain extent, I had been doing this work for me—to promote Matt Friedman's career and get the next big job. It took this terrible situation to bring me back to what it was all about. It isn't about me. It's about the people out there who need help. I was humbled by this realization.

Not knowing what else to do, I finally surrendered. I accepted the fact that, knowing what I did about this problem, I could no longer turn away. I had to step up and become fully involved. At that moment, an activist was born. Many people who fight injustice have a similar story to tell. The reality of the pain and suffering gets under a person's skin. Once absorbed, there is no escaping it.

As many times as I have told this story, it still has an emotional impact on me. I can still see that girl's face in my mind after all these years. Most audiences feel the pain and sorrow that I experienced. This displays my true frailty and vulnerability. The moment offers a glimpse into my personal grief. It demonstrates that I am no different from anyone else – we all have our personal struggles.

Personalizing Our Stories

For a long time, I chose not to share this story. I felt embarrassed and ashamed that I had failed to help such a young girl. It was one of those experiences that you keep to yourself. Part of me wondered if people would judge me as harshly as I judged myself. But then one day, I offered this testimony to a small group. At the end of the talk, several people came up to me and made the following comments:

What you said really moved me. It touched my heart so deeply. It helped me to understand what it must be like to face an issue like this. I was moved by it.

What you said brought tears to my eyes. I could imagine that poor girl. I could also feel your pain.

Over time, I came to realize there is great power in personalizing a story. During most of my presentations, I now offer this story to help the audience understand more about me and my journey as an activist. In this case, the story doesn't describe a great victory or achievement, it instead focuses on one of my biggest failures.

Expressing Our Failures

Let's face it, we can all relate to failure. We have all failed at times. In fact, it is often through our failures that we grow. Some of my most important life lessons happened when the outcome was a disaster. Personal testimonies about our failures help us all to understand that our life experiences are often shared.

Because we can all identify with these stories, presentations that focus on our mistakes and what was done to overcome them, offer a great way to learn. They teach us how others resolved a problem after something went wrong. It forces us to ask, *"What would I have done in that situation?"*

The truth is, at any given moment, there are often many others who might have failed in a similar way. Sharing this in a presentation can help communicate this message effectively. This insight is summed up well in the following comment from a corporate attendee at one of my talks:

I sometimes feel that people who give talks about their activist work come across as if they are superior or too self-righteous. They go on and on about how wonderful they are for the things they do. Your talk didn't do this. It showed me that you make mistakes like the rest of us. I felt your humility.

My Testimony

The story above is a testimonial. The word *"testimony"* comes from the Greek word *martyria*, which means to offer up "evidence." The root of the word is *martyr*. A loose translation of this word is – *the evidence of what nearly killed me*. The term is used to describe a person's journey through hardship or hard times, along with what was done to overcome these challenges. Each testimony is unique to the person offering it.

Anyone who provides a testimony is offering the intimate details of their own personal struggles. This self-exposure may require a

person's deepest hurts and fears to be on display. Those who take it upon themselves to do this often do so with the understanding that it can offer hope and healing to those who are on a similar journey. They often do it out of a conviction that what they learned can be passed along to others. It is a compassionate, loving act of kindness.

Testimonies like this can be powerful because people can readily relate to them. It is easy for us to follow the drama. When I tell this story, it helps people to be able to relate to me more as a human being than as an activist.

In my line of work, I am not some kind of perfect hero who just goes off saving people. Like everyone else, I am human and I fail. Showing my vulnerability to the audience conveys to them, *"I trust you enough to share my deepest, darkest hurts."* The audiences' responses often include empathy and compassion in return. This sets the tone for the remainder of my talk which will be honest, sincere and personal.

Work-Related Example

Here is another example of a personal failure. I regularly use this story to underscore the importance of taking responsibility for our actions. Due to my lack of experience and immaturity, I made mistakes that resulted in a situation that nearly got out of control:

In Nepal, I supervised a social marketing company that had internal financial and staffing problems. The donor I represented had many concerns and I brought in a consultant to offer suggestions. The consultant's report was critical, hard hitting, and recommended major restructuring, including some significant downsizing. If the recommendations were accepted, the organization would have to make painful changes.

While decisions were being made in my office, a copy of the report somehow leaked to the NGO, to the consternation of its staff. Since I brought in the consultant, I became a major target for their wrath.

Accusations flew concerning my honesty, competence, and ability to make decisions. The entire process became very personal.

Realizing that whatever was going to happen was now well beyond my control, I went to my supervisor, took a half day off and went directly to the NGO. I asked the general manager to assemble the staff together in one room.

I started off by saying, "I want to begin by thanking you all for being here. I know that there is a lot of talk about the reorganization moving forward. There are many misunderstandings, so I'm here to discuss these with you face-to-face. I'm here on my own time. What is it you'd like to say to me?"

For a long time, the room was silent. No one spoke. Finally, one hand went up. It was a question about the transition team that would be brought in and what would be done. After answering this question, another followed and then another. For three hours, there was shouting, debating, moments of silence, crying and finally it ended. I was able to clarify things that were misunderstood, provide missing information, and apologize for any mistakes I had made – and there were many.

I acknowledged my naïve or misinformed decisions. I was in over my head. I saw this and asked my supervisor for help. This humbling experience taught me about my own limitations.

What could have evolved into major dissension between two organizations was resolved through constructive discussion. Such common situations can prevent development programs from moving forward. It's good to take on an issue directly. It is important to clarify what is inaccurate and accept responsibility for our mistakes. This establishes respect and clarity.

6

HEROIC STORIES

Who are Heroes?

Most of us feel that heroes are people who demonstrate impossible feats of bravery to help others. While this is one example, not all heroes exist in comic books or in movies. They are not just people who risk their own lives to save the helpless, but are also ordinary men and women who go out of their way to help people. Why? Because it is the right thing to do; because they simply cannot help themselves.

Taking this concept further, a heroic act can be something quite simple and seemingly insignificant. A person helps an elderly woman cross a busy intersection; a teacher helps a struggling student with a new concept; a police officer helps a victim of crime to feel secure after having been violated; a mother helps her son when he scrapes his knee; and a person smiles at someone who is having a bad day.

In all of these cases, it is not about the size of the gesture, it is about the affirming gesture itself – **the selfless act of kindness for another without any expectation of something in return.** The gesture can be as subtle as a hand reaching out for another to offer reassurance of love. What is the main ingredient of this act? Doing “something” for another. Why? Because it is the right thing to do.

Why Use Hero Stories?

One way to motivate and inspire people in a speech is to tell a heroic story. I consider everyone who steps up to help the world or others, no matter how big or small their gesture, to be a hero. Each of us has

this spirit inside us. It needs to be recognized and nurtured to reach its full potential.

Most of us have enough good inside us to change the world. We need to develop and foster this goodness and encourage it in those around us. With this in mind, I regularly tell stories related to someone's heroic efforts because they inspire action and change. This is an example:

Last winter, I traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the American Bankers Association (ABA) Financial Crimes Enforcement Conference. As an anti-human trafficking expert, I was invited to participate on two panel discussions focusing on the issue of modern slavery as it relates to the banking sector. Following the second session, one of the bankers came up to me and told this story:

Three years ago, this person and his family were traveling across several states in America by car to meet up with relatives. Following a long drive, he pulled into a small motel off the highway. Because it had been a long journey, his wife and two teenage daughters were tired. That evening he went out to get some food for his family. As he was coming back to the motel, he noticed a very young teenage girl being pulled into a room by an older man. He said he remembered she had such a sad, frightened expression on her face. He guessed what was about to happen – she was a young prostitute about to be used by this man. Since he had daughters of his own around the same age, he felt he really needed to do something to help.

After dropping off the food, he went to the motel manager and told her what he had seen. He then returned to his room not knowing if anything would happen. Twenty minutes later, there was a police car parked in front of the room. Ten minutes after that, he saw someone being led away in handcuffs. The young girl was escorted to another car and driven away.

He said he remembered this event because he felt so good that he was able to help a young girl in a terrible situation. In fact, he went on to say that this was a major milestone in his life – something he felt very proud of.

After hearing his story, I asked him what he did for a living. He told me that he was a compliance officer focusing on anti-money laundering for one of the major American banks. I asked him if they did work related to modern slavery. He said they were just getting started in this area, that was why he had come to the session. He went on to say that he felt his job was not very exciting and wasn't sure how much difference it was making.

Throughout the world, many people in banking compliance do their jobs without realizing that the result of their work could have a major positive impact on society. Over the past two years, the issue of human trafficking continues to emerge as an important concern within the banking sector. With an estimated US\$150 billion generated from this illicit crime annually, banks must ensure that none of this illegal money makes it into their business. If it does and regulators discover it, the bank can be fined for money laundering.

To address the problem, many banks are stepping up their efforts to track this crime. This includes training their employees; breaking down crimes into component parts to identify potential links with banking procedures; using "red-flag indicators" to search their data to find nefarious activities; and if found, sending this information to financial regulators.

With this information in mind, I told the ABA banker in front of me that while his day-to-day efforts might not seem as dramatic as his motel encounter, there were many people who could be helped through his work in the coming years. In fact, I went on to say that those involved will be our future heroes because what they will do will not only help protect their bank but also help protect many other people like that teenage girl. I was surprised that he hadn't realized this before.

Banks need to understand that by addressing the issue of human trafficking, they are not only protecting their business, they are also helping to address one of the biggest injustices of our time. The outcome will be that many people will be freed from bondage. This makes their efforts TRULY HEROIC.

I have told this story to many bankers. What surprises me is that many don't make the connection between the important work they do and the value it adds. For some, this simple story is an epiphany.

Helping people to understand that they are heroic can be inspiring. It is a great way to help an audience understand their true value. Following a banking event in Singapore, someone said to me:

I felt really good after hearing the story about how an ordinary banker can make a difference. I thought my job was meaningless. Now I realize it isn't. I am really grateful for this insight.

We All Want to be Appreciated

In the story above, I point out to the person who feels his life is humdrum, that, in reality, it isn't. He has a role to play that adds value to the world. If he does his job well, victims will be helped, wrongs will be righted, and good will prevail. This kind of message can motivate and inspire each person to do even more.

As human beings, we all want our lives to be valued and appreciated. Many people regularly do acts of kindness. Unfortunately, few of us are rewarded for our good deeds. Whenever I can, I try to point out that each and every one of us can add value to the world. For this reason, I try to describe stories that relate to ordinary people doing positive things.

Likewise, longing to be admired and respected appears to be in our DNA. This recognition is universally sought. When we see a story play out on the big screen with this outcome, we yearn to have a similar experience. This is why the home run that wins the game is

dramatized in so many movies. Having a huge crowd stand up and clap for the underdog who overcame amazing obstacles to bring about a victory is so appealing and satisfying. We harbor a hidden desire to be this person in our own life. We watch these movies to vicariously experience such heroism.

Whenever I can, I try to use a heroic story to inspire and motivate people to reach their full potential. Heroic stories have the ability to do this. They demonstrate that most people who do heroic things are the same as anyone else.

A Lone Voice: A Heroic Journey

The hero in all of us often surfaces as a voice within our heart that tells us to act. For many of us, this voice does not find an outlet. It remains dormant. For those who acknowledge and nurture this force for good, it can arouse the hero in both the giver and the receiver. This is why telling stories about heroic acts can help to inspire people to take a stand, step up, and be heroic themselves. This is another story I often tell of someone who took a stand and became a hero.

During my early counter-trafficking years in Nepal, there was a girl called Meena who had just returned from the brothels in India. She was trafficked when she was only 14 into one of the most notorious sex establishments in Delhi. She spent three grueling years there before being rescued by an NGO team based in India's capital. During our interview, she talked about the terrible rapes, torture, and abuse she endured daily. She suffered from a range of sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. It was one of the most terrible stories I had ever heard.

After six weeks in one of the local shelters, her anger continued to grow. On a number of occasions, she vowed to the shelter staff that she would travel into the northern villages, which had produced many victims, in order to share her story among the people there.

She said she was determined to prevent any more Nepalese girls from ever experiencing the same terrible ordeal she had endured.

Several counselors tried to talk Meena out of her decision. They warned that a young girl shouldn't travel alone in the dangerous hills of Nepal. They cautioned that her health would worsen without regular treatment at the shelter.

Undeterred, it was clear that nothing was going to get in her way. Realizing that we couldn't change her mind, we asked if she'd agree to travel with a companion. After much persuasion, she finally accepted this offer and allowed a male social worker to accompany her.

Over a six-month period, Meena traveled throughout Nepal telling her story. In each village, she'd locate the central square, often under what they called a People's Tree, where she'd sit and begin recounting her story. At first, there would be five or six people listening. Then others joined until the crowd swelled to over a hundred. At the end, many of the villagers appeared shocked and horrified by her emotional testimony. Others cried when they heard the fate of so many young girls from their own country.

At the end of each talk, someone would inevitably raise their hand and say, "What can we do to protect our community? What can we do to protect our young girls?" At this point, the social worker would stand up and say, "I am glad you asked that question. Down the road at another village, we talked about this and came up with a plan to start a neighborhood watch. At the village before that, they decided to put in place a school registration system."

The best part about this approach was that solutions were identified on the spot by local people. Many suggestions could be put in place with little or no effort. The community's participation in the process ensured that the suggestions remained relevant to their own cultural and traditional needs. The collective discussion also helped to raise awareness.

Meena's courage helped to prevent others from experiencing the same fate. She continued to travel until she grew too sick to carry on. With no medication at that time to treat AIDS, I am told that Meena eventually died. Tragically this was the fate of most of the girls I met back then.

What makes this story so inspirational is that Meena experienced so much terrible hardship. Despite everything she went through, she got up and did something to help other girls. These kinds of stories help us all to reflect upon our own actions. They force us to ask the questions, "Are there things we should be doing? Are we doing enough?" I still think about Meena from time to time. Even after all these years, I am still inspired by her.

Heroic stories can also be very memorable for the audience. I have had people come up to me ten years after I gave a speech to thank me for something I said. Below are a couple of emails I received that illustrate this point:

I remember you telling that story about the girl who walked the hills of Nepal. What an amazing thing she did. I still get a chill every time I think about the evil of a system that exploits little girls like that. I always tell people about this when the subject comes up. More people need to know. If they did, we could stop this horrible thing. You need to tell these stories to more people.

Meena will always be my hero. From the first time I heard about her work, I wanted to be just like her. Now that I work for the UN, I try to learn from her example. This is an amazing lady.

7

AN EMOTIONAL STORY

Anything that is considered emotional is meant to bring about or prompt feelings of tenderness, sadness, or nostalgia. An effective sentimental story can elicit these emotional responses from an audience. Below is an example of a tragic story I sometimes tell. It was a deeply personal moment for the girl involved. It was also a very sad moment for me as I watched events unfold before my eyes:

In different parts of the world, strict cultural norms govern what happens to girls within a traditional society. I witnessed this in the worst way following a trafficking case in Bangladesh.

It involved a 15-year-old girl, called Ava, whom a local trafficker kidnapped and took across the border to India. Once there, the trafficker immediately sold her to a brothel. While most girls in this situation are trapped for years, she was rescued after only three weeks during a police raid. By then she had been forced to have sex with several dozen men. This was the worst fate for a young unmarried Muslim girl. Her society considered her spoiled.

The police had been accompanied by a team of journalists covering the raid on the brothel. Despite their professed ethical code against revealing victims' identities, a newspaper article included the names of those rescued and where they came from. This information made it back to Ava's home community in Bangladesh. Within days, everyone knew her tragic story.

After the raid, Ava spent three weeks in an Indian shelter where she received counseling, medical care, food, and love. Afterwards, social workers took her back to Bangladesh where she waited an

additional two days at a local shelter. I was invited to accompany her back to her home village. I agreed, in hopes of better understanding how the repatriation and reunification process worked.

Ava had a very young, innocent appearance. With her long, shiny, jet-black hair, which flowed down below her waist, her perfect teeth and her piercing brown eyes, she was truly a joy to behold. When I met her, she came across as being quiet and timid. The social worker said that Ava was completely different before her trauma. She used to be outgoing, playful and joyful.

Two hours after leaving Dhaka, the capital city, we arrived at her village. Because it was so unusual to see visitors arriving in an official looking vehicle, word spread like wildfire and we were surrounded before we even got out of the car.

Her entire family was assembled in front of her home: her father, mother, an older brother and two younger sisters. On our side stood an NGO representative, Ava, and myself.

For several moments, everyone just looked at each other. When Ava started to move forward with her hands stretched outward, her father put his hand up and told her, "Stop."

She halted. I could see and feel that her family loved her. I sensed that they wanted to run up and scoop her into their arms. Instead, a horribly different scenario unfolded.

"You have to go," her father said. "You can't stay here anymore."

Ava didn't move, not knowing what to say or do. She knew what was happening but she chose not to believe it. "It is me, Father. I am home."

"You can't stay here. We know what happened to you. You will have to leave."

"But I didn't do anything, Father!" she cried out. "I was just walking down the road when I was taken! I didn't do anything!"

"I am sorry. What happened to you can't be changed. You have brought shame on our family. You will have to leave. Now go!"

"But Father, I didn't..." she started to say before he cut her off again.

"Just leave," he demanded, as he held back his own tears. "We have your brother and sisters to think of. We need to ensure they have a chance to get married someday. Your shame will prevent that from happening. Now go!" He turned to walk into the house.

When her mother started to walk toward her daughter, he shouted to his wife, "Come inside now!"

This was one of those times in my life when my heart completely broke. Despite their tremendous love for their daughter, sadly their sense of societal obligation overruled everything.

We brought Ava back to Dhaka. She got a job in a garment factory but several months later she simply disappeared. No one knew what happened to her. I sometimes wonder if she died from a broken heart.

The point I am trying to convey in the story is this: ***We must understand the importance of societal norms and practices. They can supersede a family's love for their son or daughter. Over time, we can only hope that these traditions will change.***

Using this story as a springboard, I go on to describe how unfortunate victims of sex trafficking in certain societies require specially designed care and support. Below is a comment made to me following a speech to a group of government officials in Bangladesh:

I have seen this kind of cultural bias many times. It is something that can't be fixed easily. It requires entire communities to change.

When we first did public health work in rural Bangladesh, we faced similar challenges. People were not used to new health techniques. Before we can change societal norms, we need people to care. Telling emotional stories like this helps people to understand what is right because they can feel the victim's pain.

Components of an Emotional Story

If the story being told is meant to elicit an emotional response, it is very important to pay particular attention to the characters, the plot, the situation, and the outcome. For example, the characteristics and personality traits are important to set the stage for the drama that follows. Anything offered in a speech that touches an audience helps to make the point relevant, memorable, and inspiring. They will recall the story long after the presentation is over.

A well told story enables the listener to visualize the protagonist's experience, allowing the audience to fully understand what a person went through. Stories should not be too complicated and must have a clear beginning, middle and end.

Most emotional stories are comprised of a conflict and some kind of resolution but not always. Not all stories have satisfactory endings.

In addition, the setting is a critical component. For example, two stories, one set in luxurious surroundings, the other set in a slum, will send out very different messages to the listener, offering completely different contexts.

It is essential that when we tell personal stories with intimate details, that we preserve the protagonist's dignity. Most emotional stories require someone to share highly personal information. Doing this is very courageous. Respecting their confidentiality and privacy is vital. Before telling a story like this, I always try to obtain permission from the person involved.

Having said this, it is possible to overload an audience. When a story is too disturbing, it can be counterproductive by evoking the wrong response from an audience. This is a particular risk when telling stories about human trafficking.

Finding the right balance is important. There is a big difference between describing what a character feels versus describing what is happening and allowing the listener to fill in the details.

Missing the Point

The following is a good example of an emotional story that misses the point. The person telling the story places too much emphasis on her own feelings, without focusing on the victims themselves.

The shelter was filled with young girls who had all been forced into prostitution. I looked into their eyes and all I could feel was their pain. I felt so sad. I really wanted to do something. Before returning to my hotel, I spent time with them. I held their hands and prayed. It was a great moment for me. I felt like I had really made a difference. I will always remember that day. It was both a terrible and a beautiful moment.

Telling a Story in Your Own Voice

This is a translation of a letter I received from a girl called, Jeana, in 1994 when I was living in Nepal. The day before, I visited her at a human trafficking shelter. With letters like this, it is easy to see how people like me feel compelled to help. A letter like this can break your heart.

I sometimes read this letter because it is a direct plea from one person to seek the help of others. She was dying. She had come to accept her own destiny. But she was determined to see that this didn't happen to anyone else. Using genuine narrative reaches people at a deeper level. You will understand what I mean after reading Jeana's letter.

Matthew

Thank you for your kindness in coming to see me yesterday at the shelter. Your words brought great joy to my broken heart.

I turn 15 on Monday. After being used by so many men, I can see that my days will soon come to an end. My illness gets worse with each passing day. I can hardly eat. The food has no flavor. It is sour like so much of my life. I will not see my 16th birthday.

I look back on that day when I left my family's home. I was only twelve then. I was so happy. So full of life. I had such hopes and dreams. Now look at me. I will never marry. I will never have children. I will never have grandchildren. I will not grow old. The day that first man took my virtue was the day my God died. He and all those other men stole my life away. I was just a child. Why did nobody come to help me? I have stopped asking why this happened to me. I have even stopped feeling angry.

I need you to promise me. I need you to do what you can to prevent any other girls from falling into this hole. Promise me you will end this evil. Promise me you will never stop trying. I don't care about myself. I'm done. Don't let any more of our sisters go through what I went through.

My spirit is already dead inside. My body will soon catch up. How can this happen to a child? Where are all the good men? Where are our protectors? Where is our humanity? Promise me.

Jeana

Jeana's words always have a powerful impact. After reading the letter out to the audience, I continue:

Many of us who work in this field are driven by these passionate pleas. This is one of so many. This young girl was turning 15. She was commercially raped over 7,000 times. There are literally millions of women and girls in similar situations.

Jeana asked two good questions – “Where are all of the good men? Where are the protectors?” They are out there. But we need to find them, wake them up, and take care of this problem.

Reading this letter so many years ago was an epiphany that helped me to understand that we, the citizens of the world—collectively and individually—have a responsibility to help end the suffering of those like Jeana. Human trafficking represents one of the most egregious human rights violations of our time. As rights bearers ourselves, we must all accept some responsibility.

To solve this problem, we need to establish a “second generation abolitionist movement” in which we all step up and do our part to help address the issue. Abolitionist William Wilberforce and others led a movement 200 years ago. So can we. If an army of ordinary people were to come forward within a mass movement, this can turn the tide and help reduce the number of victims. This approach worked before – it can work again today. But we need a mindset shift and must all take heroic steps to do our part. Every contribution will add up.

What can we all do? We can learn about the horrors of modern slavery and educate others. We can step up and volunteer for one of the many anti-trafficking groups. We can raise money for the cause or donate ourselves. We can support government efforts to help fight the injustices. The idea is to use our own talents to fight human trafficking. If you are an artist, create your own work of art and display it in a public place. If you are a film maker, be a voice for the voiceless and produce films about modern-day slavery. If you are a corporate executive, organize a talk on the issue and mobilize your company. Whatever you do, do it in the pursuit of freedom. The same can be said of anyone, a teacher, a social worker, a doctor or a lawyer. If 10 million people did one thing that is 10 million actions. This mass movement could finally abolish slavery.

8

GIVING THINGS A VOICE

While most stories focus on people, it is possible to give voices to animals, fish, birds, trees, forests, oceans, etc. Using this form of storytelling can appeal to audiences that want to help the environment or animals. This approach can be highly effective.

I once attended an event where a small animal shelter charity was trying to persuade people to adopt dogs from their facility. The spokesperson stood next to a picture of a dog sitting beside a small boy who was grinning from ear-to-ear. There was also a collection of dog photos – each one cuter than the next. The speaker said, “*I’d like to read this letter from Bo, the dog*”:

A year ago, I was all by myself living on the streets. My mother was a stray dog and we all lived under a highway overpass. One day she ran into the street and was killed. We were all alone. For a long time, me and my two brothers had to find food on our own. It was so hard. It seemed like we were always hungry and cold. One day a nice man came in and found us. He put us in a cage and then drove us away in a big van. At first, we were so scared. But when we arrived at our final destination, everything changed. Many people were so nice to us. They cleaned us, pet us, fed us, and gave us so much love. I stayed in that kennel with my two brothers and many dogs. One day, a small boy came with his parents. They put a leash on me and took me to their home. Every day I am happy. I run, play, and enjoy love. I only wish my brothers and friends at the kennel could have the same kind of life I have. Can you help them? Can you adopt a dog like me? Can you make them as happy as I am? Bo

This approach can be effective for the following reasons. First, it personalizes the appeal. Bo, the dog, is given a face and an identity. We can relate to the trauma and the gratitude expressed in Bo's own words. Bo is saying thank you for caring about him, an innocent creature. This appeals to our compassion and empathy.

Second, it is cute. We see a child-like sincerity in Bo's letter. An innocence that shines through. We can all relate to this because we understand that a dog on the street faces many dangers and perils. We can imagine what it must be like to forage for food, to try to find a place to sleep at night, and to understand how it feels to fear being attacked by other animals.

Finally, the format allows us to hear a message from a completely different perspective. If animals could actually use words, we'd expect them to say something like this. The message really resonates with us.

Public Service Announcements

A number of major public service advertisements have been broadcast over the years following a similar approach. Below are two examples:

Nature is speaking – Julia Roberts is Mother Nature (Conservation International)

Some call me nature. Others call me Mother Nature. I've been here for over four and a half billion years. 22,500 times longer than you. I don't really need people but people need me. Yes, your future depends on me. When I thrive, you thrive. When I falter, you falter. Or worse. But I have been here for eons. I have fed species greater than you and I have starved species greater than you. My oceans, my soil, my flowing streams, my forests, they can all take you or leave you. How you choose to live each day, whether you regard or disregard me doesn't really matter to me. One way or the other, your actions will determine your fate. Not mine. I am nature I will go on. I will go on. I am prepared to evolve. Are you?

Nature doesn't need People. People need nature.

Nature is Speaking: Harrison Ford is The Ocean (Conservation International)

I am the ocean. I'm water. I'm most of this planet. I shaped it. Every stream, every cloud and every rain drop, it all comes back, to me. One way or another, every living thing here needs me. I'm the source. I'm what they crawled out of. Humans are not different. I don't owe them a thing. I give. They take. But I can always take back. That's just the way it's always been. It's not their planet anyway. It never was, never will be. But humans. They take more than their share. They poison me and then they expect me to feed them. Well it doesn't work that way. If humans want to exist in nature with me and off of me, I suggest they listen close; I'm only going to say this once. If nature isn't kept healthy, humans won't survive. Simple as that. Me, I could give a damn with or without humans; I am the ocean. I covered this entire planet once and I can always cover it again. That's all I have to say.

Final Statement – Nature doesn't need people. People need nature.

For years, we have heard marketing companies talk about the advantages of giving an issue a face or an identity. This works. These two innovative approaches are very effective because they take an abstract environmental setting – nature or an ocean – and provide it with a voice. We can imagine that if a forest or an ocean could express itself, this might be its response to the terrible issues it faces at the hands of man. The message is bold and provocative. By saying, “*I don't need you,*” it reflects the fact that we are the loser in the present game as we continue to abuse our environments. We will be the ones who face the ultimate challenges. Nature and the oceans will simply continue. This is a powerful message.

From the Villain's Perspective

A variation of this approach can be found in the story below. It portrays an issue from the perspective of the villain, in this case a plastic bottle. I also find this approach innovative and highly effective.

A Plastic Bottle Speaks: Hello, I'm a plastic bottle. While I might seem insignificant to you, I'm far from it. I was filled up with water, used once and then I join my kind in the landfills, parks, forests and oceans all over the world. Each day, I join the 60 million bottles like me discarded in a 24-hour period. If I am lucky, I hope to join the massive plastic island that has formed in the ocean that covers an area the size of Spain with 150 million metric tons. With no end in sight, our numbers will grow and we will eventually come to dominate the environment. While this will add to the 100 million marine animals being killed each year by plastic waste, I don't worry about this. Since it will take me 450 years to decompose, I will be around a lot longer than any of you will.

While this statement might seem cheeky, it is effective. It provides the disturbing details in a thought-provoking way. Showing a photo of a massive plastic island in the ocean while reading this text can be very effective. The audience really begins to care.

Below is a variation of this approach:

A Seat Belt Speaks

Use me or don't use me. It really doesn't matter to me. I'm just a simple strap attached to a buckle.

I'm here because physics is involved when a moving object strikes another. I'm here because society feels that people need to be protected from the dangers associated with driving. I'm here because no family wants to receive a call that says one of your loved ones has died in an avoidable way. I'm here because nearly all the research says that by using me, I can save your life.

If you want to experience flying out of a windshield then go ahead. It doesn't matter to me. Go ahead and join the 30,000 people killed each year in car accidents in the USA.

If you think I'm a simple strap that doesn't have any relevance to your life, think again. I might be the difference between an extended life filled with joy and happiness and a life lost. Think about your family. Think about the people you love. Think about what matters most in your life. You decide.

Many people die from indifference to the wearing of seatbelts. As someone who has been in three major car accidents, I understand the importance of wearing a seatbelt. The above “in your face” statement uses an aggressive approach to bring this message home. In an indirect way, it makes the point that we should all wear seat belts because we love our families and our own lives, and we need to do what we can to protect them. Love for our family is the motivating factor here.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS AND RATIONALES

Using a Story to Describe a Program

Let's face it, most program descriptions tend to be uninteresting, uninspiring, and even boring. In the past, when presenting a program description in detail, I'd often show a series of PowerPoint slides that included the objective, activities, and overall ethos of the program. Here is an example of a typical slide I would use:

Safe Migration Training and Outcome

- Community Outreach
- Pre and post-test monitoring
- Research to determine messaging
- Program dissemination and expansion

I'd state the category heading and then make a series of statements to describe individual elements of the program. This presentation format is very common. During my time working for the United Nations, I made or sat through hundreds of presentations of this nature. At some of the conferences I attended, there would be up to five similar presentations, one after another.

It doesn't take much imagination to see how ineffective this approach is with most audiences. By the second speaker, many of the participants are looking at their phone or laptop or talking amongst themselves. It is also common to see people get up and walk out in the middle of a talk.

Albert Einstein once remarked, “*Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.*” For years, people have continued to make the same boring presentations. If we feel that they are ineffective and fail to communicate a memorable understanding of a subject, why do we all continue giving them? Do we assume that somehow the audience will eventually wake up and pay attention? Insanity is at work here.

Using a Story to Explain Strategy and Implementation

Using a story to describe how and why a program was set up helps the audience to understand the process better. It also helps to offer credibility that the steps followed resulted in a logical, practical outcome. Here are two good examples. In the first one, I simply present a photo of a group of migrant workers sitting together. When telling a story, there is no need for any bullet points:

Example One

During my time in Bangladesh, I was once asked to attend a safe migration training given by a partner agency. To help educate communities on the dangers of human trafficking, this partner agency had developed a comprehensive safe migration curriculum. It comprised a half day of material focusing on everything the UN offers relating to safe traveling practices for migrants.

As part of my condition for attending the training, I asked if the partner organization could carry out pre-training and post-training tests to gauge the effectiveness of the curriculum. They agreed. The results of the post-training tests were quite shocking. Many scores remained the same and some actually went down. We concluded that the training provided so much information that it overwhelmed and confused the participants. Apparently, the

excessive details caused them to lose their perspective and their sense of priority.

Following this disappointing outcome, we asked an advertising agency to go to the villages to see if they could come up with a better approach to help protect prospective migrants from being exploited. Over a two-week period, they used focus groups and small group discussions to identify the simplest ways to prevent human trafficking. What they discovered was amazing in its simplicity. It was a stroke of genius.

Instead of long, drawn-out training, the villagers were taught to do just ONE thing:

“If a person wants to take your son or daughter away to India to get a great job, don’t say no, agree, but insist that a family member accompany them on the journey.” It was then explained to them, “If it is a genuine job offer, the recruiting agent will agree. But if the agent terminates the arrangement, it is probably a case of trafficking.”

Six months after providing this advice, we returned to the community. The villagers were very excited. They said about 60 percent of the time that they insisted on a family member going with the child and the recruiting agent, the deal fell through. They said they now understood how to avoid the trafficking trap.

In many parts of the world, children are told not to take candy from strangers and not to get into cars with them. This is a universal message regularly reinforced and widely accepted. Because these villagers had experienced this prevention technique firsthand, it quickly developed into a similar enduring message that spread from village to village.

We must understand that often less is more. A simple message directly related to a problem can offer protection that is clear, understandable, and effective.

Example Two

We had known for some time that young women from Mongolia were being trafficked through Japan into Macau, where they were forced into prostitution. After two or three years some victims managed to return home. To avoid losing face, nearly all of them lied about their experiences. The potential shame, embarrassment, and stigma were simply too overwhelming.

How did this victimization process work? The back page of the local Mongolian newspaper carried ads that said, "If you are young, unmarried, pretty, and you want to make money overseas, contact us and we will send you to Japan to work in a restaurant." Since many young people find life in Mongolia isolated and boring, young women would respond to the ad believing they could make great money in an exotic location and would accept the job. Once recruited, they were sent to Japan to work in a restaurant but several weeks later, on a false pretense, they'd be trafficked to the brothels in Macau.

To help prevent this from happening, our proposed solution was simple. We bought a cell phone, put a lot of minutes on it and hired a well-trained NGO worker to answer the phone. She was told to provide advice and guidance but never reveal who she was or the name of her organization. We then put an ad in the newspaper among the false ones. This ad simply stated, "Before calling anyone else about a job, call us first." We provided no other information.

The calls soon came in. The young women would ask, "Do you have a job for me?" The NGO person would say, "No, but let me tell you about some of the other companies out there and what might happen to you if you accept a job from them."

This approach allowed us to help people avoid making a serious mistake. Armed with this basic information, many were deterred from accepting false jobs. But something else happened. A second group of people called the same number. These were women who

had been trafficked, but never told anyone their story. Somehow word got out about this “hotline” that could help people who had been trafficked and victims started to call. This information helped to significantly increase the number of cases known to the police.

Surprisingly, a third group also called—the traffickers. Their business had dropped off due to our efforts. After learning that our call service talked women out of accepting jobs abroad, these criminals began telephoning to threaten the NGO worker. Since we used a cell phone, we recorded the traffickers’ numbers and gave them to the police. All in all, it was an efficient, inexpensive way to help innocent people from being horrifically exploited.

For a prevention program to be effective, it must meet three basic criteria. First, it must target the right people. Second, it should result in behavior changes so individuals avoid being trafficked. Third, it should be cost effective and replicable. The program I just mentioned meets each criterion with excellent success.

Another lesson in this story is that we must find solutions that fit the problem. The best solutions reach a person with the information they need, when they need it, before they make a tragic decision.

Using a storytelling approach, the participant can better understand the context, rationale, and reasons why a program worked or why it didn’t.

Problem Solving

One way to help people understand how a problem can be solved is to walk them through a scenario that brings this message home. Simply describing the outcome is never as effective as the journey. The story below illustrates this important point:

For development workers to do their job in a remote area, getting access to the project sites is essential. Reliable all-terrain vehicles

are essential. During my stay in Nepal, my organization had a policy that prohibited the purchase of anything other than American vehicles. The Nepalese Government had to endorse these purchases, but did not want American vehicles for practical reasons. There were few maintenance facilities in the country for American cars, spare parts were impossible to find, and they had such a high gear ratio, many vehicles ended up veering off steep roads because they were simply too fast. Many of our programs suffered as a result. The inability to access remote places inevitably impacted monitoring and evaluation.

While we explored our options, nothing proved practical or affordable. Finally, one of our staff came up with a crazy idea—why not bring some old vehicles back to life?

At each district health center, there were four or five abandoned vehicles. Most were junked because a simple part was broken. With no maintenance budget to fix them, these vehicles were left to rot. Some of these needed parts costing very little money. When we realized the number of potential vehicles that fell into this category, we checked our internal policy and found that we could spend unlimited amounts on vehicle repairs. The plan fell into place.

We went to the Ministry of Health with this proposition: If we agreed to rehabilitate the vehicles, would they allow us to use them for two years? At the end of this time, we'd hand them back in full working order. Because these vehicles were such eyesores and demonstrated the inefficiency of the government, they agreed to let us take and use a bunch of these vehicles.

This program was a resounding success. We solved a problem that once seemed unsolvable. This was efficient and cost effective. After two years, we offered to hand them back to the government. Having received new ones from other donors, they declined and said we could keep them. This gave us a constant supply of vehicles for a fraction of the cost of new ones.

The lesson in this is that we can find ways to use what is available to us. Innovation and ingenuity offer cost-effective and efficient solutions to most problems.

One of the most important lessons I learned during my time in public health out in the field was the importance of using what was available to make a difference. This story helped the audience to understand that we can and should be creative in the way we solve problems.

Why Use Problem Solving Stories?

Problem solving stories can be highly effective because they help the audience to understand the reasoning and the rationale used to resolve seemingly insurmountable obstacles. In the work I do, there are many times when problems arise that prevent a program from moving forward. In the case above, the issue was a lack of transport needed to monitor our efforts in the field. Without these vehicles it was impossible to visit medical sites to troubleshoot and to monitor our on-going efforts. This hindered our work greatly and put people's lives at risk. When carrying out public health work, simple on-site adjustments can sometimes be the difference between life and death.

In the story, I tried to clarify not only the problem but also the various factors that contributed to it. This allowed the audience to do two things – to understand the complexity and to visualize what we were up against and what prevented us from making progress. In this case, breaking down the factors into parts offered clarity and understanding.

At this stage in the story, many people begin to think about solutions. Without knowing it, they are asking the question in their mind, “*What would I do in this situation? Would I be able to fix this?*” By telling a story instead of listing the facts, it forces the audience to work out solutions for themselves.

While the story describes how we reached an impasse that seemed impossible to overcome, it shows how a member of our staff tackled the issue by looking at it from a completely different angle – instead

of buying something, he suggested that we refurbish something. This had never crossed our minds.

Stories like this are important because they challenge the audience to be more creative when seeking solutions. What made this idea so different was that it challenged the conventional wisdom that we always have to buy something in order to do something.

What I like most about this story is that the solution achieves two things at once – it allowed us to have the vehicles we needed to do our work and it solved another problem by recycling abandoned and rotting vehicles.

10

USING HUMOR

Jokes and Humorous Stories

Many effective speakers use humorous stories to get their points across. For me, this was less relevant, because I was often talking about human trafficking. When you try to tell a joke or a funny story when addressing a human rights issue, it often doesn't work. Like anything else, it depends on the content, the audience, and the occasion. To illustrate this point, jokes can be very effective at a wedding but perhaps not at a funeral. I once tried to insert a humorous story in the middle of a presentation. The punch line was met with total silence – nothing from the audience. This was a memorable moment for me and certainly taught me a lesson.

If you use a funny story, it should be amusing to others not just to you. This is especially true if the story opens your presentation. It should open with a bang, which can be tricky.

In 2016, I did a 70-day road trip with my wife across the USA. We visited 27 cities giving 114 presentations. At the end of the trip I gave a presentation to the sponsors. I began with this story:

One morning in April 2016, I woke and decided that I needed to do a 100-day road trip across the USA to teach corporations about human trafficking. My plan was to do one presentation a day during this extended period. Armed with this crazy idea, I went to my board and told them about my plan. To my surprise, they said no. I approached them again. They said no. I approached them again. They said no. I approached them a fifth time and they said

maybe. I wore them down. In the end, they agreed to 30 days. But instead I took 70 days.

Because I couldn't do this trip alone, I spoke to my wife and said with a big smile, "Honey, guess what, we are going to do a cross country road trip throughout America. We will visit 27 cities and get a chance to really see our country. It will be like an extended vacation. It will be my birthday present to you." I thought I was so clever.

Hmmmm. So, we started our little adventure together in Vancouver. During the first week of this epic journey, the reality of what I had committed to hit home – this was NOT going to be the fun vacation I had originally promised. Along with the endless driving, exhausting search for hotels and relentless speech preparation, there was also the constant struggle to make it to all of the venues on time. Despite almost ending our marriage in Kansas City, we somehow made it. Our rental car clocked up a whopping 10,000 miles. (At this point I showed a photo of an old junkyard car – this always got a laugh).

To make up for this miscalculation, you can imagine how many additional birthday presents I needed to buy to make up for this humongous error.

While the story wasn't LOL funny, it did get a chuckle from the audience. Since this story was real and personal, it was accepted without question.

Below is another humorous story to make a point about millennial students. It takes a generalization and gives it life.

To illustrate the differences between students when I was in college and students today, let me tell you a revealing story.

One day, a young math student was walking down a road when a frog called to him, "Boy, if you kiss me, I will turn into a beautiful princess."

The boy picked up the frog, smiled at it, then placed it into his pocket. A few minutes later, the frog said, "Boy, if you kiss me and turn me back into a beautiful princess, I will stay with you for a week."

The boy took the frog from his pocket, smiled at it, then put it back. A few minutes later, the frog said, "Boy, if you kiss me and turn me back into a beautiful princess, I will do ANYTHING you want!"

The boy took the frog from his pocket, smiled, and put it back. Finally, the frog cried, "Boy, what is wrong with you? I have told you that I am a beautiful princess and if you kiss me, I will stay with you and do ANYTHING you want!"

The boy took the frog from his pocket and said, "Look, I am an engineering student, I have no time for a girlfriend, but a talking frog is cool!"

Kids these days have different priorities. We often hear of students forgoing dating to ensure it doesn't interfere with their education. This story illustrates this point well.

The following story is a humorous way to describe how interns are not always prepared for the work they are asked to do. While this example is exaggerated, I have actually had situations where untrained interns made great blunders. Using an amusing anecdote to convey this message helps to ensure it is remembered.

One of the biggest issues I face with using volunteers in an NGO setting is the amount of time required to train them up. But without this preparation, some bizarre things can happen. I once stumbled upon an intern who was standing before the paper shredder looking very confused.

"Need some help?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied. "How does this thing work?"

"Simple," I said, taking the fat report from his hand and feeding it into the shredder.

"Thanks, but where do the copies come out?"

While this might seem like an extreme example, it illustrates my point that preparation takes time but is essential to avoid major mishaps.

This final example can be used to describe the impact of a teacher who is ill prepared. During my university days, I had several teachers like this. Their lectures were confusing and sometimes incomprehensible. Since this was before the Internet, it was often difficult to find materials to make sense of the content being taught. My two sons who recently completed their undergraduate studies, often talked about similar experiences. This story highlights the importance of good preparation.

A professor talking about class attendance said that she had no illusions that attending her class was essential to getting "A's" for her course.

I recall the story of a student who attended just the first class of the semester and did not show up again until the final exam. He scored 95% in the exam. The professor was shocked because she knew he hadn't come to class all semester. She wrote "See me" on the cover of the exam. After the papers were passed back and the class was over, the student approached the professor asking why she wanted to see him.

The professor responded, "Yes. How did you score 95 for that exam?"

The student answered, "Well, it would have been 100 but I went to your first class and got very confused."

As you can see, using irony can be highly effective in reaching an audience.

Using Short Humorous Opening Statements

Some speakers like to sprinkle their speeches with humor. Here is a collection of examples I found on the Internet:

- *I always try to keep my remarks short. I remember the story of a man who shot a long-winded speaker. Afterwards, he went to the sheriff's office and confessed, "I just killed a keynote speaker". The sheriff replied, "You're in the wrong place. You pick up the reward at the bounty hunter's office."*
- *I hope my speech will keep you on the edge of your seats. Hopefully that will be because you're interested, not because you're trying to get up the nerve to leave.*
- *I always try to avoid giving advice during my remarks. As a schoolgirl once wrote, "Socrates was a wise, Greek philosopher who walked around giving advice to people. They poisoned him."*
- *(After a lengthy or flattering introduction) After such a warm, generous introduction, I can only say thank you and I think you must have gotten the wrong guy.*
- *Some say that too many after dinner speeches makes people dull. I'd argue that too many dull people make after dinner speeches.*
- *The problem with a lot of speakers is you can't hear what they're saying. The problem with others is that you can.*
- *Every speaker has his moment. The problem is, most of them stretch it into an hour.*

- *Speeches are like the horns on a steer. There's a point here and a point there, but in between it's mostly bull.*
- *The best speech is one that has a great beginning, a memorable end and not much in between.*

I asked one of my friends who regularly uses these kinds of phrases why he feels they are necessary. I found his response very interesting:

Sometimes people feel that speakers are arrogant, entitled, and condescending. I use these statements to poke fun at myself and my presentation. It offers a humble aspect to who I am – kind of like demonstrating that I'm less than perfect and like everyone else. It also gets a laugh that allows the audience to participate. It relaxes everyone, including myself.

Short Transition Statements

Below are some additional comments that can be used in a speech to get a laugh.

- *Adults are always asking little kids what they want to be when they grow up because they're looking for ideas;*
- *Always remember you're unique, just like everyone else;*
- *Every time I find the meaning of life, they change it; and*
- *I am a nobody, nobody is perfect, therefore I am perfect.*

Another way to introduce a bit of comedy into your talk is to use anecdotes told by well-known comics. For example, you can say, "As Jerry Seinfeld once said, *"The road less traveled is less traveled for a reason."* These jokes take the responsibility away from you if no-one laughs. Below are some other examples:

- *"You are only given a little spark of madness. You mustn't lose this."*

Robin Williams

- *"Most people work just hard enough not to get fired and get paid just enough money not to quit."*

George Carlin

- *"Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."*

Will Rogers

- *"As long as the world is turning and spinning, we're gonna be dizzy and we're gonna make mistakes."*

Mel Brooks

- *"Don't be afraid of missing opportunities. Behind every failure is an opportunity somebody wishes they had missed."*

Lily Tomlin

What is the Point?

Inspirational humor can be light-hearted and at the same time, very insightful. If done correctly, it can be refreshing and trigger creative thought within the audience. These anecdotes can act as attention grabbers, offer a light-hearted start to a talk and allow the presenter to capture the audience's attention and hold it. But humor doesn't always work. If a speaker misjudges the audience, the timing and the purpose of a talk, it can fall flat. To avoid this, it is important to experiment with funny stories before using them in formal presentations.

11

USING STORIES TO ADD CLARITY

From Abstract to Clarity

My father was one of the wisest people I have ever known. One of his enduring comments has stayed with me always. He often said, “Pure genius is when a person is able to take the most difficult and complex topics and make them understandable to an eighth grader but also have them be beneficial to a PhD.” He explained to me that some of the most complicated physics concepts can be best taught with a good story. I often follow this advice when addressing the complexity of modern slavery.

The Definition of Human Trafficking

The following is a typical list of bullet points used to define the concept of human trafficking. Each point addresses a different aspect of the subject. The challenge with lists of this kind is that it is hard to understand the core definition. When I have used this list in training programs, people often find it difficult to remember all of the details.

- Human trafficking is the trade of humans for the purpose of forced labor, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation for the trafficker or others.
- This may encompass providing a spouse in the context of forced marriage.
- Human trafficking can occur within a country or trans-nationally.

- Human trafficking is a crime against the person because of the violation of the victim's rights of movement through coercion and because of their commercial exploitation.
- Human trafficking is the trade in people, especially women and children, and does not necessarily involve the movement of the person from one place to another.

For me, the core of the problem is “human trafficking represents a loss of personal freedom.” Sometimes the detailed definitions and the technical jargon we use come across as being theoretical or abstract. Knowing each of the components doesn't necessarily help us to understand the essence of what is most relevant and important.

Using a Story to Define the Essence of a Problem

Using a story to get a technical point across can be an effective approach. The example below illustrates this point well.

Years ago, three NGO workers asked me to teach them what I knew about human trafficking. While I knew very little at that time, perhaps I had more knowledge and experience than most. After putting it off for nearly two months, I agreed to deliver some training.

A few days before we started, I asked, “What are you hoping to get out of this experience?”

Their enthusiastic answer was very specific, “We want to walk away with a real understanding of the problem.”

Armed with this explicit request, I asked, “Can we meet at your office on a Saturday morning?” They agreed. “Will there be anyone else there?” I asked. They said no. We decided to meet at 10:00 a.m.

Upon arrival, I asked to see their storage room. The room had a padlock on the outside. Inside were a small table, a chair and a range of office supplies. "Let's meet in this room."

This was an unusual request but they agreed. When they were settled, I walked out, locked the door and left the building. They were trapped with no way to escape. This was before mobile phones.

For the next three hours, I had a nice lunch, made a few calls and ran some errands. When I returned, I heard them pounding on the door and shouting for help. I opened the door and said:

"Now you understand. Now you know what it is like to have your life stolen. I controlled you for three hours. This, my friends, is the essence of human slavery—a loss of personal freedom."

Naturally, I got into a lot of trouble for this unorthodox stunt and I do not recommend this technique. However, the lesson did sink in. Years later I met two of them again. They both talked about that day. Despite their anger at the time, they acknowledged there is no substitute for first-hand experience."

Whenever I tell this story, the audience walks away with a very clear understanding of the definition - human trafficking represents a loss of personal freedom. It is much easier to remember a story like this than the list of statements in the slide above.

Factors Related to Modern Slavery

During my time working at the United Nations, I would regularly visit government offices to learn about their national programs. As part of this process, nearly every government had a standard set of PowerPoint slides. By the third or fourth slide, there was often a list of modern slavery characteristics that looked something like this.

Modern Slavery Characteristics

- **Fraud and Deception:** The most common approach traffickers use to recruit and secure victims is fraud and deception. Traffickers gain a person's trust and lie about a possible employment opportunity. They offer a young, vulnerable person who faces hardship and poverty the one thing that seems completely out of reach: a better life, an easier life or a life that will not only benefit them but their entire family.
- **Debt Bondage:** Debt bondage is a situation where advances in cash are paid from the trafficker to the victim, her family, or to others, which the victim must "work off." Whether through force, physical or mental abuse or some other form of coercion, the victim is maintained at the exploitation site until the debt is satisfactorily paid.
- **Threats and Violence:** Traffickers violate many laws and human rights during the process of recruiting, transporting, harboring, selling and maintaining each person. This can include torture, rape, beatings, threats of violence, threats of reprisals against family members, deprivation of food, and physical confinement.
- **Isolation and Confinement:** For many victims, isolation from others and confinement prevent them from seeking help. These factors are often the case for victims of domestic servitude and forced marriage. The tactics used to enforce this isolation often include violence or threats of violence.

Using a Story to Define Human Trafficking

This story conveys all of the characteristics listed above. For reference, I have included which characteristic from the list is being described.

“When Sita turned 18, her family borrowed money and gave it to an employment agency to get her a job overseas (Debt Bondage).

Since there were passports and plane tickets involved, the costs were considerable. At first Sita was excited because she was told she’d earn US\$120 per month.

After the paperwork was done and she completed a week’s training to become a house servant, she flew overseas.

At first, she was so excited. She felt proud that she’d earn money for her family. But when she got there everything changed. Nothing they said at the agency was right (Fraud and Deception).

They made her work from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. every day. She was never allowed to leave or have any contact with her family (Isolation and Confinement).

They beat her every time she did something wrong. Since she didn’t understand their language, she was forever making mistakes. When the mistress of the house was away, her husband would force himself on her. While she tried to stop him, there was nothing she could do (Threats and Violence).

Once when she threatened to run away, they said that her family would be put in jail for the debt that had been incurred on her behalf. They told her that she had many fees and penalties that needed to be paid before she could consider going home. (Debt Bondage).

Since they deducted money for everything—her food, board and medicine— her monthly salary was no more than US\$10 (Fraud and Deception).

She was a slave in that house. She wanted to die. When the contract was over and she went home, her family blamed her for everything. The agency said she was lazy and talked back. (Fraud and Deception).”

Using Stories to Bust Stereotypes

One of the truths I have learned while doing work related to human trafficking is that not all that we see is either black or white, good or bad. There are many shades of grey. One example of this can be found in a typical brothel situation. Most people think that all brothel staff are bad. Understanding how they arrived at this point in their lives is important. Here is a story that I often tell to bring this home to the audience.

When most people think of the person who runs a brothel, the madam, they want her to be arrested and thrown into jail. Why? Because madams are regarded as one of the main criminals in sex trafficking. But there is another side to these women that must be taken into consideration.

Many of the madams I have met over the years were once victims themselves. They were trafficked at a young age and forced into the business. Like most victims, they suffered within a cruel system that demanded absolute obedience. Over time, with few options to escape, instead of turning away from it, they learned to make the most of it. With each step up the hierarchy, their lives got a little easier. Eventually, the brothel owners take notice of their talents and teach them to become perpetrators themselves.

Some might argue that each victim/perpetrator had the choice not to follow this path. While that is true, it is not difficult to understand their motives. We all seek a better life. In their minds, this was the only way to succeed.

Some people ask, "How could they go from being mistreated as victims to mistreating others? Wouldn't they feel empathy for the new victims in the brothels?" I am not altogether sure why they don't, but this is not a new phenomenon. We see molested children go on to become pedophiles themselves. Instead of appropriately handling the pain they felt, they use it as an excuse to continue

the cycle of abuse. This is common to people who are severely traumatized.

Our hearts ache for victims but the moment they cross over and become part of the trafficking infrastructure, our views of them change. We have little empathy or understanding for perpetrators. But criminals also need help to change their lives.

I tell stories like this because they help us to feel empathy and understanding for people who are often loathed and despised. One way to stop human trafficking is to put the criminals in jail. Another option is to work with those who are part of the system and help them become better people. Over the years, I have seen pimps, madams and traffickers give up their criminal lives to become part of the solution. Because they come from this world and understand how it works, they are some of the most effective people at helping to reach others with shared experiences. Telling stories like this type helps to avoid the trap that NGOs sometimes fall into – that all criminals are bad and all NGO workers are good. It is simply not so.

12

UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

Surprise Endings

A plot twist introduces a radical change in the direction or outcome of a story. This is what I mean by a surprise ending. The power of this approach is that it can change the audience's perception of the preceding events and also give them a completely new perspective. Unexpected endings often force people to stop, really think about the story and evaluate their own understanding, ethics or value system.

“Where Were You” Story

Below is one of my signature stories. It really illustrates the point I am making. Why? Because it demonstrates that sometimes the people we least expect can teach us all important lessons about life.

I'd like to end with one more story. Years ago, as I continued to encounter victims of trafficking, I desperately wanted to do something to help. So I decided to write a book. As part of this process, I would go from shelter to shelter to interview young women and girls. I went to one shelter and met a girl called Gita. Every time I asked her for an interview, she said no. But while I interviewed other girls, she sat silently and listened to everything that was said.

On the last day, Gita told me she had changed her mind – she would give me an interview. I was thrilled. She sat on one side of the table and a few of us sat on the other side.

Over the next three hours, she described one of the most gut-wrenching testimonials I have ever heard. It was filled with a mixture of love, life, deception, rape, torture, murder, betrayal and disease. At the end of the interview, I sat there speechless. I honestly didn't know what to say. I finally said, "Wow, you must be so angry with the traffickers for all of the terrible things they did to you."

Instead, Gita looked accusingly at me and the others in the room and said, "No, I am not angry with the traffickers, I am angry with you!" she shouted, pointing her finger at each of us in turn. "Where were you when I was in that terrible brothel? I sat there every day waiting for someone to come and save me. I knew that everything happening around me was illegal and wrong. Where were you and everyone else when I needed you?"

"And why are you sitting here?" she added. "Why aren't you down there helping those other girls? Everyone knows what is going on. How can such terrible things happen without anyone doing anything? I am not angry with the traffickers. They are just bad people doing what they do – bad things. I am angry with the good people – society, you! Where were you? Why does no one care?"

Gita's Influence

When Gita heard me say, "You must be so angry at the traffickers for all of the terrible things they did to you" everyone expected her to answer yes. But she didn't. By pointing the finger at us, the twist in the story helped us to understand an important point: the citizens of the world—collectively and individually—have a responsibility to help end the suffering of those like Gita. Slavery represents one of the most egregious human rights violations of our time. We must all accept some responsibility. I go on to say:

So, is any one of us responsible for Gita's plight? Is there a direct relationship between the terrible things that happened to her and

our own lives? The answer is a resounding no. But then who must bear responsibility? Her parents? Her community? The police? The government?

If this systematic abuse has continued for generations with little change, something more must be done. Commercially raping 15-year-old girls anywhere in the world is unacceptable. We, as responsible human beings must collectively take a stand. We must all condemn this practice. How can any of us argue against this?

Without Gita's accusation, it would be harder for me to come to this conclusion. We might continue to see her as a meek and helpless victim. Her response proved us all wrong. She displayed neither of these qualities. That is why it is so important not to make assumptions. That is the power of this story.

An Unusual Meeting

This is another story with an unexpected outcome that I often tell. People who heard the story years ago still come up to me to tell me they still remember it because of the surprise ending.

Years ago, I was in Hanoi and I received a call. A local Vietnamese man asked if I was Matthew Friedman. I said yes. He then asked if he could meet with me. As a UN official, I get these kinds of calls now and then. It is usually a person who wants to better understand the work I do and how the UN addresses human trafficking.

The next day, we met in a small café for coffee. He was well dressed and well educated. In fact, I'd go as far as saying he was very interesting and pleasant.

For an hour, I sat and talked about my work. When I finished, I turned to him and asked, "So what do you do?"

Without hesitation, he said “I’m a human trafficker.” As you can imagine, I was shocked. He went on to tell me that he always wanted to talk to someone like me and thanked me for my time.

While part of me wanted to get up and leave, I decided instead to continue talking to him. For the next hour, he described how he trafficked women and girls into prostitution and sometimes men into forced labor. I was surprised how open he was. He didn’t seem to be holding anything back.

At one point, he handed me his card and said, “Go ahead and try to catch me if you can. You’ll never be able to. I’m too insulated. Forgive me for saying this, but you people are so ridiculous. You put everything on your website about what you are doing. Whenever you want to make a change, you need to get permission from someone. You have to follow the rules. As for me, if I feel a change is needed, I just make it. I don’t have to follow any rules. It is so easy to make money this way. There is no one who can stop me.”

What is the Point?

Any story that becomes memorable to the audience has the power to really make an impact. The two examples above demonstrate this in a number of ways. People naturally recall things that are unexpected. This is one of the reasons why magic tricks are so memorable. As a trick unfolds, our minds struggle to make sense of what we are seeing. This forces us to re-evaluate what is right in front of us.

13

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Including the Audience in the Story

One way I help the audience to really understand a subject is to make them part of the presentation. The best way to engage an audience is through active participation. They will become more involved and ultimately get more out of the speech. If the participants have been attending back-to-back presentations, changing the format helps to wake them up. I use this tactic in most of my talks. Here are four examples that work well.

Asking a Question

About halfway through most of my modern slavery speeches, I walk up to someone in the audience and say:

"I'd like to offer you a job. I will give you US\$1,000,000 a year. You only have to work four days a week. I will give you two hours off for lunch, a car, a house, three months of vacation, and you can live anywhere in the world you want. Are you interested?"

About 95% of the time, the person says yes. Sometimes people who think it is some kind of trick question, say no. But this is the exception.

I then turn to the audience and ask the same question. "How many of you would take this job?"

Nearly everyone raises their hand. I pause for a moment and then ask this question.

"How many of you thought this sounded too good to be true?"

Most people raise their hand. I then say, *"You are right. It is too good to be true. In fact, if that job was available, I'd take it and give up my charity work in a millisecond."* This always gets a small laugh.

I then go on to say:

"Imagine if you are a person in a developing country who only makes US\$2 a day. Imagine if someone comes up to you and offers you US\$4 a day and instead of working 16.5 hours, you only have to work 15 hours a day plus you'll be given two hours off every Sunday. But you have to make the decision now – right now. You can't go home or it will be given to someone else.

Maybe you would think, this sounds too good to be true. But what if it isn't? What if this is the first time in your life you get a break? Having a job like this could help you fulfill your dreams. You could buy a motorcycle, a roof over your head or a mobile phone. Because you desperately want this to be real, like most people in this situation you say yes and are taken away. This is how most people are drawn into modern slavery – they are tricked with an offer that sounds too good to be true."

When selecting a participant, I look for someone who appears to be engaged in the talk and outgoing and open.

Audiences like this approach. The unexpected interaction deviates from the usual format. The change draws the audience in and they become involved in the story. They can imagine being in that situation themselves.

Using a Person as a Prop

The second approach I like to use is to walk up to one of the participants and ask them to stand. I then say:

"Let's say you are living in Hong Kong and you need money for an operation for a family member. You come from a lower socioeconomic situation and can't afford it. I am a loan shark; you approach me and ask for HK\$1,000. I lend you the money. Two days later the operation goes ahead and it is successful. A few days after that you come back to me with HK\$1,500, which includes some interest." I refuse the money, demanding HK\$15,000! I turn to the audience and say, "You might think that this is unfair but I'm a criminal. I don't have to be fair." Turning to the prop person I go on to say, "You either give me this money or something bad will happen to you or the person who has just been operated on. If you can't pay this money, I need someone from your family to come with me to work for a year to pay off your debt." I turn back to the audience and explain, this is how many people are forced into modern slavery."

While the prop person doesn't have to say or do anything, just having them there allows me to interact with the rest of the audience. They are intrigued by the reactions of the prop person.

Role Playing

The third approach I use to help people to understand how traffickers work, is to carry out a role-playing exercise with the audience. I ask for five volunteers. Depending on the situation, it usually takes a few minutes for people to raise their hands. If they don't, I go up to individuals and ask them to participate. I say to them, *"This is simple, it will be fun."*

After selecting five people, I send two of them to the other side of the room. I then assign roles to the other three. I point to each of them and say, *"You will be the victim; you will be the recruiter and you will be the trafficker/smuggler."*

With the victim standing next to me, I turn to the audience and say, *"This person is the victim. She is in her village. She doesn't have a job and wants to get something more out of life."*

I then identify the recruiter and say, *“This person is the recruiter. He is the one who approaches the victim and plants the idea of a job in her mind. He is the one who answers all of her questions but in reality, lies to her.”*

Pulling the trafficker over, I then say to the recruiter. *“Once the girl accepts the offer, this person here, the trafficker, takes her from her village to another location. Since she doesn’t realize she has been tricked, she goes willingly.”*

I then ask the recruiter to sit down. I have the trafficker and the victim walk with me across the room to where the other two volunteers are standing. Once there, I ask the trafficker to please sit down.

I go on to say. *“This person here is the exploiter. He is the evilest person in this process. He is the one who owns the business that uses trafficking victims for profit. The person next to him is the enforcer. He is the one who “trains” victims by beating and punishing them.”*

After the volunteers return to their seats, I turn to the audience to say, *“All of these people are involved in the crime of trafficking. Four of them are criminals and they all play their part. They all do bad things. They all need to be held to account.”*

Once again, the audience is drawn into the story. Those who participate become partners in helping to get my points across. This approach helps to break up the talk ensuring that the presentation doesn’t become repetitive or boring.

Audience Surveys

Audience surveys are always an effective way to involve the audience in my talks. I tend to do this about halfway through to keep people interested. Below are some questions I might ask:

- *How many of you are hearing about this topic for the first time?*
- *How many of you are surprised by this?*

-
- *How many of you want to do something now that you've been exposed to this?*
 - *How many of you will actually do it?*

Asking questions is effective because it helps me to gauge the audience. It also provides them with useful information to understand where they are on their journey and allows everyone to compare their answers.

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PRESENTING IN PAIRS

When people think of a typical presentation, they expect one speaker to appear on stage. But there is another option that you should consider – doing a presentation with another person. Throughout my career, I have given tandem presentations many times – with my sons, my wife, my colleagues and people I didn't know.

Why is this approach useful? Because it allows a presentation to evolve from monologue to dialogue, it allows people with different presentation styles to interact, and this often makes the whole event livelier and more interesting.

Below is an example of a presentation I gave with one of my UN colleagues. It shows how a story can be shared. During the presentation we both walked around the stage.

- **Speaker One:** *A few years ago, we received a call from a Cambodian princess. This woman was living and working in Malaysia as her country's ambassador. She called because she had a problem. On a monthly basis, Cambodian men were washing ashore in Malaysia – some dead, some alive.*
- **Speaker Two:** *Men washing ashore? How could this be? When we asked for more details, we learned that these men had been forced onto fishing boats and made to work as slaves for many years. If they resisted, they were beaten and tortured. Life for them was hell. Every now and then, a boat would come close enough to the shore for these slaves to see an opportunity. Some of them would jump off and swim to shore. The ones that survived didn't have any money. They needed help to return home. This is why the princess called us. She thought the United Nations could help.*

- **Speaker One:** *Confused by this phenomenon, we began to ask many questions. This kind of slavery was new to us. We had never heard about it before. What we learned was that the Thai fishing industry was notorious for tricking and deceiving Cambodian and Burmese men onto boats. As we began digging deeper, we came to understand that the problem affected thousands of victims.*
- **Speaker Two:** *Wow. Armed with this information, we began to act. We traveled, to Malaysia to interview these men. We sent them back to their villages. We followed them there and talked to many others who had been similarly exploited. We came to realize this was a big, big problem.*
- **Speaker One:** *This is where it began for us. A light was shone on a problem and we used what we learned to develop a plan for the future. This is how many human rights programs begin.*
- **Speaker Two to Speaker One:** *Do you remember how you felt when you first met some of those guys?*
- **Speaker One:** *It was a surreal time. We were opening our eyes to a problem that was probably always there, but never addressed. It changed the direction of our overall work. A window to a new human rights problem was opened that could never be closed.*

This approach can be very dynamic. It draws an audience into the exchange and helps them better understand the content being presented. For this approach to be successful, the two speakers must work together. Planning is required to ensure complementarity. Without this, the exchanges can be awkward and disjointed.

Live Interview Session

Over the years, I have used a variation of this approach. On stage with me is an interviewer who asks questions. As above, we both stand and walk around the stage. What makes this version interesting is that the

overall direction of the talk is undefined. The exchanges determine the direction. Here is a sample:

- **Interviewer:** *There was one thing you said that really surprised me. You mentioned that the world needs to have some compassion for the madams and the pimps. After what they put the victims through, I find this statement hard to understand. What do you mean by this?*
- **Speaker:** *What most people don't understand is that most of the criminals working in the brothels were once victims themselves.*
- **Interviewer:** *Wow, that is quite a statement. Can you expand on this?*
- **Speaker:** *Many of the madams I have met over the years were once victims themselves. They were trafficked at a young age, forced into the business. Like most victims, they suffered in a cruel system that demanded absolute obedience. Over time, with few options to escape this world, instead of fighting against it, they learn to embrace it. With each step up the hierarchy, their life gets a little easier. Eventually, the brothel owners recognize their talents and train these victims to become perpetrators.*
- **Interviewer:** *Really, with all they went through, why would they do this?*
- **Speaker:** *Good question. Some might argue that these victim/perpetrators had the choice not to follow this path. While that is true, it is not difficult to understand their motives. We all seek a better life. In their thinking, this was the only way to survive.*
- **Interviewer:** *How could they go from being mistreated as victims to mistreating others? Wouldn't they feel empathy for the new victims arriving at the brothels?*
- **Speaker:** *I am not altogether sure why they don't, but this is not a new phenomenon. We see molested children go on to become pedophiles*

themselves. Instead of appropriately handling the pain they feel, they use it as an excuse to act out. This process often happens to people who are severely traumatized. Having spent years in this exploitative system, they start to accept the harsh routines and approaches used as normal. They have no basis of comparison.

- **Interviewer:** *So how do most people regard these madams? It seems like such a big jump from victim to criminal.*
- **Speaker:** *Our hearts ache for victims but the moment they cross over to being part of the trafficking infrastructure, our views change. We feel little empathy or understanding for perpetrators. But criminals also need help to become better people.*

This kind of exchange can be completely unscripted. The speaker and the interviewer work together as a team to create awareness and understanding. If the interviewer is very experienced, they will anticipate the questions that the audience has and ask them.

The chemistry between the interviewer and the speaker is vital. For this reason, I try to have a full hour of conversation with the interviewer immediately before the talk as a warm up. The exchange on-stage becomes a continuation of our discussion.

The liveliness of the two-handed approach can also ensure that your audience stays focused and continues to engage with the subject matter. As previously discussed, this is essential during conferences when the audience is facing long days of back to back presentations.

Learning Opportunity

Using a tandem presentation can offer a great learning opportunity for a new speaker. A seasoned speaker can go on stage with a novice to help that person get experience, increase confidence, and become comfortable onstage. Because the conversation goes back and forth, it allows both speakers to stop and think about what they will say

as their partner is presenting. I have used this approach many times to train and mentor new speakers. For example, I sometimes use the opportunity to ask questions of the other speaker to clarify a point and to draw the person out. I have also used this approach to mentor up to five co-speakers at the same time. It is amazing to see how new presenters blossom onstage in real-time as a session unfolds. Before my eyes, I see them forget about their fears and insecurities as their voice finds an outlet.

15

USING SIMULATIONS TO CREATE STORIES

Sweatshop Challenge

In the 1940s, Edgar Dale summarized the percentage of learning we receive from the following:

- 10 % of what we READ
- 20 % of what we HEAR
- 30 % of what we SEE
- 50 % of what we SEE and HEAR
- 70 % of what we SAY and WRITE
- 90 % of what we DO

It is clear from this set of statistics that doing something is the best way to learn. We have all experienced this ourselves throughout our lives.

One way to reach people is to include them as participants in a story. For the past ten years, I have given presentations on the subject of modern slavery to schools across Asia. While most students appear to understand the basic details and the importance of the issue, with so much school content being taught on a daily basis, I wanted to see if we could offer an approach that would have more of a lasting impact. I began to show films that offered a glimpse into the lives of trafficked persons. Because the students could see for themselves victims of forced labor, this helped to increase their understanding of the suffering endured. But even this didn't have sufficient impact

to significantly change the attitudes and behaviors of students. Once again, I decided to try something different. Below are a few examples of what I came up with.

Sweatshop Challenge

The Sweatshop Challenge is a methodology used to help students understand what it is like to be in an exploitative work situation. This simulation can be done with students ranging from 8th grade to seniors in high school. For every 50 students, there should be two volunteers. Here is a description of the methodology:

This activity is usually done first thing in the morning. When the students arrive, they are immediately escorted to the gymnasium without an explanation. Upon entering, the organizers shout at them – “line up, stand in place and don’t talk.” They are given one nut and one bolt. They are then told that their classes have been cancelled for the next five hours and they will stand in place and repeatedly screw and unscrew their nuts and bolts. They are also instructed that if they talk, make eye contact with the organizers, or work too slowly, they will receive an automatic detention.

For 30 minutes, the organizers hand out detentions – even for arbitrary breaches or no breaches at all. Many of the students stand there not knowing what to do with themselves. They have never been in a situation where they are mandated to stand and do this kind of repetitive, manual labor. The expressions on their faces often include bewilderment and confusion. Others become angry and frustrated.

After just 30 minutes, the students are told they can sit down, their classes will continue as scheduled and they will NOT be receiving any detentions. The following statement is then made:

“Imagine if you had to do this work from 6 am until 11 pm every day without a day off. Imagine if there was always someone standing there shouting at you, punishing you if you didn’t do it

fast enough. Imagine if this was your life. How would it feel? This happens to 25 million people around the world who are trapped in modern slavery. You only had to do this for 30 minutes. But what if this was your life?"

The remaining time is used to talk about how the students felt about the experience. What were their emotions? How did it feel to lose control of their time? This helps them to fully understand what forced labor actually means.

This interactive approach helps students to experience what it is like to lose control of their lives, even for a short period of time. This is a powerful lesson. It gives them a taste of what many trafficking victims experience when they first find out they are under the control of others. Most importantly, it includes them in the story itself. Below are some testimonials.

"I never did anything like this at school before. After doing this thing, I now know a little of how it feels to be a victim."

"The sweatshop activity was one of the most powerful lessons I ever had at school. I really thought I was going to have to stand there for five hours. I was so afraid."

"When I read stories about these people in slavery, I'll remember how I felt. It was really educational."

"We do this every year now. It is one of our most talked about events. The students really do feel changed." A Teacher

Sweatshop Marathon

In 2014, the first sweatshop marathon was held in Hong Kong. The goal of this exercise was to give participants an enduring taste of "forced labor." The methodology had two objectives: to help raise awareness and to raise funds to help eradicate human trafficking.

Volunteers were challenged to spend ten consecutive hours engaging in a repetitive action – screwing nuts onto bolts and then taking them apart. During this repetitive activity, they were given no breaks, no food, no water, and no rest. They worked continuously from 8 pm to 6 am. If they did not perform fast enough, they were shouted at by the organizers.

Those who took part gained a real appreciation of how it feels to be in a forced slavery situation. At the end, the participants were asked “Can you imagine this being your life seven days a week, 365 days a year? It isn’t your life and it shouldn’t be anyone else’s.”

This methodology has been used in Hong Kong and South Africa. Participants walk away completely changed. Below are some testimonials:

I couldn't do it. I tried. I did it four hours and that was enough. I can't imagine how people who are in real sweatshops survive. It must be hellish.

I did the full ten hours. It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. I can't imagine how awful it must be for those people who do this every day. It changed my life.

Before the challenge, I thought this kind of thing would be easy. No way. It is horrible, just horrible. Now I get it.

Several of the participants went on to work in the counter-trafficking movement. One student from Africa said the following:

It is impossible to experience a sweatshop challenge and not feel the need to help all those victims around the world. I felt their pain. I felt the violation. I felt the need to get involved. It is funny how one simple activity can change the course of a person's life.

Experiencing Life

Another way to help someone learn an important life lesson is to ask them to go out into the world and experience something radical for

themselves. To fully understand the issue of begging and how beggars become invisible, I did the following, and this is the story of my amazing experience. I often recount this ordeal during my presentations. My own personal response and the emotional toll it had on me helps audiences to better understand the issue.

During my Master's course at New York University, I was assigned the task of begging on the streets of New York City. I dressed in old clothes and ventured onto the streets one night. The experience astounded me.

As a large, Caucasian, middle-class male, I am hard to overlook. But the moment I put my hand out to beg, I became the Invisible Man. People pretended not to see me and walked by as if I wasn't there. Sometimes they walked around me as if I was a post. I could not have understood what beggars feel had I not tried this. It completely changed my perspective.

To my discomfort, I had to redo the assignment. Although plenty of people ignored me the first time around, I actually collected a great deal of money. A significant minority reached into their pockets and hastily handed over cash. I was surprised at how relatively easy it was.

My professor sensed that I had approached the exercise incorrectly and asked me to demonstrate my technique. I did as I was told. I walked up to him with my hand in front of me, looked him in the eyes, and asked for money. He laughed. "Don't you see?" he said. "Those people gave you the money out of fear. They saw this very large man with an intense gaze and thought you might rob them. Next time, do it with your head down and avoid eye contact." When I repeated the exercise, that is when I became almost totally invisible.

At times, we must walk in the shoes of those we hope to help. This brings empathy, understanding, and compassion, which adds value to our work. While our minds do a great job imagining the problems other people face, there is no substitute for first-hand experience.

Begging is not an easy thing to do, even under the best of circumstances. But for me, the only way I could fully understand what it is like was to do it myself. These experiences can be very good teaching opportunities for our audiences. It offers a great lesson. WE can all do something like this to gain first-hand experience but it takes courage.

As another example, in 2012, senior fire officers from the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (UK) spent an evening learning about homelessness outside the classroom. They helped at a Salvation Army soup kitchen before sleeping overnight on the streets of Norwich. The exercise was designed to help teach fire officers about homelessness in a practical setting. The project enabled those who participated to see and feel the challenges homeless people face from many different perspectives. This helped them to develop their own life skills. Many of those who took part said the experience changed their lives forever.

Life experiences are a great way to enhance a speaker's credibility. While many people would balk at sleeping out on city streets at night, this does make for a great story.

Crossroads Foundation Simulations

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand"

(A Chinese Proverb)

The Crossroads Foundation is a Hong Kong-based, non-profit organization that seeks to address global need. The aim of the Foundation, in a broken world that sees too much suffering, is to do all they can to connect those who are in need with people who can provide help.

The two main services they offer are global distribution of relief aid to over 90 countries and simulations on a variety of issues including war, HIV/AIDS, blindness, hunger, water access, inequality in trade and the complex global range of issues that hold billions in poverty. The goals of the Crossroad simulation (X-perience) include:

- Education: They give participants greater knowledge of global challenges;
- Empathy: They impact both heart and head among their participants; and
- Engagement: They explore ways, during their debrief, for participants to engage with global challenges.

According to Crossroads, “many people find experiential learning far more powerful than the spoken or written word. Over 200,000 participants have taken part in our X-perience programs, with interest in them growing. Participants include students, business teams, community groups, families, and individual visitors.”

According to the Crossroads organization, speeches, presentations and academic papers are important but we hear people express weariness with talks and documentaries on global issues. They find an ‘experience’ of this lifestyle, even in simulated form, far more powerful. The old proverb says: *‘I cannot understand a man until I have walked a mile in his shoes.’* Crossroads offers participants, if not a mile, at least a few steps in the shoes of those who suffer.

The first simulation, dubbed, “Slum Survivor” was held in 2005 when a group of business leaders were invited to spend 24 hours living in simulated slums. Each participant was given a pile of debris to construct their own temporary shelter. They foraged for food from garbage bags which they ate off banana leaves. They encountered “loan sharks” and engaged in simulated dog eat dog struggles in mock market place scenarios.

Slum Survivor was a great success. It narrowed the gap between the experiences of those in extreme poverty and the understanding of those who genuinely wanted to engage with them and, ultimately, to help them.

Since then Crossroads has organized weekly simulated events all over the world and participants have been motivated at a depth that is unprecedented. Many of the corporate leaders who have taken

part remained involved with global issues, long after their simulation experience. The Crossroads approach has also birthed NGOs, projects, and further engagement in the community, both adult and student. Simulation participants from Davos Economic Forum, where this approach has been used many times, indicated:

This takes it from hearing to being.

Reading 1000 books would not have taught me what I learned in the past hour.

Using Virtual Reality

Another way people can experience a story is with new technology. Virtual reality is a good example of this. A 3D film is produced and then uploaded on to a headset. The person watching the video feels they are actually part of the scene that is unfolding around them. We use these films to help sensitize business representatives about human trafficking. Since it isn't possible for us to bring them to the actual location, this technology is the next best thing.

At one of our business forums, we invited corporate representatives to watch a short film on sex trafficking. Below are some of their comments.

Using VR provides an emotive sense that comes from being in that situation and feeling and experiencing it. It is a very powerful way of helping people to understand a given reality.

I feel this technology will help motivate more people at all levels to understand the relevance of this crime against humanity.

This can be used to broaden ethical awareness, especially amongst banks - making it more real to a corporate crowd that doesn't really understand much about the world.

What is the Point?

One way to help participants develop their own stories is to give them a real taste of the problem. This can be done through a range of different simulation experiences that affect a person on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level.

Harper Lee sums this concept up well in his novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* during which Finch, the main protagonist, says to his daughter, *"If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it."*

16

STORYTELLING AND FUNDRAISING

Fundraising Appeals

Communicating what an organization actually does and its global impact is essential to raising funds. This is done via presentations to donors, potential partners, and to the general public.

When pitching for funds to support my counter-trafficking program, I would often say something like this:

As I have described, globally, it is estimated that there are over 40 million men, women and children in situations in modern day slavery today, with about half in Asia alone. These victims, who can be found in factories, construction sites, within fisheries and sex venues, are forced to work for little or no pay, deprived of their freedom and often subjected to unimaginable suffering.

Over more than a decade, the international human trafficking community has not come close to meeting its full potential. While individual, small-scale success stories can be found, many victims are never identified. For example, the 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report was only able to account for 100,000 victims receiving assistance globally. This means that less than 0.2 % of the victims are being identified and assisted each year. This number has remained unchanged for several years.

According to the International Labor Organization, the profits generated from this illicit trade are estimated to exceed US\$150

billion annually. But despite the size of the problem, annual global donor contributions add up to only around US\$350 million, which represents approximately 1% of total profits generated by the criminals.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that the number of trafficked persons continues to increase. In fact, the UN has indicated that there are more slaves in the world today than at any other time in history.

For the world to really make a difference in addressing this problem, the private sector must become a player in this fight. To help, please donate to our organization. We will use this funding to work with the corporate sector to help address the problem.

Why is this Approach Not Effective?

For many years, I used this approach to make a case for funding. My rationale was simple:

- It provided a comprehensive overview of the issue;
- It outlined the magnitude of the challenge we are facing;
- It revealed the limited impact of our collective work; and
- It made a case for the needed resources (or so I thought).

What is wrong with this approach? According to research, the big picture summary, which often includes shocking statistics, does not motivate giving. In fact, there are studies that show that use of this approach can actually have a negative impact on fundraising. With a corporate, foundation, or government donor base, organizations should use statistics—but do so to show that we are an expert or that this problem impacts the donor's area of interest, not because we think these statistics will motivate the donor to provide funds. It won't.

Why? Because this approach has a tendency to overwhelm the audience. The problem comes across as being so big and so unmanageable, that it turns the donor off. The unconscious dialogue

in their mind comes to the conclusion that *“my donation would have little impact, so why bother?”*

A More Effective Approach

This same research has demonstrated that donors are more motivated by emotional content. Most donors want to help people, not issues or statistics. Storytelling—especially a story about an individual—is one of the most effective ways to illustrate a problem and suggest a viable solution. Researchers call this *“the identifiable victim effect.”* Your character should have a name, a gender, an age and other characteristics to make them real. Donors give when they are moved by something that reaches them on an emotional level, not when they are faced with a list of facts.

But there is one more point that needs to be considered. As part of an effective pitch, the donor should also be included in the story. This allows them to visualize their contribution. In the most successful appeals, I have the donor depicted as the hero in the story. This means clearly telling them how their support will make a **significant impact**. For example, the message might be *“a donation from your organization will help a typical victim to move beyond their present situation and get their life back. It is because of what YOU do, that this can happen.”*

Finally, an appeal like this can offer a sense of hope. Despite the overwhelming statistics, someone’s life can be transformed. Offering this hope is a highly effective way to motivate people to contribute. It shows how resources can be translated into action, leading to a sense of hope for a better world for all involved. Below is an example of an appeal I now use to motivate potential donors using these basic elements:

Despite all of the pain and suffering that has been presented in this speech, there are still grounds for hope. I met Sita, a 13-year-old girl, two weeks after she had been rescued from a notorious brothel in Mumbai. Having been there for nearly two years, she told me

that she had been raped over 7,000 times. After her family found out where she had been, she was cast out. They said she brought great shame to them. While many would say that this girl's life was over it wasn't. Instead of giving into these circumstances, Sita took the time she was in our shelter to invest in herself.

The first thing she did was to regain her health. To deal with the trauma, she spent many hours with one of our counselors. This helped her work through her immense pain. When she began to feel stable, she decided to take some of the job training options provided within the shelter. This allowed her to learn a valuable skill. Once she completed a course that taught her how to sew, our shelter helped her to get an internship with a garment factory. After demonstrating her skills, they offered her a job. Six months after taking this opportunity, Sita moved out of the shelter to share an apartment with three other garment workers.

As her life continued to improve, Sita eventually met a man who married her. She now has three children and is living in a small village in northern Bangladesh.

The donation we are asking you to provide will help other girls like Sita to move from the hell they were in to a life worth living. Your contribution will make all the difference in the lives of these girls. You will be an integral part of this story. With this in mind, please consider partnering with us to help these people. Your contribution can help change a nightmare into something good.

The main point of the message is that human beings are hard-wired to respond to stories with emotional content. This is why every culture on the planet has had stories for many generations. And studies show that donors use their primal brain when making decisions about donations; this part of the brain is associated with emotion, not logical reasoning.

This story is also about hope. Hope is one of our most important spiritual and emotional traits. According to countless studies, hope has

a way of boosting our own personal feelings, reducing our sense of helplessness, increasing our happiness, reducing our stress and improving our overall quality of life. So, by giving, we help the giver to feel good.

The “What if” Message

Here is another effective approach that can be used to demonstrate the impact of a development program on the lives of people. In this case, the pitch focuses on a point in the future. It describes a successful campaign and also asks, what would have happened if these vital tools had not been available? How would this impact real people in real-life situations? Like the example above, it helps the listener to see the issue from the perspective of individual people.

“At the end of another year (2023), we would like to thank everyone for your continued support for our on-going efforts to work with the private sector to address modern slavery. With the successful expansion of the E-MIN blockchain app, the Apprise app, the e-learning curriculum, the ACET Artificial Intelligence (AI)/ Machine Learning (ML) platform for bank and the many additional efforts made to raise awareness and introduce a full range of tools and remedies to identify and address modern slavery, thousands of people have been protected and rescued. This work has allowed us to open up a new front in the fight against this terrible human rights problem across Asia.”

This statement offers one possible outcome. It represents a scenario in which the Mekong Club’s work is fully supported to allow our on-going efforts to continue to be refined and expanded over time. It represents a potential future that demonstrates the power of using the private sector networks, people, infrastructure and commitment to be an active part of a robust collective solution.

But what if these efforts did not exist? What if the tools outlined above were not in place? How would this affect real people in the real world?

What if the E-MIN App was never launched? Without this tool that helps to secure employment information in a form that doesn't allow it to be altered, Ram Shrestha, a villager from Gorkha District in Nepal, might find himself in a situation where his contract is changed after arriving in a destination country. With no way to verify the original agreement, he could find himself among the millions of international migrants that are exploited from a system that encourages a lack of transparency.

What if the Apprise App was never launched? Without this tool that allows auditors to question migrants working in a factory in their own language, Cung Le, a migrant worker from Vietnam working in a Chinese factory might find himself in a situation where his adverse circumstances and conditions would never be discovered because the auditor has no way to communicate with him. This would allow the most vulnerable people in a factory to continue being ignored because there is no tool available to reveal the exploitation they are experiencing.

What if the ACET AI/ML platform was never launched? Without this tool that helps banks to use red-flags to search big-data to identify potential trafficking cases, Jasmine Cruz, a Filipino migrant worker who was recruited to work in a restaurant in Hong Kong but instead was forced into prostitution might never be identified. With no way to track the many nefarious transactions made by the trafficking network that brought her into Hong Kong, she could find herself among the thousands of young women who are used in these sex trafficking venues.

What if the E-learning Toolkit was never launched? Without a means of educating factory managers about the rights and responsibilities they are expected to maintain within their worksite, Yayan Ruhian, an Indonesian factory worker might

find himself in a situation where his supervisors abuse his rights because they have never been educated on what is expected of them. With no awareness raising tools available to right these wrongs in local languages, systemic abuse of employees would continue, sometimes out of a basic lack of knowledge among managers.

The tools that have been developed by the Mekong Club have all been suggested by our private sector partners as a means of addressing issues related to modern slavery. The Hong Kong business world developed them with us because of their own understanding of problems and resolutions. Every tool has been extensively tested and refined to fill a gap or address a specific issue. This makes them highly effective.

For these tools to have an impact in my field, they need to be extensively promoted and used. The tools already exist and so we feel confident that my opening statement offers a realistic vision of a world that has a strong potential to exist.

*But for this to happen, we need people to share our optimism and our vision. **This is where you come in.** If you are one of these people, please join us in helping to fight modern slavery. Please consider donating to our work. With your help, thousands of people can be spared the pain and suffering that goes along with modern slavery across Asia.*

Other Options

There are a number of additional ways in which nonprofits can introduce storytelling into their events. This includes:

- Having a person who benefits from your efforts tell the story for you;
- When telling the story, show slides depicting the work taking place;

- A good video testimonial can also be very effective and can lend a personal touch to your talk;
- Read a story told by a recipient;
- Include your own personal testimonial why you got involved and what difference it has made in your life; and
- Let your audience know that these stories are available on social media and on your website.

ENDING WITH Q&A

Ending your Presentation

The ending of any talk should provide the speaker with a chance to emphasize their main points and ensure they are memorable. It should also include a call to action to motivate the audience. An example of a strong ending might include the following:

The world needs our help. Every day, over 25,000 people are enslaved somewhere in the world. Within a year, less than 1 percent will be helped. For there to be major breakthroughs, the private sector must take a stand. This includes carrying out more social audits, listening to worker voices and training all those involved in overseeing supply chain sustainability. When corporations work together, amazing things can happen. Look at your business, identify potential risk areas, and help to put a stop to modern slavery. Help your business to be a leader and to be heroic. Thank you.

Introducing the Q&A

While it is very common for a professional presentation to end with a question and answer (Q&A) session, how this is introduced can positively or negatively affect the end of a speech. After the closing statement, allow the audience time to applaud. You can then say:

If there are any questions, I'm happy to answer them.

I always work out the details with the organizers before giving any presentation so there is no confusion about who will do what and when. For example, sometimes the organizer facilitates the Q&A but at other times I manage this process myself.

How to Answer Questions with Stories

Many books on public speaking suggest that answers to questions at the end of a speech should be short and to the point. The rule of thumb is that it shouldn't exceed one minute. It is never easy to find stories that can be told in such a short time. But it can be done. It just requires some preparation. Here are some examples:

■ Do you think the world can ever solve the human trafficking issue?

Let me ask you a question. What if there was a massive asteroid barreling towards Earth? Let's hypothetically say that the only way to stop it from hitting our world would be to end modern slavery within the next two years. Do you think mankind would be able to do this? Absolutely. Every single thing we had at our disposal would be explored and used. Knowing how resourceful mankind can be, I strongly believe an effective solution could be found. Saving the Earth is a gloriously compelling motivation. Where there is a will, there is a way.

36 seconds

■ Is there a way to reduce demand for prostitution?

When I was still working in Nepal, we produced a dramatic film called "Chameli." The film portrayed the story of a girl who was trafficked from Nepal to India. Using fiction as the medium, the film helped to show all of the horrors associated with sex trafficking. After Nepalese men watched the film, a certain percentage of them would walk away saying "I wish I hadn't seen that. I had no idea these girls were being exploited in this way. It is so unsexy. You ruined it for me." While not all men had this

reaction, it does demonstrate that a percentage of men can be reached using this kind of approach.

38 seconds

■ **Can a student really make a difference in addressing modern slavery?**

I once had a college student intern in my United Nations office. After brainstorming with him, he decided to write a report on the issue of forced marriage between Vietnam women and Chinese men. He collected relevant data, wrote a report and within six months, he was one of the world experts on the topic. How did this happen? Because there was so little research, his work rose to the top. Anyone can have this kind of impact. All it takes is a good idea, a motivation to learn the truth, and a commitment to get this information down on paper.

36 seconds

■ **Forced prostitution has very little to do with the average person. Why is this relevant to the general population?**

A young girl once said to me, "I am 15 years old and I have been raped 7,000 times. I don't understand why the major newspapers don't use this headline, "Fifteen-Year-Old Chinese Girl Raped 7,000 times." If you were to read an article like this, don't you think it would create a lot of attention? Yet, this happens to over 4.5 million women and girls. How can this kind of horrific abuse not be relevant to us all? It offends all of our sense of decency, our ethics and our morality.

32 seconds

Strong Endings

The two most important parts of any speech are the beginning and the end. Over the years, I have watched a presenter give a very inspirational closing statement, one that would be remembered and talked about but then when the question and answer session starts, they lose their

momentum. It is important that this portion of the session be just as strong as the body of the talk.

To prepare for this, I write down questions that I have been asked frequently and review the list before each major event. This helps me to consider my answers even before the talk begins. Surprisingly, there are about twenty recurrent questions that often come up. The ones listed above represent a few of them.

FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

Fear of Public Speaking

Fear of public speaking is a major reason why more people don't participate. While there are many reasons for this fear, there is one predominant factor – we overestimate the risks of communicating our ideas in front of others, viewing the speaking experience itself as a threat to our credibility, self-esteem, and self-worth. In other words, we are afraid of appearing foolish and unprofessional in front of others.

In order to tell our stories, we need to get in front of people. Addressing this fear is part of the journey for some. The text below outlines the major reasons for this irrational fear and what can be done to reduce or eliminate it.

My Own Personal Journey

For much of my life, I was terrified of public speaking. I would do anything to avoid this dreaded task. But these days I undertake about 150 public speaking events a year.

I can trace my fear of giving speeches to an event that happened in the third grade. Our assignment was to write three paragraphs about Abraham Lincoln. Since I was a student who often completed tasks the morning they were due, I took a shortcut and copied two long paragraphs directly from the encyclopedia. I felt confident although I was cheating.

When our papers were returned the next day, mine was marked unsatisfactory, but this was not the end of it. My teacher asked me to

stand up. When I did, she asked if the text I had written was my own. I said yes. Of course, I lied. She asked me again. I said yes, a second time.

She told me to read my paper to the class. I knew I was in trouble. I looked at the essay and realized that I didn't understand many of the words I had copied down. Since the content was well beyond my reading ability, I couldn't do it. Having no choice, I began to read, often stumbling over many of the words. Every time I looked up, hoping she'd allow me to stop, she told me to go on. Clearly, she was making an example of me.

From that moment, I developed a terrible fear of public speaking. If I couldn't get out of a required speaking assignment, I spent days before the event with unrelenting fear, suffering from constant mini panic attacks. Most fears, like mine, are based on an irrational criterion. But like many people, I allowed my fear to control me.

Professionally, I am required to give presentations on a regular basis. Public speaking is an integral part of my work in development. But decades after the third-grade, I still suffered before every talk. Instead of getting easier, it got worse. The anxiety, trepidation, and loathing took control of my life.

About ten years ago, I thought about the innumerable people who faced audiences every day. What was I so afraid of? Something had to change. So, I decided to face my fears head-on. I was tired of the fear controlling my life.

Finally, whenever presentation volunteers were needed, I stepped up. While my heart would say, "*don't do it,*" my mind took control. The process was not easy but something amazing happened – I was able to rid myself of the sensation of dread and eventually feel confident and secure with each event. This came about after doing as many talks as I could. Repetition was the secret to my success.

While I never eliminated my fear completely, my public speaking continued to improve. Now I realize that a little fear is an important ingredient for a passionate speaker. Fear helps fuel my passion for the subject, inspiring my words and giving them more emotion and power.

Our fears are sometimes self-generated. Often, they are based on past events that hold us back. Facing our fears may seem difficult and frightening, but the payoff is enormous.

What Are We Afraid of?

According to many studies, fear of public speaking is among the top three fears that people face in life. But I have come to learn that not all people around the world share this fear. For example, I have found that many people in Africa and Asia are happy to get up and give presentations without hesitation. For some reason, I find this fear to be more prevalent in North America and Europe. Below are some common reasons people offer to explain their fear of getting up in front of an audience.

I Feel Self-Conscious: Most of us have no trouble presenting to a small group of people at a time. But this changes dramatically when the setting is more formal and when the audience size is increased significantly. If you ask why this is, most people can't offer an explanation. Perhaps it represents a combination of other factors.

I'm great at staff meetings. I can offer a really clear set of points without the least amount of fear. But if you put me in front of a podium and ask me to speak, yikes, I'm terrified.

Fear of Being Judged: Many people say they feel self-conscious when they are in front of a large group. They feel that the audience will somehow judge them. I often hear people say: *What if I embarrass myself, what if I can't remember something, or what if I say something foolish?* All of these comments are based on a fear of judgment. The truth is that most audiences don't really care about the presenter; they just want to hear the message.

Nervousness: Speakers who are feeling very nervous before a presentation are often afraid that everyone watching will be able to see it. They feel that if they appear nervous, the audience may think they don't know their subject. But this is often not the case. Most nervousness is lost on the crowd. Likewise, most audiences are nearly always sympathetic and supportive. They want the presenter to succeed. The fact that you are on stage giving your talk puts you in a category beyond what most of the audience would do.

I could feel my legs shaking beneath me. I wondered if the words would even come out of my mouth. I was so scared standing up there.

Past Experiences: Many people who gave public speeches in the past walk away feeling that they didn't do a very good job. This thought takes hold in their mind and influences future presentations. Perhaps past performances were less than perfect because there wasn't enough preparation or practice. If a person is prepared for a presentation and continues to do more and more of them, this fear should decline.

Lack of Preparation: If a person does not prepare adequately for a speech, they will naturally feel nervous. This is an easy fix – spend time going over the material. All speakers need to prepare, even very seasoned ones. In my own case, I never give a speech without reviewing the content thoroughly or even reciting it out loud.

I realized that when I rehearsed the speech a few times, I felt less afraid. Making this simple change made the process much easier.

Narcissism: Extreme self-consciousness is a form of narcissism. In this case, the person is too wrapped up in themselves. To avoid this tendency, it is important to take the spotlight off ourselves. It is not about you, the speaker, it is about the audience and your message. We need to get over ourselves.

What if I fail? What if I can't do it? People will think badly of me. They might not like me as much. I would rather not do a speech than have this happen.

Comparing Ourselves with Others: There are many people who do things better than us. If we say that we can't do something as well as someone else, we are setting ourselves up for failure. We need to do the best we can and be satisfied with that. If you are prepared, if you are interested in the subject matter and if you are passionate, you will succeed. Don't worry about anyone else.

Ways to Reduce Our Fear

Below are some pointers that can be used to reduce fear while giving a presentation. The most important one I can suggest is this – practice, practice, practice.

Start Small: A good way to begin your public speaking career is to start small. Don't try to take on a big talk until you first experiment with smaller ones. One good way to do this is to agree to do short introductions before someone else's speech. This allows you to get to know what it feels like to be in front of an audience which will help to build your confidence. This also helps you to understand that there is nothing to fear.

Even when the talk was only a few minutes, I got really nervous. But after doing a few of these, it became easier. After a while I began to enjoy doing this. I guess, practice does make perfect.

Be prepared: I recently read an article that stated that up to 85 percent of the people who regularly give presentations don't review their material or practice before the event. If you don't do this, you might be concerned that you will forget something or say the wrong thing. This can only increase your fear. Practicing a speech is a great way to identify deficiencies and to build confidence. It also allows you to determine if a speech is too long or short. Even as a seasoned

presenter, I try to always do one or two dry runs before an event. This helps me to feel more comfortable and more confident.

After doing the talk three times in front of a mirror, I began to feel good. I found some things I didn't like and I changed them. This helped me to relax. I now know my stuff.

Be Realistic: Recently a member of my staff came to me with a collection of 50 slides for a 20-minute talk. Each slide also included up to ten individual points she wanted to make. If this had been my own presentation, it would have taken me 90 minutes to get through. She said she was fearful that she wouldn't cover all of the information in the allotted time. This was a valid fear. What she had produced was not realistic. This is why practicing is so important. Some speech trainers say that the average amount of time per slide should be around two minutes. This means that a presentation that is 60 minutes long should have no more than 30 slides. With effective storytelling, slides can be reduced because the story can take a lot of random points and pull them together into one extended description. In other words, it consolidates many messages within one explanation.

I tried to give a speech once and ran out of time halfway through. I felt so embarrassed. I wasn't able to get most of my important points across. I feel scared this will happen again.

Know the material: People attend presentations to learn. They give their time to be educated, inspired and empowered. If a person doesn't know the material they are presenting, perhaps they shouldn't be doing the speech. When I worked for the United Nations, I saw this happen on a regular basis. A UN official was selected to speak because of their position, without having either the relevant knowledge or expertise. The outcome is often a superficial presentation. I have heard colleagues say, "I'm afraid I can't do this speech. It is beyond my expertise." My response is simple, "Don't be fearful, find someone else to do it." Presenting material we know little about can waste the audience's time.

Within five minutes I tuned the speaker out. He was telling me things everyone in the audience already knew. I don't know why they picked someone like that. I could have done a much better job and I'm no expert.

Avoid Memorizing or Reading: A colleague of mine used to memorize every word of her speech. She did this because she was afraid she'd miss something. The problem with this approach is that if you lose track of your train of thought, you can go blank. We have all seen this happen to presenters. Another way people overcome their fear is to write out the entire speech and simply read it. While some people can pull this off, most can't. Having something read to us is often tedious and boring. It would have been easier for them to hand it out and allow us to read it ourselves. Showing a visual and talking through it with a story can be the most effective way to communicate our message and overcome our fear. Because the process of telling stories comes so naturally to most of us, it is a great way to capture and hold our audience's attention.

I never feel nervous when I tell a good story. I can see the audience is interested. They want to know what I am going to say next. It makes me feel like what I am saying really matters.

Find a Person in the Audience: Within the first minute of any speech, I try to find someone in the audience and gauge their reaction to my material. If I am connecting with this person, I know I'm doing OK. This reduces my fear. Telltale signs include direct eye contact, the person nods regularly, they have an encouraging smile on their face and they are leaning forward. There is always someone in the audience who will provide this affirmation.

I have my husband sit in the front row. I can always tell when he likes something. I know him so well. If he is looking interested, I know I'm doing alright. This helps me to relax.

Visualize a Good Outcome: Prior to all of my speeches, I try to get a good look at the audience before going on stage. I then close my eyes and imagine myself speaking in front of this group. In my mind's eye, I can see myself presenting the material in a passionate, articulate way, without any stress or nervousness. This always helps me to relax.

Talk to the Audience: Many public speakers feel like they have to make a formal presentation to the crowd. We have in our mind what a speech should be and that is what we give. With all of those eyes looking at us, we feel that we are being judged on our performance. This adds to our fears. One way around this is to think of our presentation as if we are having a simple conversation with everyone in the crowd. We all talk to people every day. It is a natural part of our daily life. Having an informal conversation with an audience can help to reduce our stress.

I like to sit on a stool when I speak to an audience. I imagine that I'm with my girlfriends and we are just chatting away. This helps me feel more confident. The more casual I am the more I seem to reach people.

Be Vulnerable: Don't be afraid to make a mistake. Nearly all audiences are rooting for the speaker. They want the person on stage to succeed. They want them to do a good job. Now and then I see a speaker forget a point or make a mistake. This can sometimes increase their fear and result in a speech falling apart. When this happens to me, I say something like "Oops. I forgot what I was saying. Oh, yes, this is it." I take it in my stride. Audiences don't mind when things go wrong. They are always forgiving. Don't let it increase your anxiety.

I was once doing a big presentation and the projector broke down. I didn't have any slides to talk from. Not knowing what else to do, I just muddled through the content. When I finished, the crowd stood up and clapped. They knew how hard it had been for me. This was their way of saying they thought I was brave.

Don't Ever Apologize: Some people begin a speech by saying how scared they are. This is never necessary. Most audiences can't tell when a person is afraid. Most people follow the speech and feel it is going OK. If you say you are nervous, you have invited the audience to focus on this fact. There is no need for this. If you feel anxious, keep it to yourself.

What is the point?

Fear of public speaking is extremely common. In fact, it is very natural. Most people experience this in some way, shape, or form. Whenever we put ourselves out there in front of a group of people, we feel judged on our performance.

To overcome this fear, we must face it. The best way to do this is to force ourselves to speak in public more often. If you adequately prepare the material, if you practice your speech, if you provide a realistic amount of information and if you accept that doing your best is good enough, the event will go well. There is no need to be fearful.

GOING ONLINE

COVID-19

Two months before COVID-19 struck China, my wife and I took a lovely vacation to Koh Samui, a small exotic island get away in Thailand. As we looked out at the sunset, I recall us talking about how the coming year was going to be the best one ever. There were so many exciting activities ahead of us and we were feeling the optimism and enthusiasm that went along with our assessment.

Then on January 24, 2020, everything changed. COVID-19 began to spread, China shut down, air travel, face-to-face meetings, business deals and so much more began to be severely affected. And then the virus hit Europe, North America and the rest of the world. The change came so fast and had such a devastating impact, few of us would ever have imagined this could happen. Within six months, our hope for the coming year being the best ever was replaced with fear, uncertainty, and a sense of hopelessness.

One of the first things that changed in my professional life was that nearly all of my live public speaking events were cancelled. For a while, the dates were moved forward but when it became clear that on-site presentations would be indefinitely postponed, online events began to take off. Within a short time, webinar presentations became the norm with this alternative approach filling the need for shared information. While it isn't the most ideal approach, it did fill the gap.

How to Tell Stories using a Webinar

As the pandemic has continued to unfold, I have given several dozen online presentations. While I initially found it difficult to adjust to not having an audience in front of me offering visual cues, like with anything else, I adapted. Below are some of the lessons learned during this time.

First, when using a webinar format, slides can be a help or a hindrance. I find with storytelling, the best way to avoid the audience being distracted is to show a simple photograph of a person or location to illustrate my story. Just the picture with no words. I found that when I used a slide with words on it, even a single simple sentence, the audience spent time trying to read instead of listening to me.

Second, an even better approach is to tell the story by being fully onscreen. This allows the virtual audience to listen to me and at the same time to watch my body language and other visual cues. For example, many studies have shown that in the process of communication, non-verbal expression can have 65% to 93% more influence than words on paper or words being heard. This means that how something is said can be more important than what is said. By allowing the audience to see me speaking, they can pick up on my passion, my emotions and my absolute desire to motivate change.

Finally, being able to watch a person speak is more personal. If a participant sees a series of PowerPoint slides with a tiny box at the top showing the speaker, it reduces the talk to something very ordinary and not worth watching. One of my corporate partners has this opinion on webinars:

I often sign up to webinars to get some emails done. Many of them are so boring, I listen but don't bother watching. There is really nothing to see. I wish it wasn't this way but it is.

The Importance of Body Language

Body language is the process of communicating without words through movements and gestures. Positive body language can be defined as nonverbal movements and gestures that communicate interest, enthusiasm and positive reactions.

Even in a webinar format, this form of communicating without words can be used to support and strengthen our presentations. For example, when I am making an online presentation, I try to adopt a relaxed posture whether I am sitting or standing. I keep my back straight with my shoulders relaxed. This reinforces the idea that I feel comfortable with my surroundings. Likewise, I try to lean in slightly to the camera. This demonstrates my interest in the topic I am presenting.

I try not to cross my arms because this can offer a visual clue that I am less interested in what is going on around me. To make the talk more dynamic, I sometimes incorporate hand gestures. Emphasizing words with my hands increases my credibility and confidence. I keep my head up and look directly into the camera. Good eye contact lets others know that I am invested in what I am saying.

If I answer questions at the end, I make sure I look attentive and offer affirmative gestures such as nodding my head or smiling. These actions let the audience know that I am interested in them and their questions.

Good Lighting and Audio

Just as the actual performance by the presenter is important, so too is the quality of the video and audio presentation being used. To look our best on camera, we require soft, directional illumination. One way to find the right light is to experiment with different locations, backgrounds and lighting options.

Likewise, while most computers include a built-in microphone, not all of them provide the pristine audio quality that you'll need for your audience to clearly understand what you have to say. In some cases,

an external microphone might be needed to improve the quality of your sound.

Don't underestimate the importance of the physical location of your webinar. If the room you are in has others or too much background noise, make sure you have a higher-quality recording device.

Finally, make sure your WIFI connection is reliable. There is nothing worse than having breaks in your speech caused by low bandwidth.

While telling a story as part of your presentation, you want the story, itself to have a starring role. Anything that detracts from this can reduce the impact of your message and undermine your potential influence.

IN CONCLUSION

Throughout this book, I have repeatedly argued that public speaking is one of the most important forms of communication. It allows the presenter to stand up in front of an audience to create awareness, form connections, influence decisions and motivate change. While there are as many different kinds of presentations as there are presenters, some tend to be more effective than others. There is a continuum that ranges from the most impactful statement to a presentation that has little value and communicates very little information to the audience. All of us who do public speaking fall somewhere on this line.

We all have the potential to improve our presentation style and approach. One effective way to add significant value is to use relevant and compelling stories. As I have described throughout this book, storytelling represents a traditional form of communication that has existed from the beginning of time. Stories help the audience to tie a series of events, actions and outcomes together in a way that provides true clarity and meaning. We can all relate to stories because our lives are made up of them. This form of expression is very familiar to us all.

To reach our full potential as a public speaker, it is important that we shine a light on our own presentation style. Consider asking yourself the following questions:

- What presentation approach do I use?
- Does it follow the traditional approach used by so many?
- Does it communicate my messages in a format that will allow me to truly teach, inspire, and motivate my audiences?
- Have I included storytelling in my presentations?

As noted throughout this book, a well-told story allows us to take abstract ideas and make them relatable. This makes the content and the message easier to understand. Other advantages of a good story include the following:

- **Common Experiences:** Because many of us share similar life experiences, there is often instant recognition when hearing a story.
- **Chronology:** Stories offer chronological details to help the listener understand a series of events, steps or actions that led up to a specific outcome.
- **Expectations:** When a story is being told, we want to know what the ending is. This raises our expectations and draws us into the presentation.
- **Emotional Response:** Stories allow us to relate the content to our feelings and emotions.
- **Connecting with Others:** As a story is being told, we relate both to the content of the story and to the storyteller.
- **Learning from Others:** Through storytelling, we can learn a lot from the experiences of others. It also helps us to avoid making similar mistakes.
- **Entertainment:** Watching and listening to stories is another form of entertainment. A good story can make us laugh, cry, cheer, and feel happy.
- **Validating and Comparing our Values:** Stories allow us to understand that most people share similar views and feelings about the world around them.

For most life skills practice makes perfect. We must all experiment with different styles and approaches to find the formula that works best for our own unique speaking style. If you already use storytelling, you can continue to develop techniques to improve your stories. If you don't yet use them, consider applying what was presented in this book to your presentations and see what happens.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, *"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."* Taking this thought one step further, as Wesam Fawzi once said, *"The greatest investment you'll ever make is investing in you."* I hope this book offers the insight you need to try something that will allow you to reach your full potential as a public speaker.

Storytelling: The Art of Inspirational Public Speaking

It is time to pull the plug on traditional presentations. Let's face it, endless PowerPoint slideshows have been overused. Public speaking is one of the most important and influential forms of communication, which is why it is so vital to get it right.

This book is for anyone who wants to speak with power to change mindsets and influence others. It is time to shake things up, to grab and retain an audience's attention, to engage people immediately to get your message across in a clear, meaningful and memorable way.

In this ground-breaking book Matthew Friedman goes back in time to offer a step-by-step guide to crafting and telling stories to engage target audiences effectively to get a message across in a clear, meaningful and memorable way. Friedman breaks down the building blocks of storytelling, fresh presentation styles and various story formats. He also delves into the common mistakes that most public speakers make.

Using well-honed and proven techniques he aims to make a great public speaker out of anyone. As an award-winning professional keynote speaker with more than 30 years of experience, Friedman is the perfect guide for anyone who speaks to lead, teach, sell and influence people.

Matthew S. Friedman is a leading internationally renowned expert on modern slavery and human trafficking. He has an influential platform through his work as CEO of The Mekong Club where he speaks about modern slavery to more than 20,000 people every year at 160 corporate events. An author of 12 books, Friedman is also a filmmaker and philanthropist and he regularly advises heads of governments and intelligence agencies. Website: <http://MatthewSFriedman.com>