

# Closing the digital fundraising and storytelling skills gap

Fundraising Everywhere  
Digital Fundraising Conference 2025

Jonathan Waddingham  
Chief Product Officer





## Vision

A future where nonprofits have the power to create more equitable communities and a healthier planet

## Mission

To help nonprofits become better storytellers, build trust and raise more money



## The BRIDGE program: Learning by doing, in community

-  3,500+ organizations
-  120+ countries
-  50+ funding partners

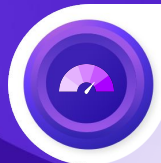
# Lessons from the 2024 Charity Digital Skills Report

## Barriers to moving forwards with digital and data

*Are any of the following creating a significant barrier to your organisation from moving forwards with digital and data?*



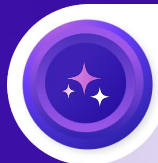
# Top barriers for charities on BRIDGE



**Time and capacity**



**Don't know where to  
start**



**Don't know how AI  
could help**



**Lack of funding**



# A roadmap for digital success

1. Create a digital strategy
2. Set SMART goals
3. Define your audience
4. Craft a compelling story
5. Adapt your story (for different audiences and channels)
6. Share your story
7. Measure the results

# How to create a digital strategy

### Digital Strategy Wizard

Download as PDF

Sections1 of 11

1Statement of PurposeComplete

2Digital ObjectivesComplete

3SWOT AnalysisComplete

4PEST AnalysisComplete

5Identify StakeholdersStarted

6Social MediaComplete

7Digital BudgetComplete

Statement of Purpose

Why have you developed a strategy? What do you hope to achieve?

To amplify advocacy for gender justice and to broaden community outreach. By leveraging digital, we aim to increase awareness of gender issues across Florida, foster stronger connections with our partners, and provide critical support services to those affected by gender discrimination and violence.

300/300


Done

Organisational Digital Objectives

How can your digital channels help deliver your overall organisational goals? Provide SMART goals for each of your digital channels.

Social Media

<https://partners.lightful.com/digital-strategy-wizard>

 lightful

7

# Digital storytelling



# Extractive storytelling

This is the use of constituent stories in order to gain benefit for yourself, or your organisation.

Extractive storytelling often involves extracting important elements from an existing story, and **presenting them in a different way**, for your own goals.

- When a storyteller uses dishonest or manipulative tactics to present a narrative
- Misleading narratives that can be harmful to others
- Donor-led, supporter-led
- “Us” versus “Them”
- Exploitative: promoting harmful stereotypes



# Mutually beneficial storytelling

This type of storytelling aims to create a positive outcome for both the storyteller and the audience.

It involves crafting a narrative that meets the needs and interests of the storyteller (your organisation), and the subject (the individuals you serve), and your audience (your supporters).

- As an organisation you benefit from sharing stories. E.G. engagement, donations, support, exposure...
- The constituents benefit by raising awareness about their lived experiences, and representing their community in their own voice.



# Ethical storytelling plus AI

social platform

Home

Keystone Story

Your strategy

Strategies

Campaigns

SMART Goals

Personas

Analytics

Your communications

Stories

Create post

Posts

Story builder

Media library


Notifications

Support

Miami Empo...  
Jonathan Dem...

Storytelling for Impact

Please provide your story



Storytelling with Impact can provide you with feedback on stories of any type and length.

Start by pasting in your story in the field below and pressing "Get AI Feedback".

Campaign launch blog post

In the vibrant and diverse city of Miami, a significant number of local youth face challenges that can hinder their personal and educational growth. Miami Empower is dedicated to changing this narrative by fostering a supportive environment where young minds can thrive. Their mission is to provide young individuals with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to become empowered members of their community. By offering comprehensive after-school programs, mentorship, and leadership development opportunities, Miami Empower seeks to bridge the gap between potential and achievement.

Through targeted initiatives, Miami Empower has touched the lives of countless young individuals. Consider the story of Jamal, a high school student who struggled with direction and self-esteem. Joining Miami Empower's after-school program marked a turning point in his life. With access to mentoring sessions, skill-building workshops, and community service projects, Jamal transformed into a confident and driven young leader keen on making a difference in his community. His story exemplifies Miami Empower's impact, illuminating pathways that inspire and elevate youth.

2,244

Add the story's purpose (optional)

Save

Post story

Get AI feedback

Hi! Lightful's AI assistant:

Please add your story in the field on the left and I'll provide suggestions on how it could potentially be improved in terms of Authenticity, Dignity, Empowerment, Transparency, Context and goals.

I will give you general thoughts on these aspects, as well as provide specific examples. I'll also flag potential areas to consider regarding consent.

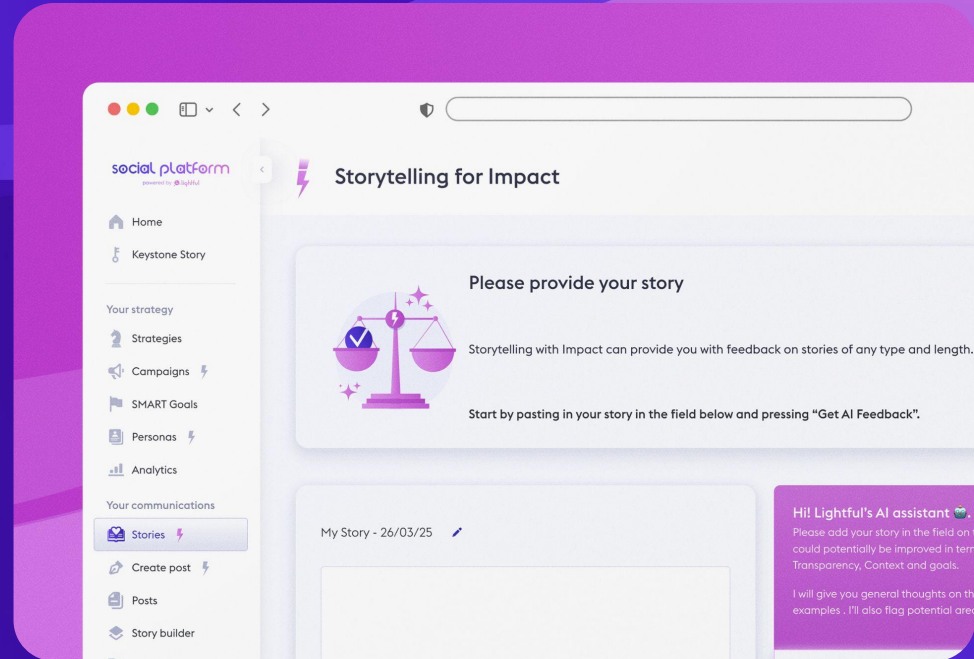
Your feedback will appear here...


View Previous Feedback

<https://partners.lightful.com/ethical-storytelling>

# Ethical storytelling guidance

-  Authenticity
-  Dignity
-  Empowerment
-  Transparency
-  Context
-  Consent





# Consent form template

I, \_\_\_\_\_ understand that my story, photo, and video is my own and hereby grant my permission to \_\_\_\_\_ to:

☐ Interview me
 ☐ Record my voice

☐ Take my image
 ☐ Videotape me

I understand that the information I provide may be edited and shared both immediately and in the future with the organization's audiences on websites, in videos, and on other public online forums (email, social media, newsletters, presentations, etc.) I consent under the condition that the following requirements are met (tick one from each column):

☐ My image is used without being obscured
 ☐ My real name can be used
 ☐ My voice is used without masking

☐ My image is obscured so as not to reveal my identity
 ☐ A pseudonym is used to protect my identity
 ☐ My voice is masked to protect my identity

I understand that media shared on the Internet is subject to sharing and is accessible globally. I have the right to retract my consent after the production of the video, website etc. My interview, picture, voice, or video can be used by \_\_\_\_\_ for:

☐ One time only for \_\_\_\_\_
 ☐ Up to one year

☐ Up to one month
 ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_


### OTHER CONDITIONS:

Client Signature

Date

Organisation Signature

Date



Consent form template



# Digital fundraising



**Tl;dr version**

**Make it as easy as  
possible to give**

When did you  
last test your  
own donor  
journey?



# Pro tip

You might even be able to use some dummy card details...

<https://docs.stripe.com/testing>

Email

test@example.com

Card information

4242 4242 4242 4242

VISA

12 / 34

567

10

Name on card

Zhang San

Country or region

United States



12345

Pay









# The digital donor journey



# Plan your campaign as a journey

Sections 1 of 6

- 1 About your campaign  Started
- 2 Campaign goals  Not started
- 3 Campaign theme  Started
- 4 Audience  Completed
- 5 Task Timeline  Started
- 6 Campaign review  Not started

## Campaign status

Active 

### About your campaign

#### Campaign type

- ☒ Fundraising ☐ Advocacy ☐ Awareness  
☐ Volunteer recruitment ☐ Newsletter sign-up ☐ Other

🌟 Hi! I'm Lightful's AI support. I can help you start your campaign from a story! 

#### Campaign name

My next amazing fundraising campaign

36/100

#### Campaign description

This fundraising campaign is going to engage our key major donor audience through focussing on the impact stories we know they care about, specifically Project X which has now reached 10,000 people.

198/600


<https://partners.lightful.com/campaign-planner>

# Set SMART goals


Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound

## Setting your SMART Goals


This will involve 4 simple steps:




Defining your outcome



Setting your deadline



Deciding your accountability



Selecting any linked accounts

Back

Next

<https://partners.lightful.com/smart-goals>




# Create audience personas

<

Update persona

Download as PDF

>



**Carmel**  
Donor: Major  
⚠ Not yet engaged

- 👩 Lawyer
- ♀ Female
- 👤 35-55
- 📍 Coral Gables, Miami
- ♥ Running, triathlons, healthy eating

Average daily social media usage

🕒 Medium: 1h - 2.5h

Social media platforms

📷 Instagram   in LinkedIn

Reasons to engage with you

- 👍 They care about women's education, particularly girls schooling
- 👍 They have a significant budget for donations
- 👍 They love to see the impact themselves, and will come to in-person events like galas

Reasons not to engage with you

- 👎 They don't know about our new projects
- 👎 They don't see themselves in our comms
- 👎 We don't tell our story well enough to engage them

Contact preferences

📧 Social media   👤 In person

✉ Email

<https://partners.lightful.com/persona-creator>

# Bring it all together

# Case study

## Blackrod Sports and Community Centre

Their goal was to develop a digital strategy focused on storytelling via Facebook.

With tailored support, they learned how to use imagery and videos to highlight their work, and how to tailor content for different audiences.

They achieved amazing results:

- Facebook followers **grew by 7%** in six months
- Audience engagement **rose by 22%**
- Their improved storytelling helped secure a **£170,000 National Lottery grant**



*"We have a strong 5 year history of delivering projects on time and within budget but struggle to tell our story online to funders and users. Our staff and volunteers change, and we have lost those with digital storytelling and communications experiences and skills."*

**David Holden-Locke**  
Chief Executive

# Be your own case study

1. Create a digital strategy
2. Set SMART goals
3. Define your audience
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5. Adapt your story
6. Share your story
7. Measure the results



*"All it took was taking a more strategic approach to our digital storytelling and fundraising, thinking about our different audiences, and sharing our story in new ways, and suddenly we're now doing waaaaay better!"*

**You**  
**Your amazing organisation**

# Thank you



Lightful is a certified B Corp powering social and environmental change. Our services are designed to support organisations to amplify their voices and multiply their impact.

We provide a range of blended learning programmes for different types of organisations. Our programmes build the digital confidence and resilience our partners need to become more effective.



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