

Storytelling Keys in Visual Media

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a great video is worth a million! The impact of stories communicated in a powerful way can amplify your message and transform your organization. Visual storytelling is not new. From cave paintings thousands of years ago to today's virtual reality platforms, the fundamentals have held constant. Dive into the power of storytelling by examining the art of communicating messages, emotions, narratives, and information in a way which reaches viewers at a deep and lasting level. In this session, Shawn Boskie, CEO of Arizona-based film studio and entertainment company, Canyon Productions, will share a list of his essential tools for telling attention-grabbing stories that connect with your audience.

Shawn Boskie has accumulated over 25 years of executive leadership experience focused on strategic growth, building teams and fundraising for a variety of for-profit and non-profit organisations. He is the founder and CEO of Canyon Productions, an independent film company that makes movies and series with God at the centre of the story. For more than ten years, he served as Vice President of Development at Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), the world's largest legal organisation protecting religious freedom, free speech, the sanctity of life, parental rights, and God's design for marriage and family. His passion for team growth and alignment stems from a professional baseball career that spanned 15 years. Shawn and Pam, his wife of 33 years, have three grown children and reside in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Introduction

In our modern visual world, video is king, especially when you consider that 82% of global internet traffic in 2023 came from video alone. Film, television, and digital media have inspired praiseworthy changes, and detrimental cultural shifts.

It's not surprising, then, that video has emerged as a leading fundraising, marketing, and communication strategy in the mission-driven sector. People appreciate the authenticity and impact that video content has to offer in building the Kingdom.

People can recall stories that they have personally experienced far easier than those they have merely heard of, read about, or dreamt of. The immersive nature of video storytelling is simply much stickier than other forms of communication.

Video Captivates Audiences

Here is a video clip from the first episode of *The Chosen Series* where Mary Magdalene meets Jesus for the first time. The Bible is filled with incredible captivating stories of redemption, action, and history.

1. Digital Media is a Critical Part of your Toolkit

- a. Videos combine imagery, dialogue, light, and sounds in a format that has captivated audiences and grabbed hearts and minds since its creation. It can elevate your brand, build credibility, and broaden your reach.
- b. Forbes reported that marketers who use video grow their revenue 49% faster than non-video users. It's no wonder that more and more businesses (and nonprofits if we're smart) are using video as a marketing tool.

2. Types of Videos

- a. Your video can take different forms, including explainer videos, fundraising videos, instructional, campaign, testimonial, organizational, behind the scenes, and storytelling videos.
- b. They can be used across various platforms, television, theatrical, social media, fundraising events, and websites.
- c. No matter what type of video you are producing, it should accomplish its objective by communicating authentically, personally, and impactfully.

3. First, Begin with a GREAT Story!

Nathan and King David in 2 Sam. 12

- a. Great storytelling is about taking a piece of the human condition (so things like birth, growth, emotionality, aspiration, conflict) and conveying it in a unique situation. Flawed characters are interesting!
- b. Great Stories Have a Purpose. Why MUST this story be told? Find the Heart of the Story.
- c. Great Stories are Universal. They are relatable.
- d. They appeal to our deepest emotions.
- e. Great stories are surprising and unexpected.
- f. What greater purpose does this serve? What does it teach?

4. Storytelling Fundamentals

- a. Use “The Story Spine” formula created by professional playwright and improviser Kenn Adams. It goes *Once upon a time there was [blank]. Every day, [blank]. One day [blank]. Because of that, [blank]. Until finally [bank].*
- b. Structure: Beginning, Middle, End
 - i. Attention Grabbing!
 - ii. Begin with Action Dialogue
 - iii. Describe a Setting

- iv. Begin with Background Information
- v. Have the Main Character introduce himself or herself
- c. What does the journey teach? What is the message?
 - i. Characters that suffer adversity (underdog), victory, and growth
 - ii. There are surprising or unexpected moments
- d. Use Texture and Description for Intrigue
- e. Have a Clear Call to Action

5. Creating Content

- a. Mobile devices make creating video content easier than ever. Anyone can pull out their phone and press record, capturing a memorable moment in seconds.
- b. Even though we can all be producers and directors now days, with professional nonprofit video production, every detail from the creative concept to the execution is strategically mapped out.

6. Begin with the Audience in Mind

- a. When thinking through what type of video/story you are going to make, consider the feelings, experiences, and actions you want viewers to take. What types of storytelling and visuals are likely to resonate with that audience?
- b. Identify your target audience.
 - i. Your current base of support.
 - ii. Prospective ministry partners
 - iii. An individual supporter
- c. The format, Cover artwork, length, embedded text, and tone matter intensely!

7. Test Test Test!

- a. One way to find out if your story is interesting and capable of achieving its objectives, tell it to your friends and family.

- b. Talk with a stranger or two. Watch their face as you give it to them and try to see if it resonates. Does it delight? Are there confusing moments?

Conclusion

Great stories demand to be remembered. God is the ultimate author and storyteller. He used the remarkable deliverance of the ancient Israelites described in the book of Exodus to be a collective memory for the Hebrews down through the generations. It was to provide an explanation for their beginnings in slavery and their escape with God's help and favor. This helped motivate them to loyalty and love for God. It helped shape the community and strengthen culture over time as faithful Jews participate in retelling the story of the Exodus to this day. The valuable tools at our disposal today can help each of us tell stories that change lives for years to come!

Resources:

Master Storytelling by Mark J. Carpenter and Darrell D. Harmon

Save the Cat! By Blake Snyder

Decker, Allie. The Ultimate Guide to Storytelling. February 28, 2023.
<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/storytelling>

Bolton, Darren. "10 Reasons Why Video Content is So Powerful" April 26, 2021. (54) 10 REASONS WHY VIDEO CONTENT IS SO POWERFUL | LinkedIn