



Storytellers Project

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Standard Operating Procedures



Chapter I

Big Picture

Storytellers Project is dedicated to the idea that oral storytelling and journalism have the same goals: serving and reflecting a community while fostering empathy.

Every Storytellers Project event blends the authenticity of storytelling with the truthfulness, community building, and empowerment at the heart of great journalism.

Our differentiating factor is our news judgment. As stewards of the public trust, we only share stories that are in service of their communities. We share stories that celebrate our universal values. And while all of them are entertaining, they must, above all things, connect with a sense of meaning to a diverse audience.

Our Three Key Mandates

- 1. Cultivate new audiences and subscribers**
- 2. Generate more revenue for our market**
- 3. Connect our newsrooms to community members and your community to each other**



Our Model

OUR MODEL can be adopted by any market in any town, with almost any budget. We have seen Storytellers used to create the kind of community-revolutionizing nights that civic leaders — and storytelling lovers — dream about.

We do it by focusing on story development more than story performance. Many of the biggest storytelling nights find and grow talent randomly. They put calls out and the bold, the professional, the vain, the specially educated — essentially, those already so inclined to share — show up.

This storytelling night model works in reverse. We highlight the skills of the journalist, paired with a professional storytelling mentor or educator to train

all kinds of people to tell compelling stories, thus shifting the focus onto the craft of story and not just the charisma of the person.

When people feel empowered to tell their stories, and others feel excited about listening, something in a community changes. People feel closer to each other. They feel more accepting of those unlike themselves. They feel more connected to their city and the people in it. They feel more ready to invest.



2020 Virtual Shows:

20

National shows

19

Local shows

1.5+

Million views
in 2020 across
media channels

879

Average peak
of concurrent
viewers online

2021 Scheduled Virtual Shows:

20+

National shows

23

Regional shows

DO NOT DISSEMINATE.

What you get...

Community building

Live events are about intimacy and active choice. Our events lead to quantifiable increases in loyalty, deep engagement, and trust between you and your community. Those feelings can be leveraged across newsroom and sponsor brands.

Brand reach

The success of the events feeds directly into brand perception. It's another way for the community to see the value that your paper brings to the city.

Subscriber acquisition

Every Storytellers event is an opportunity to build a new kind of relationship with people who may or may not already have a relationship with our newsrooms. Check to see if you have subscription offers available to promote at your events!

Revenue

Ticket revenue will cover production expenses. All the revenue generated from sponsorships stays in your market, and is 100 percent profit.

What you give...

Journalistic expertise

Many of the skills required to be great coaches and hosts are already part of your toolkit. Your work with Storytellers Project will help you refine and deepen those skills.

Personal connections

Make use of all the contacts you've made in your time in the newsroom. Maybe you've met some fantastic people whose story never made it to print. Now is the time to bring them on stage to let them tell their story.

Networking opportunities

Make connections with colleagues far and wide. Select "Storytellers Coaches and Points" under "Follow this channel" on Microsoft Teams and use it as a forum to ask questions, and to share successes and challenges.

Sponsorships

Work with Gisele Roberts to book locally controlled revenue. \$20,000 is the minimum amount for sponsorships.

Time and Talent

MOST MARKETS need two to four people to handle training, coaching storytellers, logistics, and event-night execution. These people are generally from the newsroom, but help can come from office assistants, marketing, or other talent in the building. Your Storytellers team should be detail-oriented and experienced enough to understand how to get support from across the organization.

Coaches should be drawn from a diverse talent pool. Age, gender, ethnicity, and life experience diversity all matter. Consider picking not just your best editors or writers, but your most ambitious and easiest-to-work-with staffers.

2-4

Dedicated people

4+

Shows

25

Hours per show*

* Except for the first show, which could take up to 60 hours.

Key takeaways

GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO COACH

- Adhering to an 8-week coaching process prioritizes the needs (emotional, social) of your storytellers. That's an act of grace and respect. Remember, this isn't about you.
- Provide coaching notes to storytellers and your other coaches on the day of the call.

STAGING MUSTS

- Stages should be at least 1 foot off the ground (unless unreasonable)
- No notes OR props
- No background images OR slideshows OR music
- No other storytellers on stage (they should be in the audience)
- Emcee adjusts the mic. No storyteller touches a mic or adjusts it.
- Storytellers should stand rooted to the stage (no pacing, walking, strolling, etc.)
- Put a pop-up on stage (You should have two. If not, call us.)

WHEN IN DOUBT, CALL US. DON'T MUDDLE THROUGH. DON'T GET ROADBLOCKED. THE NATIONAL TEAM IS HERE TO HELP.

PROGRAMS

- Order 4 weeks in advance. You should know the storytellers, the venue, sponsor language, Supporters, and the upcoming events by this time.
- This allows them to be delivered 1 week before the show.
- Any changes to the program can be mentioned from the stage.

MAKE YOUR FACEBOOK EVENT AT THE START OF SEASON

- Share storyteller photos there.
- Link to articles and past show stories there.
- Engage with your potential audience and answer any questions they ask.

EMCEES MUST GO THROUGH TRAINING

- These emcee trainings take place on the 3rd Thursday of every month at 10:30 a.m. PT
- Forward calendar invite to any new emcees
- We encourage co-emcees (2 per show) of different identities/backgrounds/etc.

UPDATES AND NEWS

- Inclusivity and Representation Plan **Page 45**
- Best Practices for Recruiting **Page 41**
- Booking Note (http://bit.ly/Booking_Note_ST) **Page 14**
- Storyteller Promotion (http://bit.ly/Self_Promotion_ST) **Page 15**
- Teller Demographics (http://bit.ly/Demographics_Survey_ST)
- Consent Forms in SharePoint (search consent forms to find the folder) **Page 160**
(<https://gannett.sharepoint.com/teams/nationalstorytellers/SitePages/Home.aspx>)
- New Venue Form (<https://forms.gle/zvjxTE8MjYJikD6L8>) **Page 35**