

# MERLE BENNY

## YOUR MILLION DOLLAR \$TORY



**Fast Track  
NonProfits  
5 Steps to  
Supersize!**



**NONPROFIT CHAMPION**



# Your Million Dollar Story

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## Introduction

### *You are a Nonprofit Champion*

We have created this e-book and Your Million Dollar Story™ workshops to give you the tools you need to grow a strong, sustainable nonprofit organization. This approach is based on our experience and success.

Storytelling is powerful! From our childhood bedtime stories until we become the wise elders; stories are central to our lives. They teach us and entertain us. Stories pass information and values from one person, and one generation, to the next. They inspire us to act – and to give.

Stories are central to your success. We are not all naturally good storytellers, but we can learn to be. Telling your story and the story of your organization will propel you forward. Taking an exploration to discover the stories, new audiences to tell them to and new formats for packaging them, will be exciting!

Nonprofit Champion focuses on fast track organizations; yours might be a newly formed nonprofit or an old one ready for change. Whether you are starting from zero or already have a million dollar budget, you can grow quickly and continue your growth, year after year.

This e-book will give you an overview of the tools and steps to sustainable growth. We are here to answer questions. Email me at [grow@nonprofitchampion.com](mailto:grow@nonprofitchampion.com).

We are here to inspire and encourage you on your journey. We are passionate about your success and are continually adding to our toolkit to serve you better. The more organizations we interact with, the better we become at ensuring that each of you see your Vision become reality.

If you need more than this e-book offers, or if it intrigues you to learn more about our work, let us know. We offer workshops that get your entire organization ready for growth. We also can provide the planning, design, video and event management services to create Your Million Dollar Story.

## About Me

I love a good story! I learned to tell them by writing direct mail letters. I



wasn't soliciting funds back then; I was running corporate conferences and sold them through direct mail (imagine making a telecommunications conference sound exciting!). That led to developing marketing materials for some of the world's biggest brands. When communications moved online I produced the first corporate mega-site. Then I had the opportunity to work with leading Internet pioneers, providing marketing and production services.

But I kept up an active volunteer life. So, along the way I would take what I learned and apply it to the nonprofits that I loved, helping them raise money. Of course, I discovered, as you have, the great pleasure of helping an organization succeed. That's why I became a fundraiser!

Long before I started Nonprofit Champion, even before my corporate career, I loved volunteering. I was a patrol leader in my first troop and grew up to be a Girl Scout leader. Combining my leadership skills and compassion to creatively address a need is my idea of fun! I am thrilled to devote all my energy to the growth and success of nonprofits and their champions.

Learning the magic (and science) of combining words and images to tell a story makes this work possible – and that's what we want to share with you. We have assembled a first-rate team to help more and more organizations tell their Million Dollar Story.

Everyday when I listen to the radio, read the paper, go online or watch TV, I see again and again how important a good story is. I hear a voice, see a picture, read a few words and I want more. In seconds someone's life becomes important to me. I care.

*Do you know what I mean?* A good story is the beginning of a relationship. You have a great story and I want to hear it!

Merle can be found at:

[www.nonprofitchampion.com](http://www.nonprofitchampion.com)

[www.facebook.com/nonprofitchampion](https://www.facebook.com/nonprofitchampion)

[www.twitter.com/nonprofitchamp](https://www.twitter.com/nonprofitchamp)

# Your Million Dollar Story

## *Fast Growth Nonprofits: 5 Steps to Supersize*

This is a process of discovering your strengths and your appeal to the public and to donors including corporations, foundations and individuals. Once you know your unique positioning you'll be ready to expand in ways you have never dreamed before.

Warning: this plan is for you if you intend to grow your organization quickly. If you are satisfied with your current size – your budget, the services you offer and the number of donors you have now – don't bother reading any further.

Your organization has the power to grow bigger and stronger and serve more people. If you're ready...read on.

*Before we get started, I just had to share this...*

## My Aha! Moment

I could have saved this for the end of the book, but I think you should know it now. There's a secret to storytelling that I have discovered and I've used it to raise lots of money. I want you to know it too.

It's this simple Million Dollar Formula and you can use it to create your own story, it goes like this:

### 1. There's a need! + 2. We can fill it!

I used to work too hard at it, thinking I had to tell the details and explain how we did our work and why we did it that way. I was putting people to sleep instead of inspiring them! Then I discovered the secret truth, you just need to make people care, by sharing the problem or need, and then show them how you can fill it.

It really is that simple. People respond to the need and they are happy to join you because YOU are the solution. The details and methods are more than most people want to hear. **Aha!**

# My Story

## "Why do I care?"

Your success depends on motivating others to care about your work. To get others to share your passion, they must be emotionally moved. Your most powerful tool is story.

You have a story to tell. Your life has included many challenges and choices; they have shaped your values and inspired your work. They've led you to the place you are now. Sharing your story will inspire others to listen, care and take action.

Twenty-five years ago I learned there were homeless families with no place to stay. The thought of children without a home really moved me. I heard about Cynthia and her little children who had no family to help them out. As a single mom I knew how much I depended on my extended family to get me on my feet and off to a successful career. Here was an opportunity for me to help other moms!

You are a Storyteller:

- What happened in your life that inspired your interest in this work
- What personal challenges helped shape your values
- When and where did you hear about the organization
- What was your reaction
- What roles have you played
- What is your dream

## Step 1:

You have many stories. Start with the personal story that expresses your motivation and values as they relate to your organization. Details make a story memorable and give it the power to move others to join you. Sharing your challenges makes people care. Practice makes you a great storyteller.

*Here's a worksheet to get you started...*

## **EXPLORATION:**

*Why do I care?*

First, reflect on your life and your work:

- 1. Motivation** – *Why am I telling my story?*
- 2. Audience** – *Whom am I speaking to?*
- 3. Values** – *What moved me to action?*
- 4. Story** – *Which stories show my values?*

*For each story...*

**What was the Challenge?** Why was it YOUR challenge?

**What were the Obstacles?** What people or circumstances held you back, influenced you or changed your priorities?

**What Choice did you make?** What decisions did you have to make. How did you feel about them?

**What was the Outcome?** What changed as a result of your Choice? What did you learn? What did you want to share?



# Our Story

*"Who else cares?"*

You are not alone; your board and staff know there is a need and that your organization can fill it. Working together, sharing your story, you begin to build a community of Storytellers who are motivated to care, to commit and to contribute. Your shared vision grows from the passion that started your organization and has the power to engage more and more Storytellers.

The very idea of homeless families was new to me. Hearing the story of a founder who had provided food for the homeless and had figured out a way to do more captivated me. Learning that others in my community had already signed on to help moved me. I loved the idea that a problem had been identified and a unique solution had been found – and I could be part of it. I signed on and began to recruit other volunteers.

**Your organization has a story:**

- Who was the founder
- What inspired him/her
- What was the dream
- What has happened since
- What stories do others in your organization tell
- What values do you have in common
- What is the shared dream

## Step 2:

Shared values are at the heart of a shared story. As you tell your story, listen to others in your organization and identify common values – a shared story begins to emerge. Often the founder's story is a great addition because it tells a personal tale of a time and place and the passion that inspired action. When you are a group with a shared purpose, vision and goals, you can identify others who might join you.

*Here's a worksheet for Our Story...*

# EXPLORATION:

## *Who else cares?*

Think about the history of your organization:

**What was the Challenge?** What need was the organization created to fill? What called the founder to take action?

**What were the Obstacles?** What obstacles were overcome? What obstacles remain?

**What Choices were made?** What were the significant turning points of the organization?

**What was the Outcome?** What are the success stories, and the failures, that came as a result of the challenges?

List the values you share as a group:

1. We Value: \_\_\_\_\_
2. We Value: \_\_\_\_\_
3. We Value: \_\_\_\_\_
4. We Value: \_\_\_\_\_

Remember *Motivation/Audience/Values/Story* from Step 1? Now your *Motivation* is to identify the *Audience* that shares your *Values* so they too can become part of your *Story*.

*Who are the...*

- People \_\_\_\_\_
- Organizations \_\_\_\_\_
- Schools \_\_\_\_\_
- Congregations \_\_\_\_\_
- Foundations \_\_\_\_\_
- Corporations \_\_\_\_\_
- Government entities \_\_\_\_\_

These are your future Storytellers, friends, partners and funders.

# Right Now Story

## "Why Now?"

Right Now Stories reflect the values you celebrated in My Story and Our Story but they put the focus on those you serve. They are also stories of urgency. Your daily work produces great stories of personal needs, desires, problems and challenges that are overcome through your efforts. There are also stories of hope; these give you the opportunity to talk about the unfulfilled need that requires resources you are seeking. It is essential to your growth to capture, record and tell these stories.

When I became the Board President, we took a look at our strengths. We had successfully provided emergency service and short-term solutions for many years but the stories we heard from families told us that more was needed if they were going to find and keep a home. As we gathered the stories of the homeless and formerly homeless families the obstacles that stood in their way became clear. It was time for us to explore new approaches and to seek support in providing additional services.

### **You have stories to discover:**

- Who has a story to tell
- What do they have in common
- Is there another chapter to the story
- What is the urgency
- What resources do you need to make more success stories
- Are the subjects of the stories available as storytellers

## **Step 3:**

In addition to telling My Story and Our Story, you will want to identify stories of need – who are the people impacted by your work and what have you done (or want to do) for them. Collecting these stories is everyone's job.

*Start building your library...*

## **EXPLORATION:**

### *Why now?*

Think of the stories you've heard from those impacted by your work:

**What was the Challenge?**

**What were the Obstacles?**

**What Choices were made?**

**What was the Outcome?**

What do these stories have in common? \_\_\_\_\_

What needs are being met now? \_\_\_\_\_

What needs aren't being met now? \_\_\_\_\_

What will help you create more success stories? \_\_\_\_\_

Your story collection becomes **Your Library**. In it you will gather stories from your daily work. Make it easy for everyone to add stories.

While everyone on your board and staff should hear and tell stories, you will continually broaden the base of Storytellers.

# Our Story Campaign

*"Do you hear me?"*

Considering your Right Now Stories, choose a focus, one that is closely aligned with your goals and helps you meet them, while creating a sense of urgency. Think of it as this year's leading story or **Your Story Campaign**. This focus builds momentum, renews those already in your base of Storytellers and attracts those you have identified as future Storytellers.

Our exploration led to the decision to add services to help families find a home that met their needs and put in place the services to help them stay in the home for as long as they desired. We called the campaign *Dreaming of Home*. This gave a clear picture of the need while inspiring and encouraging us to find better housing solutions for families. The more we told the story, the more we attracted people to care about and invest in this need.

## **Find a focus that will inspire and motivate:**

- How have you excelled
- What do your stories tell you about your strengths
- Why do they tell you about weaknesses
- What is the next logical step
- What is a desirable reach
- What is the big dream

## **Step 4:**

Focusing on one area of need gives you a clear message. Clarity is important in storytelling – the easier it is to tell the story the more often it will be told.

*Your Campaign begins here...*

## **EXPLORATION:**

### *Do you hear me?*

Explore the possibilities for Your Story Campaign and make your selection. Then, like an advertising campaign team, begin to turn your choice into the words and pictures that will support Your Story.

Your Story Campaign elements:

- Name
- Brand
- Website
- Brochure
- Advertisement
- Video

Add the talent you need to your team of Storytellers (these may be paid or Pro-Bono professionals, depending on your access and your budget):

- Marketing Manager
- Graphic Designer
- Videographer
- Copywriter

You are now ready for your communication plan.

1. Motivation – What do I want my audience to do?
2. Audience – *Which groups of people is this going to?*
3. Media – *How am I delivering the message? This may include:*

Newsletters

Direct mail

Email

Social media

Events

4. Frequency/Timing – *When and how often will this happen?*
5. Responsibility – *Who will lead the team?*

Your Story Campaign may also be used in applying for grants. The better you are able to tell Your Story, the easier it will be to communicate the need – and raise the money to fulfill your vision.

# Our Story Hour

*"Will you join me?"*

You now have a plan that will take you to Your Million Dollars! With all the pieces in place you are ready to create your events. The ideal opportunity for presenting Your Story and attracting other Storytellers is an in person gathering. Large or small, an introduction or fundraiser, you can create a one-hour event that is a powerful opportunity to share Your Story.

The first time I stood before a room of 400 people just waiting to hear what I had to say, I was in awe. I cared very much about homeless families – and was thrilled to see a room full of people willing to wake up early and come hear Our Story! I told my story, we showed a beautiful video and heard the most moving testimonials I could have ever dreamed. And we raised a lot of money. We continue to tell our story; it is as powerful as ever, it has truly become A Million Dollar Story.

## **Make Story Hours the center of your growth plan :**

- Create an event based on Your Story Campaign
- Prepare an excellent presentation
- Practice
- Schedule frequent, convenient, inviting events
- Listen
- Ask for money only at fundraising events

## **Step 5:**

The success of an event depends on attention to detail. Every single aspect of the Hour has the potential to motivate your audience to care – and caring is the first step to involvement, donating and passing on Your Story.

*It's time for you Story Hour...*

## **EXPLORATION:**

### *Will you join me?*

To grow and prosper you need events that give you the opportunity to tell Your Story to a group. A Story Hour is the perfect setting, because you create and control, the environment and the message. By offering them on a regular schedule, you are always ready to invite people to a well-planned event.

Elements of a Story Hour:

- A goal – what do you want to achieve
- An audience that helps you reach that goal
- Your compelling story
- An emotional video and or testimonial speaker
- Careful planning and timing
- An invitation
- Food
- An appropriate setting

Turning Your Story Hour into a fundraising event is easy – you have the elements in place and a guest list, the past attendees, ready to go.

You are positioned for:

- ✓ Fast growth
- ✓ New opportunities to serve more people
- ✓ The ability to do more of your good work
- ✓ Exploration of additional revenue sources



# Get Ready for Fast Growth

Coming March 2014

*Nonprofit Champion announces:*

## Your Million Dollar Story

A two day workshop to guide you to fast growth

In two days your team will learn the tricks and tools to move your organization to the next level. You'll work through the steps, building your own custom plan. You'll leave ready to start on a year-long journey to fast, sustainable growth.

*Take your organization to the next level and beyond.* Learn directly from Merle Benny and her team, in this fast paced super-productive workshop. Your team will be guided through the steps from Vision to planning your Fundraising. You'll leave prepared for fast growth.

**And you'll get FREE email follow-up plus regularly scheduled coaching calls to keep you and your team on track throughout the year.**

Walk out of the workshop with YOUR STORY, ready to deliver. Plus you'll develop your THEME, plan your VIDEO, design YOUR STORY HOUR, create your CALENDAR and begin planning your FUNDRAISING event.

We are planning the Workshop schedule now. Go to [www.nonprofitchampion.com](http://www.nonprofitchampion.com) today to pre-register (no obligation); this will help us choose a city near you for our fall and winter schedule.

## Want more?

Nonprofit Champion will work directly with your organization to develop, prepare and package **Your Million Dollar Story**. We'll guide you through the process, and work with you to deliver your successful fundraising. We will provide a fully outsourced marketing and development department 100% tailored to your needs and guaranteed to grow your organization.

This fully customized consulting includes on-site training, brand and theme develop, a professional video and more. We'll plan and run your event and deliver just what you need for fast growth. *Let's get started!*

Email [grow@nonprofitchampion.com](mailto:grow@nonprofitchampion.com) for a free consultation.

A Quick Review of the Five Steps to Fast Growth:

## **1. My Story**

*Why do I care?*

You have a story to tell and it's your most powerful tool as a nonprofit leader.

## **2. Our Story**

*Who else cares?*

Your shared vision will attract more and more Storytellers to your organization.

## **3. Right Now Story**

*Why now?*

The stories of the people you serve demonstrate your values and a sense of urgency.

## **4. Our Story Campaign**

*Do you hear me?*

Focusing on one area of need gives you a clear message.

## **5. Story Hour**

*Will you join me?*

Events are an opportunity to showcase your work and emotionally move your audience.

Here's a collection of resources for Fast Growth Nonprofits including some of books that have recently inspired me.

## Storytelling

Storyteller Wilton Blake has gathered a list of [Storytelling Resources for Nonprofits](#)

Jonathan Gottschall, [The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human](#)

## Big and Bold

[Social Transformation Solving Social Problems at the Magnitude They Exist](#), from [Community Wealth Partners](#)

[How Nonprofits Get Really Big](#) from [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#)

Michael Kaiser, [The Art of the Turnaround: Creating and Maintaining Healthy Arts Organizations](#)

## Collaboration

[Nonprofit Networking: The New Way to Grow](#) from [Harvard Business School Working Knowledge](#)

[The Networked Nonprofit](#) from [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#)

[Collective Impact](#) from [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#)

## Fundraising

[UnderDeveloped, A National Study of Challenges Facing Nonprofit Fundraising](#) from [CompassPoint](#)

[Nonprofit Fundraising Study](#) from [NonProfit Research Collaborative](#)

[Ten Nonprofit Funding Models](#) from [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#)

Jason Saul, [The End of Fundraising: Raise More Money by Selling Your Impact](#)

## Brands

[The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector](#) from [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#)

## Creativity and Good Ideas

Jonah Lehrer, [Imagine: How Creativity Works](#)

Charles Duhigg, [The Power of Habit](#)

Adam M. Grant Ph.D., [Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success](#)

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