

One Thing at a Time:

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO STORYTELLING SHOWS

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Storytelling is a great way to get people connected to your organization—it's fun for the storytellers and your audience. In this guide you will find several important things to consider when preparing a storytelling show.

Beyond entertainment, storytelling provides an effective medium for sharing a deeper message; and you can either keep things light and humorous or thought provoking and raw.

Storytelling shows can be as simple or as complex as you like. Determining your structure; how many storytellers you present, how you choose them and how long they have to share their tales, all depend on your goals, time-frame and capacity.



TIP



Storytelling Overview

How will you choose storytellers? Will it be open-mic or will storytellers be auditioned? Perhaps something in between? [The Moth](#) announces their theme along with a call for storytellers prior to the show; night of people put their name in the hat and wait to see if their name gets drawn.

How many stories would you like to showcase? The number of stories you feature will largely depend on the set-length of stories. Keep in mind that short stories (under 10 minutes) will be more difficult for storytellers, believe it or not. Make sure you publicize the length of story your show will accommodate - along with your call for storytellers, thus ensuring they'll be prepared

Set storytelling guidelines so people know what is expected.

Some of the basics include, but are not limited to:

1. Stick to the allotted time. Finished or not, you're off the stage when time's up.
 2. Stick to the theme.
 3. The story must be true.
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CHECK OUT OTHER STORYTELLING SHOW GUIDELINES TO COMPARE, CONTRAST AND BORROW!

For the full list of [Knock, Knock! Guidelines](#) visit www.itsyourneighbor.org

Consider:

? Would you like to reach new people and give them the opportunity to learn more about your neighborhood association, its purpose, services and activities?

? Would you like to engage neighbors, who are currently involved peripherally with your organization to help raise funds to further association activities?

? Is there a cause you'd like to raise awareness around?

These goals are not mutually exclusive, but taking on too much may require you to spread your resources too thin and muddy your advertising. We suggest picking one goal and going for it! Swing for the fences! The clearer your purpose, the more successful your show will be both in terms of content and in terms of fundraising/friendraising.

Step 1: IDENTIFY GOALS

Identifying your goals is the first step; they will inform your decisions throughout the rest of the event planning process and keep you on track. Include your whole board in the process and make sure you take the time to really dig-in and hear what everyone has to say—agreeing on your purpose at this step will help make sure things go smoothly from start to finish.

Education // News // Neighborhood Identity ?

AGREE ON A GOAL AND HOLD ALL DECISIONS ACCOUNTABLE TO IT.



Step 2: WHO IS YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE?

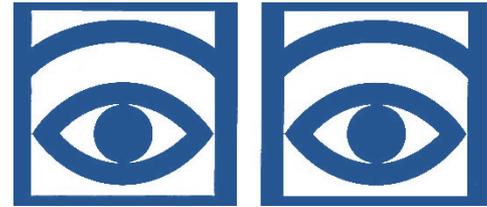
The question of “who is your target audience” will start to shake out when identifying goals in Step 1. However, visualizing who you are addressing when determining the look and feel of your show—and your advertising—will help ensure that your message and your tone is appropriate.

You don’t want to gear yourself towards families with kids and then put together an R-rated (unlikely to happen) show and likewise, you’d be in a similar mess if you were putting together a G-rated show for an adult audience (easy mistake).

TIP

Consider:

- How old are they?
- Where do they work?
- Do they have particular interests or hobbies?
- Do they have free time on their hands?
- Are they single or do they have a family?
- Where do they live?
- Are they a professional, a student or retired?
- Do they use the internet or prefer print?



Actually visualize the people you hope will come to your show. You can target more than one type of person—but identifying “who” will help you with the “how”.

Step 3: CHOOSE A THEME

When developing the theme for Knock, Knock! It's Your Neighbor; "True stories of Bizarre and Humorous Neighborly Interactions" the idea was to make it broad enough that any story about neighbors would qualify. This decision had its pros and cons. On one hand, the show included a wide variety of stories and was appealing to a wide audience. On the other hand, it was more difficult for the host and potential storytellers to feel immediately inspired by the theme. While the show was a success, we decided the theme was too vague and we would try a narrower theme the next time.

To avoid a theme that risks feeling too big we recommend you get the process rolling by asking fellow board members if they have topics they feel inspired by or stories they'd like to share—once you've gone through a brainstorming exercise pull back to see if there is an over-arching theme that captures *most* of what was shared. Start with everything on the table and then whittle your options down. Use examples from stories/topics shared by the board to create prompts that will help further clarify the theme and get the storyteller's wheels turning.

Start with a brainstorm...

- Busted assumptions
- Awkward neighbor moments
- To the rescue
- Neighbor secrets
- Lost and found pets
- How I met my neighbor
- Coolest neighbor ever
- Accidental home invasion
- Wild goose chase
- Bikini gardening

...Then see if a larger theme emerges...

**"MISTAKES OF NEIGHBORLY PROPORTIONS:
TALES OF MISADVENTURE, MISHAP AND MISCONCEPTION"**



As your neighborhood association board gears up for producing a storytelling show take a moment to decide the best way to break up roles and responsibilities. It is likely that you have multiple skill-sets and talents represented – take inventory and put yourselves to work!

(1-2) Project Coordinators: The ring-leaders and project managers. They delegate, make final decisions and keep everyone and everything on track. They are responsible for ensuring identified goals are met and over-all objectives are achieved.

(1-4) Volunteers: The people taking on specific tasks, such as; social media posts, blogs posts and press releases, soliciting small business participation/donations, locating storytellers and more. Delegate, delegate, delegate - but we promise, it will be worth it.

(1-2) Host: This person is asked to participate; it is the Project Coordinators job to make sure they have incentive to do so and to make sure that there are safety nets in place in case you lose them.

Additional Contacts: These will be your venue point-people, your food and beverage donors and/or sponsors, storytellers and participating organization coordinators. Keep up your relationships by checking in regularly and by thanking them publicly every chance you get. Remain organized by keeping a spreadsheet with everyone's name and contact information; be sure to share it with members of your production team.

CONTACTS OFTEN PROVE TO HAVE A WEALTH OF INFORMATION. DON'T HESITATE TO ASK THEIR OPINION OR CALL ON THEM FOR POSSIBLE RESOURCES. THINK FUNDRAISING IDEAS OR CONTACTS WHO MIGHT BE WILLING TO HOST!



Things that we love in a show

- Videos
- Karaoke
- Prizes
- Props
- Photo + confession booths
- Exposure to other organizations
- Networking opportunities
- Food + beverages
- Music (live or otherwise)
- Raffles + silent auctions
- Powerful message
- Trivia/game show elements
- Stand up comedy + improv
- Audience participation
- Puppet shows
- Special guests

First think big, take inventory and then scale back to what is reasonable. Decide from the feasible activities which best suits your goals, audience, and makes the best use of your resources. Don't feel like you have to do it all, sometimes it's best to stick with one idea and run with it. Not all storytelling shows need multiple components – again, think back to your goals and make decisions based on them.

STEP 5: CONSIDER ALL POSSIBLE SHOW STRUCTURES AND ACTIVITIES

What sort of storytelling show is the best means to achieve your goals? Again, you'll want to reach out to your board to help you brainstorm. How are other established storytelling shows structured? What sorts of activities are popular with your target audiences?

Keep in mind what resources are available to you. Perhaps you have a volunteer on your board with entertainment or theater experience? Or maybe your neighborhood association has stashed quirky trivia questions away that you could pull out for a pop quiz style game? Maybe someone has a PA system you could use, or perhaps there is a local business owner involved with the neighborhood who would host your organization in their establishment and, if you're lucky, share a portion of their profits.

TIP

Step 6: CHOOSE A VENUE...

Many Portland establishments are happy to share a percentage of their revenue in the name of causes they believe in or help you come up with alternative ways to raise funds. You can charge a cover if that works best for your show, but don't hesitate to consider other possibilities; ask what the options are!

- Find out if the venue is set up to sell pints, or other beverages you can easily have donated. If so, then ask if they would sell your donated items for a share of the profits raised.
- Create a floor plan if you are setting the room up for specific activities, like tabling.
- Help your venue help you—consider making them some fliers or sharing your digital media to ensure they can promote your show successfully and cohesively.



TIP

...AND A HOST

Based on your identified goals and theme, contact individuals who you think may have a vested interest in your neighborhood or your cause. Give yourself plenty of lead time—finding dates that work for everyone can be tricky.

- You may want to wait to choose a location and exact date based on your host's availability.
- Choose someone with public speaking experience, a good sense of humor and a demonstrable passion for your cause.
- Consider a host who can bring their own audience.
- Have your host sign a [performance agreement](#) securing their availability and ensuring that they help promote your show.

WHEN CHOOSING A VENUE ASK:

- What is the capacity?
- Are they willing to promote the show?
- Do they host other shows and are they successful?
- Do they have a stage/area for entertainment?
- Do they have their own PA system? Or will you need to find mics/speakers?
- Is there room to set up tables for participating businesses/organizations?

Step 7: SOLICIT DONATIONS...

It is often easier for smaller businesses to provide in-kind donations as opposed to financial contributions. This doesn't mean they can't be acknowledged as an event sponsor; they bring the items needed in order for your show to move forward and their donations are strong show of support.

When considering your costs, and planning your budget, try to identify expenses that could be cut by seeking this kind of arrangement with local establishments.

For example, the venue selected may not be able to donate a portion of their revenue generated the evening of a show, but they may be willing to host a guest tap, where beer donated might be sold to raise funds for your organization.

Another way to include businesses in your event, and raise funds, is by seeking donations for an auction, silent or otherwise, to be hosted the night of your show. Along these lines, raffles also provide a similar opportunity.



Consider:

Your goals identified in Step 1 – Are you raising money to boost your own visibility, support the work you do and drive up membership? Or are you aiming to raise money around a specific cause or project? Sharing your goals with a potential donor may increase their desire to participate and lend you a hand.

Are there businesses in your neighborhood that have an interest in your work, or would like to plug into your network of volunteers?

Do any of your current board or committee members have relationships with businesses that may be interested in participating?

How might a donation from a business lead to an ongoing relationship with your organization?

Can you offer a tax deduction?
If you are not an independent 501(c)3 could SE Uplift Neighborhood Coalition provide [fiscal sponsorship](#)?

What to include in a sponsorship packet?

- Advertising via social media, website and press releases
 - Will you have a webpage promoting sponsors
 - Could include sponsorship profile
- Posters and programs or any other printed collateral
 - Includes sponsor's logo
- Tickets to your event
- Access to your network via list serves and newsletters
- Event slide show publically thanking sponsors
- A word from the podium, again thanking sponsors
- Signage and/or tabling opportunities at event

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- A brief explanation of your show
 - Event goals, target audience and theme
 - What they are supporting, explicitly
 - A direct "ask" for sponsorship
 - Why they are being sought as sponsors
 - A written explanation of benefits
 - Outline several different giving options
 - A table that reiterates benefits at those various levels
 - Whether or not their contribution is tax deductible
 - A commitment form that asks for a signature

...AND SPONSORSHIPS

Before seeking sponsorships ask "what do we have to offer?" Sponsorships are very much "you scratch my back and I'll scratch your back" kinds of arrangements.

What could your neighborhood association offer?

Benefits

Once you've identified all possible benefits of participating in your event put together a small, well thought out and designed packet that includes:

Introduction to sponsorship

Step 8: OUTREACH

Separate your asks and address them individually, to maintain clarity. List each, then draft statements or calls to action around every ask identified. Include any and all [links](#).

Next, you'll want to decide whether it makes sense to share them together, in a single press release or separately, as multiple press releases. If you are hosting an open mic a single press release is you'll need, if you are hoping to identify storytellers ahead of your show send a separate press release out in advance of the general show release – timing is everything.

There are many resources on the web to help you draft a [press release](#) you are proud of, but what they don't tell you is that a press release can fill multiple roles. Take your various individual statements that comprise your release and use them as social media posts, in the about section of your blog and on fliers or other print materials.

You can find [more examples](#) of press releases on our website.

Ask #1 General call for audience members & high points of show

Ask #2 Call for storytellers. How will they participate?

How will audience participate, what will they gain by being at your show?

Ask #3 How can your audience and storytellers support your cause?

The Press Release

Join us at the warm and [Lovely Ford Food + Drink](#) with our host for the evening, local comedian and improv actor, [Jay Flewelling](#)!

The show will kick off at 7:00. If your name is drawn you'll get to tell your [*3 minute story*](#), live, on stage. Our themes for the night are Keepin' Up with the Joneses and Neighbor to the Rescue. Ever experienced a serious case of neighbor envy? Or have you ever saved your neighbor from a dire situation? We want to hear your stories.

Not interested in sharing a true story of neighborly interaction? Join us in the audience or participate in our Portland Pop Quiz. We need your cackle, applause and quirky Portland knowledge to make this show complete.

Your night will not only be filled with laughter you can also drink beer to help raise money for [SE Uplift's Creative Engagement Grant](#), which will fund original neighborhood projects. Beer has been generously donated by [Lucky Labrador Brew Pub](#).

Step 9: MAKE A PLAN

- Identify Goals*
- Target audience*
- Choose a venue*
- Find a host*
- Outreach strategy*
- Make a plan!*

The amount of time needed will vary show-to-show and will be based on the tasks at hand. Write down all of your known tasks and place them on a timeline. Start with the show date and work backwards to ensure that you aren't over-extending yourselves. Write down every tiny thing that comes to mind—if it needs to get done, plan on it.

The first time around start with a simple idea, with as few “moving parts” as possible. The possibilities are endless; pick one or two activities and plan to incorporate new/additional ideas the next time around. You don't have to do it all to have a successful show; in fact, quite the opposite!

Take a look at the [activity checklist](#); it is based on the tasks for our small production of Knock, Knock which was held at Ford Food + Drink in February of 2014 and has a timeframe of 8-10 weeks.

**USE IT TO BRAINSTORM IDEAS, OR EDIT IT
AND USE IT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE!**



TIP