

# **The Winning Story: Capturing the Stories that Differentiate Your Proposals**

*Capturing, storing, and showcasing your organization's stories  
to help your proposal stand out in the crowd*

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Presented by Julie Wickert  
[julie@truestorycommunication.com](mailto:julie@truestorycommunication.com)  
(ofc/hm) 512-459-3262, (cell) 512-914-6882



## Why stories?

- Your organization's or client's stories are unique; they distinguish you from your competitors
- Humans appear to be hardwired to respond to stories – stories are memorable, persuasive, and efficient in conveying complex information about your solution
- Stories express passion, which is an important factor in many contracting situations
- A shared story creates a shared experience

## What makes a good story?

- **Use a narrative pattern.** A story has a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- **Paint a picture.** Engage the reader's senses – and emotions. Give the story a hero, and put a face on him or her.
- **Throw rocks at your hero.** Describe the challenges faced.
- **Most important factor about whether a story is compelling is whether it's meaningful to the customer.** Understand the customer's concerns and touch on them with your story.

## Which stories?

- Customer success stories
- Anecdotes that provide insight into the character of key proposed personnel
- Tales of seamless transitions
- Team members' heroic efforts of to satisfy customers
- Accounts of improved performance
- Others?

## How do I capture these stories?

- **Proactively!**
- Interviewing customer-facing team members, customers, or other stakeholders
- Soliciting online submittals
- Mining existing proposals, marketing materials, annual reports



## How do I store them?

- Structured folders, organized by product, customer, date, or other criteria
- Databases
- Online collaborative tools such as Privia, RFP Machine, or Wikis

## How do I showcase them?

- Most important: in the executive summary!
- In a graphically noticeable way

## Resources:

Book, *Storytelling: Branding in Practice*, by Klaus Fog, Christian Budtz, and Baris Yakaboylu. Chronicles the role of storytelling within organizations.

Article, “The Secrets of Storytelling,” by Jeremy Hsu. *Scientific American Mind*, August/September 2008. Explores peoples’ affinity for stories and what that indicates about the human mind.

Article, “Winning Federal Government Contracts through Fact-Based Storytelling,” by Robert S. Frey, M.A. *APMP Proposal Management*, Spring/Summer 2005. Makes the case for the value of stories in helping win business in the federal arena.

Article, “Creating Preference,” by Terry R. Bacon, Ph.D. *APMP Proposal Management*, Fall/Winter 2002. Discusses the challenges of distinguishing your value proposition among many.

Book, *Story*, by Robert McKee. Presents award-winning screenwriting methods from Hollywood’s master of the craft.

