

ETHICAL STORYTELLING PRINCIPLES FOR POSITIVE IMPACT

Action Guide for Social Enterprises



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About this Catalyst Market initiative

Catalyst Market and Catalyst 2030

[Catalyst 2030](#) is a global network of social entrepreneurs committed to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and promoting systems change at all levels through collective action. Catalyst members have developed a new global online marketplace called Catalyst Market that connects conscious producers and consumers to accelerate the transition to an inclusive, regenerative economy.

The Impact measurement and Storytelling Toolkit

This guide is part of a larger co-creation process with Catalyst Market members. In August 2022, the Impact Action Group began developing a Toolkit for impact measurement and storytelling for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. A survey went out to all Catalyst members to determine what topics were a top priority for improvement.

Informed by the results of the survey, the action group developed five guides about the following topics:

1. How to Measure and Manage Your Impact
2. Choosing the Best Authentic Stories to Engage your Intended Audience
3. **Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact**
4. Impact Storytelling with Photography and Video
5. Marketing Fundamentals

These guides were created by Catalyst Market members FOR Catalyst Market members. However, their content is relevant for any micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise committed to systems change and achieving the SDGs.

The authors wish to thank the **Skoll Foundation** and the **Rockefeller Foundation** for their grant support.

Use of this guide

- This Guide and the other Guides developed for the Impact Measurement and Storytelling Toolkit (*the Toolkit*) are available as a free download at the [Catalyst Market Resource Hub](#).
- We encourage all Catalyst members to use the Toolkit for their own internal impact measurement and storytelling efforts. We hope you will also share and promote the Toolkit for such use by other social enterprises.
- Any Guide, excerpt, adaptation or derivative of a Guide distributed without charge must reference the relevant author(s) and the support of the Catalyst 2030 organization and funding support provided by the Skoll Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation.
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For any comments and questions regarding the Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact Guide, please contact the author at: katja@fairchangeimpact.com.



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Introduction

Who is this guide for?

We have developed this guide for small and large social businesses engaging in telling the stories of the people they work with, partner with and support, as part of their marketing and communications to wider target audiences. They may be product or service-based enterprises, selling directly to consumers or serving business-to-business markets, in any sector and region.

Although the main audiences we've written this guide for are for-profit organizations, if you are an NGOs or civil society group serving social causes, you will also find it useful to increase your ethical storytelling skills as a way to engage individual and institutional donors.

The social enterprises targeted by this guide channel funds, goods, technical assistance or other types of support to people who need it: for instance, local suppliers in poor regions, communities in neighbourhoods with high crime and drug abuse rates, groups suffering discrimination, or persons dealing with special health conditions. A key goal these social enterprises aim for is to make a positive impact on the producers and communities they support with the revenues from the sales of their products or services.

On the other end, these enterprises market their offering to buyers and investors in wealthy countries or socio-economically advantaged areas in the same country. Typically, these buyers and funders are located far from the places where problems occur and have no personal or professional experience with the challenges faced by the people who benefit from their purchase or donation.

The enterprises use storytelling as an approach to showcase the impact their work has on the lives of the people they support.

If this profile fits your enterprise, you will probably have experienced that the distance between the supported producers and communities on the one hand, and your buyer and funder audiences on the other end, can be challenging. Disparities between “privileged givers” and “underprivileged receivers”, social and cultural differences, moral dilemmas around translating human suffering into marketing messages – all these things make storytelling for positive impact complex and delicate.

This guide is meant to address these challenges and equip you as a do-good enterprise with the basic tools to tell the stories of the people you support in an ethical way that respects their dignity, while at the same time capturing the hearts and minds of your target customers or investors.

The guide can be used by the staff member(s) responsible for your organisation's marketing and communications strategies, and who include storytelling in their messaging. The Ethical Storytelling Principles are applicable to written content (for instance, web content or brochures), audiovisual formats (such as video or podcast), and in-person communication (for example when engaging in personal sales relationships with your customers and prospects, or speaking or networking at trade fairs or conferences).

Whether you are new to the job or a seasoned marketer or communicator, you will find helpful recommendations to improve your storytelling practices. Ethical storytelling for social good is still in its infancy and to date, few guidelines about this topic exist. That's why we aim to provide valuable and actionable advice for any communicator within the social enterprise.

How does this guide differ from other ethical storytelling tools?

Over the past several years, several organizations have published ethical storytelling manuals online. Often, these are produced by and meant for non-profits and alliances of social sector organizations, with a focus on humanitarian assistance, community support or international development. These are valuable resources and you will find some references below.

This Guide takes a broader and deeper approach, by focusing on for-profit enterprises engaged in marketing for social good. The basic starting points of ethical storytelling that respect people's dignity and authenticity are not different for typical charitable organisations' communications (think of writing funder's reports or sending out a newsletter to individual donors, for example). However, using ethical storytelling to achieve sales of products and services or spur funding and investment is a different kind of game in many respects, as we will see in the following Parts.

Another added value of this guide is that it hones in on storytelling as a way to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our priority audiences are member organizations of the Catalyst 2030 network that strives to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, so wherever relevant we have included recommendations Catalyst enterprises can implement to be effective storytellers in support of the SDGs.

As members of Catalyst 2030, we explore systems change approaches as a means of uniting in collective action to achieve the SDGs and address the root causes of societal and environmental challenges. In the following Parts, we will point out how ethical storytelling for positive impact is more than just a responsible and captivating approach to marketing and communications. It also contributes to the Catalyst 2030 commitment to systems change by transforming conventional narratives about people who face pressing social and environmental issues.

What you'll find in this guide

This document consists of three main chapters. In **Part 1: What is ethical storytelling and why do we need it?** we start with some context and background. We explain what Ethical Storytelling for Positive Impact is, how it differs from both mainstream storytelling and ethical marketing, and how it enables socially committed businesses to change the narrative around the artisans, producers, local communities, and other people they support.

Part 2. Nine Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact describe the principles and how they can guide your enterprise in capturing and telling the stories of the people you support in a way that respects their dignity and authenticity, while at the same time moving customers, investors and funders.

Finally in **Part 3. Implementing the Ethical Storytelling Principles into your operations**, we introduce the Impact Storytelling Cycle, explaining how the nine Ethical Storytelling Principles are reflected in its different phases. We also share practical tips to incorporate the principles into your marketing, branding and communications strategies.

For your convenience, we have listed key terms and concepts we use in the guide as entries in the **Glossary of terms**, with their definitions and descriptions. Terms included in the Glossary are highlighted in sea blue the first time they appear in the text.

At the end of each Part we have included a **Key resources** section with a curated selection of online resources and in some cases, books, where you can learn more about the topics we discuss. Find the full alphabetical list of resources, including web links, in the **Bibliography**.

Part 1: What is ethical storytelling and why do we need it?

In this part, we explain what Ethical Storytelling for Positive Impact is and how it differs from both mainstream storytelling and ethical marketing. We also touch on the difficulties and limitations of storytelling-as-usual and explain how socially committed enterprises can change the narrative around the artisans, producers, local communities, and other people they partner with and support.

Stories of people the enterprise supports: a specific kind of storytelling

As a social enterprise you can tell all kinds of stories as part of your marketing and communications strategies. Founder or origin stories (sharing how your organisation came about and the WHY behind its founding), stories highlighting your enterprise's mission, vision and values, stories of success and even stories unveiling challenges are just a few examples of commonly used formats.

This guide focuses on a specific type of storytelling: the one that showcases the lives, work and experiences of the people a social enterprise works with and for, such as artisans, rural producers and other types of supply partners, as well as the specific population groups or communities the organisation supports through social investment activities. We call this Storytelling for Positive Impact. Its main goal is not just telling great stories that resonate well with buyers and funders, but – equally important – to demonstrate how the partnership between these people and the enterprise creates positive change.

Social enterprises that engage in storytelling for positive impact connect different worlds and often, people from very different backgrounds. While honesty and authenticity are important for any kind of storytelling, what sets these kinds of stories apart is that they disclose the experiences of a key stakeholder group in ways that demand special care and caution. This is where the Ethical approach to storytelling comes into play.

So, what exactly is ethical storytelling for positive impact? We unfold its main characteristics below.

Breaking down ethical storytelling for positive impact

By ethical storytelling we mean the practice of capturing and communicating stories about the individuals, groups and communities supported by social enterprises in a way that respects the dignity, rights and wellbeing of these people. This kind of story-based communication can be part of the marketing, fundraising, or investor outreach strategies of your enterprise, depending on the type of organization.

By impact in the context of this guide, we refer to impact that is aligned with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). So, an "impact story" communicates the positive change created or co-created in individuals, communities or societies by your enterprise through the implementation of activities that are aligned with the SDGs most relevant to your organisation and the cause you support.

Storytelling is as old as humankind and has been used by individuals and communities everywhere to pass on traditions, transmit information, educate children, understand the physical and the spiritual world surrounding us, and as an art form to move audiences. More recently, storytelling has become widely used in another area: that of businesses and marketing.

Especially over the last decade, with the rise of conscious consumerism, telling authentic stories has proven to be a powerful approach. Consumers are increasingly demanding more transparency and accountability from companies and are turning to brands that market their products and services in a responsible way that is genuine and evidence-based.

And in this area – the main focus of this guide – storytelling differs from other forms of communication that can be used to get a marketing message across. Storytelling presents a captivating narrative that is meant to attract attention, influence, inspire action by the target audience. It centres around a hero: the person or group that your social enterprise supports. That narrative can be presented through written text (on a website, social media, or in print), images (such as photos, video, reels), audio (for instance podcasts or radio) – or combinations of these.

The purpose of ethical storytelling for positive impact is to drive action by the key audiences your enterprise addresses in support of the people whose lives and conditions you aim to improve.

There's two sides to storytelling for positive impact. First of all, by communicating about the daily realities of supported people in an ethical way, your social enterprise increases the chances of achieving solutions to the pressing problems these people face. Ethical storytelling for positive impact is a tool to foster the transformation towards better lives.

On the other hand, impact also refers to the target audiences. By telling authentic and captivating stories, your enterprise educates, inspires and engages these stakeholders, moving them to act. By purchasing products, investing in your enterprise or financing a project, customers and funders enable the positive change you seek to bring about.

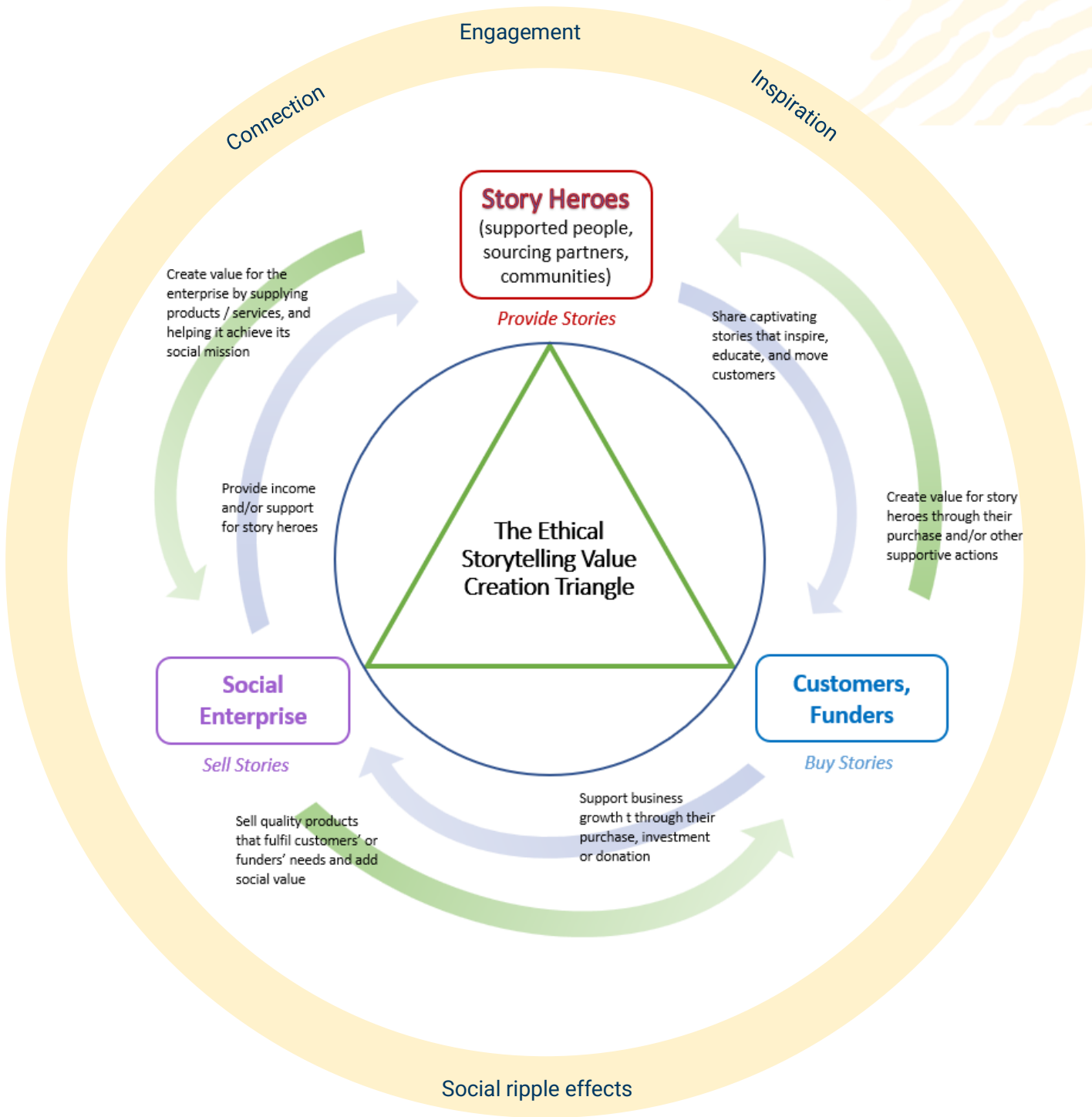
The Ethical Storytelling Value Triangle

This is why good storytelling creates value for all parties involved: the people your company works with, partners with or supports; the business; and the intended audiences: customers, investors, or funders. We have called this the Ethical Storytelling Value Triangle ([Graphic I](#)).

It is important to note that the value created through the process of capturing, telling, and sharing stories is not just monetary and transactional. Intangible value is added all along. This intangible component of the value your organisation creates by means of Ethical Storytelling consists of connection, engagement, and inspiration. It is here that the three parties in the storytelling cycle mutually benefit.

The Ethical Storytelling Value Creation Triangle also drives what we call Social ripple effects. These are the wider positive effects telling the impact story has on the wider community, entrepreneurial ecosystem, potential customers, and other stakeholders touched by the story.

Social ripple effects consist of all the additional positive benefits a story-inspired purchase creates for the local producer or other supported groups, and for their families and wider community. In addition, they also refer to the additional benefits the purchase generates for the buyer, such as the certainty to have contributed to a positive social cause. In the case of an investor, a positive ripple effect can be the contribution to their core purpose of allocating funds to companies with a proven positive social or environmental impact.



Graphic I. The Ethical Storytelling Value Creation Triangle

Is ethical storytelling in marketing the same as ethical marketing?

Ethical storytelling for positive impact puts honest and fair treatment of the people supported by the social enterprise at the centre. Your enterprise can use it as a key component of its communications and marketing & sales strategies. In that sense, it is a marketing tool. But it's important to note that it is different from [ethical marketing](#) as this term is generally understood.

Usually, principles for ethical marketing focus on the consumers and their right to be informed in an honest and transparent way about the products and services a business offers. They also include guidelines on honest and fair conduct towards competitors. By contrast, the Ethical Storytelling Principles focus on the people a social enterprise works with and supports, and the desired impact created on their lives, work, and communities.

While the ultimate purpose of ethical storytelling for social enterprises is to move the company's target audiences to buy, donate or invest, the dignity and wellbeing of the people whose stories are told – the real story heroes – are the priority.

Of course, fairness and honesty towards the target consumer, donor, or investor, are key practices for a social enterprise as for any business. This way, the Ethical Storytelling Principles complement existing consumer-focused ethical marketing guidelines.

Why social enterprises need ethical storytelling

It is not always easy to communicate the realities of people that deal with some kind of hardship, in an authentic and respectful way to other people in more advantaged situations. And if the people your social enterprise supports come from very different social, economic, cultural or political environments – sometimes, living in far-away parts of the world – the task becomes even more challenging.

Conventional marketing for social causes eagerly uses stereotyped ways of viewing the outside world and these “others” to create guilt, shock, or pity in the targeted audiences. Bad news sells, is the widely shared belief. Therefore, it is common practice to highlight and even exaggerate the difficulties and deprivation faced by the beneficiaries the organisation pretends to help, in order to persuade audiences into opening their wallets and donating generously.

Wherever we live, most of us grew up viewing the world around us through the lens of deeply rooted, unconscious bias and stereotype. Think of common examples such as “the developed global North” versus “the underdeveloped global South”, “normal” people versus “disabled” people, “modern city people” versus “traditional farmers”. Quite often, we hear (and use) disqualifying talk about “extremist” religions, “criminal” neighbourhoods ... – and fill in the blanks with other pejorative labels.

We have seen and heard the narratives that reaffirm these worldviews so many times that we are often not even aware of the underlying stigmatising messages they contain. Getting rid of them is not always easy. Even if you set out with the best of intentions and truly care for the people your enterprise supports, there is a risk of presenting their stories in ways that unintentionally portray them as “others” different from “us”, and as underdogs or victims. You may create the impression that you, as a do-good social enterprise together with your generous customers, will lead the way and save them.

Words and images have enormous power. Storytelling that is biased towards disparities and people's problems and vulnerabilities, does little to change the root causes of inequality and exclusion. On the contrary, it risks affirming conscious or unconscious stereotypes and prejudice among the intended audiences. It can unintentionally belittle or offend the people your social

enterprise works with. This way, on a deeper, systemic level, it reinforces existing power imbalances and divisions.

This is why we need a new kind of storytelling. Ethical Storytelling for Positive Impact takes a different approach, where the dignity and agency of the story heroes are highlighted. It no longer moves customers into buying out of pity, shock or guilt, but inspires action because they feel truly engaged with the people the enterprise partners with and supports.

Changing the narrative

It is not just bad news that sells, but good news sells as well, studies find – and probably even better. There is growing evidence that continuous exposure to negative reporting annoys and repels the public. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023 reveals that over a third of people around the world say they actively avoid the news, sometimes or most of the time. Certain news stories that are repeated excessively or are felt to be ‘emotionally draining’ are often passed over in favour of something more uplifting, the study finds.

It is no coincidence that in recent years, new approaches to gathering and sharing news known as [solutions journalism](#) and [constructive journalism](#), are gaining traction. Committed to strengthening communities and building a more equitable and less polarised world, solutions journalists focus on the ways people try to overcome the problems society faces.

At the same time, an increasing number of organisations and communications professionals are applying an [asset-framing](#) approach. This innovative approach shifts the narrative away from the [deficit-framing](#) language we are all too familiarised with. Asset-framing prioritises storytelling about individuals and communities that focus on their strengths and aspirations, as opposed to their challenges and perceived weaknesses.

Instead of reinforcing negative stereotyping and emphasising “otherness”, asset framing highlights shared values and collective responsibility for solving collective problems. It recognises that disparities and community-wide problems are related to systemic causes rather than self-caused harm or inherent characteristics of individuals and communities (more information and resources in Part 3. Implementing the Ethical Storytelling Principles into your operations).

These solution-focused trends clearly resonate with audiences. As The Conversation points out, research confirms that exposure to negatively framed news (such as war, or bumble bees disappearing) makes people significantly less likely to take positive action than those who saw more positively framed news items (peace talks, bumble bees making a comeback). The more depressed and worried the reporting made people feel, the less likely they were to be more environmentally friendly or donate to charity.

As socially committed enterprises and ethical storytellers we can learn from these novel communication trends, as we’ll see in the next Parts. It is key for us to master the art of sharing the narratives of local producers, artisans and supported communities in a way that respects their dignity, demonstrates their autonomy and agency. However different or dire their circumstances, our storytelling must convey a sense of equal partnership.

Words and images have enormous power, as we already mentioned. The upside is that telling our stories the ethical way can be a significant driver for positive impact. This way, when implemented in a conscious way over time, your enterprise can use Ethical Storytelling as a strategy to promote much-needed [systems change](#).

Key resources to learn more

Agenda 2030, business and SDG impact measurement - Overview and guidance:

- B Lab: [FAQ: The SDG Action Manager](#)
- Deloitte: [Sustainable Development Goals. A business perspective](#)
- United Nations (UN): [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)
- United Nations Global Compact: [Global Goals for People and Planet](#)

Ethical marketing – Definitions and principles:

- American Marketing Association: [Ethical nonprofit marketers tell stories with empathy](#)
- Institute for Advertising Ethics (IAE): [Principles & Practices](#)
- Marketing Schools: [Explore the Strategy of Ethical Marketing](#)

The rise of **Conscious consumerism**:

- Naturehub: [What Is A Conscious Consumer And Why Does it Matter?](#)
- Forbes: [Brands, You Need To Listen To The Conscious Consumer Of The Future](#)

Solutions journalism and constructive journalism – Definitions, research, guidance and examples:

- Constructive Institute: [Why Constructive Journalism?](#)
- Reuters Institute: [Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023](#)
- The Conversation: [Shock! Horror! Behind the ethics and evolution of the bad news business](#)
- The Solutions Journalism Network: [What is Solutions Journalism?](#)

Systems change – Definitions, learning materials and additional resources:

- Catalyst 2030: [What is systems change?](#)
- Catalyst 2030: [Systems Change Learning](#)

Part 2. Nine Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact

In this part we present the nine Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact that will enable your enterprise to capture and tell the stories of the people you support in a way that respects their dignity and authenticity, while at the same time, moving customers, investors and funders. These are basic do's and don'ts we recommend your organisation puts into practice before, during and after interactions with your suppliers, artisans, smallholder farmers and other supported stakeholders.

We start with a brief overview of the nine Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact, followed by an explanation of where these Principles come from and a description of their meaning.

The Ethical Storytelling Principles

1. **Co-Creation** – The story heroes will be actively involved in the entire story creation process, from idea generation to story sharing.
2. **Honesty and Truthfulness** – The stories we tell about the people we support and their daily work and lives, truthfully reflect the facts and the realities of their social context.
3. **Evidence-Based** – The stories we tell are underpinned by evidence that is measurable and shows proof of our positive impact.
4. **Respect for Diversity and Dignity** – We treat cultural, social, racial, ethnic differences and diverse conditions and abilities without prejudice, while always putting respect for the dignity of the story heroes first.
5. **Building and Keeping Trust** – The relations with the story heroes will be built on trust and we will avoid breaching the explicit and implicit agreements we have made.
6. **Do No Harm** – We will never put the story heroes at any risk nor negatively affect the social, economic, cultural or political fabric in their communities or their natural environment.
7. **Shared Value** – In return for the stories people share with us, we give back by providing economic, educational, technical or other value, aligned with the story heroes' needs and aspirations.
8. **Focus on Strengths and Solutions** – Our storytelling portrays people as owners of solutions, not victims, highlighting their capabilities, aspirations and agency, and prioritising solutions over problems.
9. **Balancing Needs** – In our storytelling we balance the needs of the story heroes, our organization, and our target audiences. If a conflict of interest arises, the needs of the story heroes come first.

Background: where do the Ethical Storytelling Principles come from?

The nine Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact we introduce in this guide are inspired by the on-the-ground work carried out by FairChange and our partners, with artisans, smallholder farmers, local producers and small-scale social enterprises in low-income and complex markets. The principles are also informed by our experiences in organizational strengthening and leadership development in support of civil society organisations and specific groups such as young people, communities affected by violence and conflict, and women in situations of exclusion and vulnerability.

When formulating the nine principles, we have tried to truthfully incorporate the learnings of these experiences and most importantly, the perspectives and opinions of the many individuals, groups and organisations we have had the honour to work with in different parts of the world.

Real-life, in-field experience – not theory – informs the Ethical Storytelling Principles. However, we have complemented these practical learnings with insights from research and academic studies. We're also referencing different frameworks and approaches that share the mission to promote intercultural understanding, inclusion and social justice.

These approaches include solutions journalism and asset-framing, as we already discussed in Part 1. Others are [cultural competence](#) and [cultural intelligence \(CQ\)](#), to name a few. In the text of this guide and the Key Resources we have included more information on these approaches as well as resources for further information.

The Ethical Storytelling Principles for positive impact explained

Below you'll find the nine Principles of Ethical Storytelling for Positive Impact with a short explanation of what they mean.

Use these principles as guidelines during the different phases of the storytelling process, from planning to documenting the experiences and perspectives in interaction with the people your enterprise partners with and supports, to sharing their stories with your customers and funders. You'll find details on how to reflect the Storytelling Principles into the different phases of the Impact Storytelling Cycle in Part 3.

1. Co-Creation

The story heroes will be actively involved in the entire story creation process, from idea generation to story sharing.

Make sure the story heroes participate in the different phases of the storytelling process. Be clear about the purpose, distribution channels and intended audiences of the story and discuss any concerns and input they may have. Actively seek their feedback throughout the different phases of planning, capturing, producing and sharing the story.

While you are in the exploration phase of the story process, consider asking your story heroes what it is they want to showcase to the audiences your enterprise serves? How do they define impact? When clarifying your marketing, communications, and impact goals for the story, ask for their goals as well (for example, the narrators may want to use the story for their own promotional purposes and adapt key messages to their local languages and media outlets).

Be open and actively invite the story heroes to share their ideas and expertise on the topics covered throughout the process: this can greatly benefit the quality and authenticity of the final

video, article, photo series, podcast or other medium to share the stories to the intended audiences. Depending on the format you use, build in opportunities for review of draft versions and rough cuts.

If you are not located in the same country or area and aren't able to interact in person, find other ways to make idea sharing and feedback loops easy. Use phone, email, WhatsApp, text messaging or online communication technologies such as cloud sharing of the draft documents, rough video edits or audio files.

Of course, the intensity of the co-creation process will depend on the channel: a short blog post usually needs less time to communicate back and forth than a full-blown documentary style video production. In any case, note that your story heroes' explicit consent is crucial before publishing the final texts or edits.

Are you using social media campaigns to get the story out? If possible, involve the story heroes in posting and sharing (with the added advantage of reaching audiences your organisation would not have access to on its own). When appropriate, give feedback to the protagonists about the impact their story has on your organisation's intended audiences.

2. Honesty and Truthfulness

The stories we tell about the people we support and their daily work and lives, truthfully reflect the facts and the realities of their social context.

Don't make things up and don't make the realities of the people whose stories you tell more beautiful or more miserable to impress your audiences.

It can be tempting to do so in order to create compassion, shock, or admiration. However, in ethical storytelling people should not be pictured one-dimensionally as victims or heroes. Show real people with their own needs and aspirations, complexity of character, and behaviours.

This means setting aside our pre-conceived ideas and prejudices, whether these are positive or negative. Take your time to interview, interact, observe, and share spaces and activities with the story heroes whenever possible. You will probably discover they do not always think or act according to your own preconceived ideas their challenges and wins.

You'll also note that their context is probably more nuanced than you would initially expect. For instance, local enterprises without access to new technologies can turn out to be unexpectedly innovative in finding solutions with very basic resources. Or you may come across a community living in poverty that actually consists of surprisingly good-humoured and proud people, who are not needy of financial support but voice other collaborative demands instead.

Each context is different: make sure you identify and understand the nuances. The stories you share with your audiences will be more rich and authentic if they reflect the multi-layered personalities and realities of the story heroes.

3. Evidence-Based

The stories we tell are underpinned by evidence that is measurable and shows proof of our positive impact.

Show real transformation. Base your stories on facts and indicators that demonstrate how your support contributes to changing the lives, working conditions or systemic circumstances (for

instance, power imbalances or access to decision making) of your story heroes. How does partnering with your enterprise influence the achievement of relevant SDGs? If evidence is missing or too difficult to get, then find a different focus for your story. As ethical storytellers, we must always be sure we can show our audiences proof of impact.

These proof points can be quantitative or qualitative, preferably both. How many lives did collaborating with your enterprise change, and how exactly did the improvements manifest itself in improved quality of life or work? For instance, which percentage of the local producers you partner with have increased their sales or income in a given period? What can they buy and do with this extra money and which aspirations did they have that they can now fulfil?

The way you collect data from supported producers or communities will depend on the size of your enterprise and available resources, the number of people or organisations involved, and where you and your story heroes are located. Find research methodologies that suit the situation.

For example, if your enterprise works with a small group of artisans only, you will be able to do personalised interviews with most of them – either in-person, in online video conferences, or by phone. If you work with large numbers of producers scattered around the world, online surveys may be the easiest way to capture information about quantitative and qualitative impact (make sure to include both multiple choice and open-ended questions).

There may be other limitations and solutions. For example, in areas where online access is limited, using surveys that can be responded via mobile phones is usually a good way to gather impact data. Be creative when adapting your research approaches to the context. If your organisation is working with communities where literacy rates are low, consider using picture surveys. Do they speak a different language? Find a local, bi-lingual interviewer as an intermediary. In the Key resources section below we have included a free Impact Interview tool.

If it is difficult to access sufficient information about the impact you'd like to showcase in your story at a specific moment in time, then consider ways to gather pieces of evidence over longer time periods. You can share short online surveys that are not too complex or time-consuming at different intervals, so your story heroes can complete them along the way. Or ask them to record audio snippets, take photos or shoot quick video clips with their mobiles devices to document their experiences at their own pace (make sure these are saved in a shared folder or in the cloud so they can be easily accessed). This way, a narrative can be built up piecemeal and turned into an evidence-based impact story after six months or a year.

4. Respect for Diversity and Dignity

We treat cultural, social, racial, ethnic differences and diverse conditions and abilities without prejudice, while always putting respect for the dignity of the story heroes first.

Be mindful of the social and cultural context of the people whose experiences you have the privilege to share. Acknowledge differences and sensitivities while capturing, crafting and telling their story. Act ethically and avoid words or actions that clash with the story hero's worldviews and ways of doing things.

When you set out to tell the stories of the people your enterprise supports, you may come across behaviours, ideologies and viewpoints, religious practices and traditions you are not used to. Especially when the supported individuals, groups and communities live in or belong to different cultural contexts, this means you'll have to make an extra effort to relate and connect. Even within your own country and culture, power differences and differences in social or economic background can have enormous effects on mindsets and behaviours.

While interacting with your story heroes, honour diversity, even if you don't immediately understand or agree with them. Look for shared values and common interests so that you are able to meaningfully connect across differences. And when talking with your story heroes, be aware that people use different conversational styles, depending on where you are. We recommend you consult specialised sources on cultural competence or Cultural Intelligence (CQ) for advice on how to deal with diversity (we have included some in the Key resources section below).

Social, cultural, and other identity-related differences can also impact the process of capturing your story. For example, if you are visiting producers or spending time with a supported community to do interviews and gather impact data, local ways of doing things may surprise or even annoy you. Research on cross-cultural differences has uncovered many areas where friction can arise. Approaches to time and scheduling are a typical example. These vary greatly around the globe and can considerably affect your story documentation planning.

Another example is openness to strangers or towards people from ranks of society different than one's own. Age or position within an organisational hierarchy can also determine relationships and influence how easy or difficult you will find it to get access to meaningful stories.

Finally, when writing the article, shooting the video or recording the audio you'll use to share the story with your audiences, honour these differences as well. There is a rapidly increasing awareness in the world of business and work of the need to promote diversity. As an enterprise working with diverse groups of production partners or communities, you are in a great position to show how diversity plays out in real life.

A note of caution, however. Don't picture your story heroes and their context as homogenous. Within each culture, identity group or community, differences, even contradictions, exist between individual members and their personalities. As we already mentioned under Principle 2. Honesty and Truthfulness, your story wins in credibility when you showcase these multiple facets.

Also keep in mind that ethical storytelling for positive impact moves beyond old-school marketing tactics. Using stereotypes about different population groups was long seen as the easiest way to move customers (think of commercials showing clumsy dads messing up the household while mom is away shopping: they can seem funny at first, but actually reconfirm deeply rooted stereotypes about gender roles). Instead, our purpose is not only to captivate our audiences, but also to contribute to change. Avoiding cliches is the first step towards achieving just that.

5. Building and Keeping Trust

The relations with the story heroes will be built on trust and we will avoid breaching the explicit and implicit agreements we have made.

Invest time and energy in building rapport with the people you're featuring, without rushing to get their stories out. Do what it takes to make the story heroes, their families, organisations and communities feel comfortable and confident. Building and keeping trust also means sticking to what you have agreed with them about the purpose of the story, where it will be shared, and any other relevant aspects.

How long it takes to build a relation of trust with your story heroes will depend on the situation. If you already have a firm relationship with local producers or supported communities created over time, you will probably be able to create a trusted environment where they will share their stories sooner than if you've just met.

Even so, we recommend you always dedicate time and energy into maintaining a good relationship and never take it for granted. Do this not only when the deadline for a story is nearing, but nurture it at all times. Use visits, emails, WhatsApp chats, text messages, phone calls or video meetings to keep up regular communications about work and life – without overdoing it and always respecting the preferred conversational style of the artisans, suppliers, or communities you support.

Did you just get to know your story heroes? In this case, you'd best spend sufficient time with them and their community before getting your notebook, camera or microphone out. Instead of starting to document their experiences right away, build rapport. Show an interest in their lives and work beyond the topics you're planning to cover in the story, and let yourself be shown around the workplace, village or neighbourhood. Building trust is a dialogue, so don't forget to open up about yourself and your organisation to make this a meaningful exchange for both.

That being said, it's important to be mindful of the story heroes' schedules and obligations. Working mothers, rural producers in harvesting times, product manufacturers having to deliver during peak demand or any other busy person will have to balance priorities. Don't push it and always adapt to their availability.

Finally, under Principle 1. Co-Creation, we already mentioned the need for informed consent during the story capturing and development process. Respecting what has been agreed on, both explicit and implicit, is key to gaining and maintaining trust. Whether you have signed a formal document with the story heroes, identified do's and don'ts in an email conversation, drafted a hand written statement on a piece of paper or reached a verbal agreement on how to proceed, keep your promises at all times.

6. Do No Harm

We will never put the story heroes at any risk nor negatively affect the social, economic, cultural or political fabric in their communities or their natural environment.

Always assess the risks and unintended negative impacts your storytelling can have on people and their communities. Make sure to capture and tell their stories in ways that don't cause personal discomfort or negatively influence their relationships. **Do No Harm** includes being mindful of the effects documenting and sharing stories can have on the social fabric, the environment, and even the local economy.

On an individual level, be mindful that capturing and telling stories may generate unintended discomfort for your story heroes. It can even affect their emotional or psychological wellbeing. This risk increases when you are dealing with people who face serious traumas and setbacks, for example as survivors of conflict or natural disaster, when they suffer from limiting health conditions, or go through personal grief.

Even as you set out with the best of intentions, in these cases story capturing can feel invasive or retraumatising. To avoid this from happening, always make sure your story heroes explicitly agree with the storytelling effort and never insist if they say no. Should a conversation turn uncomfortable for your story hero along the way, pause it.

It can also happen that your conversation partners disclose things they feel uneasy about afterwards, or that you yourself think are not appropriate to share with the outside world. Give your story heroes the certainty that the final edit of their story will never disclose information that is too sensitive or confidential.

In some cases it is better to avoid disclosing the names of people that are interviewed for the story, or even for them to appear unrecognisable on camera. Similarly, assess if it is appropriate to name the village, city or exact location where the story is situated.

On the level of a society, a community, or within a social group, your storytelling efforts may unintentionally affect relationships or contribute to increased tensions. As a social enterprise, you are partnering with artisans, sourcing from manufacturers, or benefiting local groups needing support. This means some people in the community have access to business opportunities, additional income, goods or other resources that other people don't. Make an effort to identify and prevent possible sources of jealousy or resentment.

Also beware of cultural traditions and social patterns your support may unintendedly affect. For instance, when you want to work with women in a deeply patriarchal society, this may cause negative repercussions when husbands or other male family members do not approve. Or in a multi-ethnic or multi-religious region, partnering with one group may strain harmonious relations with others, to name just a few examples.

To prevent negative and unintended impacts, we recommend as a minimum doing a context analysis before setting off on your story capturing mission. It will help you to identify potential sources of tension and provide input for actions you can take to make your intervention beneficial for everyone.

Finally, avoid negative impacts on the natural environment. If you are visiting a community, then stay on paved roads and trails. Treat domestic animals, cattle and wildlife with care, and clean up when you're done. Reduce your use of local resources such as water and electricity, especially in regions where these are scarce or costly.

7. Shared Value

In return for the stories people share with us, we give back by providing economic, educational, technical or other value, aligned with the story heroes' needs and aspirations.

Be mindful of the time and effort the people whose stories you capture put in and offer value in return. Assess their needs and aspirations and give back accordingly: an economic reward, in-kind support, knowledge and skills, or practical tools.

Also, be clear about the direct and indirect benefits sharing their story with your audiences will bring. As leaders of a social enterprise we may be fully aware of the value telling beautiful stories has for our marketing and for growing sales and revenues we can invest improving the conditions of the artisans, producers, and communities we work with. However, we should also take into account that to them these returns may be difficult to grasp while the immediate cost of spending time with us can be high. It means sacrificing hours away from manufacturing goods or cultivating crops, attending pressing needs in the community or taking care of children who are too small to be left at home alone, among other inconveniences.

Consider paying for the time your story heroes invest in the story capturing process. Be careful however, to do this in the most appropriate way. Cultural codes may imply that offering money or goods in return for being a guest in the community is considered offensive. If this is the case, find indirect ways to get the compensation in the right hands, for instance through a trusted intermediary at another moment in time. Doing a quick context analysis (discussed above under Principle 6. Do No Harm) will give you some clues about cultural do's and don'ts in this respect.

In addition to compensating time and effort, you may want to give back as a sign of appreciation for the good working relationship. Think of organising a workshop (in-person or online) about a

topic of interest to the story heroes, donating several days of your time to help with the building of a local community centre, providing access to an online library of tools for small enterprises, invitations to an important invitation-only networking event, or organising a fundraiser with your team for a special cause the community cares about. There are numerous opportunities to find collaborative ways for returning value.

Doing so can have another added advantage. Under Principle 6. Do No Harm, we highlighted the potential risks of causing social tensions, or benefiting some enterprises or individuals over others. Creating shared value also involves trying to reach people beyond the producers or groups you directly partner with. By opening access to workshops for everyone or contributing to facilities for the entire community, you'll extend the benefits of your support to as many people as possible. This, in turn, may reduce the risk of unintended negative consequences of your support.

Finally, in case you are doing in-field visits to suppliers or supported communities, use the opportunity to contribute to the local economy. Wherever you can, stay in a community-owned accommodation, buy food and drinks with small-scale vendors (except when these goods are scarce and difficult to get by the community members themselves), hire local drivers and assistants, and purchase extras such as locally crafted products and presents to take home to your loved ones.

8. Focus on Strengths and Solutions

Our storytelling portrays people as owners of solutions, not victims, highlighting their capabilities, aspirations and agency, and prioritising solutions over problems.

Always focus your story on possibilities and aspirations. Put people first, not the problem. Instead of picturing the story heroes your organization supports as victims of difficult circumstances, showcase them as empowered actors that take control of their situation. Mention the challenges, but emphasize the way forward.

Whichever format your enterprise uses to tell the story – text, video, or audio – it is key to carefully choose your words and images. Scan the story for shots, interview quotes or descriptions that overexpose the problems and struggles your story heroes face. Prioritise their assets, aspirations and agency.

This doesn't mean every story you tell needs to have a happy ending or your story heroes always claim victory. Just as too much hardship doesn't favour a realistic and dignified narrative, too much positivity must also be avoided. Carefully look for a balance between mentioning problems and hardship when appropriate, and highlighting actions that address these challenges.

Sending a message of empowerment and agency also means you'd best avoid giving your enterprise too much of a prominent role. Showing happy encounters where your organisation meets grateful local producers and communities on the ground can be good for promotional purposes, but don't overdo it. Always remember that they, not your enterprise, are the real heroes of the story. Some organisations even opt for never appearing on camera or having an active voice in a written piece about the people they support at all – this is something you might consider as well.

9. Balancing Needs

In our storytelling we balance the needs of the story heroes, our organisation, and our target audiences. If a conflict of interest arises, the needs of the story heroes come first.

Make sure your story coherently addresses the different needs of the three main parties involved: the story heroes, your enterprise, and the intended audiences. It means that you should communicate the real-life experiences of the people you support in a way that respects their dignity and authenticity, resonates with target audiences in (often) remote contexts and realities, and achieves your marketing and sales objectives as a business. This is a balancing act that is not always obvious.

While storytelling in social enterprise marketing has as a primary goal to activate the intended audiences into buying, donating or investing, this must never be done at the expense of the people we aim to support. Nor should we scare off our audiences by too much negativity. At first sight, this may sound obvious. But in practice, it often poses difficult dilemmas.

We might come across a striking image of hardship that illustrates the urgent need for financial support in a village struck by natural disaster, but exposes the villagers in compromising ways to outside viewers. Or maybe we are shocked by a series of debilitating injustices and want to shout it out from the rooftop in an angry blogpost, forgetting that we'd probably turn our customers off by making them feel guilty, powerless or overwhelmed with negativity. In these and other cases we must carefully assess the purpose of our storytelling and the means to achieve it.

As ethical storytellers, we must put people and purpose before profits. When conflicts of interest arise, our golden rule should always be to prioritise the needs of our story heroes over the desires of our customers, investors or donors.

Key resources to learn more

Ethical Storytelling Principles – Complementary free downloadable tool:

- FairChange: [Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact Quick Guide](#)
- FairChange: [Interview Questions for impact interviews. Quick Guide for social businesses](#)

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Cultural competence – Definitions and guidance:

- Cultural Intelligence Center: [About Cultural Intelligence](#)
- David Livermore (2015). Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success. ISBN: 0814449174
- PennState Extension: [What is Cultural Competence and How to Develop It?](#)

Do No Harm – Definitions, case studies and guidance:

- Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA): [The “Do No Harm” Framework for Analyzing the Impact of Assistance on Conflict. A Handbook](#)
- Friends of the Earth Europe: [Do No Harm: The Case for an EU Law to Hold Business Accountable](#)
- United Nations Global Compact: [The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact. Principle One: Human Rights](#)

Shared Value – Definition and guidance:

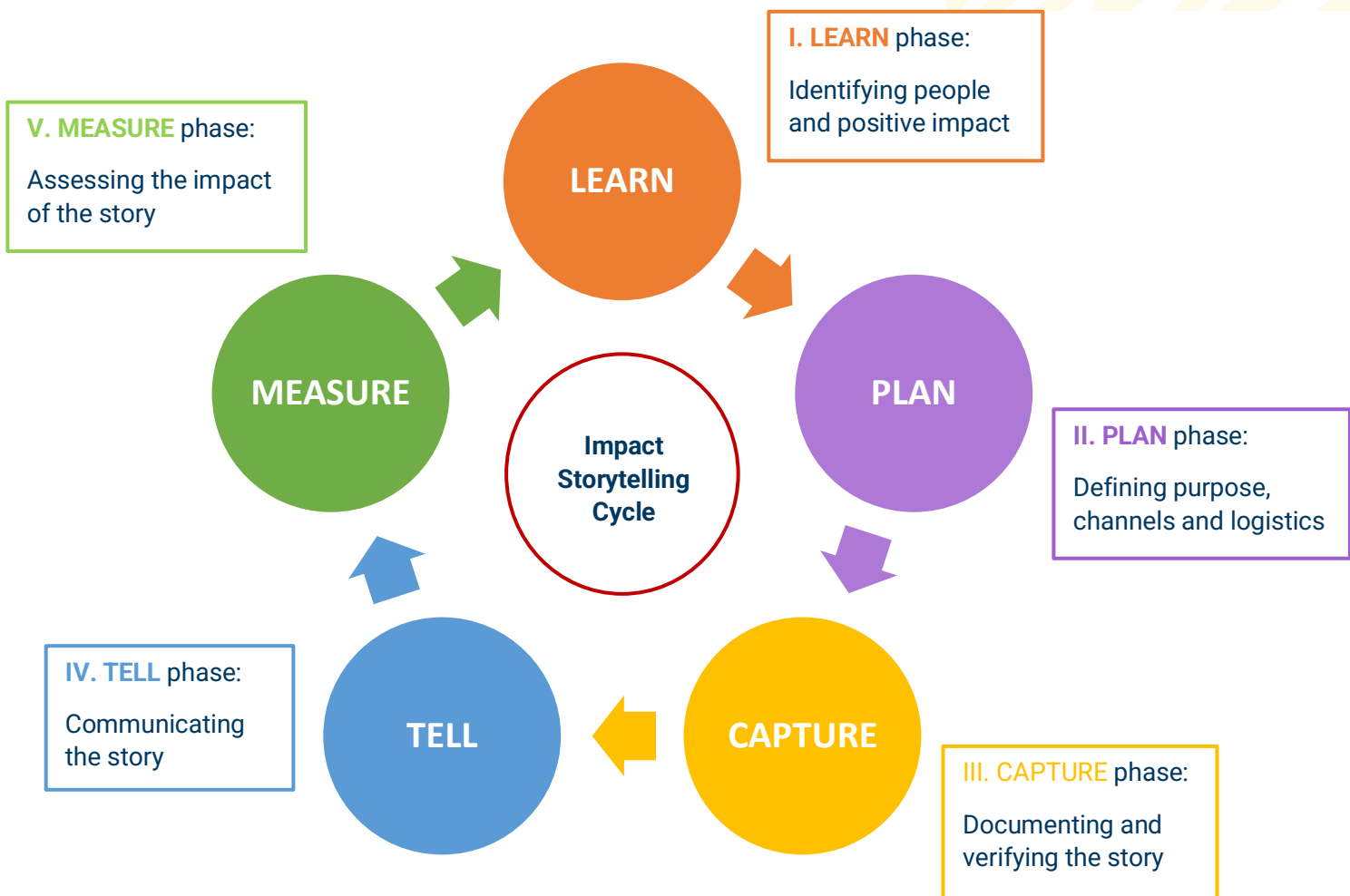
- Michael E. Porter et.al.: [Measuring Shared Value: How to Unlock Value by Linking Business and Social Results](#)
- Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer: [Creating Shared Value. How to reinvent capitalism—and unleash a wave of innovation and growth. Harvard Business Review](#)

Part 3. Implementing the Ethical Storytelling Principles into your operations

In this part, we introduce the Impact Storytelling Cycle and explain how the nine Ethical Storytelling Principles are reflected in its different phases. We also share practical recommendations on how your enterprise can incorporate the Ethical Storytelling Principles into its marketing, branding and communications strategies.

Crafting the narrative: the Impact Storytelling Cycle

To clarify how your enterprise can apply the Ethical Storytelling Principles when crafting its impact stories, it is helpful to visualise the different steps involved. The Impact Storytelling Cycle shown in **Graphic II** includes the five stages of a typical storytelling production process, from doing the preparation work to sharing the final version of the story and measuring its impact.



Graphic II. The Impact Storytelling Cycle

Below, we will briefly go through the five stages of a typical story development process and highlight the key principles that apply to each stage.

Depending on the organisational context, story format and available time and resources, your enterprise will spend more or less time and energy on each stage.

Writing a short one-off producer update typically does not need the same deep-dive into the five phases as a series of in-depth stories. Identifying the context and profiles of the people your organisation partners with may not be necessary when you tell stories about the same individuals over time. And measuring impact may not always be feasible for each single story your enterprise produces.

Also, the different stages of the Impact Storytelling Cycle will not always follow each other as a clearly distinguished sequence, while you iterate between different steps during the process.

So, take the five stages of the Impact Storytelling Cycle as a blueprint that you can adapt where appropriate. Note that you should keep in mind the nine Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact throughout the five phases. For your convenience, in our brief oversight below we highlight some of the principle we think are especially important at different stages of the process.

I. LEARN phase: Identifying people and positive impact

In order to tell a truthful and authentic story, it is key you have a solid understanding of the people whose experiences you'll feature, their environment, and the specific challenges they face as well as potential solutions.

In this learning phase, you will also consider which impacts your story will focus on. For example, if your enterprise has as its mission to achieve several of the Sustainable Development Goals relevant to its core business, will your story feature the transformations experienced by your story heroes related to all of the priority SDGs, or will you focus on just one at a time?

Ethical Storytelling Principles you should particularly keep in mind during this phase are (3) Evidence-based and (9) Balancing Needs. Use what you know about your customers or other intended audiences and their information needs and wants to fine tune your preparatory work, and make sure you can support the story you are about to develop with quantitative and qualitative proof points.

II. PLAN phase: Defining purpose, channels and logistics

While using the information you've gathered in the previous phase, now is the time you'll decide on the specific focus of your story, as well as the best format and channels to share it with the intended audiences. This is also the moment to plan the timeline of the following story capturing and development stages, including the publication deadline and, reverse engineering, the subsequent output and delivery dates of the actions leading up to the launch of your article, video or audio item.

In the planning phase you will also assign responsibilities and find external assistance if necessary. Does your story capturing effort include a field visit? In that case, you'll need to work out the logistics and start preparing. If your budget hasn't been set beforehand, this is also the time to calculate the costs involved in your storytelling initiative.

Ethical Storytelling Principles that are especially relevant in the planning phase are (1) Co-Creation, (6) Do No Harm and (7) Shared Value. Make sure you build on the perspectives and expertise of your story heroes, mitigate any unintended consequences before you move on to the next phase of capturing the story, and define what your story heroes and their communities will get out of the process.

III. **CAPTURE** phase: Documenting and verifying the story

This is where you do the actual work. The online interviews for your story blogpost are conducted; the field visit to shoot your photos or video takes place; you receive your story heroes in the recording studio for the podcast interview, etc. You'll also involve your story heroes in reviewing draft texts, raw video edits or audio so they can check accurate representation and verify facts, and take their feedback into account when producing the final version of the story.

Since now is when you will typically be interacting most actively with your story heroes, we recommend you pay particular attention to the Ethical Storytelling Principle of (5) Building and keeping trust. While you should nurture meaningful connections with the people you work with and support at all times, at this stage it is especially important. The quality of your story will in large part depend on the creation of a trusted environment where your story heroes will feel comfortable to share their experiences and emotions.

Moreover, when crafting the final story, make sure you incorporate the principles of (2) Honesty and Truthfulness, (4) Respect for Diversity and Dignity, and (8) Focus on Strengths and Solutions.

IV. **TELL** phase: Communicating the story

Once your story is ready, it's time to create the marketing communications campaign to share it with the world. Keep in mind the same principles of Honesty and Truthfulness, Strengths and Solution-focus and Respect for Diversity and Dignity. Whether you use paid advertising, organic social media posting, newsletters, an impact report or other strategies to disseminate and market the story, always make sure these principles are reflected in your messaging.

Also pay special attention to the principles (3) Evidence-based, and (9) Balancing needs. During this phase, you will enter into dialogue with customers, investors, funders or other intended audiences. Align your communications with your company's marketing goals and your audiences' expectations.

Moreover, make sure that your messaging sticks to the proof points of impact that underpin the story. It's key to avoid any association with greenwashing or "impact washing". Demonstrate positive contributions to the SDGs your company prioritised in Phase I – and other aspired changes, depending on your organisational strategy – with clear and truthful evidence. Don't hide challenges or setbacks if they occur, while being clear about pathways to their solution.

V. **MEASURE** phase: Assessing the impact of the story

How many people read, watched, or listened to our story? Which audience segments did you reach? How did they interact with the story? In this phase you'll answer these and other questions. Some key Ethical Storytelling Principles you should take into account are (3) Evidence-based, and (7) Shared Value.

Depending on the story format and channels as well as the available resources, choose easily accessible (and free) tools for online user analytics, and if you can, do or in-depth surveys into the impacts your storytelling has on customer attitudes and behaviours. Share the measurement insights with your story heroes – they will most likely find it inspiring and encouraging to know how their efforts create impact.

Another kind of impact measurement looks at the financial revenue generated by your storytelling efforts. This will give you important insights into the returns on investment of your communication strategy and also, into the revenues you have managed to generate in benefit of the people or producers you support.

However, measuring this is more complex (unless your stories are part of a one-off activity such as a fundraising campaign for a specific cause, enabling you to easily track inputs and outputs). We recommend you do this revenue-focused impact assessment over a longer period of time, reviewing the full scope of your storytelling and communications efforts.

Once you have implemented the MEASURE phase, close the loop by including the quantitative and qualitative lessons into the LEARN phase of future Story Cycles. This way, you will be able to improve the quality and impact of your storytelling over time.

Incorporating the ethical storytelling principles into your marketing strategy

Beyond applying the Ethical Storytelling Principles each time you craft an impact story, you can also integrate them into your marketing and communications strategy to ensure continuity and consistency.

Consider formulating your organisation's own ethical marketing and storytelling code of conduct. This is the perfect place to combine guidelines around fair and honest treatment of your customers and responsible conduct towards competitors with the Ethical Storytelling Principles focusing on the people your enterprise supports (see Part I, where we discussed the differences and similarities between ethical marketing principles and the Ethical Storytelling Principles).

Refer to the Principles when designing your **4P Marketing mix** (that is, your strategies around Price, Product, Place and Promotion) or alternatively, a **4C marketing** approach with a focus on relationship building with your customers. Think of the many channels and customer touch points where you can showcase your story heroes. You can feature them in your web shop, on displays in a brick-and-mortar store, and on product packages or labels.

As we already discussed in Part 1 when we introduced the Ethical Storytelling Value Triangle, Ethical Storytelling is a powerful strategy in the approach chosen by most social enterprises, where creating connection, engagement and inspiration replaces hard selling. Especially today, with consumers growing increasingly critical of conventional marketing, this approach provides a welcome alternative. By spotlighting the real-life narratives of the supported producers and communities in your social media campaigns, advertising, newsletters and other communications assets, your enterprise creates the meaningful value audiences look for.

Ethical branding guidelines

Along the same lines, we recommend you take the Ethical Storytelling Principles into account as part of your company's **branding strategy**. Do you have a **brand book** or are you planning to develop one? Make sure you have the principles at hand when describing the rules and

recommendations for the organisation's visual identity and other components of marketing and communications such as tone of voice.

Think, for example, of guidance around the use of non-stigmatising wording or people-first language (putting the person first, not their disability or other limiting condition) in all copy produced by the organisation. Likewise, you can include instructions about giving stories (and other communication messaging) a solutions-based focus and choosing asset-framing as opposed to deficit-framing.

Another aspect of your brand book are photo and video do's and don'ts. To avoid stigmatising imaging, include guidance on showing diversity, inclusivity, and authenticity in the images your organisation uses in marketing and communications.

Conclusion and next steps

As you can see, the Ethical Storytelling Principles for Positive Impact provide a blueprint for practical action. Are you part of a multi-person enterprise or larger business? Then make sure the Ethical Storytelling Principles are actively shared with your team. By incorporating the principles into your marketing strategy, you can refer back to them any time you write a blogpost, shoot a video or produce a podcast or photo series. It can also guide you when preparing presentations and appearing on stage to share your organisation's mission and work.

You will find some principles easier to implement than others, depending on prior experience and organisational context. Next steps we recommend are building your capacities around specific aspects you'll come across when preparing, developing and communicating your story if you feel certain skills are lacking in your enterprise.

Suggested skills and competences that can make your enterprise a better Ethical Storyteller for Positive Impact include cultural intelligence and context analysis, conducting impact storytelling interviews and integrating inclusive and solution-focused language and images into your communications strategy. In the resources section below you'll find some references to get you started.

Key resources to learn more

Ethical Storytelling guidance for business marketing – Download complementary free resources:

- FairChange: [Words and Images for Impact Storytelling. How-to Guide for Impact Businesses](#)
- Catalyst Market Toolkit guide: [Impact Storytelling with Photography and Video](#)
- Catalyst Market Toolkit guide: [Why Storytelling Matters: An Overview Of Marketing Fundamentals For Social Entrepreneurs](#)

4P Marketing mix and the 4 C's of marketing – Definitions and guidance:

- Indeed: [What Are the 4 C's of Marketing? \(Plus How to Use Them\)](#)
- Investopedia: [What Are the 4 Ps of Marketing?](#)
- Neil Patel: [The 4 Ps of Marketing: What You Need to Know \(With Examples\)](#) -

Branding - Definitions and guidance:

- Acumen: [Spotlight Your Social Impact Brand with Strategic Content and Communications](#)

- Donald Miller: Building a StoryBrand: Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen (2017). ISBN: 1400201837
- Investopedia: The power of Branding - <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/financial-theory/11/branding-ultimate-economic-moat.asp>

Asset Framing – Definitions, use and guidance:

- California Health Care Foundation (CHCF): [Understanding asset-Framing. Guidelines for CHCF Authors](#)
- Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund: [The Power of Asset-based Language](#)
- The Skillman Foundation: [The Power of Asset Framing: A Conversation with Trabian Shorters](#)
- Trabian Shorters [website](#)

People-first language and inclusive communications – Definitions, guidance and resources:

- The Arc: [What is People-first Language?](#)
- Unstereotype Alliance: [Resources and tools](#)
- World Federation of Advertisers: Resource page [Diversity and Inclusion in communications](#)
- Understanding in Conflict: [Anti-bias and anti-racism resources](#)

Dealing with **intercultural differences** – Guidance and resources:

- Geert Hofstede: [The 6-D model of national culture](#)
- Erin Meyer (2014). The Culture Map. Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business. ISBN: 1610392507
- Erin Meyer.com: [Resources on business and intercultural differences](#)

Crafting **Solutions-based narratives** – Story examples and additional resources:

- Constructive Institute: [Best Practices](#)
- Solutions Journalism Network: [Impact Database](#)

Glossary of Terms

The following terms have specialised meanings, either as defined in this Guide or generally recognised as in marketing, storytelling, and related areas. Please see the Key resources included at the end of each Part, and the Bibliography for further references.

4C Marketing mix

Recently, attention is shifting away from the classic 4P marketing mix (see above) to a model where the focus is less on "pushing sales" and more on creating value and building relationships with customers – an approach that is more aligned with the realities of most social enterprises. The 4C marketing mix, first introduced by professor of advertising Bob Lauterborn in 1990, replaces the Ps with Cs: 1. Customer value (providing a solution to consumer problems), 2. Cost to satisfy (total cost of acquiring, using and disposing of a product), 3. Convenience to buy (offering easy online or offline access to the good or service), and 4. Communication (dialogue between company and customer).

4P Marketing mix

The tools and methodologies a business incorporates into its strategies around Price, Product, Place and Promotion with the goal to showcase and sell its offer. First conceptualised by marketing professor E. Jerome McCarthy in the 1960s, the 4P Marketing mix approach has become widely used by large and small businesses ever since.

The 4 "P"s of marketing refer to 1. the good or service being marketed to the target audience (Product); 2. the cost of the good or service (Price), 3. where the product is sold (Place), and 4. how the product or service is advertised (Promotion). In a successful marketing plan, each "P" is considered equally important and all four are interdependent.

Agenda 2030 and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs are the first global action plan for people, planet and prosperity. The Agenda 2030 with its 17 SDGs and 169 targets were defined in an international consultation round across sectors, including business. Large and small businesses around the world have embraced the SDGs and are using them to frame their sustainability policies.

SDG progress is tracked on an ongoing basis by the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Recognising the challenges involved, initiatives such as Catalyst 2030 promote collaborative action to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Asset-framing

Crafting narratives about individuals and communities that focus on their strengths and aspirations, not their challenges and perceived weaknesses.

The Asset-framing approach to crafting truthful narratives has gained recognition through the work of visionary leader Traban Shorters and his organisation, BME Community (USA). It is applied by organisations, journalists, social leaders and businesses to avoid stigmatising narratives about individuals and communities, promoting diversity and equity instead. Also see Deficit-framing.

Brand book

Document that contains the mission and values of a company as well as the visual identity guidelines. It includes instructions about the use of the logo, brand colours, typography, image style, and other corporate identity elements on the website, advertising media and other communications channels. The brand book also addresses the company's tone of voice, which is also considered an important marketing tool to engage and move the company's key audiences - referring to a consistent communication style, including do's and don'ts around word use.

Constructive journalism

See Solutions journalism, below.

Cultural competence

The attitudes and behaviours that enable people, as individuals, groups, communities and teams, to identify and understand differences in national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, religions and world views, sexual orientation, age and identity, and effectively communicate and interact while acknowledging these differences.

Cultural intelligence (CQ)

Related to cultural competence, cultural intelligence or CQ refers to the capabilities needed to relate and work effectively in organizations with people from different cultural backgrounds and nationalities. According to the Cultural Intelligence Center, CQ predicts the capacity to adjust and adapt, make decisions, negotiate and innovate. Moreover, "CQ impacts leadership effectiveness and can even increase profitability."

Deficit-framing

An approach to discussing individuals and groups primarily by reference to their limitations or challenges and using wording that reinforces dominant negative preconceptions in the audiences. Usually applied to minority ethnic and racial groups or communities facing problems related to poverty, substance abuse and crime, deficit framing narratives fail to recognise that disparities are related to systemic causes rather than inherent characteristics and individual failures. Also see Asset-framing.

Do No Harm

A well-known approach in the world of humanitarian assistance and international cooperation that has also been adopted by companies, Do No Harm recognises that interventions by an outside organisation are never neutral. Businesses must therefore be sensitive to the local context they operate in and do all they can to avoid any unintended negative consequences their actions, and even their mere presence in a community, may have.

The first of the 10 UN Global Compact Principles, a universal framework for sustainable and socially responsible business conduct, calls on companies to use due diligence as a means to avoid infringing human rights: "do no harm", and similarly, a Do No Harm lens is needed to prevent the risk of damages to the environment caused or enhanced by businesses.

Ethical marketing

A way of marketing a company's offer that puts business ethics principles at the forefront. It focuses on the creation and dissemination of truthful commercial information, respecting the consumers' right to be informed in a transparent way about the products and services a business offers. Ethical marketing principles also include guidelines on consumer privacy, treatment of personal data, compliance with government regulations and industry standards, and fair conduct towards competitors.

Ethical storytelling

As defined in the present guide, ethical storytelling refers to the practice of capturing and communicating stories about the individuals, groups and communities a business enterprise supports in a way that respects and promotes their rights, dignity, and wellbeing. Ethical storytelling is part of the marketing, fundraising, or investor outreach strategies of the enterprise. Its aim is to move and engage key audiences, driving purchases, investments or donations in support of the cause and the people the business stands for.

People-first language

Also called person-first language, people-first language puts the person first, not their disability or other limiting condition. It constitutes an objective way of communicating about people with different abilities and capabilities, aimed at eliminating generalizations and stereotypes.

People-first language has been widely adopted in the mental health and disabilities community and is embraced by other sectors concerned with ethics and inclusion as well. In the context of Ethical storytelling for social enterprises, people-first language applies more widely to supported people affected by, for instance, poverty, war and violence, or forced displacement. By focusing on the person rather than these challenging conditions, person-first language promotes inclusion and underscores their unique identity, strengths and resilience.

Impact story

By impact in the context of this guide, we refer to impact that is aligned with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). An impact story communicates the positive change created or co-created in individuals, communities or societies by an enterprise through the implementation of activities that are aligned with the SDGs most relevant to that enterprise and the cause it supports.

Shared Value

The Creating Shared Value approach was coined and popularised by business experts Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer in 2011. They define shared value as “policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates.”

In the present guide, we understand Shared Value more broadly as creating tangible and intangible value for the enterprise while at the same time, creating sustainable social and economic value for the artisans, producers, communities or special interest groups the enterprise works with. This shared value approach aims to minimise the power imbalances and avoid the exploitative practices that dominate the transactional relationships between businesses and their suppliers.

Solutions journalism

Solutions journalism aims to transform news coverage to build a more equitable and sustainable world. It is promoted by the international Solutions Journalism Network, dedicated to “leading a global shift in journalism, focused on what the news misses most often: how people are trying to solve problems and what we can learn from their successes or failures.” Solutions journalism is applied by reporters and organisations across the globe to strengthen communities, advance equity, build trust, increase civic engagement, and depolarise public discourse.

A similar approach is promoted as **Constructive journalism**, which also focuses on important societal issues, setting them in their relevant context and reporting about the responses to these challenges.

Story hero

In this guide, story hero refers to the people (artisans, producers, community members, supported individuals etc.) whose stories the social enterprise tells in writing, video, podcast, social media posts or any other means.

We also refer to story heroes as **Story owners**, as a reminder that it is not the communications and marketing staff of the enterprise where the story content originates, but with the people who are willing to share their experiences and viewpoints. As the owners of the story, the enterprise must involve them in decisions about its use.

Systems change

Recognising there is no one set definition, Catalyst 2030 defines systems change as confronting root causes of issues (rather than symptoms) by transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics and policies, by strengthening collective power through the active collaboration of diverse people and organisations. This collaboration is rooted in shared goals to achieve lasting improvement to solve social problems at a local, national and global level.

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