

Tell Successful Stories Checklist

Tell stories that activate memories, trigger emotions, and resonate in personal ways that make your message stick. In the process, you'll set yourself apart since most people overlook this easy and fun tool for engaging readers and getting better results.

- ❑ **Show, don't tell.** Fiction writers know this adage well. When the hero faces danger, rather than writing, "She's scared," the novelist writes about her sweating forehead and hands, the gun slipping from her grip. Why not bring the same verve to nonfiction writing? Set your readers in a situation; share a story about someone who benefited from your product or service.
- ❑ **Hook your readers!** The hook reaches out and grabs your readers, and what grabs better than a story? You can pose a provocative question that will draw your readers into your story—or offer a solution to painful issues through a story. Or you can foreshadow an outcome to a situation. The possibilities are limitless.
- ❑ **Set the scene.** Help your readers join you in your stories and the message of your book or blog, article or report. Take them there by describing the scene. Use senses and descriptive verbs and nouns that make them a part of it.
- ❑ **Add conflict and complications.** First there's inner conflict—the struggles we—or the people we're writing about—have inside our minds. Fear, depression, low self-esteem. And of course conflict between people. Describing it well is essential to getting your readers involved. Use senses to convey this. What does the conflict sound like? Feel like? What's the atmosphere in the room?
- ❑ **Develop your story.** Key components of development include making it: 1) Simple and clear, 2) Brief, 3. Specific, 4) Fresh, yet credible, and 5) Relevant – to your target and secondary audiences.
- ❑ **Offer resolution.** Resolution needs to be swift and clear. Craft a compelling ending to your story and move on to the conclusions or call to action.
- ❑ **Incite action.** Whether your story is in a blog or book, article or report, you want it to support your main premise and foster the kind of action you need—buy, buy in, change, improve, respond, etc.
- ❑ **Tell stories in stages.** Maybe your story runs throughout the entire article—or is interspersed at various points in your book. Or starts or ends a chapter. Use your stories in creative ways to encourage your readers to keep reading.
- ❑ **Create a story inventory.** Keep an inventory of your best stories so you can review them (and remember them!). You'll have them at your fingertips when you need one.
- ❑ **Watch movies!** Watch how talented directors and screenwriters handle stories. Deconstruct how they tell their stories and how they get their message across. And have fun!