

Imagine What's Possible:  
Step-by-Step Storytelling System


**IMAGINE**  
What's Possible  
STEP-BY-STEP STORYTELLING SYSTEM




*Today's session will begin shortly!*

 **CharityHowTo**  
Where Nonprofits Learn

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Where your mission meets its match.



**Webinar Housekeeping**

 **CharityHowTo**  
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Questions

[Enter a question for staff]

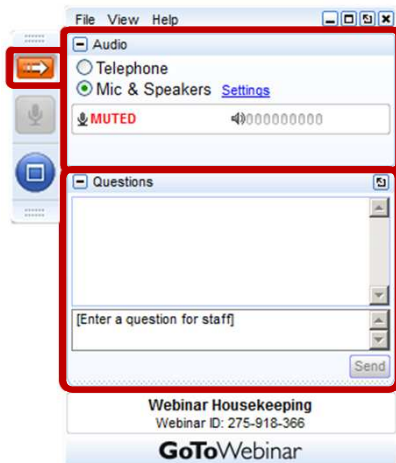
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Webinar Housekeeping  
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## Housekeeping



### Your Participation

Open and hide your control panel

Join audio:

- Choose "Mic & Speakers" to use VoIP
- Choose "Telephone" and dial using the information provided

Submit questions and comments via the Questions panel



## Who is here?



## Lori L. Jacobwith



LJacobwith



LJacobwith



- 25+ years as a speaker, trainer, communication strategist & fundraising coach
- Measurable: Since 2001 I've helped organizations raise **\$200 million from individual donors**. And counting.
- Coached more than 3000 organizations and as many stories.



## What I have for you today



## What we will cover



- What is storytelling?
- Why tell stories? What donors want.
- The secret to nonprofit success.

Using my system:

- Where to find a good nonprofit story.



## What we will cover

### **AND...using my system:**

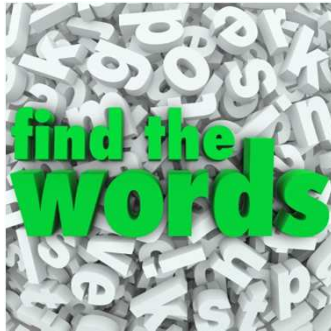
- What is a “mission moment?”
- How to create a powerful 2-minute story.
- How to change your story for writing vs. telling a story.



Plus: A few great examples of sharing stories.



## What struggles do you have?



## Development

*The total process by which an organization increases public understanding of its mission and acquires financial support for its programs.*

~ Source: AFP Fundraising Dictionary,  
(Association of Fundraising Professionals)



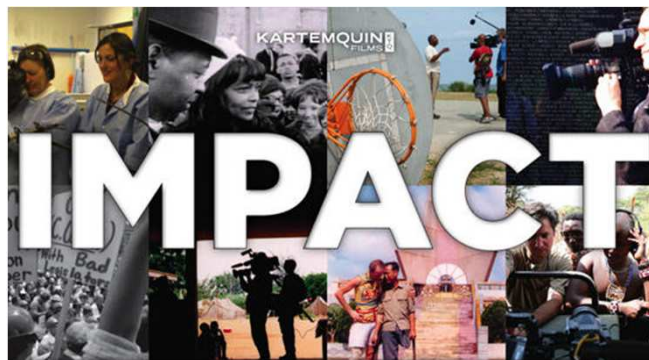
**TOP SECRET**

There is a secret to  
cutting through the  
clutter of day to day  
noise...



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## Convey Your Impact



With examples of real people

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## Storytelling



A narrative account of real or imagined events.

~ Source: National Storytelling Association



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## What Storytelling is Not

You are **not** a newspaper or news reporter that shares objective and *careful* stories.



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## Storytelling



*At its core, storytelling is the art of using language, vocalization, and/or physical movement and gesture to reveal the elements and images of a story to a specific, live audience.*

~ Source: National Storytelling Association



## Do people take action when you share a story?





## Great Gaping Disconnect

### What people want when they support a cause:

- To make a difference
- To feel personally connected to something greater than themselves
- To feel useful
- To get the warm glow of giving



~ Katya Andresen, Network for Good



## Great Gaping Disconnect

### What people get when they support a cause:

- A tax receipt
- Statistics, facts & figures
- A newsletter...sometimes
- An appeal to give (more) money



***There needs to be more of what people want in their experience with us.***



## Why are stories so important?

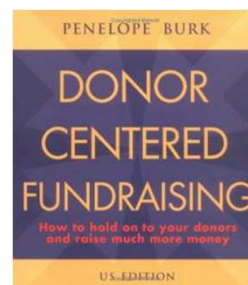


From Lisa Cron: *Wired for Story*



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## Startling statistic



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## Startling statistic



Nearly 50% of donors  
stop giving for reasons  
connected to  
*“a failure to  
communicate.”*

~ Penelope Burk & Cygnus Applied Research



## Your donors shouldn't have to work hard to understand what you do



## Support of all kinds moves towards boldness & clarity of communication



## The secret to nonprofit success: Clear, Bold Communication

- Telling Your Story - *Intro*
- Asking - *Take Action*
- Maximize Relationships  
- *Stay Relevant*
- Managing Data  
- *Success Measures*



## Stories of your impact...

...create  
unforgettable  
emotional  
connections



## Where to find stories?

### We take for granted:



1. People understand what kind of impact examples you are looking for.
2. People know how to tell a story.



## Where to find stories?

### **Remember:**

Most people don't know  
HOW to do what you  
are asking.



## A system to help you

Sometimes in life you  
just need a little help to  
move forward...



## 50% of telling a great story



...Is finding a great story to tell



## Where to find stories?



### Two important factors:

1. What questions you ask
2. Who & where you ask the questions





## What Questions To Ask?

- Open-ended
- Ask questions that gets “at” a story but doesn’t feel like you are putting the person on the spot.
- The responsibility to “find” the story is on you. Ask more questions to glean the “nuggets” to the story



## What Questions To Ask?

- Who did you turn away?
- Who stands out for you...?
- Favorite or best thing about this family...
- Add your own...



## Worksheet from the system

Worksheet

**Finding Good Stories: What questions to ask?**

**People You Serve**

Name of person \_\_\_\_\_

Questions I will ask?  
*(insert your own question or one of these)*


What was your life like before you came here?  
How has our team helped you?  
What is your life like now?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Who to ask?



## Who to Ask?

- People you serve & their family
- Board & former board members
- Donors. First-time, long-time...
- Other staff
- Event sponsors, foundations...



## Worksheet from the system

Worksheet

Finding Good stories: Who to ask questions

**People You Serve**

Name	Who knows them best?
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Family members of the People You Serve**

Name	Who knows them best?
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Board Members**

Name	Who knows them best?
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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## Imagine What's Possible: Step-by-Step Storytelling System

### Worksheet from the system

WHO TO ASK	SOME OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO START WITH... add your own
People you serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How has our story changed?</li><li>• What was your life like before you came here?</li><li>• What is your life like now?</li></ul>
Family members of people you serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the differences you've seen in your loved one's life since they came to us?</li></ul>
Board members & former members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why did you join our board?</li><li>• What is the most important part of our work for you?</li><li>• Do you have a special "mission moment" you remember about someone you met who was helped by our organization?</li></ul>
Long-time donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why do you make a financial gift to us?</li><li>• What is special for you about our work?</li><li>• Do you have a special "mission moment" you remember about someone you met who was helped by our organization?<sup>14</sup></li></ul>
First-time donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What brought you to us in the first place?</li><li>• What is special for you about our work?</li></ul>
Other staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you have a special "mission moment" you remember about someone you met who was helped by our organization?</li></ul>
Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why have you funded our program?</li><li>• What is a different special about our work that compels your foundation to make a grant?</li></ul>
Event sponsors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you know about our work?</li><li>• Why do you make a financial gift to us?</li><li>• Do you have a special "mission moment" you remember about someone who was helped by our organization?</li></ul>
Vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you know about our work?</li><li>• Do you have a special "mission moment" that you remember about someone you met who was helped by our organization?</li></ul>
Elected officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you know about our work?</li><li>• Do you have a special "mission moment" that you remember about someone you met who was helped by our organization?</li></ul>

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### Where to Ask the Questions?



## Where to Ask the Questions?



## Mission moments



<http://bit.ly/MissionMomentsFromLori>



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## Use this Storytelling Criteria

- Tell a story about **an actual person** using name, age, descriptors so your listener can visualize.
- Use **words that emotionally connect** the listener to your work and the person you're speaking about. No jargon.
- **Shares specific examples of YOUR work** and how it makes a difference in the life of a real person
- The story must be short – **2 minutes or less**.



## Storytelling: How do we do this?



## Lori's 6-Step Process

1. Identify one person.



## Lori's 6-Step Process

2. Learn & jot down as much about them as you can.
3. Write down all of the exact results.





## Lori's 6-Step Process



4. Make a list of *transformations* due to your involvement and their results.



## Lori's 6-Step Process

5. Circle the words that stand out and are emotionally connecting.



## Use Emotionally Engaging Words

- Abandoned
- Blessed
- Emotionally bruised
- Spiritually & physically broken
- Weary...



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## Emotionally Engaging Words

The placement of emotionally engaging words and phrases, is key to creating a powerful story

A place to call my own

Abandoned

Ashamed

Awkward

Bitter

Blessed

Bright

Bruised

Catapult

Delight

Emotionally bruised

Empower

Erupt in anger

Even out the odds



Explosive anger

Exuberant

Eyes pooled with tears

Eyes glimmering with hope

Fierce

Fleeting feelings of \_\_\_\_\_

Gentle

Glowing smile

Gnarly hands

Healthy

Hunger to be loved

Hunger to learn

Infectious smile/laugh

Joy

Kind

Leathery hands/skin

Lifeline

Lost

Naked fear

Numb

Overcome

Passionate

Piercing eyes

Precious

Ravenous

Revitalize

Safe

Surrender

Thrive

Tired eyes

Uncomfortably shy

Uncontrollable sobs

Unrestrained excitement

Vibrant

Weary

Weathered

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## Lori's 6-Step Process

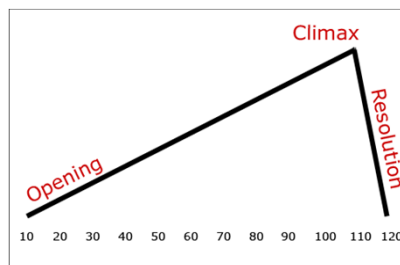
6. Now fit the story into the framework & practice telling your story.

**Often.**



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## Simple Format



- What was life like before...
- **What happened?**
- What is life like now?



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## Imagine What's Possible: Step-by-Step Storytelling System

Simple template for moving your story from

Boring  
Brilliant

Let me tell you about

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Fill in their name, age, and some descriptive details about them.)*

His/her life was

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Share specific details about how they felt about their choices, unasked for situation, health issue, etc. You get the idea.) Special note: Stay away from jargon and words that are "grant-writer" speak.*

\_\_\_\_\_ (name) made her way to us because

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Share how the person found you or your programs. Be specific. It's not like a helicopter dropped them off. Maybe ten other homeless shelters turned them down or their doctor or landlord referred them to you.)*

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Here's how our organization helped \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Be specific here. As you share examples of your work or the impact your staff has had be sure to choose engaging language and share what the person in your story felt about your support/work/program.)*

Because of our work \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is now \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(What are the exact results AND the transformations that your main character is now experiencing? Remember, even if you are serving the environment or an advocacy organization you are still talking about one person whose life is different because of your work.)*

This is just one of thousands of stories I could share with you about how we \_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Explain briefly how you save or change lives)*

Count how many "feeling and descriptive" words were used in this story?  
Does this story paint a clear picture for your listeners or readers?

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## Telling a Story



- Ditch the notes/text
- Use pauses and voice inflection.
- Paint a picture with your words.
- Practice. Practice. Practice.



## Sondra's Story



## Sondra's Story



## Clear, Bold Communication

**600,000**

The number of adults in Minnesota who need Adult Basic Education and literacy programs.

**Zero**

The number of children's books found in 61% of low-income families' homes in the U.S.

**88**

The percentage of Minnesota adults who don't get the literacy help they need due to limited program resources.



*Source: Minnesota Literacy Council*



## Writing a Story



- Varying lengths work.
- More time to build the emotional crescendo and flesh out the character(s).
- Use photos & short sentences, even bullets.



## Written: How To

### 1. Enlist your team



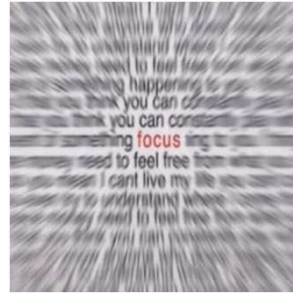
<http://bit.ly/Toiny1>





## Written: How To

1. Enlist your team
2. Keep stories focused & relevant



<http://bit.ly/Toiny1>



## Written: How To

1. Enlist your team
2. Keep stories focused & relevant
3. Keep stories light



<http://bit.ly/Toiny1>



## Written: How To

1. Enlist your team
2. Keep stories focused & relevant
3. Keep stories light
4. Bring characters to life



<http://bit.ly/ToinyI>



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## Written: How To

5. Don't forget quotes



<http://bit.ly/ToinyI>



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# Written: How To

5. Don't forget quotes
6. Deliver multiple perspectives

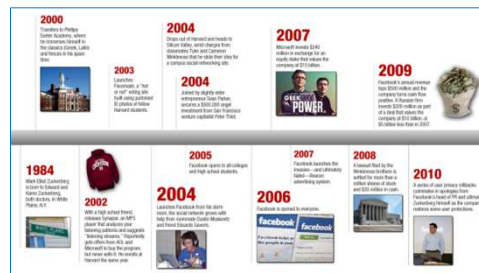


<http://bit.ly/Toiny1>



# Written: How To

5. Don't forget quotes
6. Deliver multiple perspectives
7. Tell your story over time



## Written: How To

- 5. Don't forget quotes
- 6. Deliver multiple perspectives
- 7. Tell your story over time
- 8. A picture's worth...



<http://bit.ly/ToinyI>



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## Sharing A Story



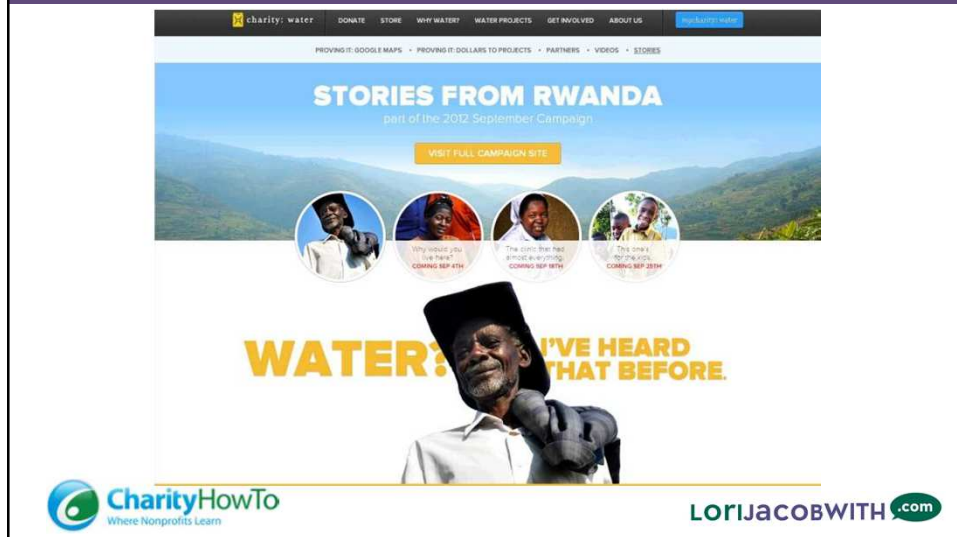
*"Give people a fact or an idea and you  
enlighten their minds; tell them a story and  
you touch their souls."*



~ Hasidic Proverb

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## Examples that cause people to take action & give more



## Real Stories



## Real Stories



<http://mnliteracy.org/volunteers/blog>



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## Real Stories



Our JULY Library Stories are by brother & sister Ben & Paige Westin, Ironton:



I have always enjoyed going to the Library because they have all the resources I need to learn new things. Whether it's for school or just something I am interested in, I know that the library will have what I need. The best part is they will even order new books for me sometimes! The staff is always friendly and willing to help if I need anything. I know that I will always enjoy going to the Library.

Ben Westin  
Age 15  
Ironton

The Library has changed my life by helping me and giving me the chance to read more. I love going to the Library because it is so quiet and has one of my favorite things, books. I love to read! I read all the time. When I want a book to read, I know where to go. The library always has the book or books I want.

Paige Westin

Age 10  
Ironton

*Librarian's note: It has been fun to watch Ben & Paige grow up before our eyes at the Library! Ben has always enjoyed books about trapping, hunting, nature lore and the great outdoors. Paige is now devouring our extensive Trxie Belden series.*



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## Real Stories

The screenshot shows the 'Share Your Story' form on the St. Michael's Foundation website. The form is titled 'Share Your Story' and includes a 'Ways to Give' sidebar with links to Donate, Donor Centre, Major Gifts, Build a Legacy, Get Involved, Share Your Story, Stay in Touch, and Fundraise for Us. The main form area contains a text box for 'Your Story', a 'Choose File' button for an image, and 'Submit' and 'Reset' buttons. The website header includes the St. Michael's Foundation logo and a navigation menu with Home, Ways to Give, Events, About Us, and News.

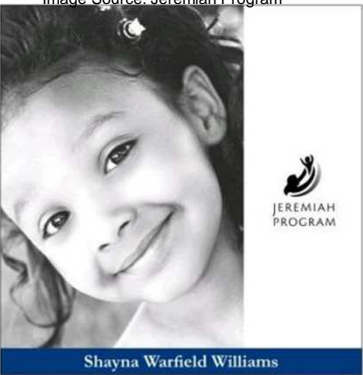
## Real Stories

The screenshot shows the St. Michael's Foundation website with a featured story titled 'Lorenzo's story'. The story includes a photo of a family and a text box that reads: 'Learn what happened to Lorenzo and why he says, "Dr. Ahmed is my angel." Read more'. The website header includes the St. Michael's Foundation logo and a navigation menu with Home, Why give?, How to give, Inspiring stories, Events, About us, and a 'DONATE' button. The footer includes the CharityHowTo logo and the text 'LORI JACOBWITH .com'.



## Imagine What's Possible: Step-by-Step Storytelling System

Image Source: Jeremiah Program






Shayna Warfield Williams

"Because of you, my mom  
and I have a better life."

*Join us after the tournament to hear  
Jyssica tell her and Shayna's story.*

Dinner & Program at 6 pm



## Before and After Stories

**Sample arts story Boring**

We are grateful to Mrs. Lee for being a subscriber to our theater series for so many years. Mrs. Lee loves the performing arts and rarely misses a show. She brings guests with her and makes sure we know that she is spreading the word about the quality performances we deliver. We wish all of our patrons were as passionate as Mrs. Lee.

.....

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**Sample story Brilliant**

At the tender age of 9, the first show that Amanda Lee saw was a three-hour long production of Camelot. At the age of 79, Mrs. Amanda Lee has told me she can still recall the thrilling moment when the orchestra music began and living in Camelot.

So, it's not surprising that Mrs. Lee has become one of our most passionate and regular supporters. Though money was tight, she was proud to bring her son and daughter to the People's Theater as they grew up; and has since delighted in opening the eyes of her grandchildren to the magic of live theater in recent years.



Now that the years have taken a toll on Mrs. Lee, she no longer has a spring always finds someone on staff after the performance she's attended to thank us for giving her the gift of beauty and a few hours of respite.

You see, Mrs. Lee is a bit lonely since the death of her husband. She's frail and now suffers from many side-effects of aging. She tells us that the joy she gets from attending our performances is better than any rehab or medication. Mrs. Lee reminds us that we are much more than a theater company. We are a place where memories are made, dreams are woven and passion is felt. We are a place where people feel alive or maybe a little less lonely. And we are a gathering place for people who love art and performance theater.

We are grateful to bring joy to patrons like Mrs. Lee and so many others. And we are grateful they share their stories with us.

Count how many "telling and descriptive" words were used in this story? Do your stories paint a clear picture for your listeners or readers?

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“ People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel. ”

~ Maya Angelou



## Moving Forward



**Share in question box:**

**One** thing you learned

**One** thing you'll do differently



Imagine What's Possible:  
Step-by-Step Storytelling System

## For more help with your storytelling

Simple template for moving your story from Boring to Brilliant Part Two

Let me tell you about

Complete in 15 seconds or less.

Name.

Age.

Descriptive details about them.

Count how many "feeling and descriptive" words were used in this story? Does this story paint a clear picture for your listeners or readers?

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## Special Offer from Charity How To & Lori

IMAGINE What's Possible

STEP-BY-STEP STORYTELLING SYSTEM

TOP SECRET

Inside learn the most powerful tool to raise MORE money!

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## Staying Connected



**Weekly BLOG:**  
**WITHISM'S FROM LORI:**  
*Boldness, clarity and wisdom  
for fundraising professionals  
making a difference*



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Download on Free  
Resources page:  
[LoriJacobwith.com](http://LoriJacobwith.com)



## Imagine What's Possible: Step-by-Step Storytelling



*Take the short  
survey and have a  
great day!*

**Thank you!!**

