



nce upon a time there was a workshop that helped doers-of-good tell better stories. They used these tales to advance their noble causes, and

over time the workshop grew more and more popular. This meant, however, that the teacher of the workshop had to travel great distances, often spending many days away from his loving family. And this made the teacher sad. (Also, cramming his tall frame into tiny airplane seats and

eating food not fit for dogs made him surprisingly cranky.)

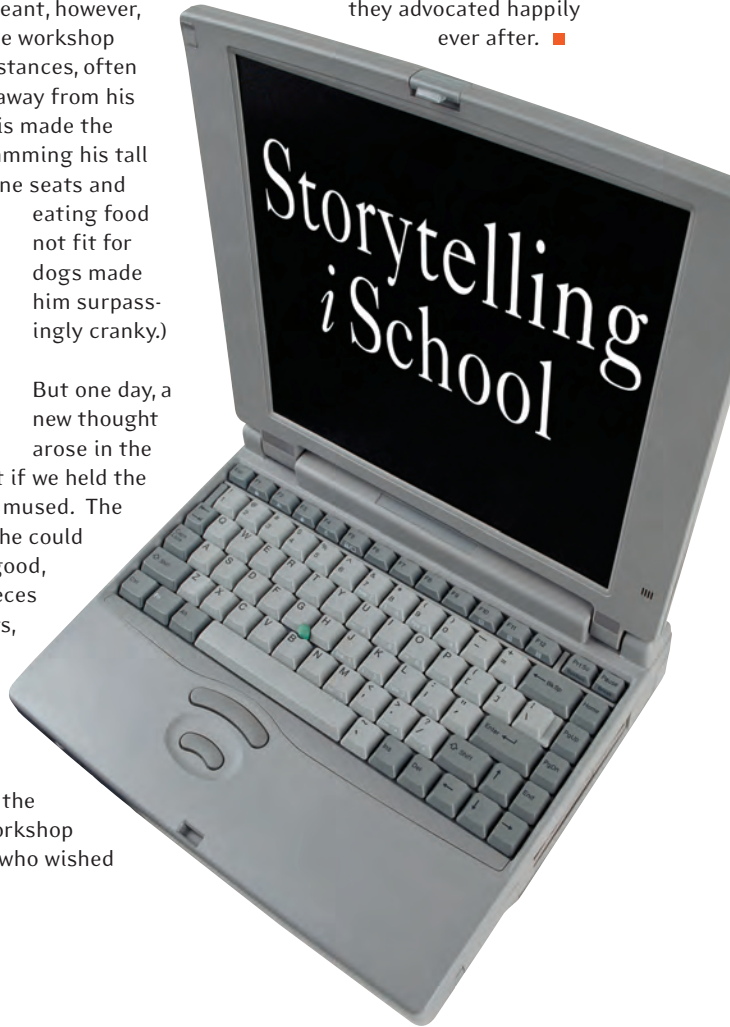
Coming This Fall

But one day, a new thought arose in the

teacher's mind. "What if we held the workshop online?" he mused. The teacher realized that he could reach more doers-of-good, require fewer gold pieces in return for his labors, and spend less time in those dreaded ports of air. And so, as the cool breezes of autumn began to blow across the land, a new kind of workshop was born. And those who wished

to know more about it went to www.agoodmanonline.com. (And they went with dispatch because each workshop is limited to 25 noble students.)

And the doers-of-good learned how to tell better stories from the comfort of their own offices (or castles.) And they advocated happily ever after. ■



a goodman

GOOD IDEAS FOR GOOD CAUSES

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Free-range thinking™ is a monthly newsletter for public interest groups, foundations, and progressive businesses that want to reach more people more effectively. For a free subscription, send your request to: andy@agoodmanonline.com or call 323.464.3956. Back issues are available on the web at www.agoodmanonline.com.

Newsletter edited by Lori Matsumoto.

free-range thinking

Let me clarify: I am not suggesting that reading is less important than movies, television, or sports. Quite the contrary, and I am proud to report that earlier this year I joined a book group. (Since it's a *men's* group, however, participants do not have to actually read the monthly selection. Being men, we do not feel that reading a book is essential to having – and loudly expressing – an opinion.) But I digress....

The Seventh Annual Summer Reading List

The summer movies stink, the best TV shows are on hiatus, and baseball is boring. We're out of excuses. It's time to pick up a book.

This year's list is a bit different than its predecessors. Most of the recommended books have been around for a while and may even be familiar to you, and some have been touted in this publication before.

I have two reasons for focusing on these "oldies but goodies": first, like treasured novels from our youth, they are worth re-reading. And second, as I speak to public interest groups around the country and mention these books, I am constantly meeting people who have never heard of them.

So unless you'd rather watch superheroes battling it out on the big screen, reality shows so awful they couldn't even make it onto the regular season schedules, or nine guys standing around in the hot sun for four hours, take a moment to consider some books that just might help you do your job better. Happy summer and happy reading!



News for a Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working With the Media

by Lawrence Wallack, et al.
(Sage Publications, Inc. © 1999)

Why I did not discover this book sooner is a mystery to me. Wallack, Katie Woodruff, Lori Dorfman, and Iris Diaz have assembled a concise and highly readable manual for any nonprofit looking to attract the media's bright spotlight. *News for a Change* is strong on ground-level basics (writing releases, pitching to reporters, crafting op-eds) while it also helps you think critically about the strategies behind your communications campaigns. Sections on the Internet are obviously dated, but the remainder is so solid that this remains an essential read for any newcomer.

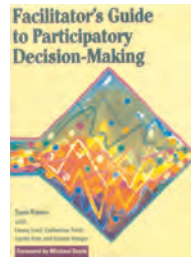


► Above all, remember: Everything is on the record. Even when you are talking casually over the phone. Even when you know the reporter as a personal friend. Even when the reporter says, "Tell me, off the record..." Never say anything to a reporter that you wouldn't want to see on the front page of the next day's newspaper or hear on the evening news.

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making

by Sam Kaner
(New Society Publishers © 1996)

If you want to run better meetings, Sam Kaner's book—which I first commended to



readers six years ago—is still a must-read. Presented as a workbook with plenty of graphics, charts, and bullet points, this guide serves a far wider audience than "facilitators" alone. It can help anyone understand how groups come to a decision, the natural barriers we all encounter in this process, and what we can do to remove or surmount those barriers.

► When people aren't able to speak without being interrupted or discounted, it is predictable that they will insert their positions into the discussion at every opportunity. Conversely, when people are supported to state their positions fully, they frequently become more able to listen to one another.

Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability

by Steve Krug
(New Riders Publishing © 2000)

If your organization is launching a new web site or revamping an existing one, this is flat out the best book for ensuring that visitors stop and smell your digital roses. Having worked for AOL, Apple, and Netscape, Krug knows his way around web sites, and he leavens his advice with just the right amount of humor and scorn. If you don't



know the five questions every home page must answer—or even if you do and you just want a fun read—*Don't Make Me Think* is for you.

► When we're creating sites, we act as though people are going to pore over each page, reading our finely crafted text, figuring out how we've organized things, and weighing their options before deciding which link to click. What they actually do... is glance at each new page, scan some of the text, and click on the first link that catches their interest or vaguely resembles the thing they're looking for.

When Words Fail: How the Public Interest Becomes Neither Public Nor Interesting

by Tony Proscio
(Edna McConnell Clark Foundation © 2005)

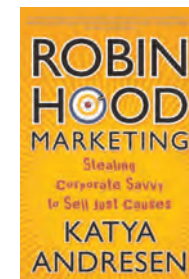


Former journalist Tony Proscio started firing back at funder double-talk six years ago with *In Other Words: A Plea for Plain Speaking in Foundations*. The slim paperback struck such a chord that the publisher—a foundation that wasn't afraid of some honest criticism—commissioned a sequel in 2001. Last year, Proscio completed the trilogy with *When Words Fail* because, in his words, "the shape and tone of public interest communication has changed very little" since his first book. Maybe so, but the silver lining to all that cloudy language is another thoughtful and highly entertaining book from Mr. Proscio. (All three books can be downloaded for free at www.emcf.org.)

► I suspect that too many foundations now use "grassroots" to describe "people of whom we approve," even if those people might take a limo to Central Park if they wanted to see some grass.

Robin Hood Marketing: Stealing Corporate Savvy to Sell Just Causes

by Katya Andresen
(Jossey-Bass © 2006)



What do greedy, polluting, job-outsourcing, health-insurance-denying corporations have to teach us, the pure-hearted doers-of-good? Okay, that may be overstating the question a bit, but when it comes

to reaching millions with our messages, Katya Andresen says we have plenty to learn from our for-profit counterparts. To back up this claim, Andresen (marketing VP for Network for Good, a portal for online fundraising) has interviewed experts from the nonprofit and commercial sectors to identify marketing techniques that can work effectively in both. *Robin Hood Marketing* is an excellent manual for newcomers that can also serve as a nice refresher course for communications veterans.

► Anything we communicate will get twisted according to the mind it enters. Our ideology is simply not as powerful as our audience's own mental machinations. As marketers, we have to accept people for who they are and work within the framework they have. ■

