



Building a Storytelling Culture: Step #1

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Join a Google Hangout about Storytelling on September 9th

As part of the A Billion + Change initiative, the Points of Light Foundation has assembled a panel of experts to talk about "Inspiring Others Through the Power of Storytelling." [Full story](#).

New Campaign Planning Tool from Spitfire

Spitfire, creators of "The Smart Chart" and "Discovering the Activation Point", has just unveiled an invaluable new tool to help you plan more effective campaigns. *Planning to Win: The Just Enough Guide for Campaigners* is based on real results from the field, it's easy to use, and best of all, it's free! [Full story](#).

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Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative

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I first wrote about the sacred bundle in our December 2002 [issue](#). The practice originated with indigenous Native American tribes such as the Lakota and Pawnee who would carry significant artifacts from the tribe's past in a pouch or bundle. While the artifacts themselves - a carved piece of wood, an animal bone, a feather - might outwardly seem mundane, each was associated with a rich and meaningful story.



BBMG's sacred bundle

At ceremonial campfires, the shamans or elders of the tribe would open the bundle, tell (or sing, or dance) the story behind each item: what it meant to the tribe and why it had been preserved. The sum of these stories told the history of the tribe and expressed its deepest values, and these stories were told so often that every member of the tribe could repeat them to their families.

The practice of assembling a sacred bundle and regularly sharing the stories comprised within has spread. In recent years, it has been adopted by individuals such as Jane Goodall (who travels with a "sacred bundle of hope"), philanthropies such as The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and businesses including Southwest Airlines.

I recently visited with Raphael Bemporad, principal and chief strategy officer at [BBMG](#), a brand innovation studio based in Brooklyn, to learn how his company developed its own sacred bundle and also brought the concept to clients. While there's no single right way to build your bundle, BBMG's experience offers a useful step-by-step example of how you might get started.

For BBMG, developing a sacred bundle was a natural fit. As a firm that helps clients such as Adidas, Pepsi, Samsung and Target refine and express their brand essence, BBMG already saw a strong relationship between stories and organizational culture. So in 2006, as staff members were preparing for the firm's annual retreat, Bemporad gave them an assignment.

"We asked them to think in advance about an object or artifact that best captured where their own personal passions and purpose connected them with BBMG's mission, and how we're able to realize those aspirations together," Bemporad told me. Staff members were given a week to find their objects, and at the retreat, each person was given a turn to place his or her object into the bundle and tell the story of why they had chosen it.



Current contents of BBMG's sacred bundle

The first bundle was actually a Lone Ranger lunch box. (BBMG later switched to the burlap wrapping pictured here.) Molly Conley, a graphic designer, put an unopened box of Crayola Crayons into the bundle because she felt as if each new project at BBMG was like the contents of the box: clean, fresh, new and with endless possibilities.

Bemporad and his founding partner, Mitch Baranowski, put in a photograph of John Rodden, a professor who had taught them both at the University of Texas to "make a life, not just a living." The empty bottle of champagne was contributed by another colleague who opened and promptly drained the bottle when she found out she'd been hired by BBMG.

As new staff are hired, or if the firm enjoys a particularly noteworthy success, new items will be added to the bundle spontaneously. And at least once a year, the bundle is opened so all the stories can be shared among the staff again. At its most recent retreat, BBMG devoted two hours to a sacred bundle ceremony because, "there had been such rapid growth," said Bemporad, "we saw it as a chance to really welcome new team members."

BBMG remains such a strong believer in the bundle that the firm regularly introduces it to clients to help reveal deep insights into who they are and why they do what they do. Aveda, Eileen Fischer, Sears, and the United Jewish Appeal are just some of the clients that have adopted the sacred bundle with BBMG's guidance.

"People who share an idea of the sacred are more likely to trust one another, work as a team and overcome challenges along the journey," Bemporad added as we wrapped up our visit in Brooklyn. "So the way to truly embody our mission is to follow the sacredness. And the way to follow the sacredness is to listen to the stories that we tell about ourselves and each other."

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The logo for "A Billion + Change" features the text "A BILLION + Change" in white, bold, sans-serif font on a red rectangular background. The "+" sign is slightly larger and positioned between "BILLION" and "Change".

A Billion + Change was launched in 2008 when over 150 top corporate government and nonprofit leaders met at the White House for "The Summit on Corporate Volunteerism" to identify the benefits to companies of providing pro bono and skills-based services.

Join us Tuesday, September 9th at 2pm Eastern (11am Pacific) for a free Google Hangout where 5 storytelling experts (including yours truly) will discuss how you can share your organization's service story to inspire others to get involved in this powerful volunteering movement. To get more information and register, click [here](#).

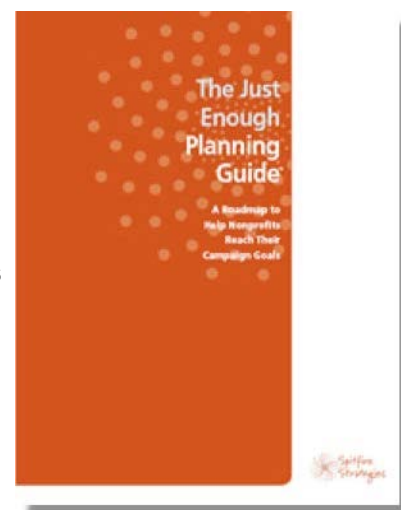
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With the partnership and support of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and input from dozens of campaign experts, Spitfire's newest tool helps organizations and coalitions build effective plans that lead to winning behavior, corporate or policy change campaigns. *Planning to Win* follows a simple six-step process for successful campaign planning and also offers real-life lessons from campaign wins. The tool is mobile and tablet friendly, exportable, shareable, and flexible (meaning you can move through it at your own pace).

Learn more and get started right now at www.planningtowin.org.



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