



free-range THINKING™

free-range thinking™ is a monthly journal of best practices, resources and generally useful stuff for public interest communicators who want to reach more people with more impact



Cool Stuff We Learned at *frank2018*

The fifth annual convening of our tribe - better known as *frank2018* - happened on February 6-9, and once again Gainesville, Florida became the center of the universe for public interest communicators. It was gratifying, as always, to see so many *free-range* readers on hand, but understanding that most of you could not attend, we've devoted this issue to a quick recap with plenty of links to featured speakers, their websites, and other useful resources that surfaced during the gathering. (Every talk from *frank2018* will be posted [here](#) throughout March, so check back often and watch them for yourself.) And if all this makes you wish you were there, mark your calendars now: the sixth annual *frank* conference is set for February 5-8, 2019, and you can receive periodic updates by registering [here](#). [Full story](#). Please note: Apple Mail users may need to scroll down manually.

Special Storytelling Webinar Starts March 8th

We like to think all our storytelling webinars our special, but this month we're trying something different: our "Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative" webinar will be limited to a maximum of ten students. We have a hunch that a smaller class will allow for more interaction during our online sessions and give us more time to personalize feedback between classes, so we've reduced the maximum number of participants by half. If you have never had a chance to take this class, now is the time to give it a try: a few seats are still open for the next four-week session that begins on March 8th. Get more details and register [here](#).

LA Area Readers: Storytelling Event on March 27th

Creating change in the world has never been more urgent or more challenging, but there are ways to do it, and that will be the focus of a unique gathering in downtown Los Angeles on March 27th (7-9pm). "Changing the Story: An Evening of Conversation, Inspiration and Community for People Who Give a Damn" is all about how community leaders, change-makers, philanthropists, and engaged citizens can cut through the noise, give powerful voice to causes, and have an impact in deep and sometimes surprising ways.



Featured speakers include Rachel Sumekh, founder of Swipe Out Hunger, Steve LePore, founder of My Friend's Place, Karla Vasquez, founder of SalviSoul, and Michael Kass, founder of the Center for Story and Spirit. I'll be there, too, so if you want to join me for an informative and inspiring evening, get more information and order your tickets [here](#).

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Craftivism: a new way to needle consumers

I'll admit it: the first time I heard the term "craftivism" I thought it sounded quaint and pictured knitted pussy hats and giant quilts. But Sarah Corbett, a London-based activist, opened my eyes to the power of gentle protest. As she puts it, "Activism needs introverts," and craftivism - activism through craft - is a way to bring contemplation and compassion into strategic acts of protest and social movements.

Corbett provided many fascinating examples of her brand of craftivism, but my favorite was her ongoing protest against abuses within the fashion industry. Rather than stand and shout outside a store selling clothes made by sweatshop labor, Corbett and her fellow craftivists create "mini fashion statements" - small scrolls of paper inscribed with a few sentences that ask readers to stop and ponder how that particular article of clothing was made. These scrolls are "shop-dropped" (as opposed to shop-lifted) into the pockets of merchandise with the hope they will inspire quiet personal reflection and ultimately derail a purchase. To learn more about Corbett's work, check out her [book](#) "How to be a Craftivist: the art of gentle protest."

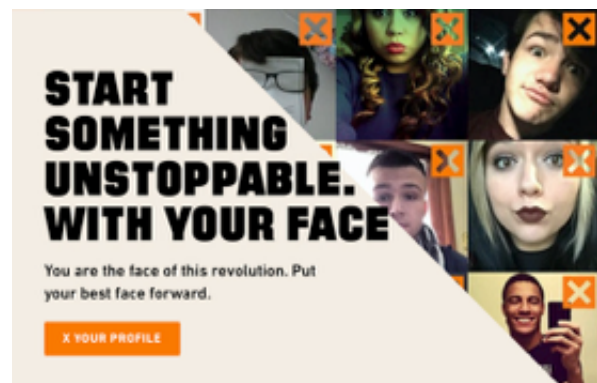


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It's the Truth: as your audience changes, so must your message.

When the [Truth](#) anti-smoking campaign was launched in 1999, about a quarter of U.S. teenagers smoked. In 2014, that figure was reduced to a mere nine percent, making Truth arguably the most successful health campaign in history. In his talk at *frank*, Eric Asche, Truth's Chief Marketing Officer, said that although the campaign had been incredibly successful at getting teenagers to stop smoking (and in many cases never start), campaign organizers realized the concerns of their target demographic were changing over time. Unlike Gen-Xers, Millennials were more interested in *joining a movement* than *rebellious against authority*.

To tap into this shift in priorities, the Truth Initiative changed the messaging of its brand and rolled out media that was positioned not at the minority of teens who still smoked but at the majority who didn't - asking them to de-normalize smoking for their peers and be the generation to *#finishit*. As the number of teen smokers continues to dwindle - it's now down to six percent - the Truth Initiative is already looking toward the next iteration of its campaign, addressing issues such as opioid use that tend to be linked with other addictive behaviors such as smoking. With any luck, Asche says, he'll be so successful he'll have to look for another job soon.



Dare we say it? Sometimes you don't want to tell a story.

We're not abandoning our core beliefs here, but we trust Stephen Voltz and Fritz Grobe, the fertile minds behind Eepybird Studios, producer of some of the most consistently viral [videos](#) on the web. In their talk at *frank*, they declared that one of the cardinal sins of creating contagious content is trying to tell a story. Instead, they say, think of the viral video as the modern-day sideshow - customers come to see the beard on the bearded lady, not to hear about why she joined the circus. (Put another way: get right to the money shot.)



Since creating viral videos has always seemed like capturing lightning in a bottle, I was furiously taking notes as Voltz and Grobe laid out their four rules for creating viral content: (1) Be True, (2) Don't Waste My Time, (3) Be Unforgettable, and (4) Ultimately, It's All About Humanity. Though these rules are deceptively simple and may sound glib, Voltz and Grobe thoroughly unpacked them and provided excellent examples throughout their talk. If you're interested in going into even greater depth on the subject, download their free PDF guide, [The Viral Video Toolkit for Nonprofits](#).

Middle schoolers have a lot to teach us about influence.

Every year, *frank* features three scholars whose research is of particular interest to public interest communicators. This year, the work of Dr. Hana Shepherd, an assistant professor of sociology at Rutgers University, stood out for us. In her paper, titled *Changing Climates of Conflict*, Shepherd and her research team examine how behavior change occurs within social networks.



Dr. Hana Shepherd

In a year-long study of 56 middle schools, Shepherd and her team asked a select team of students from each school to spread anti-bullying messages of their own devising to their friend groups. While half of the students in the study were chosen at random, the other half were chosen because they had been identified by their peers as "influencers"- kids that were not necessarily popular but had the largest number of social connections to other students or the most influence among their small peer group. Shepherd and her team found that the middle schools with teams that had the most influencers spreading anti-bullying messages saw the greatest reductions in conflicts at their school over the year - some as much as a thirty percent reduction.

Though the social networks in a middle school environment may look a little different than those of the communities you are trying to reach, we think Shepherd's research has real implications for any organization trying to understand how influence works and drives behavior change. Read more about how this study was conducted and the team's findings [here](#).

Quotes We Love

There were plenty of quotable quotes at *frank2018*, but the one that keeps ringing in my head was shared by Michael Tran of Playworks, who was channeling George Bernard Shaw when he said: "*We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.*"

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Upcoming online classes at The Goodman Center

TELL BETTER STORIES

Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative

March 8, 15, 22 & 29
9am - 10am PT
ONLY 10 STUDENTS!

WEBINAR BETTER

The Webinar on Webinars

March 9
11am - 12pm PT

DESIGN BETTER CAMPAIGNS

Strategic Communications: Cutting Through the Clutter

March 19 & 20
11am - 12pm PT

Click on the class title to read more!

About Us

free-range thinking is written by Andy Goodman and Celia Hoffman. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit www.thegoodmancenter.com.

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