

How Consistently Are You Telling Your Institution's Story?

A five-minute self-assessment.

For a story to move people, “Four P’s” must typically be present: a real **Person**, facing **Peril**, with genuine **Potential**, leading to believable **Promise**. Our institutions have countless stories of this kind to share about our people.

The challenge is determining whether the stories that we tell on our institution’s behalf hit the mark. Answer honestly for each question below.

- **Person – Who is this story about?**

Score 1 (rarely) to 5 (always): In your outreach, are you and your team regularly featuring stories about compelling individuals?

Score: ____

- **Peril – What’s genuinely at stake?**

Score 1 (rarely) to 5 (always): When you tell stories for your institution, are you and your team clearly and consistently naming the challenges it faces—or that individuals in the stories face?

Score: ____

- **Potential – What could be true?**

Score 1 (rarely) to 5 (always): In your outreach, do you and your team clearly and consistently define what’s possible for your institution? For the individuals whose stories you tell?

Score: ____

- **Promise – What happens if it works?**

Score 1 (unlikely) to 5 (definitely): If a member of your audience (e.g., prospective student, major donor, engaged alum) were asked if they found your institution’s stories compelling or inspiring, do you think they would answer “yes”?

Score: ____

Add up your score

- **16–20:** You and your team are effectively telling strong stories. Rare and worth deliberately protecting.
- **10–15:** The instincts are present, but alignment is inconsistent.
- **Below 10:** The promise of stories is not being capitalized upon, a common and fixable dilemma.

If your score surprised you

A low score usually isn’t usually a writing or talent problem. It’s a problem that arises when admissions, advancement, communications, and other teams have not worked out the type of stories that define their institution’s mission and successes.

That’s the specific problem we focus on in a working session designed to help teams identify the institution’s key strengths, the two or three challenges or opportunities that matter now, and the stories that will inspire audiences to act.

If that sounds useful, let’s talk.