

STORYTELLING & COMMUNICATIONS BEST PRACTICES

AMERICORPS LEADERCORPS MEETING 2020

AMERICORPS GETS THINGS DONE

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PR GROUP

Why We're Here

- The art of storytelling
- Your role in telling the AmeriCorps story
- Tips & best practices





What is Storytelling?

Storytelling is the process of combining facts and narrative in order to communicate a message and an emotion to a target audience.



Why Storytelling Matters

- Stories stimulate emotions
 - Stories help us remember
 - Stories influence our decisions
 - Stories link us to our sense of generosity
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“Nobody cares how much you know,
until they know how much you care.”

– Theodore Roosevelt

Values Also Matter in Storytelling

- “Education” impacts knowledge
- Values impact feelings and beliefs
- People act on what they believe and feel, more often than on what they know

What do you want the audience to think, believe, feel and do?



The Storytelling Process

- Know your audience
- Define your core message
- Create connection
- Establish a call-to-action
- Choose your medium
- Share your story!

Your Role in Telling the AmeriCorps Story

- You work on the front lines of service in Ohio
 - You have an opportunity to share stories of service and how it can transform a neighborhood, a group of people, etc.
 - You know the community you serve best
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How Can You Share Your Story?

- Use the right words
- Create rich content
- Leverage the right vehicles



Using the Right Words

“Does anyone have any questions for my answers?”

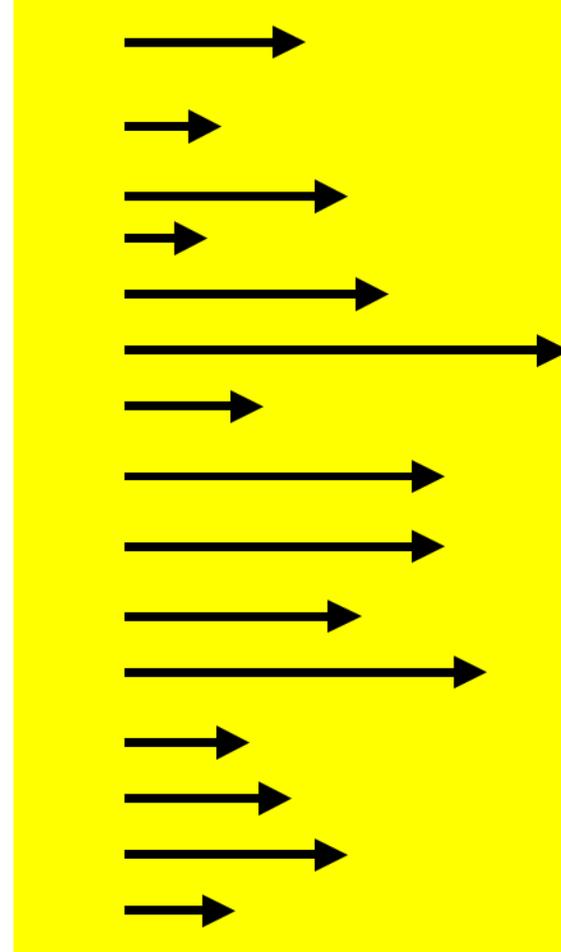
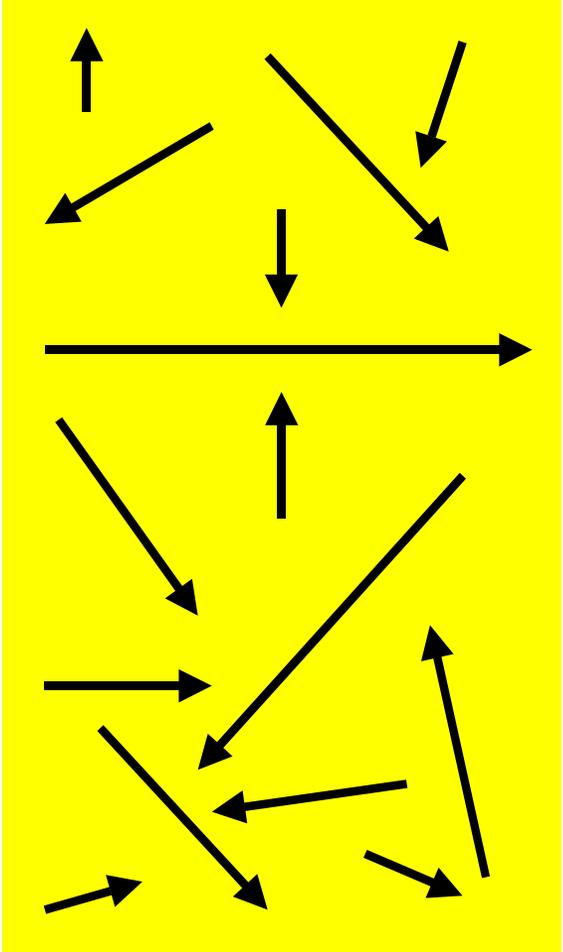
- Henry Kissinger



Using the Right Words



One Voice



Preparing to Engage

- The thoughts you most want the audience to remember
- Lead with your conclusion, followed by supporting facts
 - AmeriCorps is a national service program that engages more than 80,000 Americans in intensive service each year



Getting Your Message Out

Good content is
not storytelling.
It's **TELLING** your
STORY WELL!

@MarketingProfs

Ingredients that Make Great Content

Great content is:

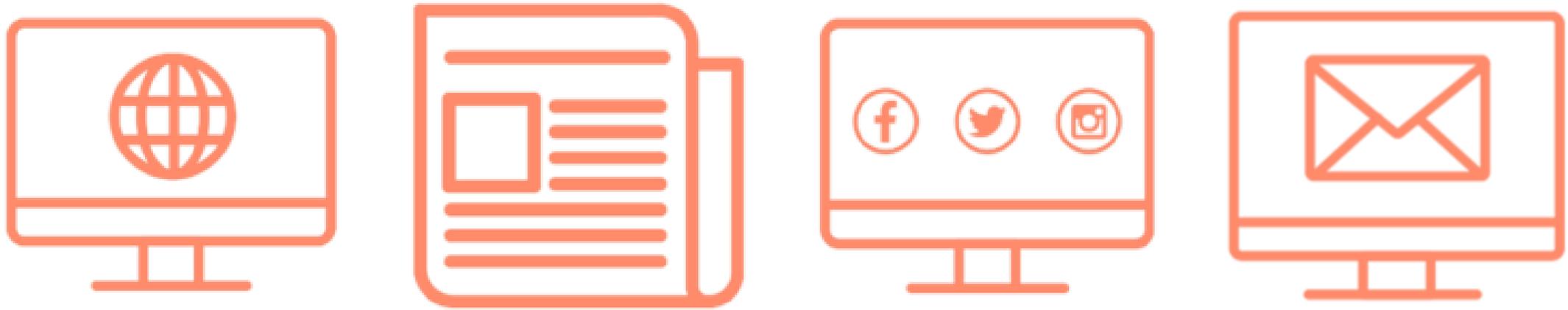
- Authentic
- Clear and concise
- Engaging
- Relevant
- Shareable
- Provides value



Are You Content-Rich?

- Video
- Graphics
- Blog posts
- Letters to the editor
- Speaking engagements/ presentations
- Among others!

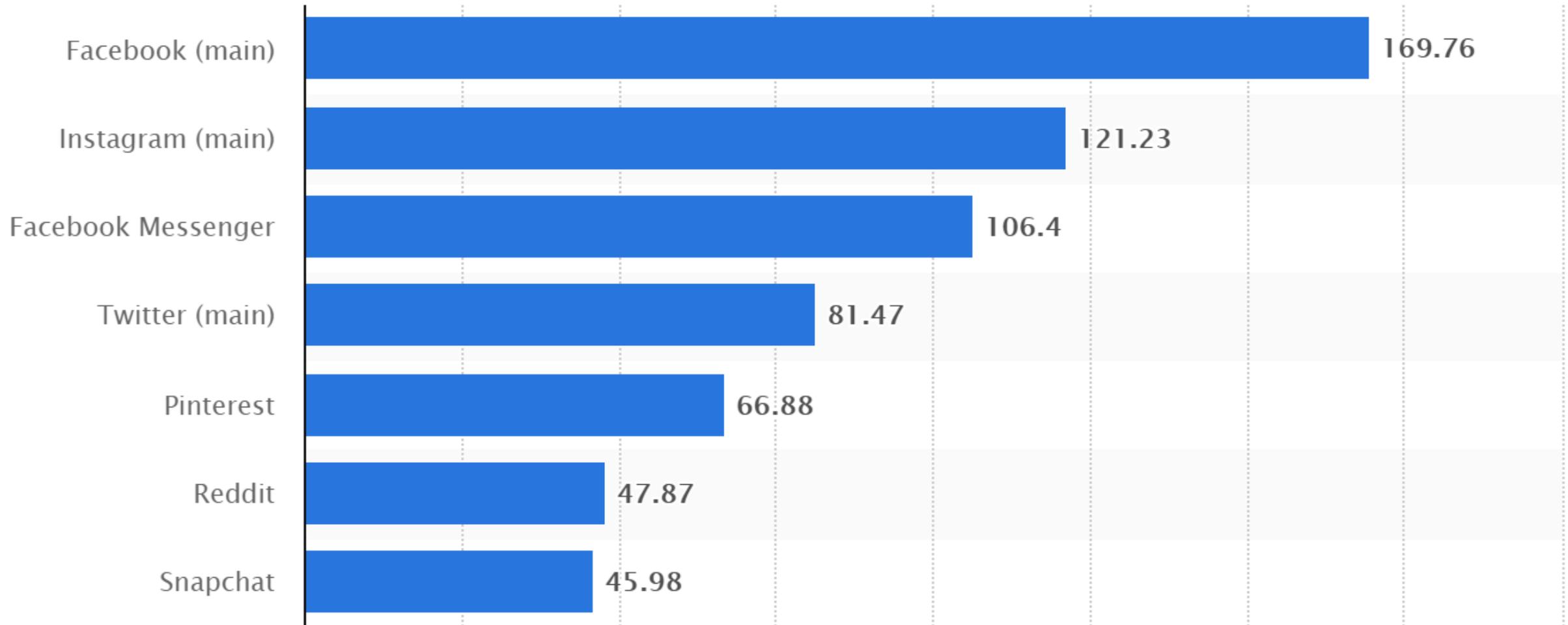




Choosing the Right Vehicle

Social Media Statistics

Monthly Users (in millions)



Social Media

Questions to ask:

- What networks are you using?
- Who is your audience?
- How are you engaging your audience?
- How frequently are you posting?
- What are you sharing?



Social Media Best Practices

- Engaging, yet concise content
- High-quality photos (AmeriCorps logo visible)
 - Facebook – 1200 x 630
 - Twitter – 440 x 220
 - LinkedIn – 400 x 400
- Include data points/numbers to show impact
- Tag ServeOhio and AmeriCorps
- Use AmeriCorps Week hashtag





Video

- More than **78%** of people watch videos online every week, and **55%** of those watch every day
- **82%** of all consumer Internet traffic will come from online videos by 2022
- **6 out of 10 people** prefer watching online videos instead of television
- Viewers retain **95%** of a message when they watch it through video

Video Tips

- Grab attention early
- Get your branding/logo in right away
- Tell your audience a story
- Average length of videos is 1-3 minutes
- Include a CTA
- Make sure your video works without sound



Blogs

- More than **77%** of Internet users regularly read blog posts
- Average reader spends **37 seconds** reading a blog post
- Approximately **55%** of bloggers write less than 1,000 words per post
- Blog posts that feature an image every 75-100 words get **2x more shares**



Blog Writing Tips

- Great platform for sharing your story in more detail
- Can be short or long form
- Conversational tone
- Include engaging photos in the post





Earned Media

Questions to ask:

- Who are your local media?
- How are you proactively engaging with the media?
- Who is your spokesperson?
- Find the “RPs”



Earned Media Best Practices

- Understand the publication's target audience
- Identify your local reporter
- Create short, engaging pitches with most important details (who, what, where, when, why)
- Don't include large attachments – provide a link to where photos can be downloaded
- Be respectful of the reporter's deadline



Submit a Letter to the Editor

- Share an opinion that addresses an issue or event
- Concise writing (200-250 words depending on the outlet)
- Include data points to show impact of service in the community
- Send to publication's editor via email (paste letter in the body of the email instead of as an attachment)
- Some outlets have an online form

AmeriCorps service adds value to area

This fall marks the 25th anniversary of AmeriCorps — a national service program that engages more than 80,000 Americans in intensive service each year at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community organizations across the country.

As a proud alumnus, having served in Youngstown from 2017 to 2019, I can personally attest to the power of national service. During my term, I served at Youngstown State University, Choffin Career and Technical Center, and other various high schools in the surrounding area. Through my service I worked to increase the awareness of health disparities in the community while empowering the students to create change by enacting a community service project.

In the past 25 years, more than 35,000 Ohio residents have stepped forward and committed to AmeriCorps — giving 65 million hours of service and earning \$118.2 million in education awards.

AmeriCorps is a proven program that brings tangible benefits to the communities being served. It strengthens the impact of Ohio's nonprofits and faith-based organizations by building capacity and creating innovative, sustainable programs. AmeriCorps expands educational and economic opportunity for its members. And it improves civic participation and encourages community involvement to develop long-term solutions.

My term as an AmeriCorps member changed my life and I have watched it change the lives of hundreds of others who continue to make a difference every day. Together, AmeriCorps members are getting things done to make our state stronger and better.

TYLER POULAKOS

AmeriCorps member,

2017-2019



Leveraging AmeriCorps Week 2020

Top 10 Ways to Tell Your Story During AmeriCorps Week

- Plan an event
- Engage your local media
- Submit a letter to the editor or guest column
- Write a blog post



AmeriCorps is a way for me to give back to the United States, its possibilities and advantages that it has given me. I am an immigrant. I came over here when I was five-years-old. I am unable to join the military for obvious reasons. Joining AmeriCorps is my way of saying, "I'm giving you four years of service in return for everything you have given to me as a nation."

Jorge Mendez

OHIO COLLEGE GUIDES

SERVE **OHIO**

Top 10 Ways to Tell Your Story During AmeriCorps Week

- Create engaging social media content
- Leverage visual graphics/photos to highlight program's impact
- Use a unique hashtag (e.g. #MadeinAmeriCorps)
- Produce a short video



“I serve with City Year Columbus, and working with the organization I've gotten to know Columbus in a completely new light.”

Amanda Iocono

CITY YEAR COLUMBUS

SERVE **OHIO**

Top 10 Ways to Tell Your Story During AmeriCorps Week

- Invite your local elected official to visit your program
- Identify speaking opportunities with the local civic organization



“I like to be in areas that people don’t like to go to. It’s like the Robert Frost poem “The Road Not Taken”. A lot of my friends and relatives questioned why I wanted to do this, they didn’t understand. But this is my purpose in life, to serve people who are underprivileged and underserved, and I love doing it.”

Anthony Ying
CITY YEAR CLEVELAND

SERVE OHIO



QUESTIONS?

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