**VRP**

Andy Goodman

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@goodmancenter

Andy Goodman is an American writer, producer, orator, and consultant. He has worked in the entertainment industry and in public interest communications.

Growing up, Goodman aspired to write for television. In 1991, he moved to Los Angeles and wrote for ABC’s Dinosaurs for three seasons. Three of Goodman’s Dinosaurs epidodes won awards from the Environmental Media Association (EMA). He also Co-produced the show from 1993-1994. Subsequently, he began working for CBS and hatched the fledgling series The Nanny.

When Goodman was ready to leave TV, he spent five years as EMA’s president.

Goodman also founded and directed the American Comedy Network.

Goodman works with nonprofit organizations, foundations, and educational institutions to improve their print, broadcast media, and Internet communications. He serves clients such as the Environmental Defense, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Sierra Club.

After leaving the EMA, he created a goodman , a consulting firm specializing in the effective communication of environmental and nonprofit causes. Goodman holds workshops based on his communication principles and published works, such as “Storytelling as Best Practice” and “The Four Connecting Points.” He has spoken at major conferences and for audiences such as Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs.

Andy directs The Goodman Center, cofounded with Lipman Hearne in 2008. He is also a part of the faculty of the Communications Leadership Institute,[8] is a Senior Fellow for Civic Ventures, and serves on the boards of VolunteerMatch and Great Nonprofits.

**About The Goodman Center:**

As a nonprofit, your organization does good work. But it’s sometimes difficult to explain compellingly—in proposals, web pages, and those impossibly short elevator speeches.

The Goodman Center is designed to help.

At The Goodman Center, we offer highly interactive, intimate workshops from nationally recognized experts that you can take from the convenience of your home or office. They’re fast, affordable, and put tools in your hands that you can begin using immediately to make your communications better.

The Goodman Center was cofounded in 2008 by Lipman Hearne, one of the nation’s leading marketing and communications firms, and Andy Goodman, renowned communications consultant and author of Why Bad Ads Happen to Good Causes.

**IN THE MEDIA:**

*Pulse Magazine*

Interview with Andy Goodman (January 2011)

Storytelling and MCH: A Conversation with AMCHP Keynote Speaker Andy Goodman

By Mike R. Fraser, PhD, CAE

AMCHP CEO

Andy Goodman

Author, Storytelling as Best Practice

As we prepare for the 2011 AMCHP and Family Voices Conferences I had the chance to talk with Andy Goodman, our shared keynote speaker, about the topic of storytelling. Andy is a master storyteller and works with many organizations to develop effective stories about their work. Here’s what Andy had to say about storytelling and maternal and child health. Don’t miss Andy’s talk on Tuesday, February 15.

**Mike**: Andy, thanks for talking with me today. You do such good work on storytelling. In a nutshell, what are the elements of an effective story?

**Andy**: What makes stories so powerful is their ability to generate an emotional response. They make the audience feel something, and the experience of feeling helps them remember what they’ve just heard. I like to use the metaphor of a drawbridge: when you want to truly connect with another person, you have to lower the drawbridge that let’s them walk across a moat (which can represent apathy, indifference or just distraction) and temporarily enter the world of your story. Emotion is the force that lowers the drawbridge, so I believe emotion is the most important element in any story. Without it, you’re just recounting a dry sequence of events, and nobody’s going to jump over a mote to hear that.

**Mike**: That is so true, we need to have that emotional connection. What is interesting is that we have so many emotional connections in maternal and child health and yet we don’t have lots of compelling stories about our work in the states. Why do you think we have such a hard time developing stories about our work in maternal and child health?

**Andy**: First of all, if our colleagues working in maternal and child health are having difficulties telling stories, I have some good news for them: you have plenty of company. I have been working with public interest organizations of all stripes for the past 10 years, and most of them are “story-challenged.” They aren’t lacking good stories to tell — quite the contrary, in fact — they just have difficulty telling them without including all kinds of technical terms, acronyms, statistics and other gobbledygook that drains the life out of the story. Just think about the last time you were swapping stories during a coffee break or over lunch. When your friends or colleagues were telling their stories, did anybody talk about “enhancing access”? Was anybody “building capacity”? Probably not, because when we tell stories in informal settings, we speak in plain English. So when I work with people in the public interest sector who want to become better storytellers, the first thing I teach them is to relax and let their gut instincts take over. Believe it or not, all human beings are natural storytellers — we just have to get out of our own way sometimes. And we also have to be a little less modest. The people I’ve met in maternal and child health are doing heroic work. Sometimes, when they tell a story, it is about them.

**Mike**: Well, that’s good news! I think you are right, we do get in our own way sometimes and make things a lot more technical and complicated than the need to be. What are some organizations that have really mastered the art of storytelling? What impact has that had on their work, and support for their work?

**Andy**: I often point to the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) as an organization that has embraced storytelling and transformed its communications as a result. (And I’d mention them here even if your readers weren’t involved in maternal and child health.) From the founder, Dr. David Olds, to the organization’s leadership, to the nurses in the field, everyone is aware of the importance of telling stories about what NFP does. Because NFP has an evidence-based model, they’ve spent decades rigorously collecting data to build the case for their approach, and it’s one of the most compelling cases out there today. But when you talk in numbers alone, you’re speaking to only half of the human brain. You need the stories as well to create an emotional connection that will ultimately let all that data in. NFP started embracing that philosophy a couple of years ago, and if you look at the home page of their website today, you will see four stories featured prominently at the top of the page. I believe that their ability to communicate so effectively is one reason they have grown so dramatically and now provide services in 32 states across the United States.

**Mike**: Yes, the NFP does a great job with stories – thanks for sharing that. In addition to their examples, what other resources are out there to help folks develop effective stories?

**Andy**: There are several books I regularly recommend for people who want to work on their storytelling. Story, by Robert McKee, is aimed primarily at aspiring screenwriters, but the sections on story structure are so solid (and applicable to storytelling in all forms), that the book is worth buying for those chapters alone. Telling True Stories is a collection of essays on the art of narrative nonfiction writing, and I think it’s always inspiring to hear some of the best practitioners talk about their work. If you want a deeper appreciation for the power of storytelling in influencing human behavior, Annette Simmons’ The Story Factor provides a valuable overview. And finally, if you want to invest four hours in an online class that was developed especially for public interest storytellers, you may want to register for “Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative” offered by The Goodman Center. I hear it’s terrific.

**Mike**: Ha, ha. I’m sure it is terrific – and can actually vouch for it myself having taken the course! Thanks Andy, we are all looking forward to seeing you in Washington, DC in February.