Workbook 3.3  
Person Centred Practice Across Cultures

Cross-cultural   
story-based marketing –

One story at a time

July 2016

This workbook has been developed for National Disability Services by:

Barbel Winter, Managing Director, futures Upfront   
and Maria Katrivesis, Consultant and Trainer

First published (July 2016)

© futures Upfront

For more information and for permission to reproduce please contact:

futures Upfront

email: [info@futuresupfront.com.au](mailto:info@futuresupfront.com.au)

web: [www.futuresupfront.com.au](http://www.futuresupfront.com.au)

**Produced by**

NDS NSW

Level 18, 1 Castlereagh St

Sydney, NSW 2000

**Funded by**

NSW Department of Family and Community Services.

© This publication is copyright

All rights reserved. Except as provided in the Copyright Act 1968 (Commonwealth), no use of this work, which is within the exclusive right of the copyright owners, may be made.

**Contact**

NDS

02 9256 3100

[ndsnsw@nds.org.au](mailto:ndsnsw@nds.org.au)

[www.nds.org.au](http://www.nds.org.au)

**About National Disability Services**

**National Disability Services** is the peak body for non-government disability services. Its purpose is to promote quality service provision and life opportunities for people with disability. NDS’s Australia-wide membership includes more than 1000 non-government organisations, which support people with all forms of disability. NDS provides information and networking opportunities to its members and policy advice to state, territory and federal governments.

**Table of Contents**

**1. Preface** **2**

1.1 How to use this workbook 3

1.2 What is this workbook about 3

1.3 Outcomes 3

1.4 Who is this workbook for 3

1.5 How long will it take to complete 3

**2. The Workbook** **4**

2.1 Story-based marketing 5

2.2. What makes a good story? 5

2.3 Telling stories cross-culturally 8

**3. Conclusion** **10**

# Preface

This workbook is part of a series of resources for the disability services sector designed by futures Upfront for NDS with funding provided by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services; Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

The workbooks in this series are:

**1. Individual Practices – working with people from CALD backgrounds with disability**

1.1 Empathy – a practice to connect across cultures

1.2 Active listening – unconditional positive regard across cultures

1.3 Choice making – cross-cultural differences and what can we learn from them

1.4 Reflective Practice – why different points of view matter

1.5 Working effectively with interpreters

**2. Organisational Practices – building a culturally responsive organisation**

2.1 Terminology and data – a guide to understanding cultural diversity and disability

2.2 Making the business case – why diversity is good for business

2.3 A culturally responsive person centred organisation – key elements

2.4 Leading towards cultural responsiveness – a practical guide for managers, team leaders and coaches

2.5 Building a diverse workforce – practical strategies

2.6 Valuing bilingual workers – strategies to recruit, train and retain

**3. Community Engagement – working alongside diverse communities**

3.1 1 Community @ a time – culturally responsive community engagement principles and elements

3.2 Making Links – networking with CALD Communities

3.3 Cross-cultural story-based marketing – 1 story @a time

This workbook is part of ‘Community Engagement – working alongside diverse communities’.

## How to use this workbook?

This workbook can be used in many different ways, including:

* As a self-paced learning program by an individual
* As a self- paced learning program for a group
* As part of formal training organised by an organisation
* As part of coaching and mentoring

This workbook includes exercises and opportunities for reflections (when working by yourself) or discussions (when working with others).

There is plenty of room in your workbook to take notes and make comments.

## What is this workbook about?

This workbook builds on the idea of story-based marketing as a powerful person centred tool for communicating messages and marketing to individuals. Based on the common elements of storytelling across cultures, it gives you a framework and some ideas to make your marketing much more relevant and attractive to culturally diverse audiences.

## Outcomes

By the end of the workbook you will be able to:

* Understand story based marketing
* Identify some common elements of good storytelling
* Telling stories cross-culturally.

## Who is this workbook for?

* People in an organisation interested in marketing their organisation to culturally diverse communities
* People in an organisation charged with writing marketing and promotion materials
* Anyone in an organisation wanting to promote their organisation to people from diverse communities.

## How long will it take to complete?

This workbook should take about 30-45 minutes to work through, longer if you watch all the videos

# The Workbook

The main part of this workbook is divided into the following sections:

* Story-based marketing
* What makes a good story?
* Telling stories cross-culturally

## Story-based marketing

In the disability sector like all other human services, we have seen an increase in marketing of services, partly in preparation for individualised funding in a more competitive marketplace open to the choice of customers.

Story-based marketing is the idea that an organisation can engage with its (potential) customers through the power of stories. Truthful stories of your work not only engender trust, but also powerfully demonstrate the value of your work. Effective story-based marketing is not simply telling people what you do and how you do it, but also showing them.

In the not-for-profit, for-purpose sector, many of the stories that are told are about people who benefit from our services.  
  
The Benevolent Society is the oldest not-for-profit in Australia.  
[Click here](http://www.benevolent.org.au/about/our--story) for the video of their story. The story by the Benevolent Society is a story based on its history. It powerfully tells the story of the work of the Benevolent Society. The images of people in the video (who do not have a voice) are used here to personalise and to link the work of the Benevolent Society to those who have benefited from the work. They tell us:

Our story is Australia’s story.

“Imagine an Australia without free legal aid, where child labour is still widespread, where there is no old age pension and no specialist maternity care. You’ve just imagined an Australia without The Benevolent Society.

Our story is the story of the nurses, the social workers and the carers who supported people in times of need. It’s the story of the thousands of people who donated time and money to help us help others and the advocates who fought for so many things we take for granted today.

Right from the start, we’ve been there for anyone who needs us, at the heart of change”.

Think about some of the NDIS videos and stories which can be accessed online [here](http://www.ndis.gov.au/people-disability/videos-and-stories).

All of these stories are focused on the individual and are told to illustrate the work of the NDIS. And certainly because it is all about the individual this format works.

A quick glance over a dozen or so websites will show that many disability services organisations now market themselves through stories.

**Workbook exercise:**

Have a look at some disability services websites. What are some of the different kinds of stories you can find? Why do they work/don’t work for you? What makes a good story?

Storytelling has become one of the most popular techniques of marketing communication. It's a very effective way to engage audiences, convey information and influence people without using overt persuasion.  
Below identifies characteristics and techniques characteristics of great stories found by academic researchers and professional writers.

**Trust in the teller:** Our feelings about a storyteller influence our reaction to the story.

**Drama:** Stories need dramatic development and emotional dynamics. Real life has ups and downs do people relate to stories with drama.

**Relatability:** The more people identify with a story, the more likely they are to be persuaded. People are drawn to stories they can relate to.

**Immersion:** The more readers put themselves into a story, the more likely they are to change their opinions.

**Simplicity:** Simple stories are strong stories. Take out everything that serve the narrative. It's usually the simplest stories that entrance us most.

**Agency:** Stories are most persuasive when readers work out their meaning for themselves. Tell a simple story so people reach the conclusion you want them to.

**Familiarity:**

The more familiar a story feels, the more powerful it is. It's easier to fill in the gaps if a story is familiar. Familiar stories are trusted. Unfamiliar stories may have to work to establish trust.

Some questions you might like to ask yourself when reading, listening to, or watching a story are:

* Do you trust the storyteller?
* Is there drama?
* Can you put yourself into the story?
* Is it simple but strong?
* Did you work out the meaning yourself?
* Did the story seem familiar?

How I overcame episodic disability challenges and returned to full time work

By Dan O’Reilly, 27 April 2016

(Please note that all references to the organisation have been removed, but the name of the author remains)

“Eighteen months ago, when I first started using [xxx Employment Service](http://northcottndis.com.au/support/service/employment-services/), I wasn’t ready to start work because I have epilepsy and fractured six vertebrae during two seizures.

The staff that supported me at xxx understood that I needed rehabilitation and [assistance to re-enter the workforce](http://northcottndis.com.au/support/adult-needs/get-a-job/). They worked as a team and helped me with things like writing a cover letter, building my resume and practicing my interview skills.

Finally, after a lot of preparation and rehab, I was finally ready to have a go at returning to work.

I started applying for jobs and soon after the search began, xxx staff told me about a [new job opportunity](https://www.northcott.com.au/career-opportunities) that had come up within xxx. I looked at the position description and went through the application process just like any other candidate.

After going through the interview stage and being shortlisted, I was stoked to hear that I was selected for the position of Customer Contact Advisor.

In this role I get to chat with xxx’s current and potentially future customers about any enquiries they have. I’m also able to help them get informed about [the National Disability Insurance Scheme](http://www.ndis.gov.au/) (NDIS), chat about their goals and discuss what they hope to achieve by using our services.

I’ve learnt so much already and am enjoying my new role. My manager Katie is an excellent teacher and I am loving being back at work. I feel like I’m part of something now, as opposed to being very much removed from society for an expanded period of time.

My seizures are now well managed and controlled with the right medication so I don’t see my [epilepsy](http://www.epilepsy.org.au/about-epilepsy) as an issue affecting my job in a major way.

The [NDIS](http://northcottndis.com.au/about-the-ndis/) is a big change and some people are understandably nervous about it. I’m looking forward to hopefully being able to make things a bit easier for people who contact us and seeing how [the services xxx offers](http://northcottndis.com.au/services/) can work with people on achieving their goals.”

## Telling stories cross-culturally

Using the infographic above and the idea of the monomyth, it might now be easy enough to pull out the key elements that make a story work cross culturally:

**Trust in the storyteller**: What is your credibility in diverse communities or even with a particular community? Do you have any standing? What does the community know about your organisation? If you have little standing, building awareness and trust about your organisation might be one of the reasons to start telling stories cross-culturally.

**Drama**: Thinking about the structure of the monomyth, the Hero’s journey. What elements are there in your story that build on the idea of the often reluctant response to a calling, a journey of transformation and a heroic return? Critical here is that a dramatic story needs to have some ups and downs, but please be aware of what Stella Young and others have called ‘inspiration porn’ when it comes to telling stories about people with disability.

**Relatability:** Can the audience relate to the story you are telling? Can people identify with the story? In this context, it might be important to point out that people from a particular cultural group might not need to see themselves or their specific community in the story in order to identify with it. But what people might need to see is that a diverse range of people are included.

**Immersion:** If people can put themselves into a story it has more impact. Immersion is similar to relatability. When people can relate to a story they can more easily immerse themselves in it. Immersion is easier if the story describes environments that are familiar to us; just like two moons and purple soil tells us that we are on an alien planet. Think about what you can build into a story to make it more familiar and, therefore, easier to relate to Is it through Cultural signifiers, description of foods or rituals? One of the more popular methods we see in stories told by organisations about people with disability is to use names that clearly indicate that someone is likely to be from a CALD background, but often that is all they do.

**Familiarity:** Again, similarly to the two elements above, if a story feels familiar it has more impact.

Finding stories written by disability organisations that are explicitly targeting a cross-cultural audience seems almost impossible. Looking at other areas, here is a story told by a South Indian woman for the Pink Sari Project, a group aiming to raise awareness about breast screening among Indian and Sri Lankan communities, as those communities have one of the lowest breast screening rates.

Gladys Roach

“In 1965, I moved to Adelaide with my husband Neville from Mangalore, South India. With an eagerness to fit in with the locals, I went door-to-door selling Avon wearing a western frock. The neighbours just peeped through their curtains, but they never answered me.

I was disheartened, and I was all set to give up on the new career when my friend suggested ditching the western frock and putting on my sari instead. I was a bit apprehensive, but I decided to give it a go. Decked out in a beautiful sari, I returned to those familiar doors, and much to my surprise, they welcomed me, and even offered tea and biscuits!

Ever since I learned that my sari created intrigue amongst people and became a conversation starter.

Imagine my shock when I learned I have a tumour in my breast, There I was, wanting to live a normal life like most people, and all of a sudden, the dreadful news! It was so deep that they only detected it when I went for a mammogram.

With early detection, I only needed to have radiotherapy. Thankfully, I am cancer-free today. I can still relate to the trauma and tragedy related to breast cancer first hand after losing my daughter to the disease recently.

I went through a difficult time with my treatment and the only thing that sustained me throughout the ordeal was my family.

Now, it is my mission to encourage every woman to make sure they get tested regularly and to be in tune with their bodies. This is why I have decided to share my story and support the Pink Sari Project.”

Workbook Exercise

In Gladys Roach’s story above can you identify what works in terms of relatability, immersion, drama and familiarity? Do you think the story works and do you think it speaks to the target audience (women from Southern India and Sri Lanka) and achieve its purpose?

3. Conclusion

This workbook aimed to assist you in understanding how to tell cross-cultural stories of your organisation to connect with and market to cross-cultural audiences.

You may also want to have a look at the other two workbooks in the series on “Community Engagement – working alongside diverse communities”to learn more about engaging with diverse communities.

Reflections:

**What are some of the take away messages from this workbook? Are there things you disagree with? Was there something that surprised you?**