



***“Data are just summaries of thousands of stories—
tell a few of those stories to help make the data
meaningful.”***

-Dan Heath

A blue-tinted photograph of two young men in a workshop. One man is seated and smiling while working on a project with wires and components. The other man is leaning over him, pointing at the work with a focused expression. The background shows shelves with various items, suggesting a workshop or classroom environment.

What's Your Story?

Using communications to make your projects stronger

April 2023

Stretch Your Brain



1. Pick one slip of paper from the “Product” bowl and two slips from the “Audience” bowl.
2. Think about the different ways your selected audiences could use your selected product.
3. List as many uses as you can!

TIP: Think about what makes the product *valuable* to that specific audience.

Ex: Hairbrush (product)

animal shelter volunteer (audience): relax a hyper dog

florist (audience): get dirt from stems

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Communications Belongs on Your Resume



Show value

Demonstrate commitment

Build trust

Secure executive buy-in

Engage residents

Grow the evidence-based movement

...But it Might Not Be on There Yet

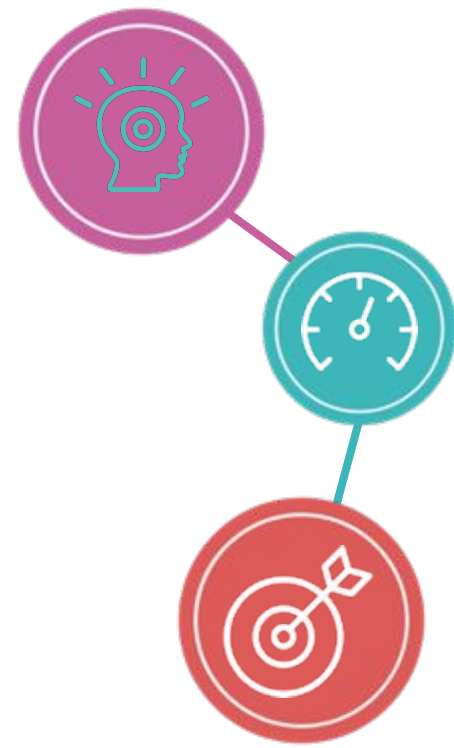
Risk-aversion

Capacity and time constraints

Incomplete programming

Fear of criticism

Where to start?



A woman in a dark blazer and striped skirt stands at a podium on the left, addressing a group of people. A man in a dark suit stands behind her with his arms crossed. The audience is seated at round tables in the foreground and middle ground, some looking towards the speaker. The room has a modern, industrial feel with exposed pipes and a large screen in the background. The entire image is overlaid with a blue tint.

HOW TO TELL A STORY

(THAT MAKES PEOPLE WANT TO LISTEN...AND ACT)

What Makes a Story?

INAY VS WIFM



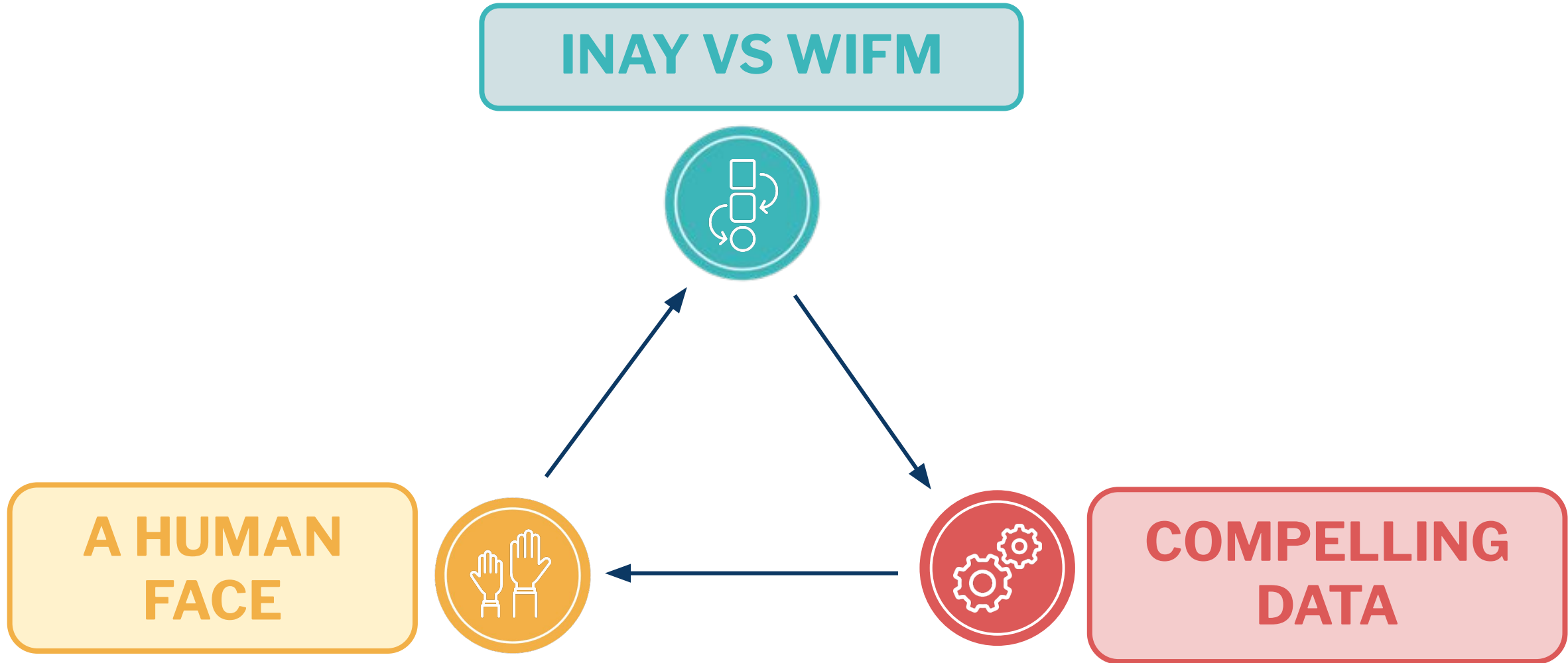
What Makes a Story?

INAY VS WIFM



COMPELLING
DATA

What Makes a Story?



The 7 Storytelling Fundamentals



Create a narrative



Share numbers



Make it digestible



Demonstrate progress



Find your message-carriers



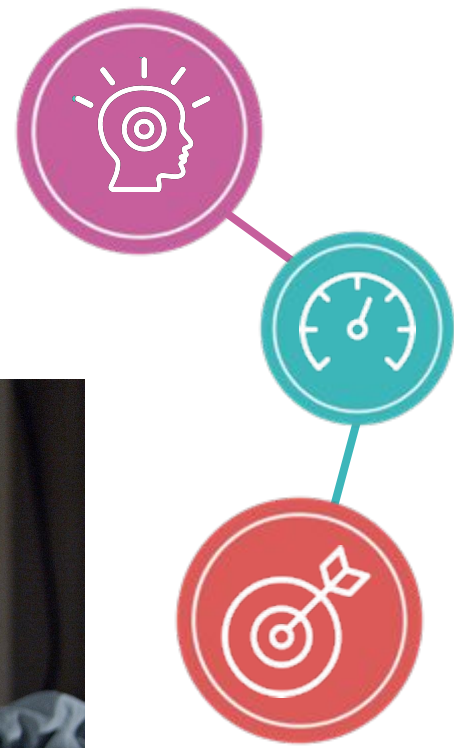
Involve stakeholders



Don't be dull

Create a Narrative

- Narrative: plot, characters, setting
- Our brains are better at taking in information in story form!



Share Numbers

- Make your narrative stronger with quantitative facts
- **TIP:** Always follow up with an ask about the numbers:
 - Do you know how many people you've served this year?
 - Think Equity: Who? Which communities?
 - How many employers did you engage?
 - What percent of budget was shifted?
 - How long did employees stay in their position?



Make it Digestible

- How would you explain it to a 5-year-old?*



- Not about dumbing it down—it makes your story more engaging, simple and relevant
- **TIP:** Take a policy word and use thesaurus.com to find a word you'd hear at the grocery store.
 - Utilize → use; ecosystem → system; advance → promote



*(Yes, seriously)

Demonstrate Progress

- What counts as progress?
 - Not just having solved a problem, it's any **step forward**
- Creates buy-in
- Shows commitment



Identify Message-Carriers

- You!
 - City Council Members
 - City Staff and Frontline Practitioners
 - Business Leaders
 - Academics
 - Nonprofits and Community Organizations
 - Workforce Advocates
 - Media
-
- Leverage the power of compounding interest



Involve Stakeholders



- Early and often
- Ask project participants to support your communications strategies

Don't Be Dull

To show value to your audience, you have to cut through the noise.



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3 EXAMPLES OF STORYTELLING THAT WORKED

MEMPHIS

SHOWING WHY IT MATTERS

- Digestible data stories about issues that affect residents

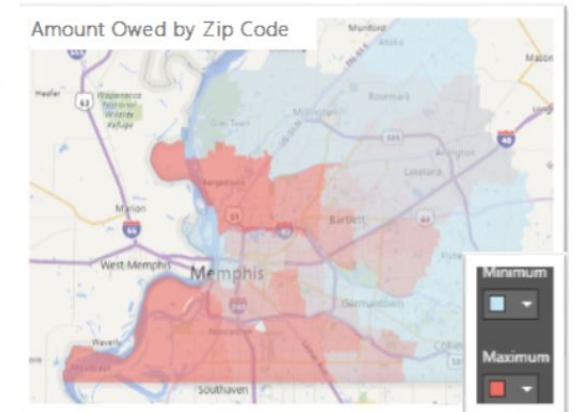


Ending Overdue Library Fines to Support Literacy

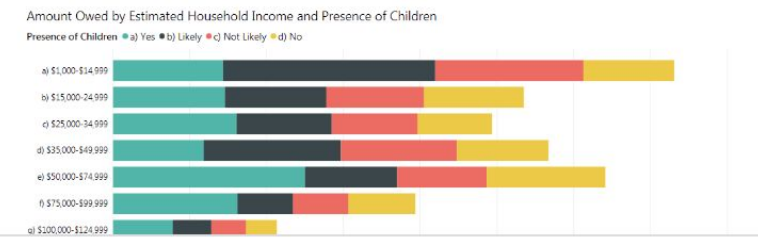
Background: Memphis Public Libraries (MPL) seeks to serve as a hub for literacy, learning, and access to the economy for all Memphians. Like most library systems, MPL has long charged overdue fines as a way to encourage timely returns, so that books and materials can remain available to everyone. In the past few years, these fines have generated about \$82,000 per year, less than 1% of MPL's total budget. However, charging fines also comes with costs. Processing each fine takes time and resources, and (more importantly) national research shows that as fines grow, they can become an obstacle that prevents people from participating in library services. But is this true in Memphis? MPL dug into the data to find out.

Service Question: How do fines affect access to library services for all Memphians?

Analysis: MPL created a "heat map" of overdue library fines and matched it with census data to better understand who was most impacted. This led to an important realization: fines were disproportionately affecting the Memphians who rely on library services most. While households earning under \$25,000 make up about 27% of the population, they accounted for 33% of all unpaid bills. Households in these areas were also more likely to have children under age 18, for whom literacy supports are especially important.



At the same time, only 20% of fines ever received any money – more often, people simply stopped checking out books, or the fines were cancelled for policy reasons. A poll of library visitors at outreach events also found that having overdue fines was the number one reason for not having a library card.



LONG BEACH

EQUITABLE OUTREACH



- A 40% increase in engagement with non-English speaking business owners

GILBERT, AZ

HAVE FUN

Data Dots

Search Results for "population"



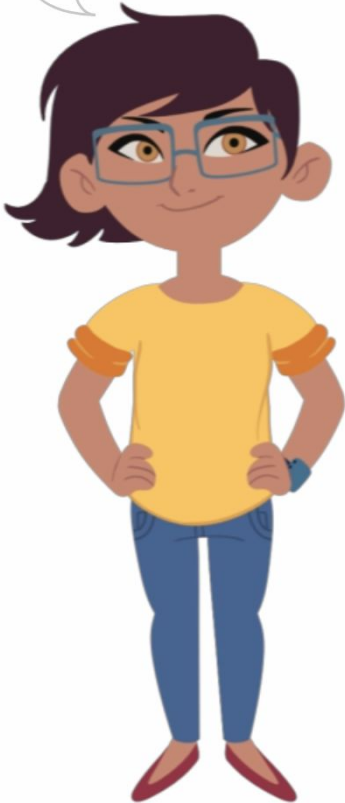
Gilbert's Population Estimate

Posted on February 4, 2020 at 12:18 am.

Written by Alex

Gilbert's 2021 Population Estimate is 273,796. In the last three decades, Gilbert's population increased 770.3% from 29,805 in 1990 to 259,386 in 2019. The growth didn't happen overnight. It all started in 1920 with 865 people. Back then, Gilbert was an agricultural community but quickly evolved into an economically-

Here's what I found for "population".






Activity: Storytelling Worksheet

Storytelling Worksheet

- Share-out
- Takeaways



PROGRAM STORYTELLING

WITH OUR FEDERAL RELIEF FUNDS, _____ WILL INVEST IN
(CITY/COUNTY)

_____. WE WILL BE FOCUSED ON _____
(PROJECT) (TARGET NEIGHBORHOOD/COMMUNITY GROUP)

BECAUSE THIS GROUP HAS HISTORICALLY _____
(TIE TO STRUCTURAL RACISM)

(TIE TO STRUCTURAL RACISM)

AS OUR DATA HAS SHOWN, APPROXIMATELY _____ OF _____
(# OR %) (DEMOGRAPHIC/POPULATION)

HAVE _____, IMPACTING THEIR ACCESS TO
(CHALLENGE)

ECONOMIC MOBILITY OPPORTUNITIES, AND THOSE OF THEIR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN.

TO MAKE PROGRESS, WE ENGAGED _____ AND
(STAKEHOLDER)

_____ AND _____, BECAUSE
(REASON) (REASON)



What Counts as Comms?*

- City and county newsletters
- Grant applications & reports
- Coffee with stakeholders
- Booths at events
- Op-eds & letters to the editor
- Social media (yours and your jurisdiction's)
- Blogs
- Mayoral/executive speaking opportunities
- Local media
- Podcasts
- Partnerships
- & more!



*More than you think—communications is a core function of your job!

A blue-tinted photograph of two young men in a workshop. One man is seated and holding a bicycle frame, while the other stands beside him, pointing at a component. They are both smiling and appear to be collaborating on a project.

Activity: Communications Timeline Worksheet

Communications Timeline

- Share-out
- Takeaways

The template is titled "COMMUNICATIONS TIMELINE" in a dark blue rounded rectangle at the top center. It features four planning boxes arranged in a 2x2 grid, each with a light blue background and rounded corners. Each box contains the following fields: "IN _____ (MONTH)", "(PERSON IN CHARGE)", "WILL DO _____ (COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY)", "TO PERSUADE _____ (AUDIENCE)", and "THAT _____ (WHY)". A horizontal timeline line runs across the middle, with "APRIL CONVENING!" on the left and "APRIL 2024" on the right. The template is decorated with illustrations of people working, a city skyline, and abstract shapes. On the right side of the slide, there are three circular icons: a purple one with a head and lightbulb, a teal one with a clock face, and a red one with a target and arrow.



THANK YOU!

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