Communicating Value: Telling Your Lab’s Story

Cathy Johnson
Director, Training and Workforce Development
Once upon a time...

Karen Taylor
Quality Assurance Manager
Department of Agriculture and Markets
Food Laboratory Division, New York Agriculture
Storytelling 101
It’s About the Who and the Why
Who is Your Audience?
“What you’re trying to do, when you tell a story, is to write about an event in your life that made you feel some particular way. And what you’re trying to do, when you tell a story, is to get the audience to have that same feeling.”

*Pete Docter, Chief Creative Officer, Pixar*
The Elements

• Universal
• A clear structure and purpose
• A character to root for
• Emotional appeal
• Surprising and unexpected
• Simple and focused

Audience’s Lack of Knowledge is a Good Thing

• People are compelled by stories that are surprising and unexpected.
• People love an underdog.
• People love an unexpected hero.
• Public health lab work is part of their lives and they don’t even know it…yet.
Story Structure

• Who is the story about?
• What does the main character want?
• What stands in the main character’s way?
• How does the main character respond to overcome barriers?
• What happens and what does it mean?
“When your character is battling against all odds, facing adversity or their back is against the wall, well then, you have yourself the makings of a great story.”
A Shared Vocabulary
A Short Story... in 6 words

"For sale: baby shoes, never worn."

- Ernest Hemingway
Activity:

What is Your 6 Word Story?

1. Beginning, middle, end
2. Emotional hook: funny, sad, thoughtful, silly
3. Give it a try

Report:
Share a short or two
Thinking ahead

- Stories lead people to make decisions
- Make it about one person or one event rather than all
- Practice
Final Thoughts

• Stories serve a greater purpose – they add value and they teach the audience something.
• Tell a story about which you are passionate.
• Storytelling changes or challenges perceptions.
• Simplify, simplify, simplify!