



WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Constructing a Strategic Narrative for Your Company

The Authors

Your company's future is composed by four different authors: the company itself, the popular culture, the customers, and the influencers. Think about each of these authors and in the space provided below, brainstorm the story that is being told about your product by each of these authors. When sketching these stories consider the following questions:

- 1 What is the appeal of the product for this author?
- 2 What is their connection with the product?
- 3 What would they tell others about the product?
- 4 How have they interacted with or experienced your product? Where were they first introduced to this product?
- 5 Are there any problems caused by your product from this author's perspective?

THE COMPANY	THE POPULAR CULTURE
THE CUSTOMERS	THE INFLUENCERS

The Elements of Your Narrative

A strategic narrative is an imagined future captured in a “before,” “now,” “to be” sequence. This type of narrative sets the stage by informing the listener of relevant history and current conditions. It defines the challenges or opportunities to be addressed, and it describes how those challenges will be met. A strategic narrative “plot line” establishes a fundamental understanding of actions to be taken in the face of a threat or opportunity.



What Are the Elements of a Strategic Narrative?

These three elements reflect the temporal sequencing that all humans do when telling stories or taking in new information. These three elements reflect the Past to Present to Future unfolding of any narrative. Answer each question for each element to begin building the pieces of your narrative.

SET THE STAGE	DEFINE THE CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	DESCRIBE THE RESOLUTION
<i>Where are we today?</i>	<i>What turning point do we find ourselves having to address?</i>	<i>What primary goal will be reached?</i>
<i>How did we get here?</i>	<i>What's holding us back?</i>	<i>Why is that important to us?</i>
<i>What have we learned from the past?</i>	<i>What's driving us forward?</i>	<i>What does this reflect about who we are?</i>
<i>What happened in the past that shaped our identity?</i>	<i>What are our most critical conflicts?</i>	<i>What will it look, smell, taste, and feel like when we get there?</i>
<i>How did that form how we perceive ourselves?</i>	<i>How are we resolving the most critical conflicts?</i>	<i>What am I calling you to do?</i>
<i>What matters to us within that identity?</i>	<i>What actions are important to take now?</i>	<i>What am I willing to commit to do?</i>
<i>What values and behaviors matter most to our brand?</i>	<i>What roadblocks might we encounter along the way?</i>	<i>What will customers be saying if our product succeeds?</i>
<i>Why do they matter?</i>	<i>What must we START doing?</i>	<i>What's in it for me, you, all of us?</i>
	<i>What must we STOP doing?</i>	<i>How will we be changed for the better?</i>
	<i>What will it take to win?</i>	

The Anchoring Moments

A well-written narrative has a plot line that anchors all of the defining events in a time-bound sequence; past, present and future. As a leader, you must first define the events along the path like the plot line of a novel before establishing themes and elements of the story to access the rational, emotional, intuitive and physical responses. It is an iterative process, beginning with defining the events that anchor the narrative, start to finish. Use the blank space to create a timeline of the anchoring moments in your company based on the model below. Remember to include events from the past and present.



Respond to each question in consideration of the Anchoring Moments timeline that you constructed above.

- 1 What themes or patterns seem to cut across the past and the present? Which themes do you want to emphasize in your narrative?
