

## CONTACT

 0417 773 347 waynea@cutthrough.biz thecontentfactory.com.au au.linkedin.com/in/wayneiac

## Nailing your narrative

Are you looking to unite people behind your strategy or transformation? To build a more agile, collaborative and engaged team? If so, the first step is to define what makes your organisation tick. That is, to create your story or strategic narrative.

### What is a strategic narrative?

A strategic narrative brings your organisation's story to life. It tells everyone:

- **Who** you are (your purpose and/or value proposition).
- **Where** you are going (your vision and goals).
- **How** you will get there (your strategy and values).

### Why do strategic narratives matter?

Broadly speaking, there are two types of strategic narrative.

There's the creative 'sugar-hit': a piece of prose that sounds good but is often entirely disconnected from your strategy. Apart from drawing some initial praise, it doesn't really achieve anything. It ultimately ends up gathering dust in a draw or on the wall.

Then there's the strategic driver - the narrative that lasts and ultimately becomes your organisation's DNA. It gives people context and informs everything they do and say. It unites them - ensuring they are working together on the same (the right) priorities. And it empowers them with a common framework that supports better, faster decision-making.

This narrative also plays an important role in helping others understand your organisation. This is particularly important for your customers, stakeholders and influencers, investors, collaborators and prospective new recruits or M&A colleagues.

### What makes a great strategic narrative

A great strategic narrative stems from a deep appreciation of your organisation and the changing world around you. It tells your story in a way that people can:

- **Get** (they understand it).
- **Buy** (they believe it... it makes sense to them).
- **Share** (they are able - and want - to tell the story).
- **Live** (it underpins their decisions and actions).

To achieve this, a strategic narrative needs to have three important qualities:

**Simple:** Above all, people need to remember your story if they are to actively apply it to their decisions and actions. For this reason, the story should be as simple and clear as possible (at least at the highest level). Start with a simple story on a page, or 'SOAP' and build out into a more detailed 'strategy playbook'. The SOAP helps to make the organisation's story easier to understand and recall. The playbook helps to deepen understanding. It also provides a platform for future communications and engagement.

**Credible:** People need to believe the story. It needs to make sense. An insincere purpose or pie in the sky vision won't work. What can help is engagement and transparency about:

- The research that supports the narrative and the plans and metrics you have to track progress. This helps to build understanding and legitimacy.
- The extent to which your leaders are openly advocating and living the story. If your leaders aren't fully on board, nobody will be.

**Inspiring:** The most powerful ways to inspire people are to explain how they are helping others and the future opportunities they are unlocking. That's why it's important to focus your story on your customers, stakeholders and people. How are their lives changing, what are you doing to help them and what could you achieve as a result?

### Evolving and maintaining the strategic narrative

There's a simple reality that underpins the success of any narrative. **You are one organisation. Ultimately, you only have one story.** This reality impacts in two ways.

First, organisations are often governed by a wide range of guiding principles - strategy, vision, goals, plans, values, purpose, mission, brand, CVP, EVP and so on. These principles are often created in silos (at different times by different departments). As a result, they sometimes don't connect into a cohesive story or, worse still, conflict. The narrative will expose these inconsistencies. Once highlighted, any inconsistencies need to be addressed.

Second, it is vital that all communications, marketing and training reinforce your story. Nothing will kill a strategic narrative faster than inconsistent messages.

If you'd like to know more about how to create, communicate and embed a strategic narrative, contact Wayne Aspland on waynea@cutthrough.biz or 0417 773 347.