



Articulate your strategy clearly and convincingly

The stakes

Performance benefits when every member of an organization clearly understands the strategy. First, this understanding gives meaning to and fosters consistent interpretation and acceptance of the established objectives and directives. Second, it fosters autonomy and initiative, by clarifying not only the end goal but also how efforts should be directed to get there. That being said, experienced leaders and managers are well aware of the difficulties involved. Indeed, how can one communicate a vision that speaks to everyone, inspires commitment and provides concrete guidance? One particularly effective technique is to express the strategy as a story that individuals can make their own and easily transmit.

Four criteria to articulate a convincing strategy

Presenting the strategic vision as a story can be very motivating, provided the four following criteria are applied:

ADVICE		ILLUSTRATION
1	Concise The key points of your story must be memorable and easily transmissible. Establish a clear and concise framework that people can build upon in their respective domains without losing sight of the big picture. • Try to tell the story in less than 500 words. More than that, and you risk losing your audience's attention. • Cite no more than four strategic dimensions, if possible. Otherwise, people won't retain the whole message. • Use short and simple sentences to make your messages more striking.	Set the stage: We sell injection presses to plastic parts makers. Our technological edge has made us the leader in this market. But our two main competitors have been eating into our market share for the past three years by applying a low-cost strategy [...]
2	Specific Too many strategies leave teams indifferent, because they seem generic - they could just as easily be stated by closest competitor! • For the message to be convincing, people must recognize themselves in the story and find answers in it: • Integrate what makes you original in the marketplace and what distinguishes your trajectory. • Specify why the vision you've chosen is consistent with your specific challenges and assets.	State the strategic priorities and underlying rationale: We can no longer distinguish ourselves through technological performance alone. We will stay in the lead by becoming an industrial performance partner for our customers, rather than a mere press manufacturer. Indeed, our research know-how [...]
3	Structured To be memorable and serve as an effective guide, your story must be consistent and structured, and naturally move from beginning to end. • Take inspiration from the typical layout of a good story: • Set the stage: Who are we? What are the main features of the context? • Specify the issue or challenge to surmount: What are the risks? What are the opportunities? • Recount the hero's journey: What path will you take? What strengths and clever tactics will you use to reach your objective?	Describe the strategic implementation process and objectives to guide and engage the organization: We will first focus our research efforts on optimizing the processes of our customers. Today, we are proud to design the best presses; and three years hence, we want to be recognized as a leading-edge partner helping our customers to optimize their complete production cycle. This will require [...]
4	Engaging The objective is not just to state the strategy: the story should also generate support and even enthusiasm, if possible. • Make your story lively and descriptive, e.g.: "Let's launch new offerings so fast it will make our competitors' heads spin." • Integrate elements that compose the basic identity of your organization, e.g., values, sources of pride, etc. • Carefully choose your words, adapt the pace, etc. to hold the attention of the listener, and test it out on various audiences.	