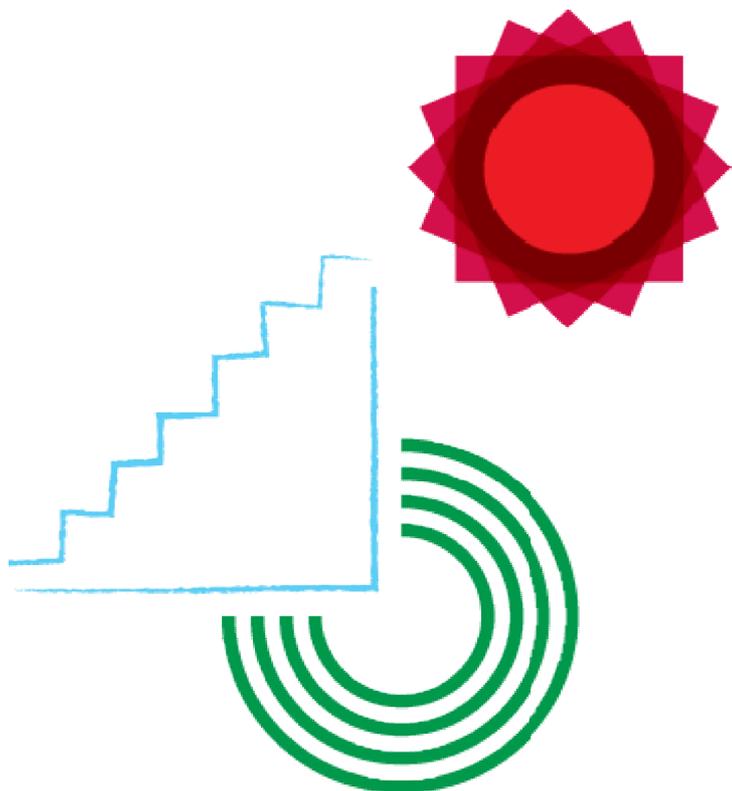




ENGAGE
FOR
SUCCESS

CREATE AND COMMUNICATE YOUR STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

20 Hints and Tips from Engage for Success



CREATING AND COMMUNICATING YOUR STRATEGIC NARRATIVE



20 Hints and Tips

1. Benefits of employee engagement

Employee engagement benefits everyone involved with your business by creating an informed, involved and productive workplace that helps propel your business towards its goals.

Engaged employees:

- have a desire and commitment to give their best to your business
- generate more revenue for your business
- demonstrate higher levels of innovation
- act as advocates for your business
- have lower rates of sickness or absenteeism
- are less likely to leave your business
- behave in ways that support your business values
- have a positive impact on customer services
- engaged employees also have a stronger sense of personal well-being and feel more involved, committed and productive at work

2. Create your strategic narrative

A strategic narrative can be written or verbal, shown through images or diagrams. However you express it, creating a narrative is a powerful tool that builds common purpose across employees at all levels of your business. Your narrative starts with you. You should be clear on your vision for your business and what inspires you about it. Mapping out your own thoughts can help you form a framework, which you can then ask senior managers and employees to contribute to or amend.

3. Envision success – establishing team priorities

It is extraordinary how often people take it for granted that they are working towards the same ends, without necessarily working out what those ends are. We asked each member of one team the six main aims of the group and wrote the answers on a whiteboard. The team found themselves looking not at six broadly aligned answers but at 25 separate goals. The first job, clearly, was to establish the team's priorities.

Divide your team into small groups and give them half an hour to come up with the three big environmental changes that are going to drive change in your organisation. Ask groups to share their list of changes, discuss and evaluate them. With a consolidated list of major environmental changes having been agreed, address what success might look like in the future.

Ask each person to project themselves forward two years, the team is sitting with a large congratulatory bottle of champagne in front of them. The champagne signifies success: what does that success consist of? What achievements would be worth celebrating? Consider what the successful company might look like from several perspectives: shareholders, employees, customers and the media. Draw together the key themes that best describe what success might look like for your group.



4. Employee involvement in the strategic narrative

There are different ways of involving your employees - here are some approaches you could consider: hold a workshop for employees to help them contribute to the narrative, ask employees to submit their views - you could set up a suggestions box or create a diary room and invite employees to give their views on three or four questions about your business. Identify champions in different departments or teams who can identify and share examples from their parts of your business – they can have a key role in linking managers with the ideas and experiences of employees. With any method you use - collate the results, identify key themes and discuss them with your employees.

5. Communicate your strategic narrative

You need to communicate your narrative to build common purpose across your business and to guide everyday behaviour. Make your narrative document freely available for employees and publish a summary of your narrative on a range of materials for your workplace e.g. posters, postcards, business cards, desk-drop leaflets or screensavers. Include regular features or case studies in internal newsletters - or on the intranet if you have one - to show how employees have used the values to inform their decision-making.

6. Tailor your strategic narrative

To help employees build a personal attachment to your narrative encourage teams to tailor the strategic narrative to fit their area of work. Keep involving your employees in updating your story and communicating new examples and anecdotes. Teams may want to do this by developing their own summary statement of what the strategic narrative means to them and writing articles for internal publications, blogs or the intranet on how their team is using the narrative.

7. Employee involvement in tailoring the strategic narrative

This can be achieved by hosting lunchtime seminars for others to explain their role and the way in which they support the narrative in their everyday work, filming their own take on the narrative or what key elements mean to them to be shown in communal areas or as part of a video gallery for the intranet.



8. Representing the organisation and its strategy externally

Be properly briefed – as a leader it is your role to represent your organisation to the prime stakeholders. The chief requirement for this is that you are fully briefed and in total command of its aims and objectives. Regular, probably weekly, meetings with divisional heads are essential. They must take priority over all activities and absence cannot be acceptable. They must be short, information-delivery sessions, not discussion groups.

9. Sample structure for a strategic narrative

- Business purpose - What does your business do?
- Business vision - What is your strategic aim for the business?
- Short-term goals - What are your objectives for the next year?
- Customer offer and services - What are the key products/services you offer?
- Business strategy in action - stories of customer using products/services effectively / customer testimony to the impact of the business on their lives.
- Information on your business culture - What qualities/characteristics make your business special?
- Information on expected employee behaviours - What are the standards of behaviour that everyone in the business is committed to/evaluated on?

10. Strategic narrative employee survey

There is no set format for an employee survey. This guidance sets out best practice examples for creating an employee survey that you can tailor to suit your business needs.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I understand the business' purpose				
There is a clear vision for the future for the business				
I understand the business goals				
The business strategy is clear				
I understand how my work				



contributes to business success				
I receive regular information regarding business performance				
The business has performed well over the last 12 months				

11. The business ‘story’

You must have a compelling story to tell about what you are trying to achieve and how you will achieve it. It should be devoid of jargon and straight forward: it must be your elevator pitch. Take time to consult and refine the story, then stick to it. Make the story the central component of any induction programme and regularly review it to make sure it is still true.

12. Make yourself accessible to the front line

Make sure you have the support to be able to reply promptly and authoritatively.

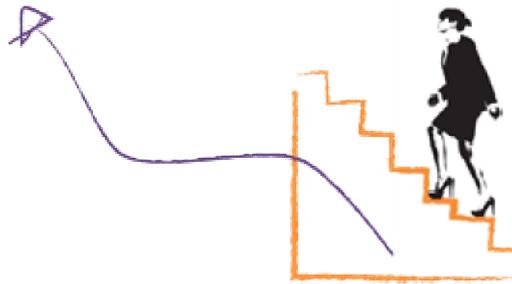
13. Observe engagement in the external world

Find organisations which believe they are practising engagement. There is a small but growing list of companies that believe their financial and delivery success rests on high levels of engagement. Time spent watching high levels of engagement in action is valuable, not only because it can start to give you ideas relevant to your own circumstances, but because you will need to create a personal vision of success, and that vision will be far more powerful if it is based on experience.

14. Vision – Purpose and Strategy

Nothing moves forward unless there is real conviction behind its ‘purpose’, which is also critical for engagement. It is part of the ‘story’ that your organisation tells its employees. Distilling this purpose is up to you and your top team, engaging as far as possible with what you and your colleagues personally care about. The advantage of starting the ‘vision’ purpose, rather than leaping straight into strategy, is that it encourages co – ownership and buy-in. Once you have established your vision you need a strategy to achieve it - for which you want people to be aligned and engaged. This plan should be based on activity- based costing to ensure you know where you make your money. You should have an outstanding

marketing department to ensure you understand and satisfy today's customers and (this is the clever part, why you need outstanding marketing people) both latent and likely future customer needs.



15. Establish a strong internal communications infrastructure

You need to ensure upward / downward feedback, including regular sensing mechanisms. These can include surveys, sensing groups – regular meetings with a panel of colleagues - or a website / suggestion box where employees can post queries or ideas and be sure of getting a response. The aim is to open up routes for direct employee questions, feedback and opinions. You need to bear in mind however, that introducing such mechanisms for communication is in itself, sending a strong message. The message will be a positive one as long as the channels for communication are consistently attended to. If they become neglected, the message will quickly become negative.

16. Make use of technology

Websites on the corporate intranet can offer accurate information on a hot or sensitive topic; use of blogs on which management participates, video diary boxes where individuals can drop in to record their views on a particular issue can be effective as long as a response mechanism is in place.

17. Remember your behavioural leadership

Whatever you say when you are at the front line, people are probably paying at least as much attention, if not more, to the way you act. Be aware of the subliminal messages you might be sending.

18. Clarity

Organisations need a clear strategy that people can get aligned to. Lack of clarity makes evasion much easier. Lack of clarity in people's objectives nearly always starts at the top with an unclear strategy. When you don't know where you are going any route is good enough. People make up their own mind or organisational inertia sets in. Once the road map is clear organisational energy can be directed to achieving progress in the market place, rather than being dissipated on internal wrangling and misaligned objectives.

19. Aligning and engaging employees with the strategy

Define what constitutes success and what constitutes failure; then communicate these definitions. Implement processes that will ensure alignment: make sure that you keep repeating your aims, your narrative

and your strategy. Never accept that employees have 'got it' until your conclusion have been rigorously promulgated.

20. Commit to operational reviews

You need reviews of engagement levels and levels of commitment to the particular behaviours required to deliver the strategy, ones that are as rigorous as those conducted for on-going business performance.

Analysis in the form of 360 degree questionnaires, pulse surveys etc. should be carried out at levels in the organisation where managers can be held accountable for the findings and responsible for any required improvement actions.

You can use 360 degree feedback to get much richer data about individual's behaviour. For those parts of the organisation that are customer facing – get customer feedback.

