

Using Narratives and Strategic Improvisation – a New Framework for Corporate Communication

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The new world disorder

- Complexity
- Uncertainty
- Politicization
- Mediatization
- Polarization
- Nationalism
- Paradoxes

The importance of communication – to create shared meaning - has never been more important.



THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION IN SOCIETY

FALKHEIMER, INSPIRED BY ETTER 2019



INFORMATION CHARACTERISTIC	INDUSTRIAL AND MODERN	POST-INDUSTRIAL AND LATE MODERN
DOMINANT DIRECTION	Vertical communication Sender-receiver	Horizontal communication Participant / participant
SOURCES	Professional	Amateurs Professionals
DOMINANT MODE	Rational (logos) Message	Emotional (pathos) Narrative
AUDIENCE STAKEHOLDERS	Uniform, solid, number, passive	Fragmented, volatile, cultural, co-producing

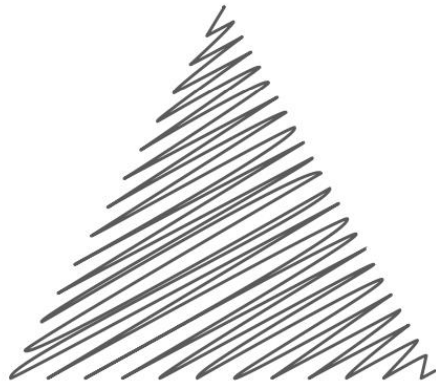
THE EVOLUTION OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

	PROPAGANDA	INSTRUCTION	INFORMATION	COMMUNICATION
DIRECTION	One Way Top Down	One Way Top Down	Reciprocal Top Loop Down	Two Way Co-production
BASE	False or misleading	True but simplified	True and rational	True and interpretive
DECISION STAGE	Before, during, after	After	After	Before, during, after
IMPACT	Exposure Manipulation	Distribution	Reach Attention	Sensmaking Action

The interplay between work, management and communication in history

THE CRAFTING SOCIETY

Work as Craft

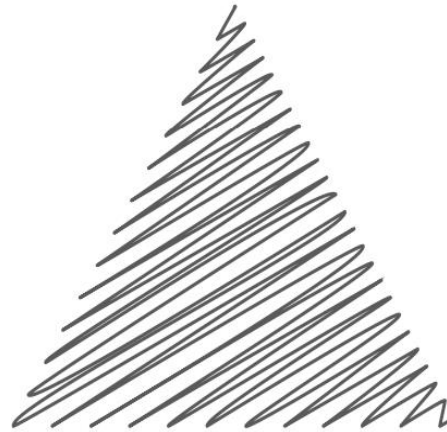


Management as senior guidance

Communication as direct dialog

THE INDUSTRY SOCIETY

Management as instructions

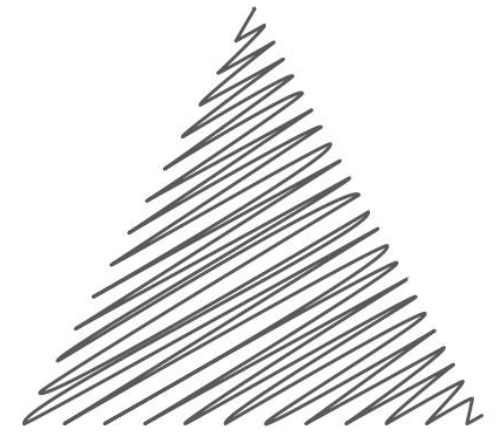


Communication as instructions

Work as designed tasks

THE LATE MODERN SOCIETY

Communication as a sense making



Work as expertise

Management as mindsetting

Conducting Narratives

Strategic Improvisation: How Strategic Narratives Guides in the Era of Complexity





Wicked Problems

1. Is not really understood until after a solution is in place.
2. Have no stopping rule – there is no traditional start, middle and end.
3. Have no right or wrong solutions, only better or worse.
4. Is essentially unique and novel.
5. Can only be solved as a “one-shot operation.”

Strategic Improvisation

– the Art of Balancing Order and Chaos



- When the map doesn't match the terrain
- The tacit knowledge
- Music and theatre
- Yes to the Mess

7 jazz principles for improvisational ability (Barrett)



1. Say yes to the mess (50/50)
2. Performing and experimenting simultaneously
3. Minimal structures, maximal autonomy
4. Jamming and hanging out
5. Taking turns soloing and supporting
6. Leadership as coaching/visionary

The conditions of improvising

Affirm change

You use what you got

Hold on to your idea

Be "one" with your instrument


Listen, take in, give space,

Don't let your feelings limit you

Practice and study

Improvisation requires a framework

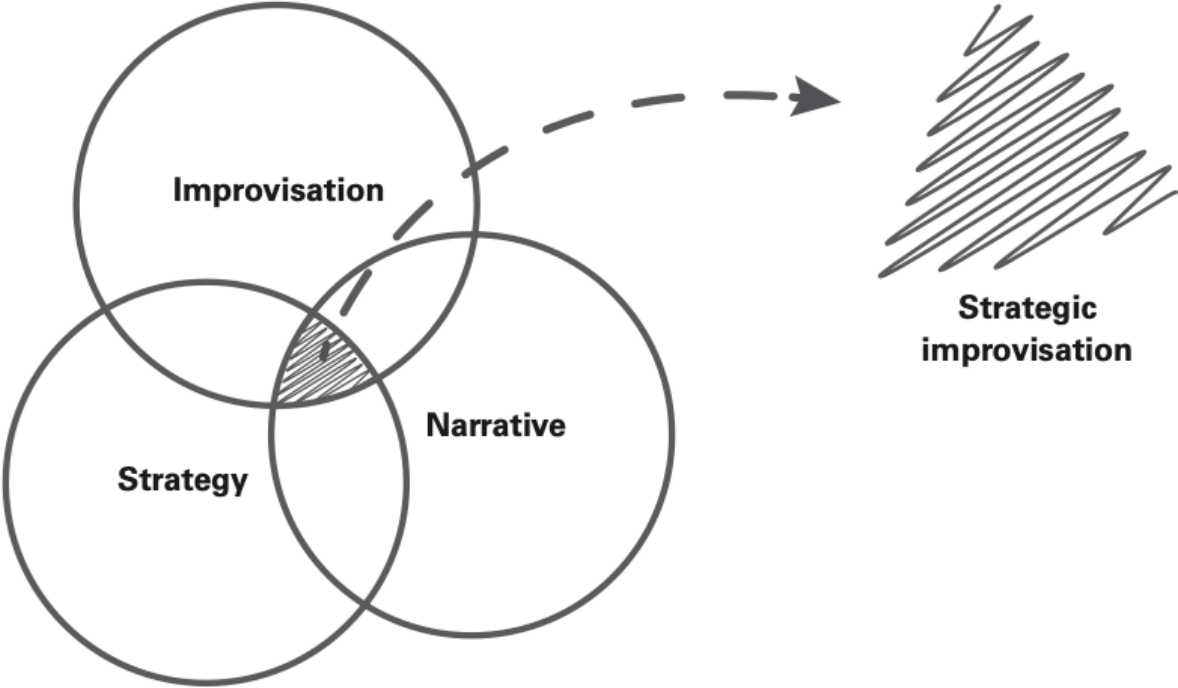




“Everybody has
a plan until they
get punched in
the face”

MIKETYSON

The strategic improvisation model



The *Narratives* of Narratives

"Experience is meaningful and human behaviour is generated from and informed by this meaningfulness. [...] Narrative meaning is a cognitive process that organizes human experiences into temporally meaningful episodes."

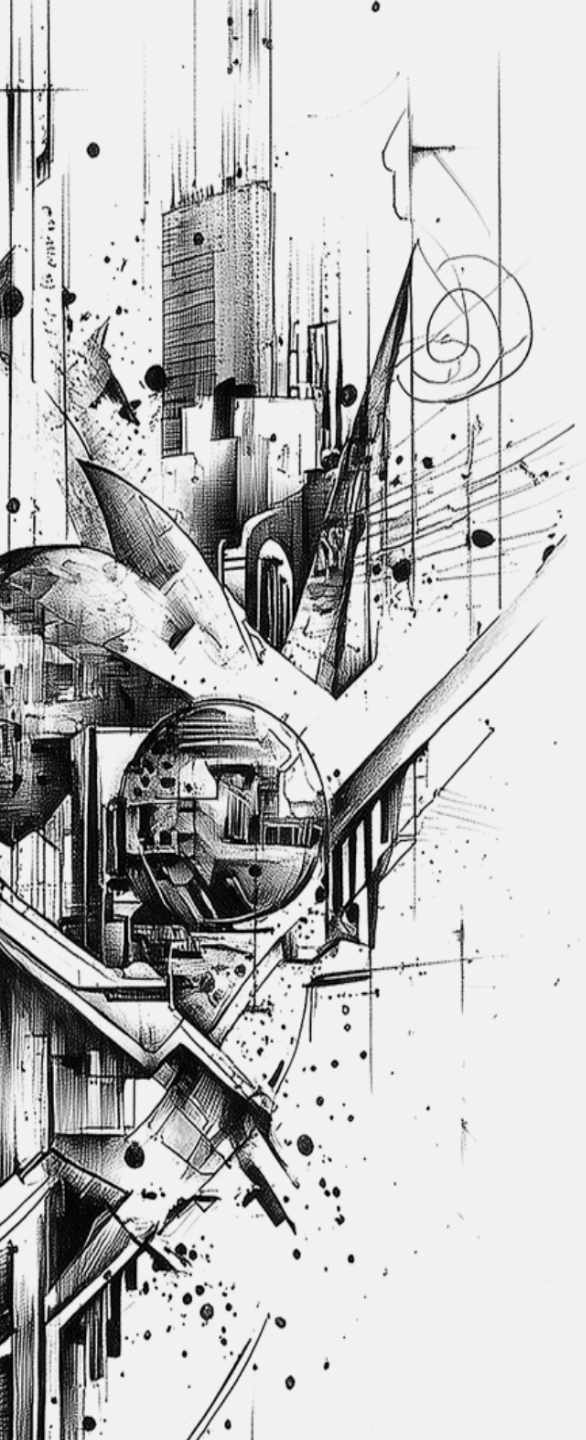
Polkinghorne 1988: 1





Strategic narratives

- Narratives are existential for us as humans. The narratives and plots are used by us all, trying to understand and communicate who we are.
- Characterized by clarity of purpose, prospect of success, consistency, absence of competing narratives



Effective Narratives for change

Understand deeply, describe simply

Honor your past

Provide a clear and compelling mandate for change

Describe a rigorous and optimistic way forward

Put the pieces of your story together

Repeat yourself

Identify and use your emotions

Strategic Improvisation and Narratives in Applied Management and Leadership

Three principles

- A well-planned foundational structure
- Responsive action capability
- Powerful images and strategic narratives



	STRATEGY	IMPROVISATION	NARRATIVE
PRINCIPLE	A well-planned foundational structure	Responsive action capability	Powerful images and stories
ORGANIZATION	Focus on value creation, predictable and robust Room for innovation, development, and flexibility	Rigged for constant change Iterative processes and learning loops Room for maneuver	Co-production with employees and other stakeholders
APPROACHES	Connects the short and long term Provides predictability Reminds of the vision and what creates value Equips the organization	Makes functional and intuitive decisions instead of optimal ones Sees failure as natural and necessary Cultivates a culture of trust and takes responsibility for mistakes	Explains, repeats and reminds Talks the walk Walks the talk Is present and accessible



The story of IKEA

We've come a long way since our early days in Älmhult, Sweden, but IKEA founder Ingvar Kamprad's dream to create a better life for as many people as possible – whatever the size of their wallet – is and will always be our driving force.





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