



UPDATED
WITH FRONTLINE
COMMUNICATIONS
INSIGHTS

ACTIVATING STRATEGY



HOW TO ACTIVATE AND
EMBED YOUR STRATEGY
TO ACCELERATE RESULTS

THE
GROSSMAN
GROUP

KATE BUSHNELL
PRESIDENT, THE GROSSMAN GROUP

So much work goes
into developing a
strategy, but it's



NOTHING MORE THAN WORDS ON PAPER UNLESS

PEOPLE
UNDERSTAND IT,
BELIEVE IN IT, AND
KNOW THEIR ROLE IN
MAKING IT HAPPEN...

THE QUESTION IS:

How do you get
employees engaged
and motivated to
bring your vision and
strategy to life?

THE ANSWER:

Take them with
you on the

JOURNEY



The difference between a strategy on paper and a winning strategy that accelerates performance is how well leaders bring their teams along on the journey. It's not enough to be the leader's strategy... it has to be the *TEAM's*

strategy, too. And the only way to make it the team's strategy is to let them be a part of it along the way. Often communication leaders are great at **informing** teams, flooding them with emails, video, social media, charts, newsletters, strategy

wheels, and meetings. Yet, great strategy activation and communication are marked by three key elements: **involve, inform, and inspire** employees, so they want to help you make it happen and achieve the results.



WHEN DONE RIGHT, YOUR STRATEGY CAN HELP:

- ✓ Galvanize your team around what's possible and what matters most to your organization and the business.
- ✓ Focus people on the most important areas of the strategy so people know what's priority (*and what's not*).
- ✓ Minimize unnecessary noise, distraction, and work that doesn't ladder up to your vision, purpose, mission, and business outcomes.

WHY ACTIVATING PEOPLE TO OWN THE STRATEGY IS SO IMPORTANT

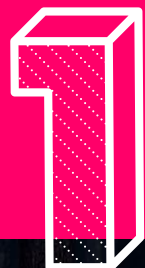
Organizations that are able to successfully unlock capacity to execute new growth strategies **increase profitability by 77%**. However...

67%

of employees do not understand their role when new growth initiatives are launched¹. This is a **BIG** missed opportunity.

BUT THERE IS HOPE! Here are six winning formulas for your corporate or functional strategy, and they work in any type of organization of any size...

- 1 Commit to having a clearly defined strategy
- 2 Know that the real work of activating your strategy starts before the strategy is even written
- 3 Prime the pump—get leaders and teams in a change-ready mindset
- 4 Articulate the strategy and storyline so it's easy for people to see and understand
- 5 Rally people leaders through memorable experiences
- 6 Plan your rollout and sustaining communications to keep the strategy top of mind



COMMIT
TO
HAVING
A

CLEARLY DEFINED STRATEGY



This may seem obvious but not all organizations have a strategy or make it a priority to communicate that strategy across the organization.



IF YOU'RE THINKING, "SHOULDN'T PEOPLE JUST KNOW THE STRATEGY?" —THINK AGAIN.

FACT 1:

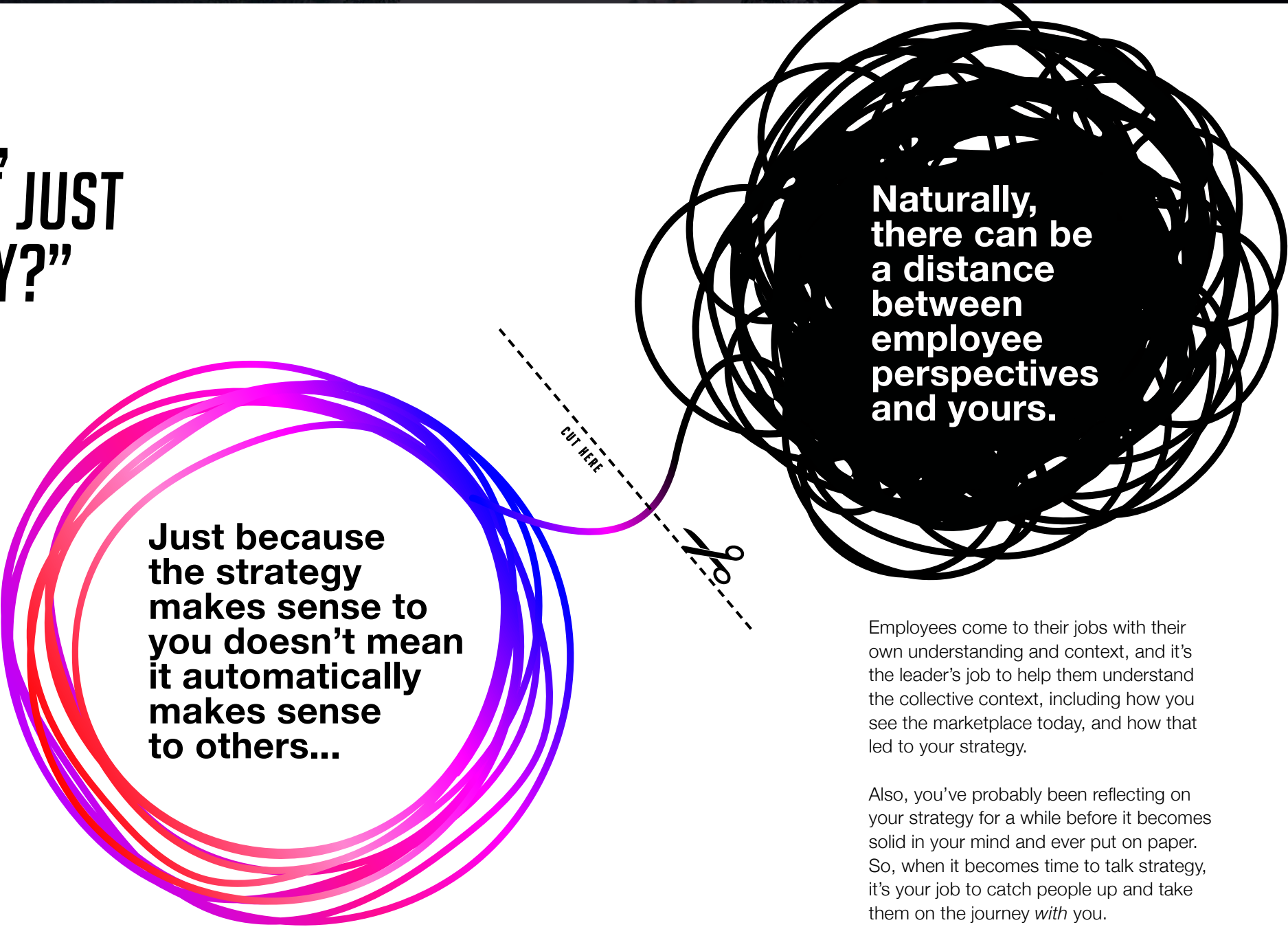
Employees aren't mind readers. There's a tendency to assume others think as we do and see the world as we do. As leaders, you see, think, and experience the business in different ways than employees.

FACT 2:

You can't get results alone—you need the people in the organization to know what's important, so they can help you get it done.

FACT 3:

Done right, a clearly defined strategy becomes a central point of focus for your organization. And when there's focus, results follow.



**Just because
the strategy
makes sense to
you doesn't mean
it automatically
makes sense
to others...**

**Naturally,
there can be
a distance
between
employee
perspectives
and yours.**

Employees come to their jobs with their own understanding and context, and it's the leader's job to help them understand the collective context, including how you see the marketplace today, and how that led to your strategy.

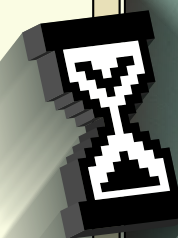
Also, you've probably been reflecting on your strategy for a while before it becomes solid in your mind and ever put on paper. So, when it becomes time to talk strategy, it's your job to catch people up and take them on the journey *with* you.

2

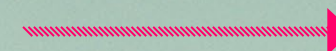
KNOW THE REAL WORK
OF ACTIVATING YOUR
STRATEGY STARTS

BEFORE

THE STRATEGY
IS EVEN WRITTEN.



Engaging leaders and teams
across the business to help shape
the strategy is a game-changer.



DRAW FROM THIS CLASSIC ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLE:

Include the people in the creation of something when you need them to ultimately execute it—you'll get better ideas, ownership, and results.

68%

of U.S. employees are either not engaged or are actively disengaged¹.

We can all relate to how much better it feels to be part of something rather than having something pushed on you out of the blue without understanding the why or story behind it.

Involve those who are closest to the challenges, opportunities, and customers in the development of your strategy. Listen and learn from them and help them feel heard. Test strategies and approaches to see how they react. Ask them what they think is needed to propel the business. When you do, they'll bring forward great ideas and solutions, give more to execute, and you'll go further faster, together.

¹U.S. Employee Engagement Needs a Rebound in 2023, Gallup

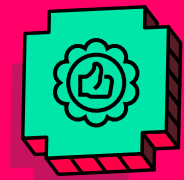
ENGAGING AND CO-CREATING STRATEGY PAYS DIVIDENDS **YOU GAIN:**



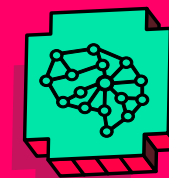
A better pulse on the organization to identify real issues and opportunities and better solutions.



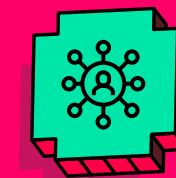
More informed decision making thanks to a deeper understanding of the landscape and what's needed.



Credibility and trust among those you rely on to execute the strategy.



Shared understanding of the context and rationale for the strategy so leaders and teams can get behind it and advocate for it with confidence. This is especially key for leaders who need to talk about the strategy with their teams to activate it.



Support from teams and a willingness to champion it because they see themselves and their teams in the strategy.



STRATEGY SPRINTS FOR THE WIN



With mounting pressures inside and outside the company, it was a critical time for a major manufacturer of consumer goods and its global supply chain function. All eyes were on the new head of the function and their leadership team to save the day and lead the way with a new strategy. We partnered with the leadership team to take a different approach to shaping and activating the strategy, which would come to be their Three Year Plan.

OUT ✗

went the typical routine of the new strategy being defined solely by top leaders and a management consulting firm with binders full of research and PowerPoints. The previous strategies struggled to take hold, priorities flip-flopped, and the business unit would take a few steps forward and more steps backward. It wasn't working in part because the strategy didn't have the full commitment of leaders in the function and across the business.

IN ✓

came an open, collaborative, iterative approach to co-create the strategy with the top few hundred leaders of the function through a "sprint" approach.

Our outcome was to go deeper into the business to engage the top leaders and their direct reports for perspective around the root cause problems that need to be solved for, the ambition we're aiming for, and the pathway to get there.

At this stage, success was that the inputs and discussion would help shape the strategy, and when the time came to unveil it, those involved in its development saw their fingerprints all over it. Through a series of online discussions and in-person collaborative events, the top 150 leaders shared hundreds of insights and ideas that fueled the strategy and gave a voice to leaders who despite being closest to customers and teams, were traditionally NOT brought into the strategy development process.

We then rolled out the Three Year Plan at a key meeting for leaders to get immersed in the strategy (*more on that in Winning Strategy #5*). There was everything you'd ever want in place to activate the strategy:

- Full leader understanding and buy-in
- Positive and forward-looking energy and excitement
- Appreciation to be part of the process
- Confidence and optimism in the leadership team and the business
- And, most importantly, readiness to take the strategy to their teams and activate it

When asked how they felt, leaders shared that part of the reason they had so much trust in the leadership team and optimism that this strategy would work is because they were part of the process.

MIC DROP.



3

PRIME THE PUMP

GET LEADERS AND TEAMS IN
A CHANGE-READY MINDSET



By design, a strategy reflects the journey to get from one point to another and they naturally require change.

FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT!



EMPLOYEES NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE AND WHY

Think C.A.R. – Context, Audience, Relevance.

CONTEXT

Context is everything. It influences how we interpret information. It's the lens through which we view and make sense of the world. To operationalize the strategy, leaders and frontline supervisors need to set specific goals tied to business unit and/or company goals. They must have the greater context to activate the plans that will deliver on the strategy and goals for the organization.

However, to make smart business plans and decisions, employees need to understand the collective context we all agree on as an organization. The goal is one message; many voices. Every leader might have a specific point-of-view on customer issues, the marketplace, or top strengths that an organization can leverage. In the end, the leadership team needs a collective point-of-view that everyone backs.

AUDIENCE

Know the mindset of those in your organization, particularly those who are critical to executing your strategy. Identify their information needs to inform what communications are needed (and when) so they're ready to understand and implement it.

Spend time with employees. It's a simple theory—and it works. Allocate time each month to spend with employees virtually and/or in-person. Ask them what they're working on that they're proud of and what pain points are getting in their way and their ideas to solve them. Make a point to connect with employees on every visit to sites. Schedule these activities like you would any other critical appointment with a board director, investor, or member of the media.

Enlist those on your leadership team to do the same and share what you're seeing and hearing so you all have a pulse on the organization. Depending on the degree of change, begin talking about the business landscape and need for change before the strategy is even developed. This gives people time to understand the context and see the upsides it can bring so they are open and ready for the strategy.

RELEVANCE

One of the biggest challenges in bringing people on a journey is they may feel like it's a road they don't want to take for any number of reasons. This is why it's especially important to present the case for change in a way that's relevant and real.

We've worked with companies who've had financially successful years, with the commercial teams exceeding targets and expectations, and yet the company is still planning to announce a transformation. Naturally, this can leave teams confused, even resentful and asking, "What more do you want from us? We've been working so hard—when is it enough?"

The reality is that any business not adapting and pushing themselves to be even better is probably not going to last. Employees need to know that in terms that are real and speak to them where they are.

When talking to employees about your rationale for the strategy (or case for change), make it real and relevant to them. For example...



Our global food chain may have experienced a record-breaking year in sales, but a new competitor with a fresh concept is threatening to erode success.

A healthcare system that doesn't pay attention to customer surveys or complaints about the quality of care can lose its standing or become a target for acquisition.

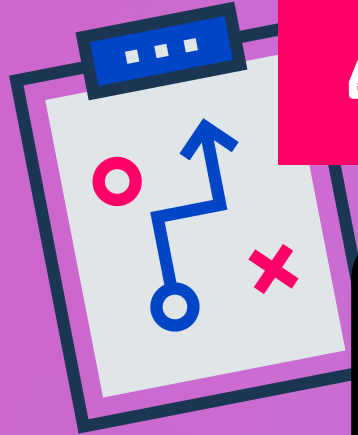
A retailer that doesn't follow online buying trends can miss essential momentum and be seen as obsolete.

All eyes are on our global supply chain to find speed and efficiencies because costs are increasing, our competition is closing in on us, and customers will go elsewhere if they're not getting value.

Employees need to feel that the journey is not just a new corporate initiative, but something everyone owns and can help solve. This helps combat one of the most common reasons strategies can fail: employees feeling that the new strategy is

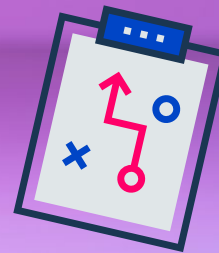
“
NOT
MY
JOB





ARTICULATE

THE STRATEGY AND STORYLINE SO IT'S
EASY FOR PEOPLE TO SEE AND UNDERSTAND



Why make the strategy complicated? This isn't a decoder ring or a riddle to solve.

X MARKS THE SPOT!

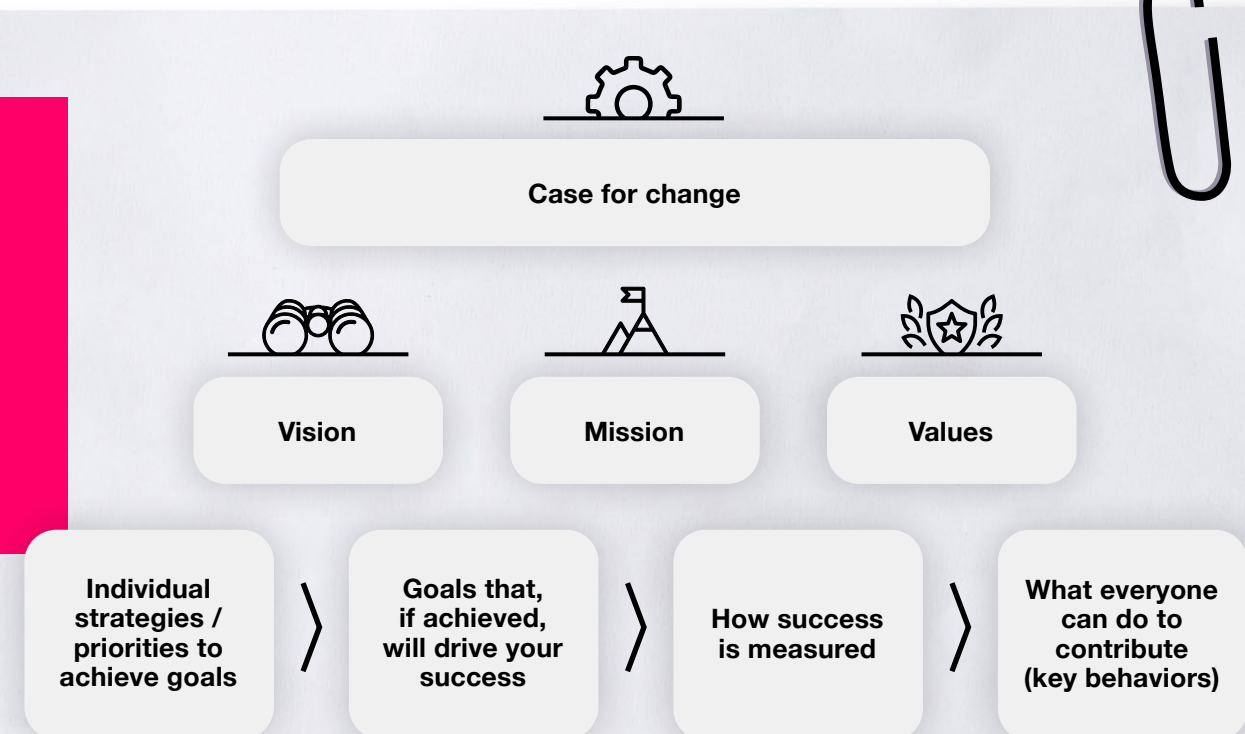
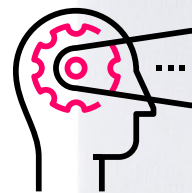


MAKE THE STRATEGY EASY FOR EVERYONE IN THE ORGANIZATION TO UNDERSTAND

Make sure leaders get it and talk regularly about it with their teams **AND** employees know it and see how they fit it into it.

***** We often hear leaders say, ***“Our business strategy is too complicated and sophisticated to put on one sheet of paper!”*** We find that if you can’t summarize the strategy at a high level, then it’s going to be hard for leaders to engage investors, Wall Street, analysts, and other key influencers in it. One of the most important tools in your toolbox is your visual one-page summary of the strategy. Summarize your strategy on one page, so it is the single source of truth and definitive roadmap for your organization to follow over time.

YOUR STRATEGY SUMMARY SHOULD INCLUDE ALL THE ELEMENTS OF YOUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:



Using the main strategy one-pager, leaders can have conversations with their teams about the role they play to activate the strategy. They can provide line of sight between the big picture enterprise strategy and what their specific team can do to support the strategy and deliver impact.

ANOTHER CRITICAL TOOL TO HAVE AT THE READY IS AN OVERARCHING NARRATIVE—OR STORYLINE—FOR HOW TO TALK ABOUT THE STRATEGY

After all, activating the strategy depends on people’s ability to talk about and embed it into everyday routines.

Describe your vision and strategy with a clear and consistent storyline and then use it over and over again as your talk track in formal and informal communications. It also should be what all your leaders talk about regularly with their teams. This is vital and often a missed element in planning and rolling out the strategy. Your storyline should:

DEFINE the destination. Get employees excited and help them envision the destination. Help employees understand why the journey is a good idea for the company, for customers, and for them as individuals.

EXPLAIN the “how”—of both priorities and focus areas—to get to the destination and what you expect of employees. Help them know their role in reaching the destination so they know how they fit and what success looks like.

ANSWER the “what’s in it for me” question that employees ask. They need to know that the destination will be beneficial for them as well as the company and customers.

DEFINE key terms. Don’t assume people know what you mean or that “common” terms mean the same to others.

When it’s time to communicate your narrative, be sure to give leaders tools to carry the message forward to their teams. Knowing the important role people leaders have as a main source of information for employees, they need to be able to talk strategy. For many of our clients, we develop toolkits for people leaders, so they have ready-to-use materials for staff meetings and conversations about the strategy with their teams and can deliver the messages proactively, accurately, and consistently. They can be tailored for relevance but also connect back to the overarching storyline. Use the toolkit as part of your “just in time training” resources so leaders are:



PLANNING THEIR COMMUNICATIONS WITH OUTCOMES AND AUDIENCES IN MIND



ENCOURAGING CONVERSATION



DRIVING SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE STRATEGY



ASKING SMART QUESTIONS TO GAUGE ALIGNMENT



IDENTIFYING THE READINESS OF THEIR TEAMS



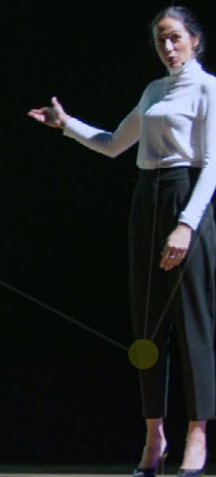
DRIVING ACTION

Don’t go it alone! Engage key partners across the business to drive awareness. Communications teams, site and office leads, employee resource groups, influencer networks, and HR partners play a key role in driving awareness of and activating the strategy. Engage them early and often, so they’re connecting the strategy in their outreach to employees and stakeholder groups.



RALLY
PEOPLE
LEADERS
THROUGH
MEMORABLE

EXPERIENCES



Want to really get people
immersed and excited
about your strategy?



LAUNCH YOUR STRATEGY AT A LEADERSHIP MEETING... BUT DON'T MAKE IT JUST ANY MEETING.

Make it an extraordinary, memorable, shared experience that leaves your top leaders feeling energized, aligned, focused, and ready to replicate for their teams.

We specialize in helping our clients create strategy launch events that both inform, involve, and inspire. Experiences versus monologues. These aren't your typical meetings riddled with PowerPoints and one-way formal presentations. Rather, they are interactive experiences that bring leaders and teams together for a shared experience, conversation, and building team cohesion.



Another goal for the experience is to shift ownership of the strategy from the leadership team to the *WHOLE* team so that everyone sees one vision, one strategy, and one team activating it.

Think of how much easier it is to activate the strategy when leaders and teams are immersed in the strategy and feel informed and inspired together...when they break down barriers of distance and siloes and

rally around a common vision, mission, and goals. Think of the momentum that's gained by bottling up that energy from the experience for leaders to take with them to their teams and bring it to life for them.



THE ULTIMATE STRATEGY ACTIVATION EXPERIENCE

We recently worked with a major retailer to unveil a transformation and new strategy at a carefully organized leader meeting.

40%

of executive leaders say their enterprise accountability and leadership are **not** aligned on strategy execution¹.

We wanted the top 100 leaders to see the journey they had been on together, so they recognized how different (and better) it's been from previous years. We also wanted them to share the same journey with their teams to accelerate activating the strategy. We mapped the journey to the top 100 leaders across three "Acts" during the meeting—each designed to evoke a different emotion and reaction.

ACT 1

was about the **"Case for Change."** We discussed what was going on in the industry and why the function needed to reorganize itself differently to win. This was about opening their minds to what's possible.

ACT 2

was about **"The Future."** We clearly defined what success would look like and how the change would make the lives of employees and customers better, answering the critical "What's in it for me?" We focused on inspiring employees, too, with engaging guest speakers, employee recognition, and purposeful team building activities.

ACT 3

was about **"Activation,"** with more detail on what was expected of the team, and how leaders planned to personally support the process and their employees. This was about the critical "must do" actions that the company needed to begin on immediately.

Building an experience around the strategy launch creates a key moment in time and way to motivate and rally leaders around it, and prepare them to activate the strategy with their teams and embed it down the organization. To take activation beyond the launch experience, leaders also need these key enablers:



CLEAR EXPECTATIONS



TOOLS TO SUPPORT THEM



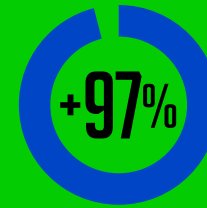
MEASURED RESULTS

MAKE SURE TO MEASURE

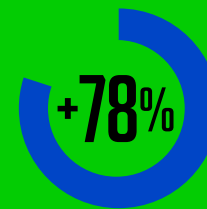
There's a reason people say, "What gets measured gets done." Because it's true. Measure to gauge leader understanding and commitment to activate the strategy. Measure pull-through to see that the strategy storyline is reaching the broader organization. Use the findings post-event and throughout the year to inform future strategies and follow up with leaders to address gaps.



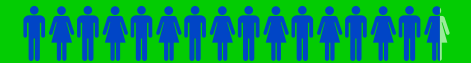
A few results our clients have seen following the launch:



rate the overall meeting as effective



reported feeling more connected to the company's mission



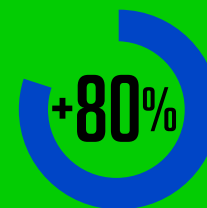
+99%

confidence and optimism stronger than before

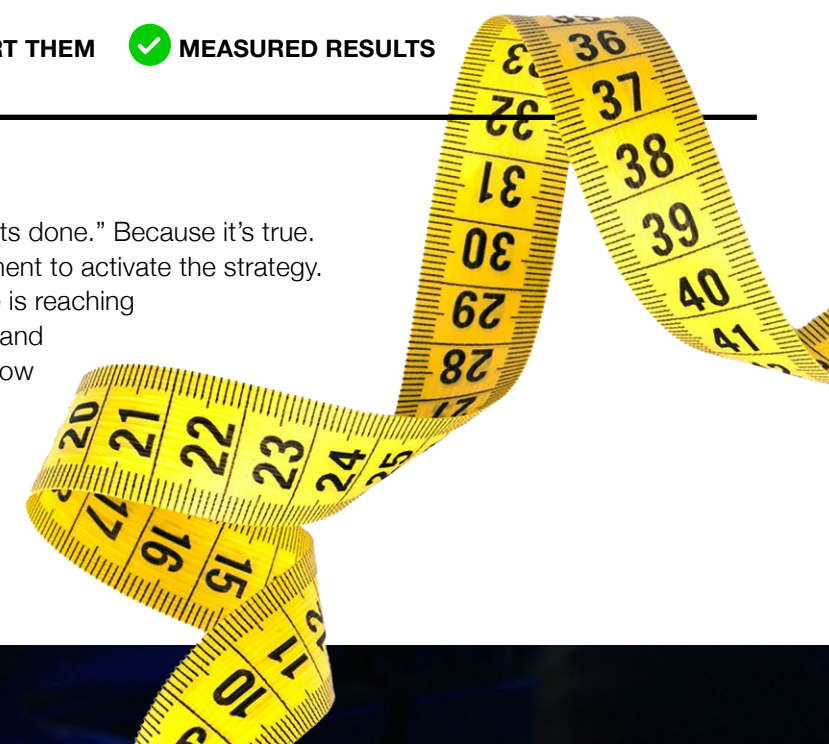


+97%

know what I need to do to bring the strategy to life



said they were "completely inspired"

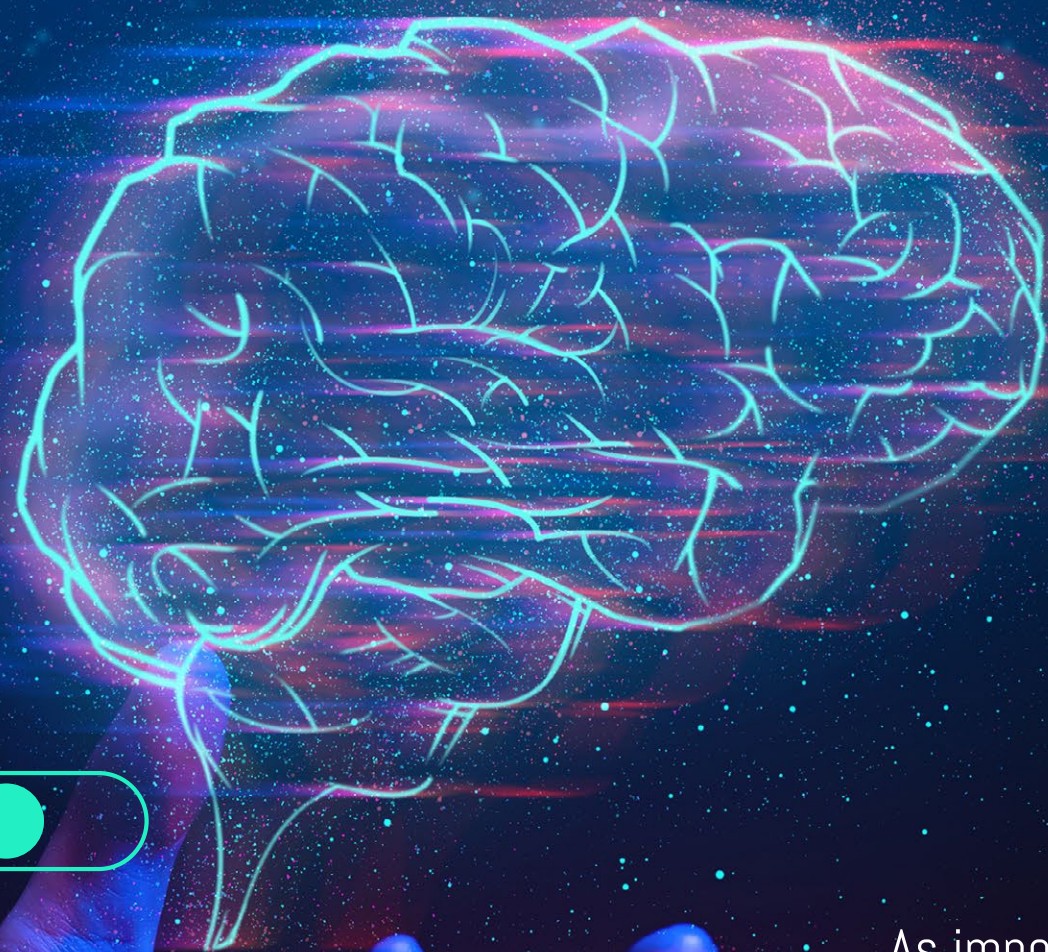




PLAN YOUR ROLLOUT

AND SUSTAINING
COMMUNICATIONS
TO KEEP THE
STRATEGY
TOP OF MIND

L O A D I N G . . .



As important as the
strategy is, it won't
remain current without
a conscious effort.



WEAVE THE STRATEGY STORYLINE INTO YOUR LAUNCH AND KEY MILESTONES ALONG THE WAY

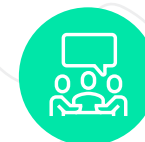
When planning your rollout and sustaining communications efforts, use the previous five strategies regularly. Keep in mind the critical role that leaders will continue to play to activate strategy so that they:



Show how their work ladders up to the bigger picture strategy and KPIs (e.g., linking site, plant, and functional team performance to company performance)



Set context for their teams on any downstream impact affecting the business (e.g., broader industry and/or strategic shifts)



Engage and listen frequently with teams and the frontline workforce through town halls, walking the shop floor, listening sessions, and regular, everyday communications



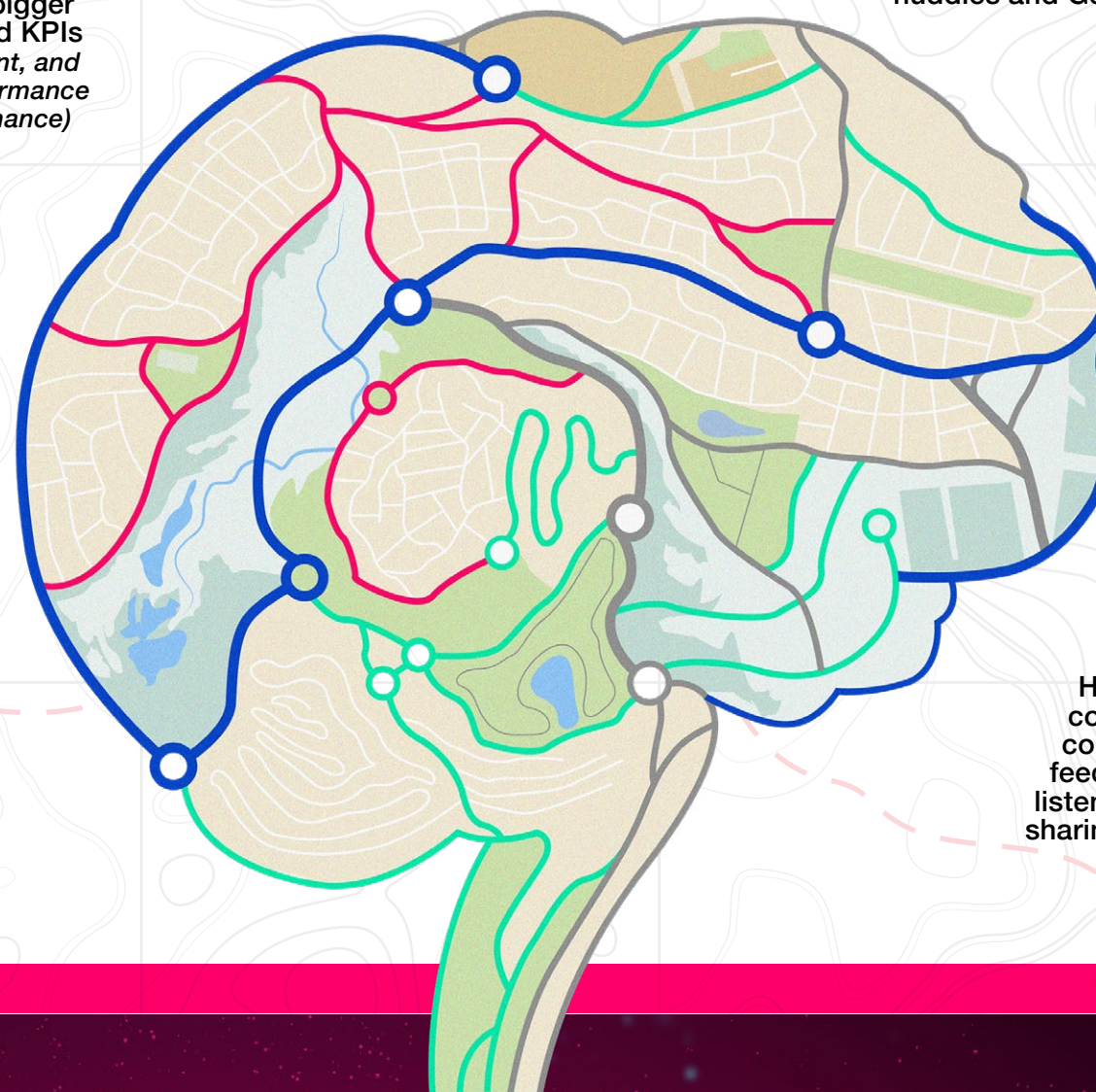
Drive accountability and consistency by making KPIs relatable and part of everyday routines such as pre-shift huddles and Gemba Walks



Make performance personal and fun with rewards, recognition, gamification, and healthy competition



Have established and consistent methods for collecting and acting on feedback, such as regular listening sessions, 1:1s, and sharing anonymous feedback

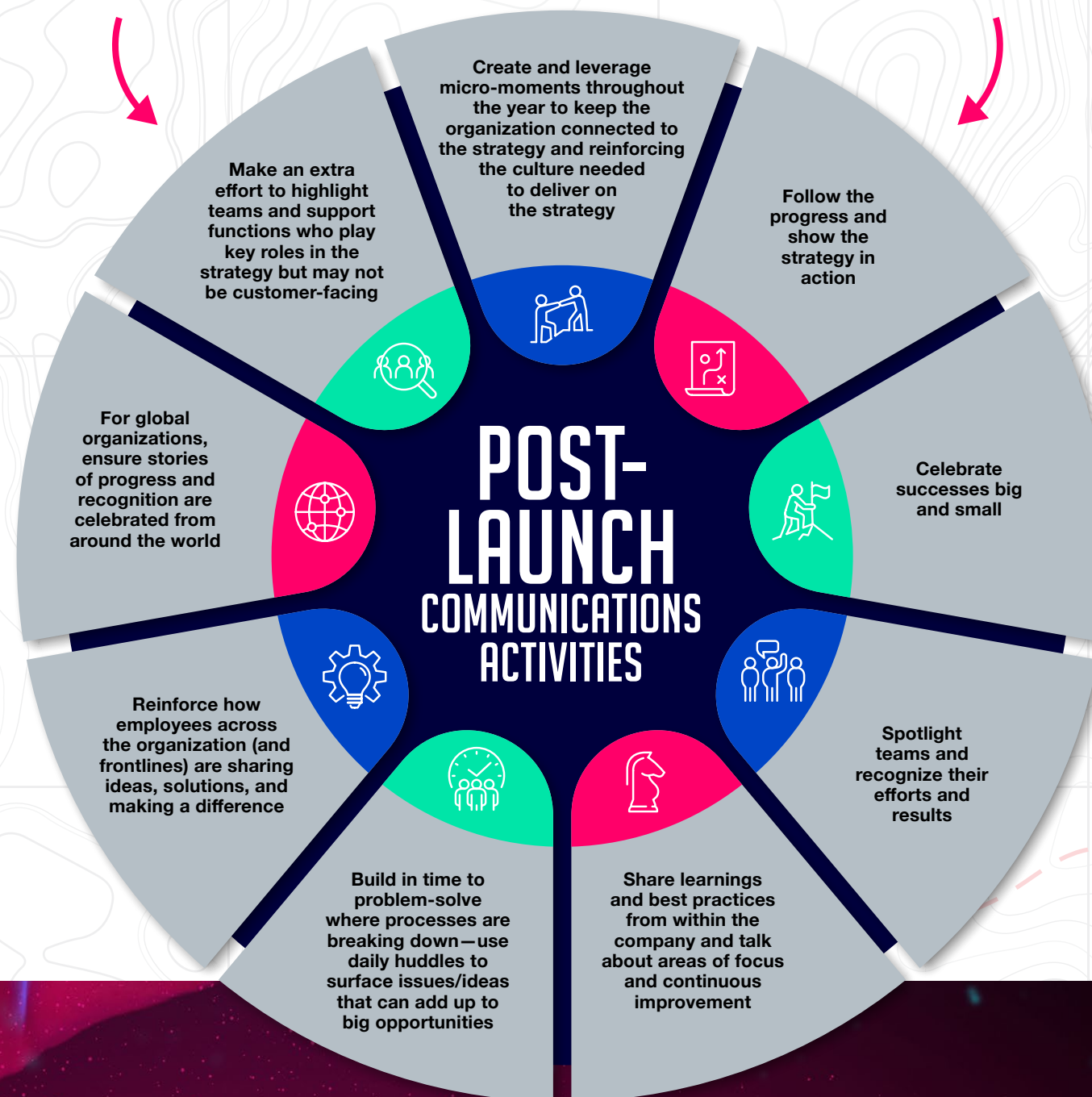


LEADERS CAN'T ACTIVATE STRATEGY ALONE...

They need the support of the Communications team. This is oftentimes in the form of messaging, toolkits, and training, so leaders are well positioned to continue to translate and share progress of the strategy in action across the organization. This communicates that it's real and relevant to employees, and reinforces that they're part of a culture that makes them feel welcome, where they can learn and grow their career, and that they feel heard and their feedback is acted upon.

Leaders also need their teams to be active participants—and owners—of the strategy as well as open to adapting to change (anything from shifts in their roles, to new processes or ways of working) and who set the example

of what you want to see in your team. Post-launch, have a communications plan that helps you embed the mindsets and behaviors that are key to activating the company's strategy over time.





THERE'S NO EASY WAY TO GET AT IT

At the end of the day, great leadership is about concurrently informing, involving, and inspiring the organization to drive the strategy.

Inform employees about where things stand, so they understand the why behind the strategy and change. Involve them in co-creating the strategy. *Imagine the ideas and solutions they'll have!*

Galvanize leaders and teams across the organization so they know, believe in, and work hard every day to advance the strategy. *More ownership in the strategy means more support for the strategy and accelerates performance.*

And inspire them so that nothing stands in the way of achieving success. Connect what employees do every day to the strategy so they know their role and actively bring it to life. If they don't know or care about the strategy, how can they help you get there? The good news is...

**WE CAN
HELP**



YOUR STRATEGY IS YOUR FUTURE

Invest in a smart approach to activate your strategy for long-term success. If you're struggling with:

- Developing your strategy
- Getting leaders and teams excited about and actively championing your strategy
- Engaging senior leaders, plant and site managers, and shift managers to lead the strategy and bring it to life with their teams
- Making the strategy real and relevant for employees, especially at the frontlines
- Driving change in your organization
- Getting the results you need out of your strategy

We can help. We partner with CEOs and chiefs of strategy, supply chain, communications, operations, HR, and more to codify and activate enterprise-wide and functional strategies and drive transformative change inside organizations.

We focus on achieving business and organizational outcomes, engaging leaders and teams in co-creating strategy for greater ownership in its delivery, and making the strategy easy to understand and relevant so teams rally around what's possible, know their role, activate the strategy, and accelerate performance. You may be thinking: ***This sounds great, but our organization works with management consulting firms on strategy.***

This is common and we work with strategy partners (internal and external to organizations) often to develop activation and communication plans that engage leaders and teams to drive ownership of the strategy and accelerate results. To learn more about our approach, explore what's possible for your organization, or to get started, visit these resources, or contact us today.



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THE
GROSSMAN
GROUP





KATE BUSHNELL

Kate Bushnell

Kate is President of The Grossman Group and works closely with the team to deliver innovative and strategic communication solutions for clients that address their everyday and defining business challenges. She has worked with leaders across a variety of functions and industries to connect employees to strategy, improve the employee experience, and drive change.

Over the years, Kate has worked with companies such as Astellas, DHL, FORVIS, Johnson & Johnson, Lockheed Martin, Molex, NiSource, SC Johnson, Tenneco, The Hartford, and Wyndham, among others. Her work has been recognized by clients and the communication industry.

Her contributions helped The Grossman Group win the prestigious PRWeek Boutique Agency of the Year and Product of the Year by SABRE for the firm's **messagemap™** methodology. She has helped companies like McDonald's, Motel 6, SC Johnson, Tenneco, Lockheed Martin, Gerber, and Pillsbury win prominent awards for their communications programs.

 **CONNECT WITH KATE ON LINKEDIN**

The Grossman Group is proud to be a Certified Diverse Supplier through the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce since 2008.