

THE COMPELLING JOURNEY™ A PLAYBOOK™ FOR SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE GROWTH

- ▲ **Effective Leaders Tell Compelling Stories**
- ▲ **Tell the story as if it has already occurred**
- ▲ **Be specific and find an emotional connection**



*“Over the years I have become convinced that we learn best—and change—from hearing stories that strike a chord within us... **Those in leadership positions who fail to grasp or use the power of stories risk failure for their companies and for themselves.**”*

– John Kotter

The Compelling Story

The leadership team had taken two days offsite to participate in the Compelling Journey™. They went away to a resort where they closeted themselves in intense conversation and debate about where they expected to lead the enterprise. The discussions continued after the meetings, through cocktails into dinner and after. They all agreed that it was time constructively spent.

Back at the office, the water cooler talk swirled around the absence of the leadership team and their offsite at the resort. **The team members were concerned that the company had been struggling of late and they wondered if this was a good idea, spending money at a high-priced property in the country instead of working with them at the office.**

That perception changed when they heard the Compelling Story.



Effective leaders tell compelling stories. They use those stories to evoke clarity and engagement among their team members. Envisioning where the organization intends to go is vital for leaders. **The Compelling Journey™ is designed for leadership to create a clear path forward. Naturally, one of the most important parts of the Journey is communicating the results to those responsible for its execution and obtaining their buy-in. This is the mechanism that can have profound impact.**

The Compelling Story is an exercise in blue sky visualization. The leaders are expected to create a PR news story extolling the successes that have transpired as a result of pursuing the plan that they developed. It is written in the future as of the time of the completion of the strategic planning cycle. The preceding steps in the Compelling Journey should provide ample information to enable the participants to create the story.

A typical article in a news outlet or magazine covering this kind of story has three parts: **an introduction where the lead sets up the story to come; the central portion where the meat of the story lies, complete with citations of success and who and what were responsible; and the third, the conclusions that can be drawn from the success of the organization.**

When we take a team through this process, we divide the participants into three groups and charge them with creating that section without letting the teams with each other. The resulting document, while it may contain minor duplications, is usually highly cohesive and is invariably engaging.

A key component of the Compelling Story is the emotional connection available within the article. It is important to recognize that the Compelling Journey is typically fact-based. Encouraging the team to connect that information to the purpose of the organization and its emotional component is central to its success as a tool for clearly communicating the Call to Action, its meaning, the supporting strategic pillars and the resulting strategic milestones that have been developed.

Sharing the Compelling Story with the staff provides leadership with an excellent opportunity to engage them in connecting annual planning and its milestones with the work that they completed in the Journey. Naturally, this opens the opportunity to engage the entire enterprise more fully in the Call to Action. We will discuss this process further in later conversations.

And it helps the team back at the office to appreciate that what leadership does when they are away at an offsite meeting can be useful for everyone.