



Electric Airwaves MD, Andrew Caesar-Gordon and Stuart Maister analyse how to build enthusiasm for your corporate strategy



## You're Changing. You Need To Define The New Story

**Is there a simple key that unlocks enthusiasm for your strategy?**

Corporate strategies evolve. Maybe as the result of merger and acquisition or crisis; perhaps as a result of a change in leadership; often simply because the market is constantly developing and you need to make a step change.

Ensuring that a revised corporate strategy translates into growth and profit requires employees who understand what is required of them and customers who understand why they should buy from you. It also helps if investors can quickly understand the approach.

Whatever the spur for change, clarity and confidence require engaging and effective communication. They require a narrative that instinctively and intuitively makes sense to those who hear it, emotionally and rationally. It tells the audience 'who we are' and 'why you should be interested', not just 'what we do and how we do it'.

For your change to be effective, you need to articulate a new story. It is the bridge between the present and a well-defined future.



### An Example: The UK Post Brexit

This is the challenge facing the UK following the Brexit vote. Just two months before the referendum, Britain was at the top of the growth charts. The UK plc story was clear and it offered certainty: a global profile and perspective rooted in an open, moderate political and economic environment; a modern, business-friendly framework operating within a tolerant, multicultural society that attracted talent from across the world and offered access to the huge EU single market. A burgeoning relationship with

China. Outsiders knew 'who' we were and 'how' we were likely to think and act to new situations. Investors understood 'why' they should engage with the UK.

And now? Brexit has damaged this well-developed, well understood UK narrative that had underpinned recent economic success. There is political turbulence and constitutional uncertainty. Business confidence is dented so much that 82% of FTSE100 finance directors say their investment and recruitment has been put on hold; forecasters' growth predictions have been slashed along with Bank of England interest rates. Our relationship with China is suddenly uncertain. The narrative of stability and certainty has been suspended. So what will take its place?

The UK government wants – and needs – to communicate a new story. But amid the noise, no babies need to be thrown out with the bathwater. The story now requires a tweak that keeps the essential truths of the old one and finds language and tone that inspires people with a new opportunity. Brexit is Brexit but the reality is that the country hasn't fundamentally changed.

This is a new chapter in our history but we remain an outward-looking trading nation with one of the world's largest economies and with trade and diplomatic connections all over the globe. We can continue to play to the themes of modernity, creativity and diversity. If a Euro crisis hits, the UK can once again seem an oasis of relative stability and openness.

The new story needs to reflect the changing context, but the core pitch remains the same. For it to be effective it needs to engage the country as well as the outside world – it is an internal as well as an external narrative.





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The new narrative can be a thoroughly British one. If there was one country in the world you could expect to handle an EU exit without chaotic political and social upheaval it would be Britain. Keeping calm and carrying on is what we Brits do. It's why Theresa May became Prime Minister. And every good story needs a good chief storyteller. Theresa May exudes stability and calm, she is decisive and, as a woman, she demonstrates that the UK is tolerant and forward-looking.

### So what does this tell you about change in your own business?

- You need to play to existing strengths while identifying some new ones.
- Keep it simple: what's the big idea that audiences can grasp quickly?
- Be focused on the audience and adopt the right language and tone.
- Ensure the leadership team is aligned around the narrative.



You need to start with the people you need to engage. Be very specific about them, and spend time considering their motivations and agenda. This is the context within which your story will land – their why.

Then consider how you do what you do. What makes you or your future plans special, different or simply great?

Here is where your story can be found: in the nexus between their why and your how. The sweet spot that combines your audiences' wants and needs with your strengths. From this you can articulate a clear story and what we call the narrative themes: a few, big ideas that form the basis for your storytelling.

Doing less, better, is much more effective than simply making lots of noise.

Your own challenges may seem smaller than Brexit. But the same process will ensure your organisation is famous for a few big things that will help you drive change and differentiate yourself from others in the same space.

### How we can help


Businesses often struggle without external assistance. Which is why they call in Electric Airwaves and Stuart Maister to help them. We work with almost half the FTSE 100 and hundreds of organisations large and small on how they tell their story. Now we are also helping their leaders decide what it is.

A bank that was tied up in trying to describe what kind of bank it was now has a differentiated, compelling niche position that is providing focus for its sales and marketing and a clear choice for its customers;

A big new player in the supply chain industry now has a clear story about how its radically different approach benefits customers, challenging them to re-think what their supply chain can deliver;

A food standards and promotions body is moving from a focus on its technical verification services to a story about the eating experience for consumers and pride in the food and farming industry;

A technology company has discovered it is selling peace of mind not technological features.

These are new exciting stories which will help our clients cut through the noise, so that they are famous for a few, big ideas. Your story must be rooted in your business strategy but getting it right will have a big impact upon it. 

If you think that that you need to generate more enthusiasm for your business strategy or find a clear, concise and compelling way to communicate about a particular project or product, call Andrew Caesar-Gordon, Managing Director of Electric Airwaves, on 020 7323 2770 or email [andrew@electricairwaves.com](mailto:andrew@electricairwaves.com) or Stuart Maister on [stuart.maister@strategic-narrative.com](mailto:stuart.maister@strategic-narrative.com)

