




The Power of Your Community's Narrative

 SNAPSHOT
SPEAKERS Kelly Schott, TheCR
COMPETENCIES Strategy
MATURITY PHASES CMM1, CMM2, CMM3

HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Ever wondered how culture fits into a community's narrative?** Kelly recapped 5 key points from a previous call on culture and tied it into community narratives.
2. **Interested in a definition of a story or narrative?** Five members shared what a story means to them. Kelly then backed this up with 5 reasons why these meanings define a story.
3. **Want to back up your story with evidence?** Six strong data points were shared.

OVERVIEW

- **Background for call.** The purpose of the call was to discuss the "why" behind the importance of telling your community story.
 - Kelly recapped a previous call on culture as this topic goes hand-in-hand. The previous call talked about the value of culture, measuring that value and the idea of culture transformations within an organization.
 - Culture is a key piece to communities and a key piece to the organization. Understanding the culture is the best way to be able to communicate to different people in a manner that creates a desired behavior change that then creates value within a community.
 - Many of the people on the previous call were in the midst of transforming their culture or moving it from something that was stationary to collaborative.
 - Communication is a key piece to this strategy. Talking to people, meeting them where they are and understanding their culture and their way of working is the best way to effectively talk to them on a level that they will understand.

OVERVIEW, CONT.

- This is a good place to begin this discussion because it's all about tailoring the narrative/story in order to talk to the right people on a level that will resonate with them. This will help to create a need or value. Talking to a colleague is different than talking to a stakeholder, but where does that difference lie? How can the message be communicated in the same effective manner? These are questions that can be facilitated through storytelling.
- **Working culture into the narrative.** For this piece, it's important to know the "who" behind who you are talking to and how you should be talking them in order to effectively get the message across. If you don't know who your members are or who you are talking to, you don't have a clear path to deliver your message. Know the recipient of your story.
- **Defining a "story" or "narrative".** These two words will conjure up different images for different people, i.e. non-fiction, fiction, fairy tale, etc. It can also be the tale of a business or the journey or path that you're trying to transmit information through. When thinking about what a story is, think also about the elements that make a story powerful.
 - Kelly asked members to share a story that matters to them or that they have truly connected with, such as a book, movie, a piece of history, a family story passed down through the generations, etc.
 - For Kelly it is a picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde.
 - One member shared that for her, it is a book called: "Lullabies for Little Criminals". Anything to do with reunions, family or mother and child really gets this participant's attention.
 - Another member likes non-fiction, particularly "The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat" by Oliver Sacks. The book focuses are various disorders.
 - "God-Shaped Hole" by Tiffanie DeBartolo resonates with another member. It's a different angle on love and loss.
 - "Three Men in a Boat (To say Nothing of the Dog)" is a wonderfully written, humorous, feel-good story by Jerome K. Jerome.
 - These stories resonate because the reader can relate to the experience shared by the author, they can relate to the universality of the emotions shared in the story, the language behind how the story is told (it can either draw you in or turn you off), the humor and/or the content helps you to buy-in to what is being expressed.

OVERVIEW, CONT.

- Kelly tied this into the community narrative by stressing that the same elements that draw us in and/or keep us re-reading these stories are the same elements that we should try to evoke in the community narrative. We have to get people's attention about our communities in the same way as an author tries to draw you into his/her story.

- **What is a story?** Kelly shared a Pinterest storyboard that highlighted very creative, non-traditional ways to tell a story. Kelly wanted people to think outside the box when creating a community narrative.
 - Creatively include the "how", "what", "where", "why" context setting. There is a start, a middle where the story builds and then the end/resolution. These may all have different terms, but they are a constant element in storytelling.
 - Storytelling has evolved immensely over time, so there is no reason why it can't continue to evolve, particularly as it relates to community.

- **Use the story to tie into the business and strategic objectives of the organization.** Use different aspects of your narrative (or even a long-form story) to show and prove the value of the community. That then becomes a business case, even though it may not feel like a narrative. All of this still ties together with the over-arching narrative or story.

- **Back up your story with evidence.** Think about how storytelling can translate into your strategic business objectives.
 - Metrics to show engagement or involvement in the community could be metrics like active members. Perhaps create an output around collaboration that has occurred in that business unit because they're active.
 - Tell success stories and member wins. It feeds the "what's in it for me" factor.
 - Uniqueness and ROI. It shows business return on the community because of its uniqueness over the competition.
 - Time saved and efficiency.
 - Finding resources that you didn't know existed.
 - Self- promotion or the promotion of members to celebrate successes that others wouldn't know about without the community is a great success story for community.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Participants all felt that they could improve upon their community narratives.
 - One participant has come from a place of knowing her community really well (she helped develop it over 7 years) to now being in a brand new community. This participant feels that she could get better with the narrative when she knows her new community better. When your perspective changes, the way you feel about the community will also change.
 - Along the same lines as above, as the vision of the community changes, the narrative will change. For one member, the way the community functions today will look very different after their migration to a new platform. This will be a terrific opportunity to figure out a new elevator pitch.
 - One participant felt that she needed to develop different elevator pitches for different stakeholders because as the audience changes, their needs/interests in the community will change. It's the "what's in it for me" perspective. This reflects back to what was discussed earlier in that people need to be able to relate to the story. Different audiences will have different facets of the story that resonate with them. Kelly agreed. This also came up in the previous culture call. Sometimes several stories – or several variations of the same story – are needed to talk to different levels of people who have different interests in the community.

- Participants discussed the aspects of their community story that they would absolutely ensure were told:
 - That the community is global and crosses different business lines.
 - The community is relevant in carrying out the organization's business objectives.
 - Making your work as visible as possible around the world in order to learn, share and solve problems.
 - Spotlighting different business units in order to give them the same visibility as the corporate headquarters. It keeps everyone on the same page.

- When framing your narrative, show the community's value by spotlighting how it ties to the company's strategic and business goals. That is the heart of the power of a narrative.

LESSONS LEARNED, CONT.

- Kelly used the whiteboard to get participants thinking about how to use the structure of the narrative to transmit the power of community. Participants discussed how to tell the story of the community while also showing the value:
 - Know the purpose of the community – who you are and why it exists. This applies to internal, external, etc.
 - Increase engagement (involvement) through peer pressure. One member used the analogy of a hotel's linen and towel service. Hotels encourage people to use their towels more than once by making them feel part of a bigger, more complete picture (protecting the environment).
 - Uniqueness. The community offers something unique to the organization that its competitors don't have.
 - There is power in having information readily available across all business units.
 - Stress that collaboration is at the heart of the company's values.

- Relatability, language and emotion are key factors of a story. This is what can be translated into a community narrative. It's all how it's structured. Think about how you talk about community and back that up. That adds power to the narrative.

- By tailoring how we talk about community and referencing some of the points discussed in this call – particularly success stories – that spells power when mentioned to the right person. If you know what people are looking for and why they're there, you can create a lot of value by mentioning these in a story. Know your audience and how to create the depth of your story to make it relatable.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

- Kelly asked participants to give their “elevator pitch” about the power of their communities:
 - Helping customers understand and navigate all of the content and resources that are in the customer care area so that they can maximize how they build their communities with this company’s software. Also, building the sense of community by connecting digital workplace managers, stakeholders and end users with like contacts in the community so that they can advance the feeling of collaboration, sharing and learning from one another.
 - The community helps connect the technical staff – engineers, architects and designers – globally.
 - A global employee community as a place to connect the global workforce and encourage collaboration and communication between leadership. A place to connect and unite employees.
 - The community is a new opportunity to be sure that they are doing their best to “work out loud” and share instead of working in silos. The more people know about each other – especially on a global scale – the more they can be in tune with each other.
 - A place to connect and iterate on work to support the larger vision of a generative network working as a support piece vs. the hub of it.
 - The community is a personalized, online home for members as a way to foster thriving online exchanges between members. It’s a way to bring together what is done in-person in an online experience to keep people connected throughout the year.
 - An internal community used by associates for knowledge as well as collaboration. While collaborating isn’t a huge piece right now, the hope is to move in that direction as they look at other platforms for the community.

RESOURCES

- As mentioned in the discussion – [Story Structure Diagrams](#) - This is the Pinterest board referenced on the call
- As mentioned in the chat: [Financial Times Storytelling Templates](#) - A great curation of different storytelling templates