



Communicating Transformation: The Power of Storytelling

Joe Rolewicz, Partner & Managing Director

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Executive Summary

We see enterprise-level transformation efforts routinely face the same paradox: leaders have designed a sophisticated strategy, they are trying to deploy an advanced technology to optimize processes and workflows, and they have funding for the right initiatives—yet they can still fall short if they are not connecting the people participating and being impacted to the *why* behind the required changes.

Transformation efforts do not succeed solely because of PowerPoint decks or project plans. Leaders that tell a story that people believe in and want to be a part of are also a key enabler of likely success.

In the healthcare ecosystem, where mission, trust, and emotion drive behavior as much as policy and process, **storytelling can be a catalyst that turns strategy into shared purpose.**

1. “Telling Your Change Story”

Metrics are not likely to make your teams and staff rally around your transformation program – but they are more likely to rally behind the meaning of it. When organizations communicate transformation as a list of initiatives (“implement the new EHR,” “reduce administrative waste,” “integrate service lines”), the message rarely inspires.

But if you as a leader can frame transformation as a **narrative journey**—why the change is necessary, what it will make possible, and how each person contributes—the same initiatives gain emotional meaning.

Transformation stories should answer three fundamental questions:

- *Why are we changing?* (Context and urgency)
 - *What future are we creating?* (Vision and aspiration)
 - *What’s my role in making it real?* (Ownership and agency)
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2. Shifting from Informing to Inspiring

Transformation leaders can sometimes equate communication with volume—more town halls, more memos, more dashboards. But effective storytelling is about *intentional simplicity*: connecting head, heart, and hands.

Head: Provide clarity. Why now? What’s the goal?

Heart: Connect emotionally. How will this improve the experience of our members, the care of our

patients, what will be the impact in our community?

Hands: Drive action. What will people do differently?

As a leader, you don't want to simply inform your teams and stakeholders about the transformation—you should try to *invite them into it*.

3. Crafting a Compelling Narrative

A strong transformation story has five essential elements:

1. **A Clear Beginning:** Describe the catalyst for change—market forces, regulatory shifts, unsustainable trends, etc.
2. **A Shared Vision:** Paint a vivid picture of the future organization and its benefits to the broader healthcare ecosystem - members, patients, teams, communities, etc.
3. **Human Stakes:** Highlight how the change improves lives—e.g. reducing burnout, enhancing care delivery, strengthening financial resilience, etc.
4. **Heroes and Guides:** Elevate real people—clinicians, managers, patients, etc. —who embody the change.
5. **Progress Milestones:** Share wins along the way to sustain belief and momentum.

The most effective transformation stories are **personal, repeatable, and measurable**. They cascade from leadership to the frontline, adapted in tone but consistent in truth.

4. Empowering Your Leaders as Storytellers

In successful transformation programs, every executive and manager can become a storyteller-in-chief - modeling transparency, consistency, and empathy—especially when uncertainty or fatigue set in.

To enable this:

- Provide **narrative frameworks** and key message points for leaders
- Reinforce storytelling in leadership development programs
- Recognize and reward leaders who communicate authentically and connect transformation to everyday purpose

When leadership communication aligns vertically and horizontally, transformation will stop just a being a corporate “program” —it can become a *shared movement*.

5. Measuring the Impact of Your Story

Storytelling isn't soft. It's strategic.

Transformation programs that we observe as leading practice are measuring:

- **Engagement metrics** (awareness, belief, advocacy).
- **Behavioral indicators** (adoption rates, initiative participation).
- **Outcome alignment** (how communication correlates with KPI performance).

Measurable and adaptive transformation communication will reinforce trust and accelerate value realization.

A Key Takeaway

Transformation communication is not about managing information; it's about **mobilizing belief**. Leaders who will win in the future of healthcare will not be those with the most data—they will be those who can tell the clearest, most compelling story about why the data matters.

When strategy becomes story, and story becomes shared, real transformation becomes possible

Some Next Steps

1. Audit your transformation messaging: Is it inspiring or merely informative?
2. Identify and equip "story champions" across clinical, operational, and support teams.
3. Integrate storytelling into governance routines—celebrate small wins as narrative proof points

To learn more about how we have helped our provider and health system clients to craft their transformation "stories" to enable organizational motivation and value realization, visit us at www.sunstonemanagementadvisors.com.

About the Author



Joe Rolewicz is a Founding Partner of Sunstone Management Advisors, a growth advisory firm focused on helping healthcare and insurance companies identify and unlock their full enterprise value. With over 25 years of experience leading complex transformation initiatives for healthcare and insurance businesses, he leads our Transformation Consulting Practice, leveraging experiences gained from over 50 different clients as well as Senior Manager roles with national consulting practices. He is also the former SVP of Planning and Project Management for a national managed behavioral health organization. Joe received his Bachelor's of Business Administration in Finance from James Madison University and a Master's in Business Administration from Loyola University in Maryland. **Questions or comments?** Feel free to contact Joe directly at jrolewicz@sunstonemanagementadvisors.com or connect with him on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/josephmrolewicz