

Why Projects Fail: Breaking the Clarity Erosion Cycle

WHY PROJECTS FAIL

BREAKING THE “CLARITY EROSION CYCLE”

BRINK TRAMMELL

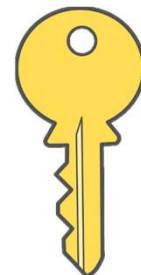
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KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- I. Why Projects Fail: The Clarity Erosion Cycle
- II. Structured Storylines
- III. Sense-making Principles
- IV. Clarity Feedback Loop

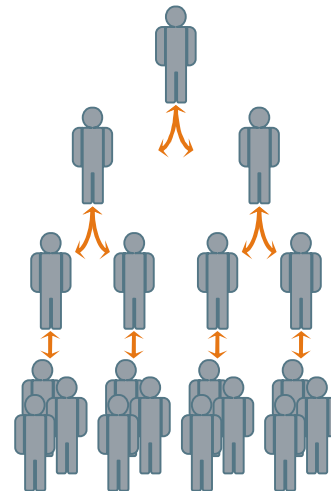


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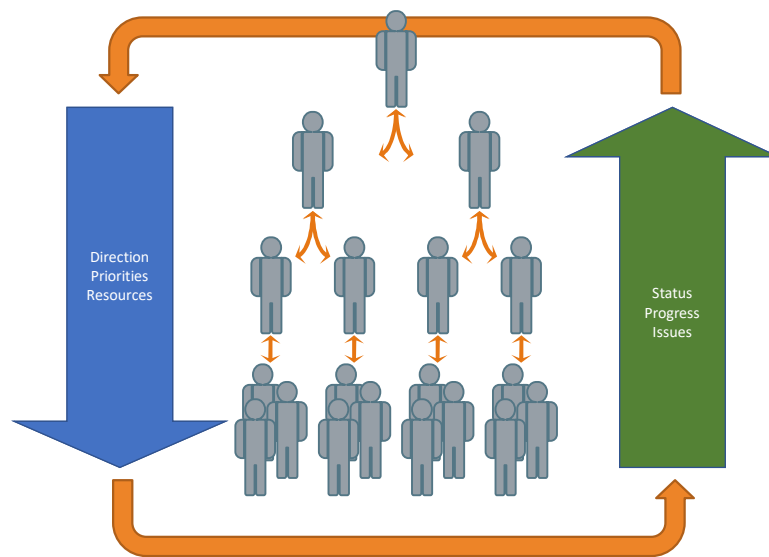
LARGE EFFORTS

Large efforts must be organized for specialization and communication.



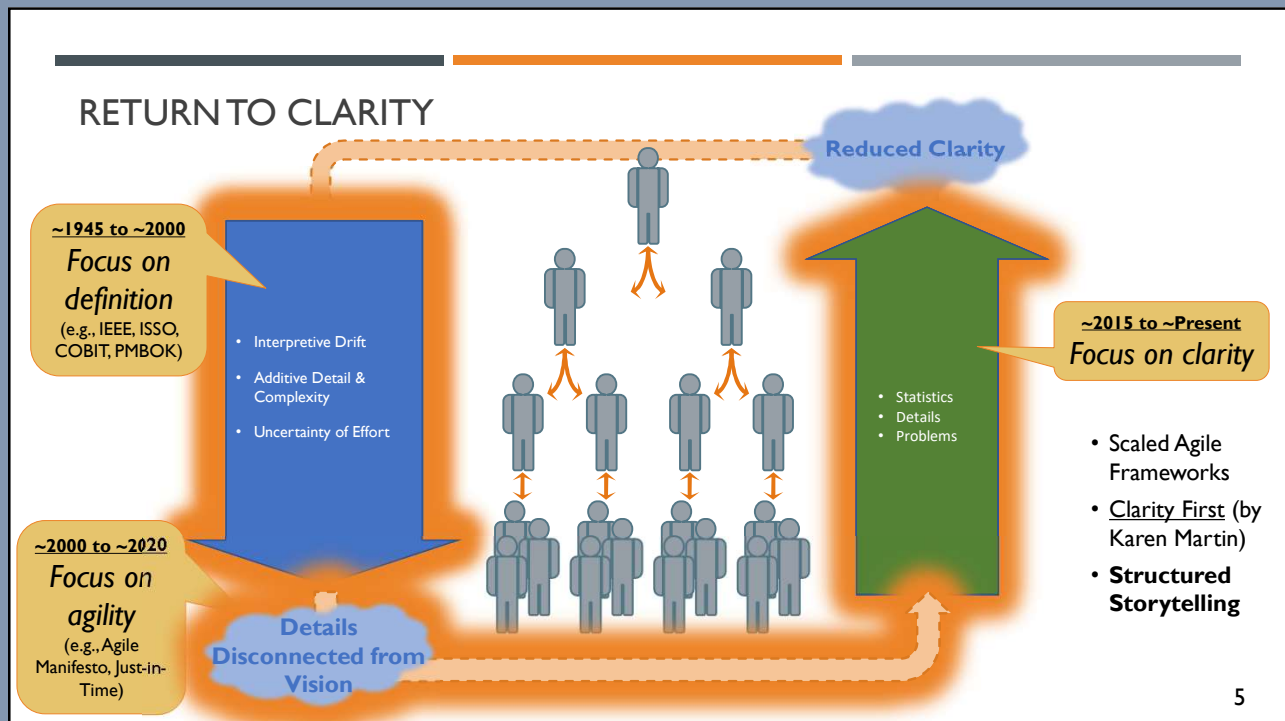
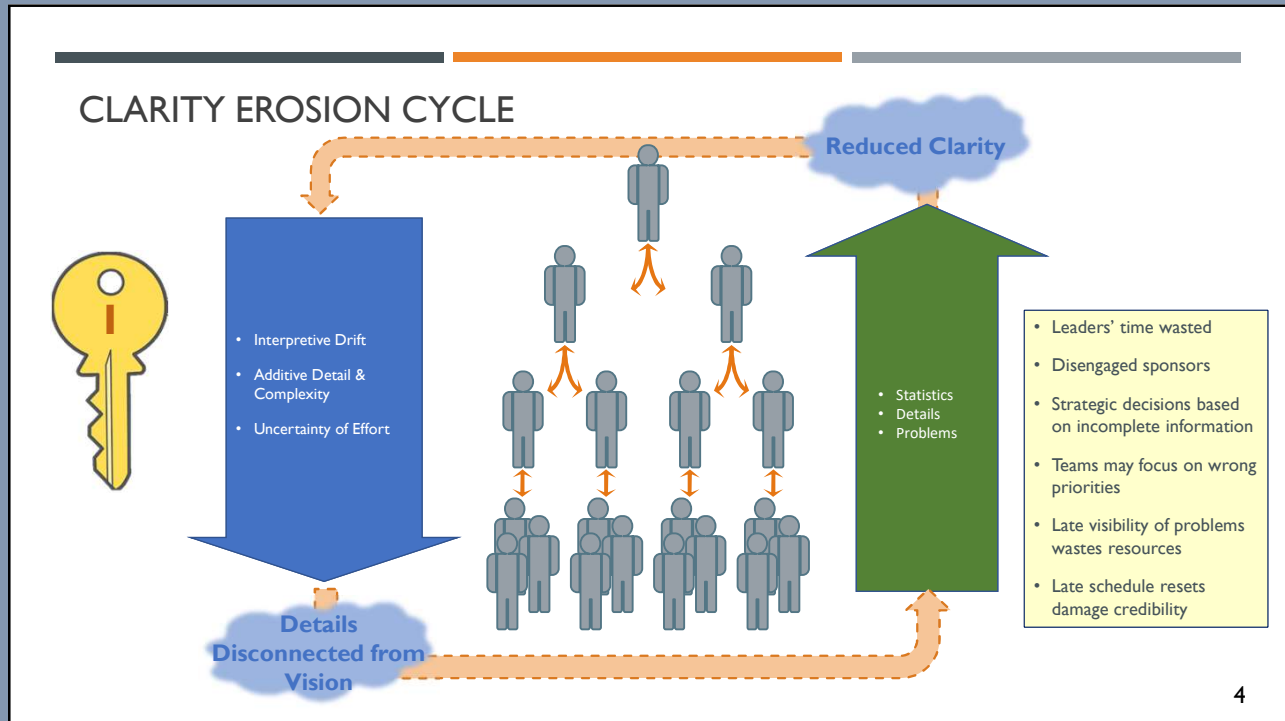
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LARGE EFFORTS



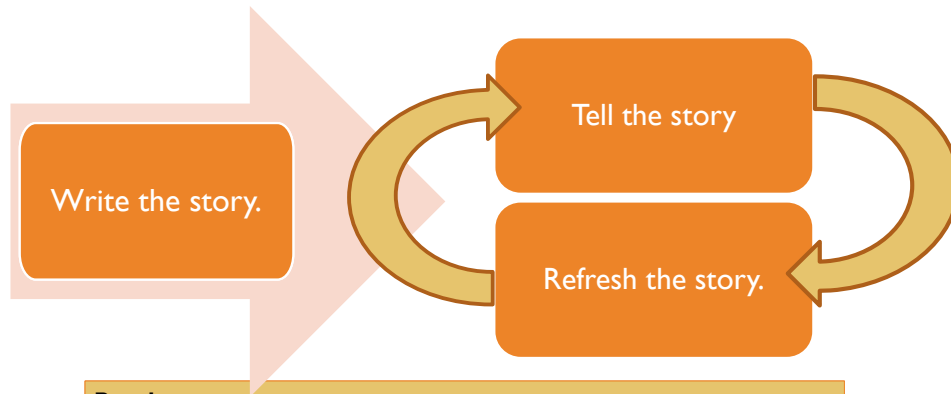
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STRUCTURED STORYTELLING

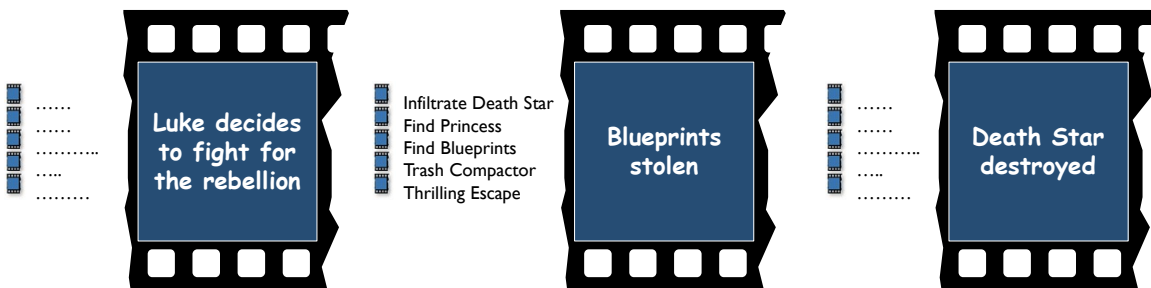


Result:

- Leaders have a clear view of where we're going and how far away we are.
- They can set proper expectations among constituents.
- They can step in as needed to resolve priority issues, misinterpretations, and roadblocks

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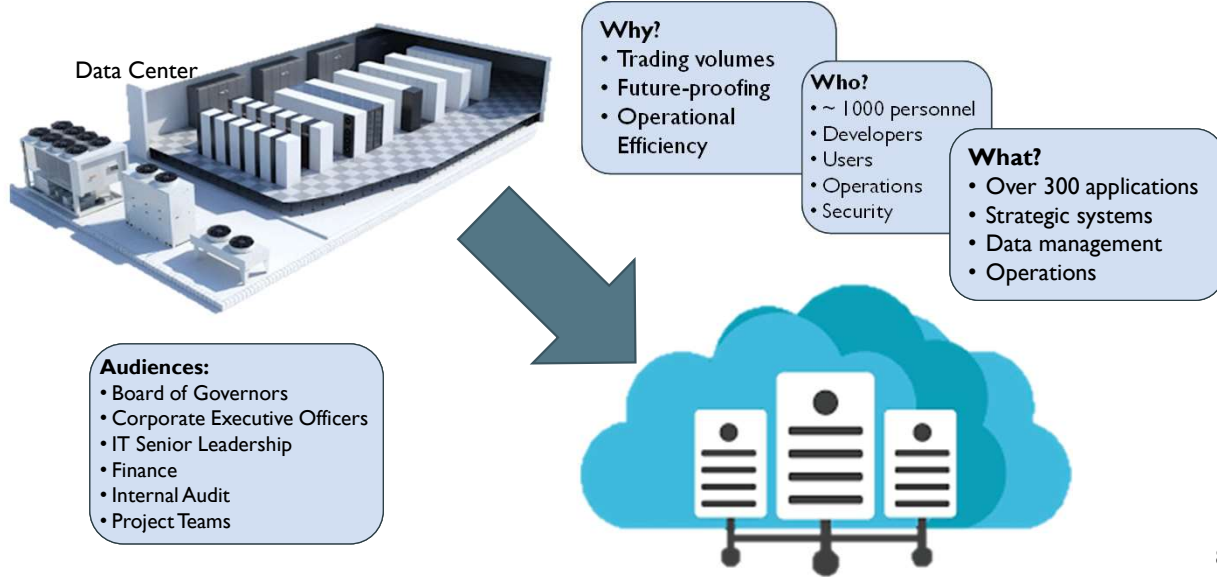
A STORYLINE IS LIKE A SCREENPLAY



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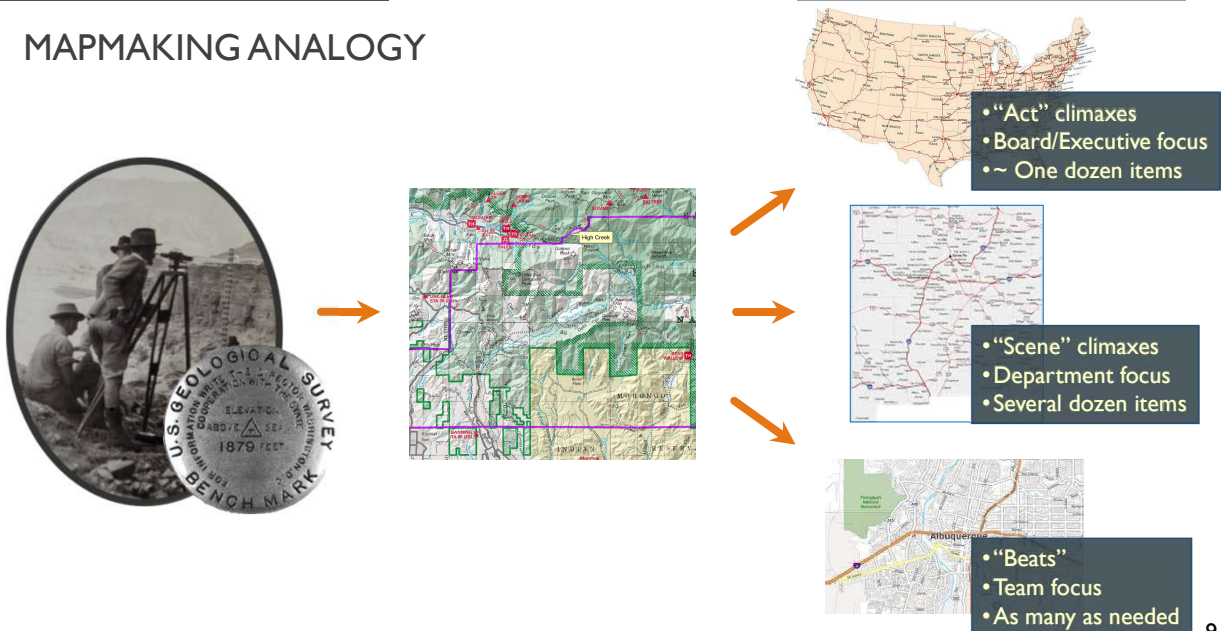
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STRUCTURED STORYTELLING IN PRACTICE



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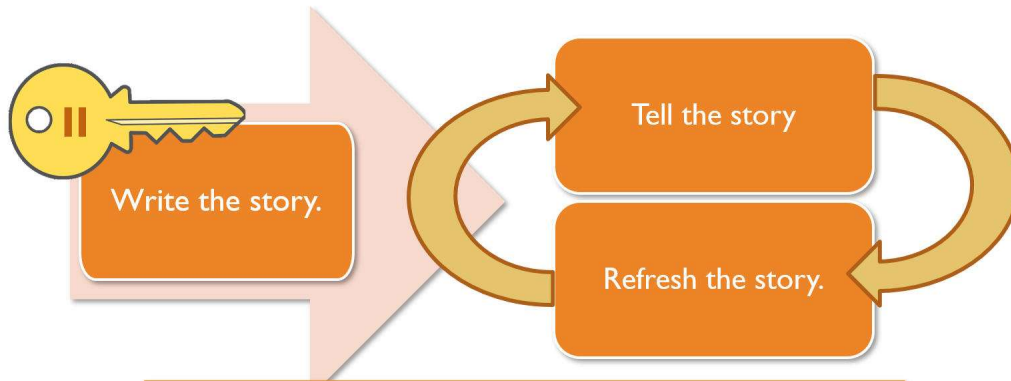
MAPMAKING ANALOGY



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STRUCTURED STORYTELLING



- Result:**
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STRUCTURED STORYTELLING

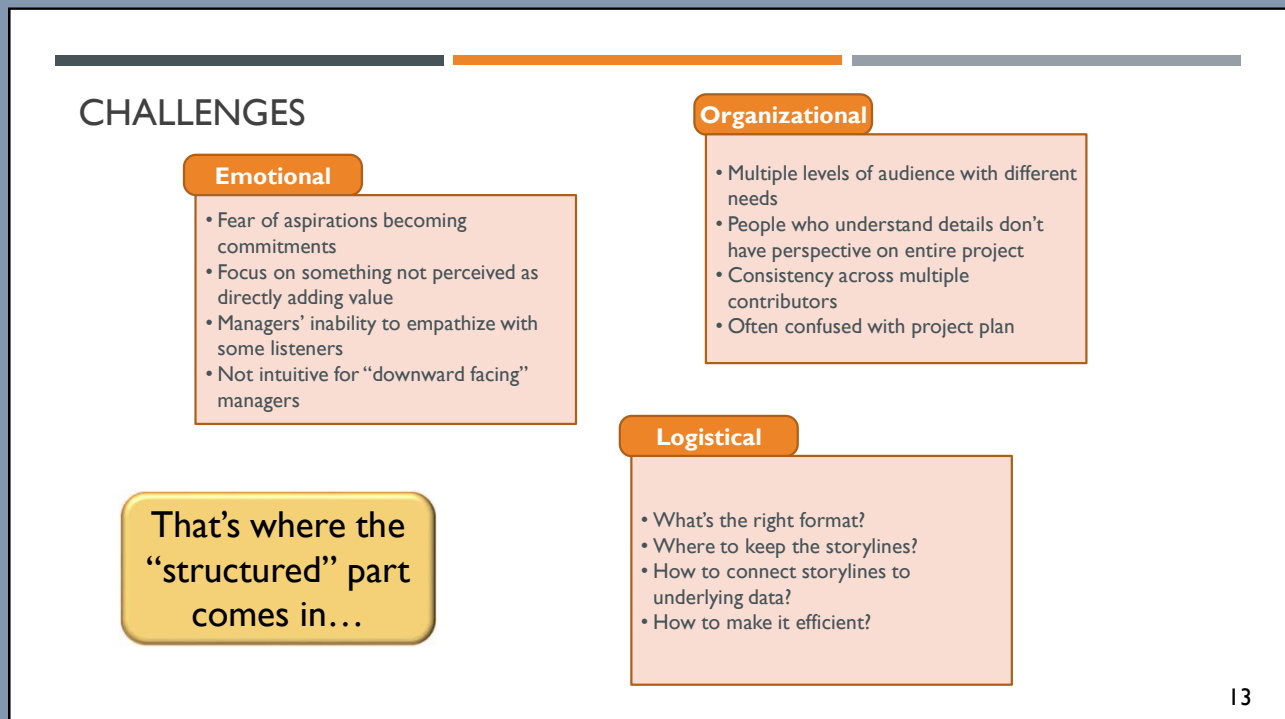
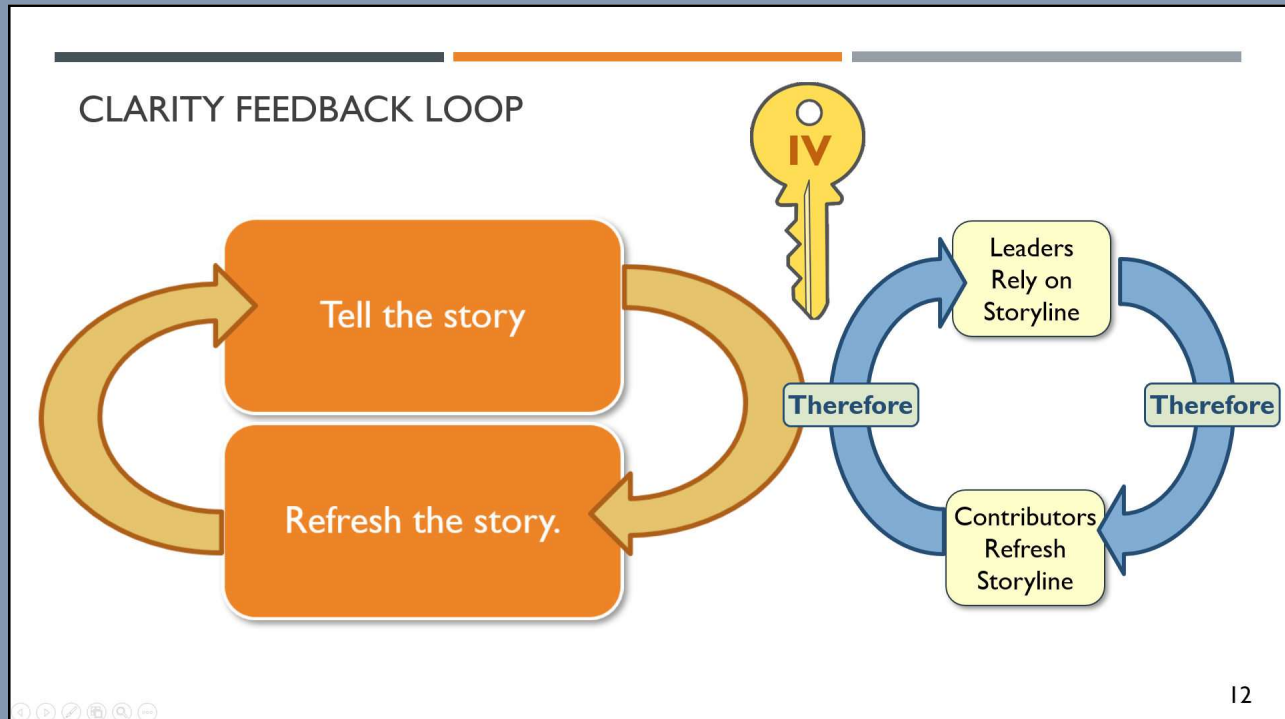
Sense-making Principles...

A good storyline:

Is a mental outline for understanding a project, not a guarantee.	Is written for listeners, not for tellers.	Is authored, not generated.	Shows important changes in the situation, not tasks for the team.
Can be told consistently in summary, moderate, and detailed forms.	Shows believable progress.	Is connected to the actual work.	Is fluid—details are added and changes made as you go.

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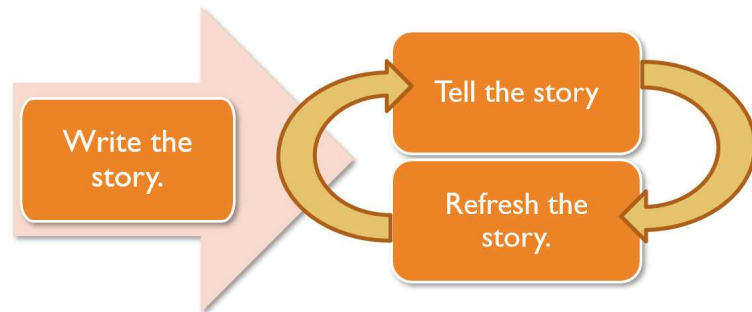


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A LAYERED APPROACH

Sense-making techniques

- What does good story look like?



14a

A LAYERED APPROACH

Sense-making techniques

- What does good story look like?

Organizational practices

- How to scale it to a large organization?

Consistency

- consistent application of the above principles from project to project, presenting them in a common (ideally visual) format so listeners know how to interpret what they see.

Currency

- Consistent approach to identify when expectations should change, and how to ensure constituents are aware.

Modularity

- The ability to combine small storylines into larger and larger ones, sometimes as part of multiple “parent” stories.

Curation

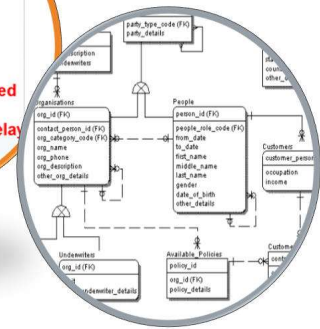
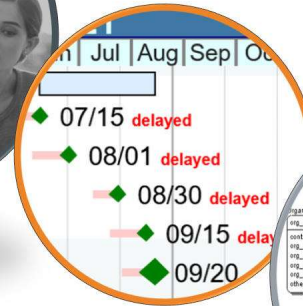
- Objective oversight of the content of the individual and collective storylines to ensure they continue to serve their purpose of providing clarity.

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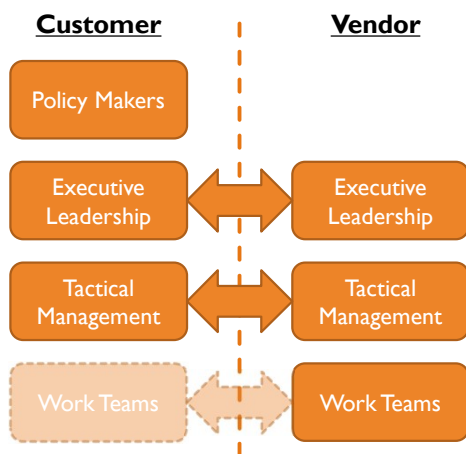
A LAYERED APPROACH

- Sense-making techniques**
 - What does good story look like?
- Organizational practices**
 - How to scale it to a large organization?
- Tools and automation**
 - How to make it practical and efficient?



14c

OUTSOURCED PROJECTS



- Characteristics:**
- Inconsistent loyalties
 - Communication across organization boundaries
 - Unbalanced risk allocation
 - Incentive for scope drift

Contract is:

Rigid
(strong customer)
Or
Vague
(strong vendor)

- Structured Storytelling Response:**
- Joint storyline ownership at tactical management level
 - Storyline becomes core to status updates
 - Vendor drives clarity feedback loop
 - Vendor commits to storyline as best expectation; NOT as contractual delivery commitment

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THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?

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