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WHO OWNS THE *NARRATIVE?*

Whether in boardrooms, in the media, or around dinner tables, we have the perception that narratives are something we can own.

Governments certainly seem to think they do. Businesses often believe they do. Leaders speak as though they do. And communicators are often expected to do exactly that.

Sometimes it feels like we're succeeding.
We refine the talking points.
We repeat the key messages.
We control the channels.
We stay on script.
And we're confident people will believe it.

But if you've been paying attention, something feels different. People have always interpreted information through the lens of their own experiences, beliefs and conversations. What's changed is that those



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interpretations now travel instantly, evolve publicly and gather momentum in ways no communication plan can fully anticipate.

Perhaps we've been describing communication more simply than we've been experiencing it. We often talk about communication as though it moves neatly from sender to receiver. But in reality, it's a living system that unfolds more like this...

It gets interpreted.
Challenged.
Shared.
Reframed.
Repeated.
Adapted.

Every conversation changes it.
Every experience reshapes it.

Before long, the message is no longer yours.

Meaning doesn't live inside the message. It emerges between people. That's why two people can sit in the same town hall, hear the same speaker, read the same email and walk away with completely different understandings of what they've just experienced.

I've seen this play out time and again inside organisations.

For example, months are spent crafting an Employee Value Proposition. Every word is carefully chosen. The design is beautiful. The communication launches flawlessly. But employees don't experience an EVP through a beautifully designed presentation. They experience it when they ask for support and receive it, or don't.

When they're promised growth and find opportunity, or don't.

When leaders speak about trust and then behave in ways that either reinforce or contradict those words.

Communication introduces the promise.

Experience tests the promise.
Together, they shape the narrative.

For communicators, this changes the role we play. Our responsibility lies in understanding how communication is interpreted, recognising where intent and experience diverge, and helping organisations close that gap - not only through better communication, but by influencing better decisions and behaviours. After all, communication creates its greatest impact when experience reinforces the promise.

So instead of trying to own the narrative, we should be asking: "How do we earn the narrative?"

Perhaps the answer isn't a formula, but a mindset:

Less certainty. More curiosity.
Less broadcasting. More listening.

That's the Blindspot.

MIA ABED AZAM



Mia Abed is a strategic communication consultant and Managing Director of Blindspot Communication. With over 20 years' experience across corporate, consulting, and entrepreneurial domains, he partners with organisations to solve complex communication challenges by transforming information into experiences that are easier to understand, navigate, and apply. He is particularly interested in the intersection of communication, culture and experience, and contributes to the profession through thought leadership, industry bodies and award panels.

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