



When a Strategic Narrative Wins and How to Achieve It

By Elizabeth Ortega, Principal of ECO Strategic Communications

Every crisis communications counselor appreciates the importance of being the first to define the primary narrative. The well-thought out and clear message sets the tone of a story for days, weeks and months to come.

While iterations of the initial account may evolve with interpretations of the facts, the opening point stands the test of time. And if

done right, it turns a lay-up shot into a three-pointer in the communications arena.

Context reigns king

Recently, a client seeking counsel explained she was being considered to act on behalf of an infamous party with a dubious reputation. She needed my input before making the next move.

She understood the representation would be risky, but it would also serve a purpose. The client would likely attract publicity which would or could attach to the law firm. This could impact the firm. At the same time, the law firm would be providing a service to its community by accepting the instruction and representing the party to the best of its ability through its quality work. This could bring in more work downstream.

My client had an opportunity to define the strategy and construct the narrative from the onset. This control of the messaging appealed to her, as did the complexity of the case.

The pros-and-cons analysis ensued.

She started by polling peers and civic leaders to gauge interest in the matter. She was carefully knitting a strategy with input from her community, peers and trusted advisors. She took a leadership approach we often forget to tap into – informal support from our community, which allows us to take full advantage of all available resources. The feedback she received from her network was encouraging enough to keep going.

Like in crisis communications, getting ahead of the news and protecting her message will allow my client to take the controversial case and seek to harness any publicity positively.

Defining your narrative is a wise bet

Often, the first account of a story wins, because it sticks in people's minds. As impressionable beings, words dominate our thoughts when they have fundamental and pertinent worth. It's why crisis communicators and

marketers, alike, home in on catchy, roll-off-the-tongue phrases that can easily be repeated. Once they take root, it is practically impossible to reverse the original statement – even if it's not entirely accurate.

Take the Toronto Raptors' Tim Leiweke who raised eyebrows when he opined that basketball could be No. 1 in Canada, a land that lives and dies by hockey-team loyalty. Leiweke elected a tag line for the Toronto basketball team that, while not technically accurate, stood out, resonated and transcended Toronto's city limits to make it Canada's basketball team. "We the North" resonated with Canadians. While Toronto is in southern central Canada (and every Canadian outside Toronto loves to hate Toronto), Leiweke and Canadians understand that the NBA originated in the U.S., where Canadians are referred to as "our friends to the north." Where hockey loyalties lie in city and provincial boundaries, Canada's only NBA basketball team has the potential to transcend those boundaries, even as a team based in Toronto.

["The Globe and Mail"](#) lays out the strategy. "Leiweke set about trying to make people forget the 'Toronto' part of the Toronto Raptors. That's what 'We the North' was about." In this narrative, the slogan's appeal is universal, because there is complete unity and belief – whether you're from Toronto or not.

Moving in unity

These two examples show how leaders can use strategic messaging to convey purpose and resolve.

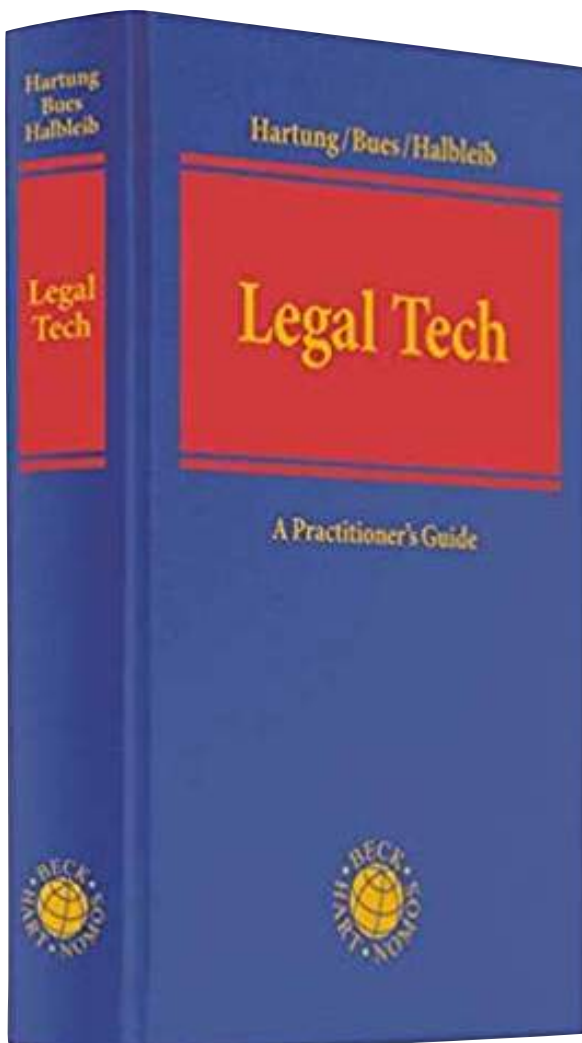
The lawyer examined the ramifications of her

case assignment with help from those close to her, and used their feedback to develop a narrative about that case that resonates with a wider audience. Meanwhile, the sports executive used a meaningful universal motto to push a country past one sport and one city to unleash widespread interest, making history in the process.

Using public influence and establishing the first narrative is a recipe for success across industries.

About the Author

Elizabeth Ortega is principal of [ECO Strategic Communications](#), A Miami-based marketing agency that focuses on achieving lawyers and law firm's leadership goals in competitive markets around the world. Consistent with her leadership counsel to lawyers and in unison with clients, she co-founded [The International Academy of Financial Crime Litigators](#), a collaboration of experienced public-and private-litigation professionals working with the Basel Institute on Governance to expand worldwide access to solutions in economic crime cases.



The Current and Future State

This new handbook comprehensively analyzes the current and future state of digital transformation in the legal market and its implications from a global perspective. It provides a multi-faceted overview of the use of Legal Tech in law firms and legal departments in different parts of the world (including Africa, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Europe, Russia, and the United States) and formulates clearcut strategic advice for a successful digital transformation. With concrete examples, best practices and first hand experience reports, more than 50 renowned international experts explain how and to what extent Legal Tech - through automation and technology - will change the way legal services are delivered. The reader learns what strategic decisions and steps are necessary to equip the legal industry for the changes to come. Future developments (e.g. Smart Contracts, Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence) are also explained and analysed in this unique book.

