

“I Know Enough To Tell A Story.”

*Investigating the Impact of Corporate Storytelling at
the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio*

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Dedications

To my husband, Chris, for your unconditional and unwavering love and support. I could not do what I do or be who I am without you by my side. Thank you for loving me.

To my children, Jackson and Jade, for being my inspiration. The world is at your fingertips. I want you to see that whatever you wish for, no matter how far-reaching it may feel, can be yours. Keep dreaming, babies.

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Love, Christyn

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Abstract

This capstone project explores the transformative potential of corporate storytelling as a strategic tool for organizational success. Focusing on the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio (ULGSO), the study examines how storytelling can build organizational capacity for inclusivity and empathy as leaders acknowledge their position as partners with internal and external stakeholders in a co-constructed environment.

ULGSO is the oldest and largest Black-led nonprofit organization serving the city of Cincinnati since 1948. The League has been facing a problem: people do not know what they do. Too many stakeholders cannot share the League's story authentically or representatively. Storytelling is a strategic and accessible solution critical for human-centered, justice-oriented approaches to leadership and learning.

The project leverages established theories surrounding communities of practice, organizational identity development, sensegiving and sensemaking practices, and storytelling to develop a novel conceptual framework and corresponding measurement tools. Our framework defines how shifting from traditional to reflexive sensegiving expands storytelling's potential to advance the mission and vision of organizations with benefits for employee engagement, loyalty, trust, reputation, and brand.

Employing a mixed-methods approach, we utilize a corporate storytelling survey with quantitative and qualitative components alongside semi-structured interviews to investigate the effectiveness of ULGSO's strategy, co-construction practices, and perceptions of story topics. We found a developing storytelling strategy, highlighting the importance of tailoring encouragement and fostering co-construction practices. Additionally, authenticity, relevance, and proximity are critical factors for successful storytellers, with stories focused on life change and empowerment identified as the most compelling, though perception differed by role. We offer three sequenced recommendations, starting with strategic skill development for team members and leaders, progressing towards routinization of storytelling practices, and ultimately transforming the organization's culture.

This capstone offers valuable considerations for organizations across industries, demonstrating the potential of corporate storytelling for equipping future-focused leadership to unlock new value in change management, communications, identity development, and public relations initiatives. By promoting co-constructed, reflexive sensegiving, ULGSO can harness the power of story to advance its mission and vision, strengthen its brand, and ultimately build a more engaged and impactful organization.

Introduction

The Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio (ULGSO) is the oldest and largest Black-led nonprofit organization serving the city of Cincinnati since 1948. The League serves thousands of people across 12 counties from Northern Kentucky to Dayton across its two divisions: the Greater Cincinnati Urban League and the Miami Valley Urban League.

Organizational Context

The League is committed to racial equity and economic empowerment for African Americans and historically underserved communities. They believe everyone deserves the opportunity to succeed, regardless of race or background. The League's advocacy work focuses on changing policies and practices that create barriers to opportunity for Black Cincinnatians. Their team also educates the public about their community's challenges and builds support for justice-focused policies. Their education and development focus helps participants develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in school, the workplace, and life. The League provides various programs and services, including job training, financial literacy education, and mentoring. It is the position of the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio that all citizens must work together to close these gaps and create a more just and equitable society for all.

The League exists because systematic injustices continue to plague Black Cincinnatians. African Americans in Cincinnati have made progress in recent decades, but they still lag economically and socially behind other citizen groups. In 2002, the National Urban League moved its national conference from Cincinnati due to concerns about racial disparities in the city. In response, city and community leaders launched several initiatives to improve race relations and address racial inequity. These efforts have had some success, but much work still needs to be done. African Americans in Cincinnati continue to face high rates of unemployment, poverty, and crime. They are also less likely to graduate from high school or college than their peers. These disparities have a significant impact on the quality of life for African Americans in Cincinnati and the region.

An experienced and committed team of citizen professionals leads the ULGSO. This team is committed to working together to achieve the mission, and they are passionate about making a difference in the lives of Black Cincinnatians. This organization prioritizes community-centered practices even within its hiring processes. To this end, vacant roles have remained unfilled for extended periods, with some for more than a year, because applicants needed Cincinnati-specific cultural competence necessary for the job. As a result, the human resources team has set an ambitious, aligned goal of 30-day talent acquisition windows.

During the past four years, the League has undergone significant turnover and churn across its leadership teams and within divisions. A team at the heart of our focus, external relations, which includes communications, grew from one employee in 2020 to a team of six in 2021, only to shrink again to one employee in 2022. Compounding the leadership and stability issue, the communications and marketing team also had three different directors during those three years. A lingering issue for the League is team capacity, resourcing, and stability.

Problem of Practice

The League has been facing a problem for decades: people simply don't know what they do. Too many folks—internally and externally—cannot share the League's story authentically or representatively.

Internally, many of the ULGSO's staff members need to be fully aware of the scope of the organization's work, likely due to the sheer number of different programs and services across its divisions. Simply put, keeping track of all the levers can be difficult. Emerging brand guidance, storytelling strategy, and strategic planning seek to address this challenge. This problem is observable during team meetings where individual contributors and leaders describe difficulty tracking flyers or social media posts for more than a dozen events happening concurrently.

Externally, the problem has even greater significance. Many of the ULGSO's stakeholders, including community members, politicians, potential donors, and city officials, need help accurately articulating what the organization does. This problem is worth addressing as it makes it difficult for the League to maintain high levels of satisfaction and support for its programs, increase engagement internally and externally, and communicate shared goals with stakeholders. We've heard our partner organization relay the discouragement of attending the same funerals, partnership meetings, and reactive press conferences only to be asked what they are doing to serve their community and address problems. Routinely, the citizens look to the city, the city looks to the League, and the League looks to the state of its communication and marketing strategy to address this gap.

Our partner recognizes the need for more strategic storytelling. In addition to hiring external consultants and firms to develop brand guidance, communications strategies, and strategic plans, they have hired a new Vice President of External Relations and Director of Communications and Marketing who began within a few months of our partnership. UGLSO has also recently hired a new Senior Director of Data and Analytics, supporting the organization by infusing data into decision-making and shifting the orientation from grant-driven to outcomes-driven. As a result of our work, they hope to hear internal and external stories that express the League's life-changing and empowering impact.

Literature Review

To support the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio in improving its communications and marketing strategy with an intentional focus on corporate storytelling, we explored the literature to understand better how research has defined corporate storytelling's central concepts and components. We refined our project questions throughout and applied the questions below to interrogate the literature, associate critical concepts, identify potential gaps, and operationalize a corporate storytelling strategy for ourselves and our partner:

- 1. What does research tell us about how people engage in storytelling about and within organizations?**
 - a. Key terms: Beliefs, identity, narrative, sensegiving, sensemaking, storytelling, reputation, values
- 2. What does research tell us about the impact of corporate storytelling as a strategy for engaging internal stakeholders?**
 - a. Key terms: Brand identity, employee engagement and loyalty, internal public relations, reflexive sensegiving
- 3. What does research tell us about the impact of corporate storytelling as a strategy for engaging external stakeholders?**
 - a. Key terms: Brand identity, external public relations, stakeholder engagement

Our goal was to understand the history and potential of storytelling in organizations so that we could design tools to analyze the effectiveness of the current corporate storytelling strategy at ULGSO. We began this journey positioned as narrative inquirers and realigned ourselves as phenomenologists due to what we learned from the literature.

Introduction to Key Concepts

Corporate storytelling is an effective internal communication strategy for building more robust organizational engagement. By personalizing messaging, organizations can enhance the capacity for connection and commitment among employees, as stories are inherently relatable and engaging and can help employees see themselves as part of something larger than themselves. Corporate storytelling is particularly compelling for building trust in the corporate brand. When employees hear stories about how the company has helped others or achieved success, they are likelier to believe in its mission and values. This

belief can lead to increased employee engagement and productivity and a stronger loyalty to the company.

Sensegiving is the process of creating meaning for others. In corporate storytelling, sensegiving refers to the process by which the organization creates meaning for its employees through the stories it tells. Sensemaking is the process of making meaning out of ambiguous or uncertain events. In the context of corporate storytelling, sensemaking refers to the process by which employees make sense of the stories that are told to them by the organization. Traditionally, sensemaking is bottom-up, dynamic, and individual, while sensegiving is top-down, strategic, and collective. In contrast, reflexive sensegiving is a distributed form of meaning-making where all stakeholders engage in a reciprocal co-constructed process. Co-construction is how employees and the organization work together to create meaning from the stories told.

Internal reputation and external reputation are interdependent. Employees' stories about the organization (internal reputation) will influence what participants, partners, and other stakeholders say about the organization (external reputation). And vice versa, what participants, partners, and other stakeholders say about the organization will influence how employees feel about the organization. The gap between what the organization promises through its branding (espoused) and what is perceived to deliver (lived) determines reputation. This gap is called the reputational gap. Organizations can mitigate the risk of a reputational gap through compelling corporate storytelling by ensuring their internal communication aligns with their external branding.

Connecting Communities of Practice, Identity Development, Sensemaking, and Sensegiving

To understand how these essential concepts relate to organizations, we first started by defining 'organization' for our purposes. Cognitive anthropology and educational theory point to Lave & Wenger's (1991) 'community of practice,' where individuals assemble based on their desire to learn and improve collectively within a particular domain. In this way, organizations can be communities of practice. In our context, ULGSO is a group of individuals committed to enabling economic empowerment and racial equity for African Americans and historically underserved communities. Communities of practice are composed of three primary elements: (1) a domain of interest, (2) engaged individuals, and (3) practical social interactions (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 599). As individuals within a community of practice engage within a domain and share concerns with the collective, they participate in situated learning. As Lave & Wenger declared, "There is no activity that is not situated." (1991, p. 33). For us, the situation is the context for the story.

Furthermore, the literature continues to develop this idea of community and its application to organizations. Communities of practice are active; their development hinges on participation in opportunities to learn. Within communities of practice, participation is "a way of understanding learning." (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 40) Stages of engagement, including newcomers, journeyfolks, and oldtimers, categorize roles within such communities or organizations. Greeno and Gresalfi (2008) define learning within these communities as a trajectory of participation (p. 171). In sum, it is essential to note that all communities of practice are not created equal, with the intensity of involvement in a particular community dependent on the amount of energy, engagement, and enthusiasm invested by the connected individuals. (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 600).

“Learning only partly - and often incidentally - implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, to master new understandings... Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations.” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53)

As these collections of individuals learn together, individual identities lose their importance and give way to developing a shared identity or new similarity cluster (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 598). Fiol & Romanelli (2012) identify two bridging processes central to the rise of new similarity clusters: (1) storytelling and (2) identification. While initial storytelling is primarily individual—and often internal—it is nonetheless a powerful form of knowledge-building (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 601). Fiol & Romanelli (2012) define a model of form identity development with three main components: (1) individual involvement, (2) collective identity formation, and (3) organizational formation. This identity development framework is valuable for our research as identity and story are tightly connected, where communities, clusters, and organizations are essentially the product of individual and collective learning. (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 599).

Another relevant phenomenon in the literature connected to our conception of communities of practice as essential in defining organizations is the reciprocal processes of sensemaking and sensegiving. Denning (2005) and Sinclair (2005) articulate sensemaking as the reflective knowledge gained by giving voice to

situated learning outcomes within a community (Gill, 2011, p. 18). In other words, sensemaking is how we navigate ambiguity, manage complexity, and create connections between seemingly disconnected values. As participants learn about their learning, they can extend the impact of their insights through explanation or story. (Gill, 2011, p. 19). Within this framework, we are defining these initial stories focused on explanation as an outcome of understanding within a community as sensemaking. In our focus on corporate storytelling, sensemaking is how internal and external stakeholders assign meaning or value to the stories told to them by an organization.

The literature defines sensegiving as attempting to influence how the co-construction of meaning evolves (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Said differently, sensegiving is how we create meaning for others. The field acknowledges the importance of these practices for addressing organizational ambiguity, sensemaking gaps, and strategic change initiatives. (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007, 2014; Weick, 1995). In our focus on corporate storytelling, sensegiving is how organizations create meaning for their employees and stakeholders through the stories they tell. Here, we see the potential value of a corporate storytelling strategy emerge from the literature, as sensemaking is only half the story: organizations and their leaders must engage in sensegiving.

The intersection of identity and impact does not end at the similarity cluster; instead, with the reciprocal relationship of sensegiving and sensemaking in place, audiences begin to recognize these clusters as new organizational forms based on the beliefs, practices, and values of its participants (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 598). As individuals within communities of practice begin telling stories about how their participation within the community makes sense, the cluster characteristics become more well-defined and give way to a new organizational form. (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 600). This development is the value of storytelling to the organization, as sensemaking is often considered a bottom-up, dynamic, and individual process. Meanwhile, sensegiving is traditionally regarded as top-down, strategic, and collective; we argue that joint identity formation and meaning-making are co-constructed. When individuals and organizations are engaged in storytelling, there is an opportunity to strategically align sensemaking and sensegiving to co-construct stories that advance the collective's identity, practices, and values (Gill, 2011, p. 669).

Ultimately, for organizations focused on defining collective identity and extending individual impact, storytelling is identified within the research as an integral component of individual, community, and organizational development.

The Role of Narratives, Stories, and Storytelling

Storytelling is a deeply human practice as “stories are one of the most universal forms of representing life experiences” (Marvasti et al., 2019, p. 65). Stories and storytellers have facilitated communication among individuals and groups for millennia across “nations, societies, and cultures” (Gill, 2015, p. 665). Marvasti, Foley, & DeLammermore (2019) share that “at the heart of social problems are people,” and stories help navigate the complexities of lived experience (p. 68). Nonetheless, “stories are powerful but have limitations to convey only certain experiences” (Marvasti et al., 2019, p. 78). While seemingly natural and universal, storytelling should not be underestimated as a complex organizational skill and strategy.

Storytelling is essential in organizational learning literature (Wilson, 2019, p. 86) and is credited as “the primary way that people generate meaning for discordant and seemingly disjointed events” (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 600). Individuals engage in “meaning making through the shaping of experience” while they craft stories as “a way of understanding one’s own or other’s actions; or organizing events, objects, feelings, or thoughts, in relation to each other; [or as a way] of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions, events, feelings, or thoughts over time” (Chase, 2018, p. 549 in Marvasti et al., 2019, p. 68). For our purposes, a narrator is anyone telling a story based on their own experiences or a narrative. In contrast, a storyteller is anyone telling a story that could be based on personal experiences, indirect or direct sample stories, and co-constructed stories.

It is important to note that “narratives have specific functions that do not apply to all kinds of stories” (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023, p. 86). Additionally, we acknowledge that “narratives are not inherently superior or more authentic” than other forms of data. In developing stories, “a distorted and artificial representation of the human experience can be produced” (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023, p. 78). For these reasons, our work explores how individuals in organizations co-construct stories that advance the mission and vision.

Storytelling is intimately linked to identity development. Within Fiol & Romanelli’s (2012) model of organizational form identity development, storytelling is identified as the way individuals within a new community of practice articulate and understand “new practices as meaningful and comprehensible” as the community itself forms and evolves (p. 601). Individuals within these communities can “try on different versions of the story and explanations for their increasingly intense involvement” to learn (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 601). The demands of the communities of practice drive the need for storytelling as “the more emotionally, physically, and cognitively engaged” individuals become, the more stories become necessary for sensemaking (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 601). In this emerging community, developing identities and practices inform how individuals begin

crafting their narratives and ultimately lead the community of practice to develop as a similarity cluster (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012).

As stories are crafted, shared, experienced, and refined within communities and organizations, individuals must “negotiate a set of increasingly common story elements” (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 601). Individual narratives give way to the development of shared stories within a common story world (De Fino, 2006 in Fiol & Romanelli, 2012). This alignment, negotiation, and refinement process is what we call co-construction. Community members co-construct a story world that unites individual narratives with increasing consistency and predictability as common story models or sample stories emerge (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 601). It is important to note that institutions produce narratives and stories as well “when official speeches, reports, websites or everyday talk in schools, courtrooms, workplaces, social media, and political hearings express who ‘we’ are (e.g. as an organization, professions, or nation), what we’re doing, where we’ve been, where we’re going, and why” (Marvasti et al., 2019, p. 70). Stories can enable organizations to engage stakeholders in a very “natural, engaging, and deeper form of communicating across a diverse audience that allows listeners to tap into their own personal elements and reach the same conclusion” (Gill, 2011, p. 19). Ultimately, storytelling allows individuals to assemble distinct elements personally, enabling storytellers and audiences to co-construct meaning aligned with shared ideas and goals (Sinclair, 2005; Simmons, 2006 in Gill, 2011, p. 18).

A central benefit of storytelling in organizations is how stories strengthen individual participation and “the persistence of an emerging community” (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 602). This outcome is mainly due to the intersection of identity and story. Research demonstrates that a “strong collective identity that is self-defining for members is a key determinant of their commitment to collective action and their ability to follow through” (Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Haslam et al., 2006; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005 in Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 603). Organizations can use identity, community, and story development practices to leverage “the power of collective identity to mobilize people to action” (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 604). Notably, the literature identifies that while these practices are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing, they are directional, meaning that individuals, organizations, and storytellers are all on linear development trajectories (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 604). These trajectories begin with the individual, develop within communities, and can produce new organizational forms of identification, alignment, and recognition opportunities are available as it is not enough for individuals to associate within a community; external audiences must also “label it as a distinct entity” (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 605).

Organizations can leverage these reciprocal processes for leadership and learning as “the socially-negotiated story world reflects and sharpens people’s individual concepts of their distinctive self” as individuals learn to identify with these new story elements and sample stories (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 601). However, this

does not come without risk. Organizations must pay careful attention to the storytelling environment, which “encompass the content, structure, communicative conditions, and discursive resources available to individuals and organizations” as identity, organizational, and storyteller development can be delicate (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023, p. 74). When organizations seek to routinize advocacy, change management, and growth, stories become essential, non-threatening, self-reflective tools that motivate change (Kitchell, 2000 in Wilson, 2019, p. 388).

Promisingly, the value of stories for organizations is not limited to specific domains or industries as they “influence societal structures” and serve an important “leadership role and function for ‘translating values into action’” (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023, p. 85). One of the ways this happens is through the connection of stories and strategy. Organizations can craft and deploy stories that overlay “meaning-making processes of the organization onto broader social narratives” in strategy development stages (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023, p. 86). Stories enable strategy development and dissemination as meaning is conferred in accessible, personal ways (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023, p. 87). However, “leaders must recognize the potential of the story to use storytelling well.” (Wilson, 2019, p. 387). In this way, organizations can use storytelling to assimilate practices, plan strategically, and outline the direction of an organizational change (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023, p. 88). Storytelling can empower organizations to inform their planning, definition, implementation, and reflection cycles “by understanding, clarifying, and thus shaping their approach to broader societal narratives,” resulting in strategy as practice and story as strategy (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023, p. 86).

Ultimately, co-constructed stories link individuals and institutions as they rely on organizational embeddedness or how storytellers deploy “institutionally relevant and preferred personal stories” to achieve their goals (Marvasti et al., 2019, p. 71). Stakeholders “take ownership of relevant information” for institutional and organizational stories, enabling stakeholders “to share and understand the organizational culture and opportunity” (Gill, 2015, p. 669). Stories can generate trust and understanding as storytelling “leads to a heightened and stronger loyalty” (Gill, 2011, p. 30). It is of strategic value for organizations to attend to the story.

As such, “authenticity is critical” as storytellers must have the ability and opportunity to personalize stories “in alignment with their ideas and goals” (Gill, 2015, p. 665). Thus, the story environment or world an organization and its people create “must be open enough to allow a space for different expectations and broader social narratives and yet be specific enough to provide a good, meaningful, and suggestive framework for communication” (Fischer-Appelt & Dernbach, 2023, p. 93). In organizations, the process of unlocking significant value created through the authentic co-construction of stories is known as

charismatizing the routine as individuals begin to assign new meaning to seemingly everyday activities and organizational routines (Gill, 2015, p. 665).

Exploring the relationship between how stories are crafted, why stories are told, and their impact on organizations requires exploration of how individuals, communities, and organizations align their identities, goals, and values through stories (Marvasti et al., 2019, p. 73). The boundary will be blurred in this process as our story becomes "about the researcher[s], the researched, and the research itself all at the same time" (Marvasti et al., 2019, p. 69).

The Convergence of Brand, Engagement, Loyalty, Public Relations, and Reputation Outcomes

Beyond storytelling's value for identity development, meaning-making, and organizational outcomes, the literature identifies benefits for brand, engagement, public relations, and reputation. These additional benefits become available to organizations as a result of "the shift from individuals finding meaning and understanding about their new practices in the telling of their story to the story and its protagonists (the new collective) beginning to define participating individuals" themselves (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 602). This trajectory engages individuals as they "interpret the world in ways consistent with the values underlying their story and thus consistent with one another's values" (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 602). Converging evidence reveals storytelling is "an effective means of communication" that is "more engaging and appealing" and ultimately "more believable" as stories can be adapted and adopted by individuals to advance organizational objectives. This potential is vital as "reputation, trust, goodwill, brand strength, and relationships" are all intangible assets critical to an organization's success generated from within (Gill, 2011, p. 22).

Brand is "assurances that the organization promises to deliver" (Gill, 2015, p. 664). One analytical framework central to our work identifies the importance of internal stakeholders as "the primary custodians of the corporate brand" (Nyagadza, 2020, p. 26). In this way, stories can convey an organization's activities, associations, behaviors, personalities, and values and influence the perception of a brand (Nyagadza, 2020, p. 25). This adoption and influence process of corporate storytelling for the brand is mediated by feelings or emotional attachment, a similar kind of individual and personal connection necessary for identity and story world development (Nyagadza, 2020, p. 25). This connection is critical as "employee engagement, relationships, and storytelling contribute to the individual's involvement, satisfaction, and enthusiasm" (Gill, 2011, p. 20). Again, the literature confirms the power of story to move beyond meaning-making to generate outcomes; more specifically, for the internal stakeholder, storytelling is known as "a means to deeper engagement and more inclusivity" (Nyagadza, 2020,

p. 27). The individuals who create community and carry an organization forward "reinforce the adoption of corporate culture and values, and ultimately the corporate reputation" (Nyagadza, 2020, p. 26). This connection is essential as "the stronger the individuals' ties of identification to the collective, the stronger the collective identity will be" (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 602). In this case, the collective identity being strengthened is the brand as stories motivate and "create strong emotional bonds" (Nyagadza, 2020, p. 39).

Reputation can be understood as "values afforded to the individual or the organization based on general beliefs" based on "how external stakeholders perceive the organization is delivering on its promises and collective esteem that the organization is held by public and stakeholders" (Gill, 2015, p. 664). Knowing that "characteristics and values embodied in the stories reflect the collective identity that increasingly guides the perceptions and behaviors" of stakeholders, organizations must consider how stories can inform and shape perceptions to improve reputation (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 602). Gill (2011) developed a storytelling-to-reputation model that moves from corporate storytelling to deeper engagement with staff to internal connection with the corporate brand to improve external reputation via interaction (p. 23). However, this potential is not limited to external reputation alone as "engaging with staff [through story] on a personal level builds stronger loyalty that may strengthen the committed internal reputation" or "the respect in which the organization is held by its employees" (Gill, 2011, pp. 22, 27). Additionally, the literature suggests that "when employees are comfortable with their organization's values and work practices, they become important assets to enhancing the company reputation" (Gill, 2015, p. 663).

As the value of internal stakeholders as both assets and custodians is recognized, public relations practitioners can begin to prioritize corporate stories as a way "to keep content true to the organization's communication strategy and ensure that the audience can effectively interpret meaning" (Gill, 2011, p. 21). As internal and external stakeholders are engaged and influenced by opportunities to co-construct meaningful stories about the organization, value is generated as "the audience can comprehend the strategic message of the story" (Gill, 2011, p. 20). A benefit to storytelling is how stories can be used to give and make sense, as "the sharing of meaning between the employer and employee, and the sharing of meaning between employees" expands formerly fixed futures. This value is not limited to seasons or strategic plans, as storytelling has ongoing utility, and both "brand and reputation need to be nurtured and protected" (Gill, 2011, p. 22). Again, the literature confirms a linear development process where corporate storytelling is a method of "building and promoting an organization's external reputation on the strengths of its internal reputation," and, as such, the value of internal stakeholders should not be overlooked (Gill, 2011, p. 23). In sum, storytelling is "an ideal public relations approach for delivering communication that is engaging and relevant" (Gill, 2011, p. 20).

The promise of a corporate storytelling strategy for brand, engagement, public relations, and reputation ultimately develops additional advocates as storytellers are increasingly equipped to engage others "on behalf of their organization" (Gill, 2011, p. 18). Thus, organizations should acknowledge how corporate storytelling increases "the potential for understanding, recollection, and the commitment for the corporate message" (Nyagadza, 2020, p. 30).

Operationalizing a Corporate Storytelling Strategy

Understanding the foundational components is essential as organizations seek to implement storytelling solutions. In his 2011 metanalysis, Gill identifies practical corporate story fundamentals, or, as we call them, story elements. He categorizes these elements as "an inclusive approach; emotional content; relevance; prospective value; strong characters; familiarisation; and promotion of trust" (p. 21). Below are his findings reproduced for consideration by those seeking to design a corporate storytelling strategy informed by the literature.

Boje, 2008

- Move beyond text to a living example
- Use collective memory from the organisation
- Supplement the individual's memory with organisational memory
- Decentralise the narrative
- Sense-making from retrospective, here-and-now, prospective narrative

Matthews and Wacker, 2007

- Attention to aesthetics through design
- Empathise with audiences' circumstances
- Sympathy through holistic pictures with all the pieces • Injecting fun into the activity
- Extend the value beyond the moment

Dowling, 2006

- To create interest in the organisation
- Help shape expectations of stakeholders (internal and external)
- Lifecycle models - unfold over three parts: yesterday, today and tomorrow
- Where the organisation has come from
- Where it currently is
- Where it is heading
- Employees become part of the history of the organisation

Denning, 2006

- Similar to Dowling's lifecycle
- Springboard approach to the future
- Future is kept vague so that listeners are encouraged to be part of the solution and direction
- Employees get a sense of contributing to the future

Rossiter and Bellman, 2005

- Needs to project expertise, sincerity, likeability and powerful characteristics
- Expertise fosters esteem and respect
- Sincerity promotes trust and corporate citizenship
- Stakeholders will identify with the organisation if they like what it stands for
- Organisations are leaders as a result of their perceived power

McKee, 2003

- Display a struggle between expectation and reality
- Personalise the message
- Present all the statistics, including the negatives
- Acknowledge the weaknesses along with the strengths
- Self-knowledge is the root of great storytelling

Barnes, 2003

- Strong central plot line
- Clear values
- Lots of emotion
- Compelling characters

Prusak, 2001

- Suggests four attributes - endurance, salience, sense-making, and comfort level
- Durable stories may have changed names and circumstances, but the behavioural lesson remains the same
- Salience refers to relevance and punch in the story
- Sense-making, meaning that is true to the receiver's own experience
- Receivers need to be comfortable with the feeling they get from the narration

Implications for Organizations and Their Leaders

Emerging evidence suggests traditional sensegiving practices have limitations in moving organizations forward. In their 2021 article, "Reflexive sensegiving: An open-ended process of influencing the sensemaking of others during organizational change," Kihlberg and Lindberg present a new framework for understanding the impact of supporting others by making meaning during change. They define reflexive sensegiving as "a multivocal process aiming to influence *how* the sensemaking and construction of meaning evolves" and identify "four distinctive features: open-endedness, low control over cues given, several sources of cues, and the encouragement of complexity and ambiguity" (Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021, p. 476).

Typically, management and organizational leadership literature focus on traditional sensegiving practices with hierarchical features where named leaders attempt to influence and change their followers' behaviors, habits, or thoughts. Kihlberg and Lindberg (2021) "examine how sensegiving would look if followers were given stronger voice on the content of sensegiving and were agents in the processes of sensegiving" (p. 478).

“Sense is not an object to be passed on but a skillful activity to be engaged in” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, p. 24)

Distributing agency and voice with reflexive sensegiving via corporate storytelling can accelerate the organization's outcomes and extend the power of mission and vision. As a result, when we speak about full co-construction, we describe the reciprocal sensegiving and sensemaking processes among team members, leaders, and organizations.

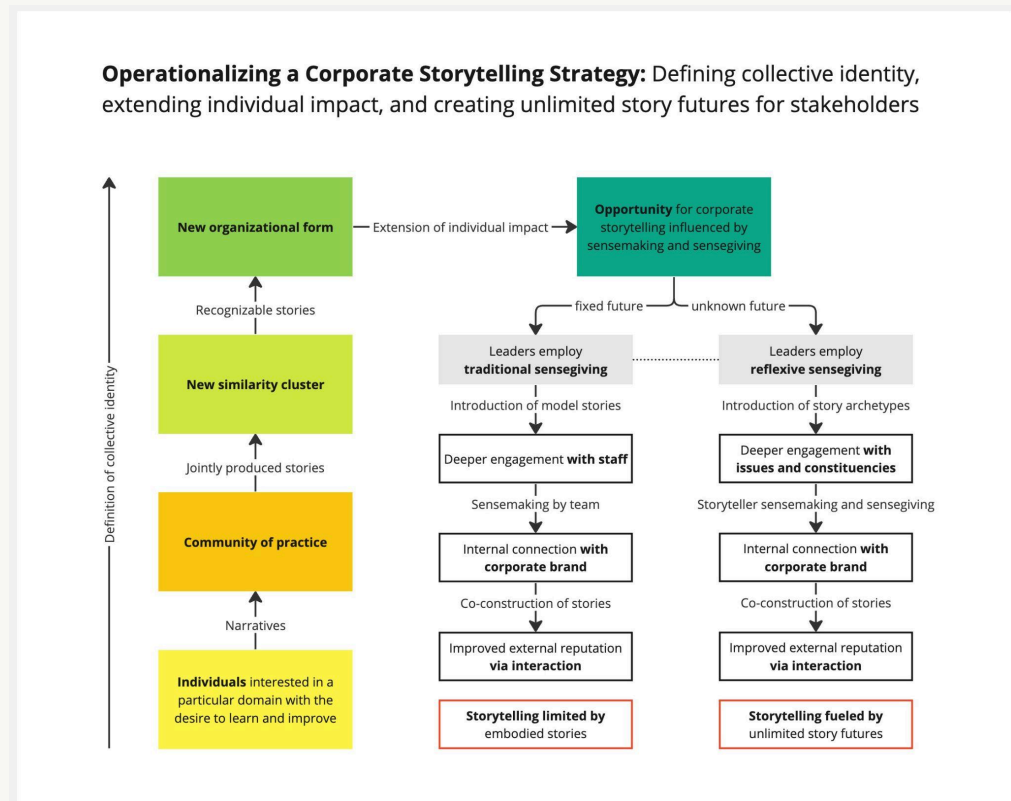
However, as we acknowledge when presenting storytelling as a potential solution or strategy for organizations, we want to emphasize that "if this process is not facilitated by experienced, knowledgeable, respected, and verbally talented individuals...reflexive sensegiving could result in paralysis instead of progressive enlightenment" (Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021, p. 484). Shifting from traditional sensegiving practices could produce new stories and new storytellers, expanding the advocacy and impact of organizations.

Conceptual Framework

Marvasti et al.'s (2019) central claim about stories is relevant to those researching social problems: "At the heart of social problems are people: people collecting statistics and being represented by them; people enacting behaviors; people writing following, or resisting policies, and navigating all of this through mundane and extraordinary practices" (p. 68). As we conducted our literature review, we identified connections between narration (individual) and storytelling (sensemaking of others), from individual and organizational identity development, between sensegiving and sensemaking processes, and how organizational outcomes (internal reputation, external reputation, and trust in the brand) are linked to the corporate storytelling strategy, which should be centered in its mission and values.

These are central principles from Fiol & Romanelli's (2012) Model of Form Identity Development, Nyagadza's (2020) Corporate Storytelling for Branding, Gill's (2011) Storytelling to Reputation Model, and Kihlberg & Lindberg (2021) Traditional and Reflexive Sensegiving. We created this conceptual framework by integrating these concepts, illustrating how organizations can operationalize a corporate storytelling strategy by defining collective identity, extending individual impact, and creating unlimited story futures for stakeholders.

This conceptual model is directional, so steps involving identity development, internal engagement, and story co-construction are prerequisite mediators of organizational sensegiving and external outcomes.



Project Questions

To frame the inquiry, we designed questions to elucidate to what extent the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio engages in corporate storytelling as a component of its overall communication strategy. The following project questions are proposed:

1. How effective is corporate storytelling as an engagement and public relations strategy at the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio?
2. How do Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio employees co-construct stories that advance the organization's mission and vision?
3. How compelling do external stakeholders find the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio's corporate storytelling strategy?

Project Design

The Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio is a valuable asset to Cincinnati. The League is working to make a difference in the lives of Black Cincinnatians and other historically underserved citizens. ULGSO is committed to driving equity and financial empowerment for African Americans through advocacy, education, and development. The League's Mission is to help Black people and historically underserved communities achieve their highest true social parity, economic self-reliance, power, civil rights, and justice. Additionally, the League's Vision is to be a best-in-class organization in Southwest Ohio for change and advocacy in our community, an employer of choice in our region, the investment of choice for our corporate, government, and philanthropic partners, and a model of integrity and excellence (Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio Strategic Plan 2023, 2023). This organization deserves and needs the community's support to continue its vital work toward this mission and vision, and a well-crafted story strategy is essential to its success. As a capstone team, we know the power of story. We are invested in narrative inquiry methods, like corporate storytelling, to establish human-centered, justice-oriented approaches to storytelling.

We centered our methods on understanding that we, as researchers, are the tools. As a person "born and raised" in Cincinnati, Christyn has a personal connection to this capstone project, and as a team, we are invested as co-conspirators in ensuring its impact on the community. We began with a focus as traditional narrative inquirers, coming to each narrative inquiry relationship amid the worlds of participants and researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), knowing that our engagement with participants shapes our lives and participants' lives. We partner with our participants by gaining an understanding of their funds of knowledge, provided in the sensemaking ways of the participant.

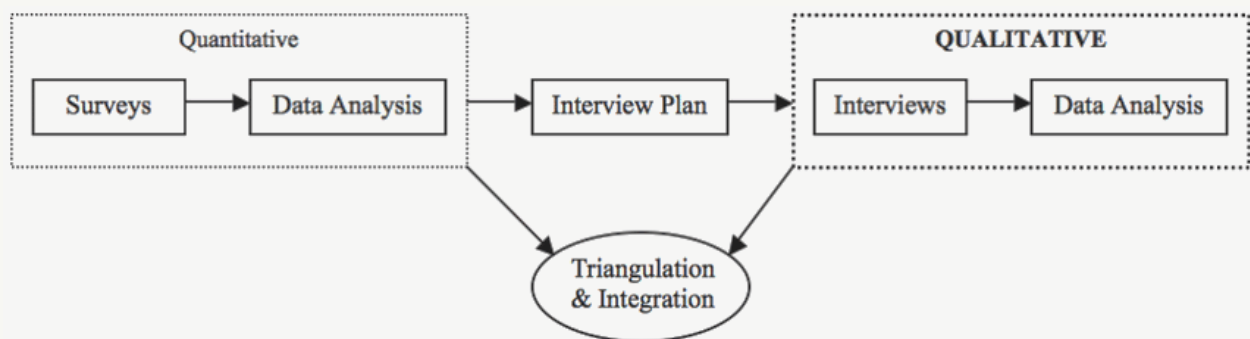
We are awake to this duality as we live alongside participants and when we share these retold stories of experience in our ways. We explored this narrative inquiry through listening sessions with our ULGSO partner and the literature review, which enhanced our learning about ourselves. Ultimately, we emerged using a phenomenology approach within narrative inquiry focused on corporate storytelling, which centers on the specific lived experience of storytelling for those involved with ULGSO. We chose phenomenology because it aims to understand the meaning and essence of the phenomenon (corporate storytelling) from the participant's perspective.

Foundations of our project design:

1. The definition of corporate storytelling - is the process of developing a message that creates new points of view or reinforces opinions and behaviors by using narration about the people, the organization, the past, the visions for the future, the social bonding, and the work itself to engage with stakeholders effectively.
2. An organization primarily implements a corporate storytelling strategy to advance its mission and vision.

To this end, we are utilizing a mixed methods approach, sequencing from survey quantitative and qualitative research to qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Explanatory sequential design:



The capstone team was responsible for the following primary objectives:

- Adjusting and refining the scope of the capstone project
- Designing a human-centered, responsive study
- Crafting clear and concise capstone-related communications
- Co-facilitating interviews, resource gathering, and recommendation crafting
- Analyzing all data sources collected from and shared by the partner organization

ULGSO leaders were responsible for:

- Providing access to the league's policies, procedures, and people
- Sharing examples of communications, guidance documents, and foundational materials
- Opening events and meetings to the team for awareness and observation
- Socializing and prioritizing the study with internal stakeholders
- Identifying external stakeholders to participate in the study

ULGSO employees were responsible for:

- Participating in the study design itself and contributing to the data collection

ULGSO stakeholders were responsible for:

- Participating in the study design itself and contributing to the data collection

Data Collection

Corporate Storytelling Survey

The first component of our sequential design was a survey. For quantitative and qualitative data collection, we designed a Corporate Storytelling Survey with 21 close-ended questions on a Likert-like 5-point scale and three open-ended prompts. These items were created based on considerations from Gill's (2015) storytelling elements and outcomes, for example, items from Shen, Hongmei, and Jiang, Hua (2019) and the implications for identity development from Fiol & Romanelli (2012). We crafted these questions to align directly with the project questions and our conceptual framework. The open-ended questions provided richness to the Likert answers and guided the semi-structured interviews. There were three goals of the survey: self (how they use storytelling), organization (how they interpret/perceive the organization using storytelling), and co-construction (how they frame stories about the organization in their work).

We constructed our survey tool based on our project questions, which originated from the existing models and adapted to our conceptual framework. For project question 1, which focuses on the effectiveness of storytelling as a communication strategy at ULGSO, we were interested in respondents' perceptions of their role and positionality. For project question 2, which centers on the co-construction of the ULGSO story, we focused on the respondent's storytelling strategy by asking each to indicate the extent to which they told stories for these six reasons: engaging with colleagues, engaging with the community, connecting with the mission, connecting with the vision, improving the external reputation, and improving program outcomes. Finally, for project question 3, which is about the compelling nature of a ULGSO story to the external stakeholder, we wanted to know which stories were considered compelling and why. While there are many potential story topics about this organization and its work that the respondents may find compelling, we limited our inquiry to six potential areas of focus based on our initial information gathering using artifacts like the strategic and communication plans and initial conversations. These six storytelling focus topics were mission, vision, living the ideals, empowering others, changing lives, and program outcome.

During our meetings with our ULGSO partners, we determined how to communicate with the appropriate potential project participants. The partner organization provided these lists to us for our direct distribution. For Internal stakeholders, we sent invitations to all employees of the organization with targets differentiated by role (team member, team leader, executive leader) and division. For external stakeholders, we sent invitations to a predetermined list of program participants, donors, board members, and city officials familiar with the organization. We introduced the project directly to internal and external stakeholders via email, describing the project goals contextualized with the strategy, mission, and vision. We expect reliable participation from internal and external stakeholders based on our relationship with our partner organization.

The survey was open for three weeks, from mid-November through the first part of December, and thus, we completed our survey data collection in early December. We had a 39% response rate distributed across the level of survey respondents applicable to our project questions.

Corporate Storytelling Semi-Structured Interview

After the survey, we designed a semi-structured Corporate Storytelling Interview protocol to deepen our understanding of the preliminary findings on corporate storytelling. These interviews provided additional context and nuances to our exploration of the impact of corporate storytelling at ULGSO. These interviews focused on the “how” and “why” of the co-construction process and the level of mediating that co-construction has on the impact of corporate storytelling. Our goal for the interview was to deepen our understanding of the co-construction and compelling nature of the storytelling with a focus on examples.

We structured our interview tool into three sections, originating from our experience with ULGSO colleagues, the problem, the literature, and the preliminary findings from the survey. After the introductions, the first section focused on project question 1, the storytelling context, and influences, and we asked how storytelling happens at ULGSO. The second section was on project question 2, where we focused on storytelling methods and motivation. We asked questions about when and how each interviewee tells their stories about ULGSO, deepening the organizational perspective level depending on their role and following up with changes as they have moved through the organization. Our final section on project question 3 was on storytelling effectiveness and impact, where we asked how each knows they have a compelling story about ULGSO, looking for how they determine the kind of feedback or develop the model story dependent on the role. We ended each interview by requesting their most compelling story about ULGSO in their own words.

We offered the option for inclusion in the semi-structured interviews as the final question of the survey tool. We determined how to communicate with the appropriate potential interviewees during our meetings with our ULGSO partners. Upon final identification, we sent invitations to all who indicated willingness to participate in the interview. As no stakeholder was identified as exclusively external, we altered our protocol to elicit perceptions of external stakeholders. Then, we (re)introduced the project directly to the pool of interviewees via email to arrange interview times. We conducted the interviews from the middle of December through early January, with those confirmed. From those who opted into our semi-structured interview pool, we solicited 18 participants. We had a 61% response rate for those solicited and distributed across team members, team leaders, executive leaders, and board members. We recorded each interview using Microsoft Teams in both video and transcript mediums.

Tool	Invitations Sent	Achieved Sample	Team Member	Leader
Survey	118	46	16	30
Interview	18	11	5	6

Based on our respondents' composition, we decided to collapse role analysis into two levels: team member and leader. It is important to note that the leader category comprises team leader, executive leader, and board member—including external leaders.

Data Analysis

Corporate Storytelling Survey

We conducted our analysis of the survey data using the tools within Qualtrics. Based on our conceptual framework, we distinguished our respondents by their organizational role and their internal or external positionality and in the aggregate. Because we had already aligned each survey question with one of our project questions, we could triangulate the analysis of these categories and our questions independently while enabling cross-question review, which occurred inductively.

We first conducted a z-test to determine the statistical significance of our data. We established several significant instances of data co-occurrence, confirming our ability to examine data applicable to our questions. We analyzed the mean and variances of our 5-point Likert scale quantitative questions in the aggregate and by role and positionality. We also analyzed the open-ended, qualitative questions using word frequency and reliability data in the aggregate and by role and position. We recognized the connection between the role and positionality and the

transitions between one's understanding of storytelling at ULGSO, one's storytelling about ULGSO, and the impact of storytelling about ULGSO.

For project question 1, our first set of seven questions provided the data to analyze the current state of ULGSO's corporate storytelling strategy. By role, we could discern the extent to which each respondent feels the organization already has a model story strategy, encourages storytelling and feels encouraged to storytelling, and uses stories to advance the mission and vision. Using Qualtrics graphs and tables, we discussed the Intersections of roles for each of these premises.

For project question 2, the data collected from our second set of seven questions, using Qualtrics graphs and tables, showed the connection between roles and the intensity of the specific reasons for motivation.

For project question 3, the final set of seven questions produced data on the intensity of the six compelling reasons for storytelling per respondent and to what extent the initial outcome indicator of encouraging action matters to each respondent. Using Qualtrics graphs and tables, we learned by role how influential particular reasons are for storytelling, some of which intersect and some do not. We also learned how much action is desired for all roles.

The qualitative portion of the survey produced data on what words respondents use to tell stories, why they tell stories, and what words they would like others to use when storytelling. Using Qualtrics open-ended question functionality and word clouds, these data directly aligned with questions 2 and 3, enabled us to begin the theme-development process for coding our semi-structured interviews, and added context for our quantitative data.

Corporate Storytelling Semi-Structured Interviews

We used Dedoose to develop themes through our coding. We had a single outcome indicator in the corporate storytelling survey and pivoted after the initial survey analysis to determine the possible additional outcome indicators out of the guiding question. We developed codes based on the compelling topics within section 3 of the interview guide with three specific incomes: encouraging action, empowering others, and their most compelling story.

Our codes originated from a combination of deductive, through our conceptual framework, and inductive, through our openness to what presented itself outside our conceptual framework, reasoning as we reviewed the data. The interviews were coded with examples and non-examples of the corporate storytelling strategy.

For project question 1, our coding dedicated to the storytelling strategy, which includes storytelling elements and sample stories, was created from our conceptual framework. Inductively, we discovered themes for the context of storytelling, which include the history of storytelling and the concept of the embodied story.

For project question 2, our conceptual framework led us to determine the co-construction's actors and the co-construction's mission and vision motivations. While analyzing the data, we recognized the dual nature of the co-construction inductively - while one actor is sensemaking, another is sensegiving - and additional motivations involving the organization's reputation to the co-construction.

For project question 3, we initially identified a story's compelling reasons for enhancing the mission and vision and improving a program's outcomes. Additionally, we coded the story's compelling outcome as evidence of the impact through our conceptual framework. As we distilled the data, we added several other compelling reasons for a story, including its being life-changing and living the organization's ideals. We also added the outcome of encouraging action.

Finally, we decided to code in its entirety the answers to our final question of the semi-structured interview for all, which asked for the interviewee's most compelling story they tell about ULGSO. These stories illuminate the effectiveness of storytelling and co-construction, answering components of all three project questions.

Intercodeability

Of our eleven (11) interviews, we decided to use one as our tool to align our interpretations of each code before working independently on eight of them. For example, we determined that we would attribute a specific code to a participant for being either an example or non-example of that code. We then concluded our coding process by coding the final two together. Our coding process established alignment between/among us throughout the analysis, establishing reliable themes and patterns.

For intercodeability, we analyzed two different sets of data:

The User Code Application Count

The User Code Application Count shows a difference in how we used Dedoose to code. We acknowledge this difference because (1) we did the initial interview coding to develop intercodeability and the final two interview codings under Luke's Dedoose account, and (2) Luke coded our highest-coded interview. These reasons account for the unreliability of these data.

The User Excerpts Count

The User Excerpts Count shows a difference in how we used Dedoose to code excerpts. Similar to the User Code Application Count data, when we attribute for the ones we excerpted together, our excerpt counts are aligned, indicating our intercodeability is consistent at the code level and the same depth of excerpt per media.

Project Questions Data

For our project questions, we analyzed four different sets of data. For each, we analyzed the highs and lows, in addition to where there was congruence across the different dimensions of data:

The Code Count x Media

The Code Count x Media illustrates the numbers of codes by each participant and, thus, by role. These data enabled us to analyze the impact of role on each of our project questions in multiple ways.

The Excerpt Count x Media

The Excerpt Count x Media shows the number of excerpts by each participant and, thus, by role. These data also provided input on the impact of the role on each of our project questions.

The Code Application

The Code Application shows the number of each code by each participant and thus by role. These data allowed us to analyze the themes independently and collectively by role and code concerning each project question.

We could not generate code application statistics or distribution plots due to our limited sample size of interviews. Thus, we rely on thematic analysis and not descriptor distribution.

Code Co-Occurrence

The Code Co-Occurrence shows the intersections of all the codes, regardless of participant. These data provide the cross-analysis between project questions.

Limitations

1. The interpretations of specific questions within the Corporate Storytelling Survey led to unexpected results.
2. Of those who chose to self-identify and report their identity to the organization for the survey, a total of 46, only 48% of survey respondents elected to self-identify and provide their relationship to the organization. Because of the small sample size, we made that optional, as with all demographic information; we only had 8/30 (27%) identified as external to the organization. Thus, we needed more external stakeholder identification.
 - a. This limited our ability to answer Q1 using the relationship to the organization as a factor.
 - b. This limited our ability to answer Q3 without relying on the perceptions of all respondents. The data collected from internal stakeholders provided perception data for analysis.
3. We had a limited number of semi-structured interviews, so even though there was a representation of roles needed for our project questions, we could not confirm specific analyses via our coding.
4. Our tool measures traditional sensegiving well. Our tool would need additional refinement to include reflexive sensegiving.

Findings

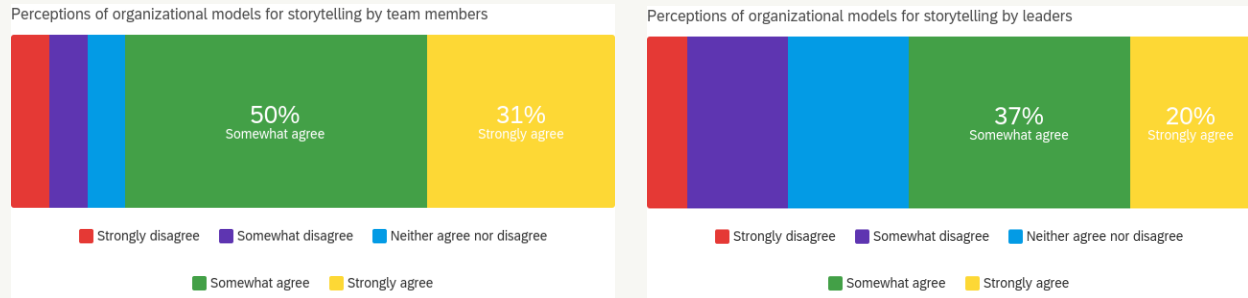
After analyzing and triangulating the data produced by our tools, we associated our key findings with our three project questions:

- 1. How effective is corporate storytelling as an engagement and public relations strategy at the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio?**
 - a. A corporate storytelling strategy is in development.
 - b. Encouragement is unequally perceived as team members report significantly more encouragement to engage in external storytelling than leaders.
- 2. How do Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio employees co-construct stories that advance the organization's mission and vision?**
 - a. Co-construction is present across roles to differing degrees.
 - b. Authenticity, proximity, and relevance impact storytelling and self-identification of storytellers.
- 3. How compelling do external stakeholders find the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio's corporate storytelling strategy?**
 - a. Stories focused on empowering others and life change are perceived to be most effective in encouraging action and providing evidence of impact.
 - b. Team members and leaders hold noticeably different perceptions of how compelling stories are depending on the story's focus.

How effective is corporate storytelling as an engagement and public relations strategy at the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio?

A corporate storytelling strategy is in development.

When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed, this organization has a model for telling stories to advance its mission and vision; 65% of respondents agreed overall, with 81% of team members and 57% of leaders agreeing, respectively.



While team members overwhelmingly agree that there is a model for storytelling at ULGSO, leaders are aware that a model is still being developed as a part of a new strategy for communications and marketing. One team member shared:

“I think honestly with the leadership of the organization and how it's going, there's a lot of strategy happening and a lot of continuity that is being filtered down so that people really have one message of what we do instead of just tailoring that message of what you're doing in your department.”

This team member understands the strategy and demonstrates the potential leaders identified as a central goal yet to be realized: "I want people to have that same talk track about the Urban League that they have about so many other nonprofits in the city. Moreover, the fact that they have a talk track about other organizations tells me that it can be done." This difference of belief between team members and leaders, according to our literature, may exist due to the traditional sensegiving structure that limits sensegiving of the future to only leadership, so while leaders have the opportunity to think and create the future, it is fixed for team members without the structures for them to sensegive (Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021).

Understandably, code co-occurrence revealed that leaders have the most access to story elements (39); however, there are multiple preferences on how those elements are deployed. For example, one leader shared, "I know that we are doing good work because there continues to be a need and a demand for the work that we are doing, but I want quantitative data to support that versus qualitative."

Others expressed, "We can report on numbers and metrics all day, but the real magic is the people behind the numbers—that make up those numbers—so I am very intentional."

Recognizing words as essential story elements, survey respondents demonstrated the power of language and shared words they use to craft stories about the organization. When asked in an open prompt to write the words they use when telling stories about ULGSO, the survey respondents used the words in the word cloud below.



The words shared align with the organization's mission and vision, demonstrating promise in this developing strategy as the respondents tell stories with the mission and vision in mind.

Survey respondents perceive stories as being used to advance the organization's mission and vision across roles even while the strategy is being developed. Enthusiasm for storytelling was rich: "I [don't] know everything, but I know enough

to tell a story." When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed that this organization's employees, leaders, participants, and donors use stories to advance its mission and vision, 70% agreed team members use stories, 78% agreed leaders use stories, 52% agreed participants use stories, and 48% agreed donors use stories. Interestingly, respondents perceived more team members not engaging with this strategy than any other group, as 17% of respondents disagreed that team members use stories to advance the mission and vision.

It is known that traditional sensegiving is limited by the presence of embodied stories, whereas reflexive sensegiving empowers all members of an organization with unlimited story futures (Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021). While leaders were hesitant to be identified as embodied stories, evidence of their impact was significant in both code application and excerpts. The organization's CEO struggled to reconcile this phenomenon: "I don't like it. I don't like it at all. I'm not Urban League. I'm certainly not Urban League, you know, this is [just] my moment in time."

Embodied story code application was consistent across all interviews, demonstrating the persistent presence of narratives and the need for intentional sensegiving practices to expand access to co-construction opportunities. Code application was found to be highest in the CEO's transcript (7), and co-occurrence was identical when reviewing examples of embodied stories told by leaders (18) and examples of embodied stories being most compelling (18).

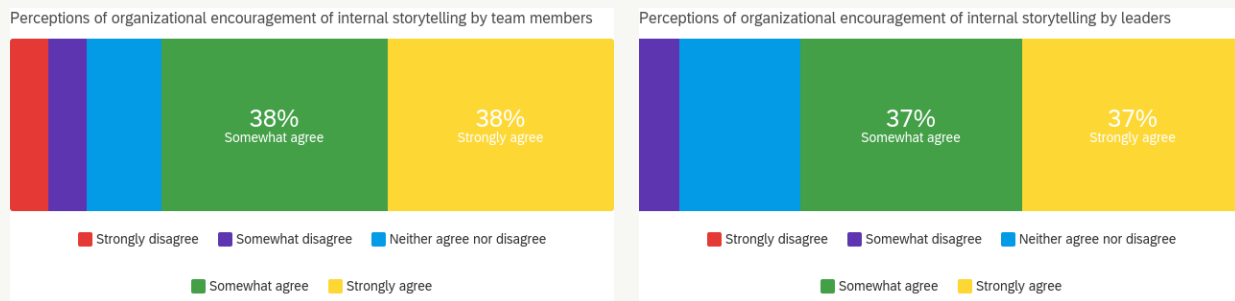
One team member who saw themselves as an embodied story stated, "I really choose to tell these, to share my story, and to tell the story because there's a lot of people that are just like me." This same team member identified current leadership as the embodiment of ULGSO and revealed the impact of embodied stories: "Right now, we have a strong female leadership, and being a male, that is kind of hard to say because you know I am a leader...I want to be a leader in the organization, and should that time come, great. If I, if the League doesn't see me as a leader, [silence]."

Additionally, code application demonstrated the presence of story elements (84) used by leaders (70) motivated to advance the mission (71) to encourage action (74), revealing a typical pattern for implementation.

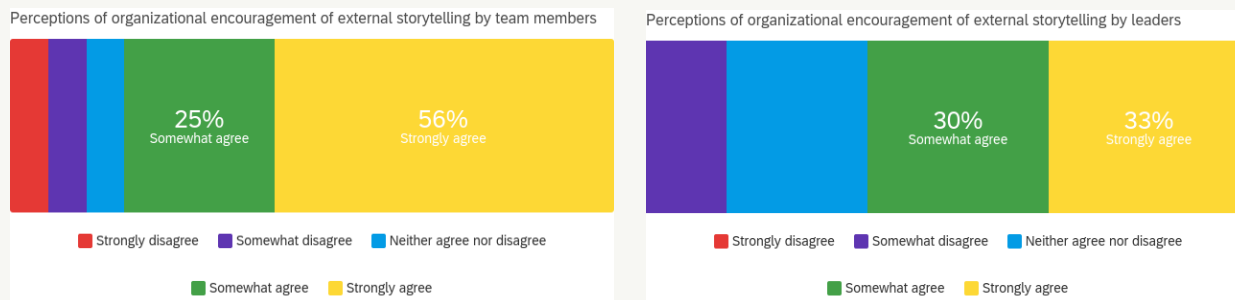
This evidence demonstrates promise in this developing strategy and the need for intentional sensegiving practices to expand access to co-construction opportunities.

Encouragement is unequally perceived as team members report significantly more encouragement to engage in external storytelling than leaders.

When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed that this organization encourages internal storytelling to advance its mission and vision, 74% agreed overall, with 76% of team members and 74% of leaders agreeing, respectively.



When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed, this organization encourages external storytelling to advance its mission and vision; 70% agreed overall, with 81% of team members and 63% of leaders agreeing, respectively.



Among those interviewed, one team member (8) had a higher code application of encourages external storytelling than all of their peers, and a majority of leaders interviewed declared: “I took it upon myself to be Urban League’s number one cheerleader.” Encouragement was equated mainly with expectation by respondents. While no leader strongly disagreed that the organization encourages external storytelling, 23% of leaders and 6% of team members neither agreed nor disagreed, demonstrating significant differences in perception by role.

Evidence of encouragement, both internal and external, was highly concentrated, as two leaders with the highest code application of encouraging internal storytelling have direct storytelling responsibilities, and one of these two also had the highest code application of encouraging external storytelling (11). While every

team member interviewed reported evidence of encouraging external storytelling, multiple team members presented no evidence of encouraging internal storytelling by code application. Additionally, multiple leaders presented no evidence of encouraging internal storytelling by code application.

How do Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio employees co-construct stories that advance the organization's mission and vision?

Co-construction is present across roles to differing degrees.

An organization primarily implements a corporate storytelling strategy to advance its mission and vision. We have evidence that storytellers at ULGSO are making sense of this strategy for a mission more so than vision, as advancing the mission was the second most applied code (542) across all transcripts and the highest motivating factor (71), whereas advancing the vision was coded as a motivating factor (32) and excerpted across transcripts (256) at nearly half the rate of the mission.

All respondents surveyed engage in co-construction to varying degrees, with the individual's role determining the types of opportunities available for corporate storytelling. The literature suggests that the most significant potential for corporate storytelling starts with the individual, expands to internal storytelling, and strengthens external storytelling as an output of co-constructed sensegiving and sensemaking (Gill, 2015).

When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed, they told stories from their own experience about this organization to engage their colleagues; 93% of respondents agreed overall, with 75% of team members and 100% of leaders agreeing, respectively. When asked to share the reasons why respondents tell stories about this organization to engage their colleagues, some motivations improve the internal reputation:

- "Because I'm committed to the mission"
- "Because it's a great organization and it's my job..."
- "To show how proud I am to work for this organization."
- "[Because] I believe in the impact the organization has on the community."
- "[Because] the Urban League's ability to strengthen the community fabric is evident in how it cultivates a collaborative environment, promoting teamwork and shared goals. Even in the face of burnout, my passion prevails..."

When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed, they told stories from their own experiences about this organization to advance its mission and vision, and 98% agreed. Survey respondents expressed reasons such as:

- “To share the mission and vision of the organization in a personalized way.”
- “To share my experiences, promote our programs, and advance our mission for more external and internal involvement.”
- “Through the story, my aim is to highlight the organization's mission and its profound and lasting impact on the lives it touches.”
- “To encourage people to get involved in the change that is happening through our organization.”
- “To help explain the mission of the Urban League to the communities we serve, along with an explanation of how we are guiding them out of a cycle of poverty by all the services we offer.”

Furthermore, some survey respondents indicated they told stories from their own experience about this organization for reasons beyond mission and vision to include improving the organization's program outcomes and external reputation:

- “I tell stories when asked or feel the need to combat misrepresentations of our organization.”
- “[Storytelling] helps me work in the various neighborhoods in my gun violence prevention work.”
- “[Storytelling] helps the listener to hear and feel the passion of the work done at the UL and how we impact lives.”
- “I'm in [a] community-facing role. So, it's important for community members to feel connected to me and my work.”
- “Many in the community don't understand what the Urban League does. I personally share success stories to illuminate the great programs we have internally [and] the impact [they have] had on our participants.”

Code applications across interviews confirmed this external reputation evidence from the survey where improving external reputation (19) was consistent across team members and leaders, demonstrating a perceived responsibility for reputation.

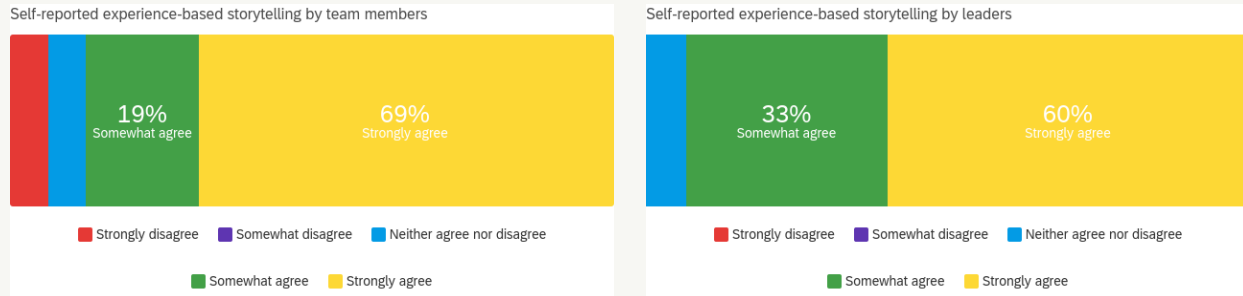
While the examples above highlight the inspirational components of improving program outcomes and external reputation, some motivations from survey respondents were identified as job-specific or operational, such as “to inspire others to donate and get involved,” “to make sure we have funding,” or “because [ULGSO] needs more support from the business community.” Evidence of these job-specific or operational goals' tight connection to improving program outcomes was demonstrated through code application (38), positioning this motivation as the median.

Sensegiving from leadership as an essential component of co-construction proved to operate on traditional practices (Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021). Sensegiving from a leader through stories told by a leader (39) was the highest co-occurrence among all codes. While all leaders recognized this sensegiving, only two team members demonstrated awareness. Sensegiving from team through stories told by team (22) was found to be co-occurring at nearly half the rate of leaders. While all team members recognized sensegiving from team, only two leaders demonstrated awareness. This trend continued among interviewees when looking at sensemaking by team and sensemaking by leader, as interviewees only supplied evidence of their sensemaking without acknowledging sensemaking practices at other job levels in both code application and code co-occurrence. Our literature confirmed the finding of only self-recognition in identity development by sharing the view of identity as a socially constructed cognitive category with features that specify the similarities among the members of their categories and distinguish them from members of the other social categories (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012, p. 599).

While this finding confirms co-construction occurs at all levels, evidence of sensegiving to engage colleagues was not found as a part of co-construction. One respondent shared a challenge of corporate storytelling at ULGSO: "It doesn't always feel natural because I don't hear all the stories that I should be sharing." Similarly, among interviewees, two team members who demonstrated the highest sensemaking for improving program outcomes (10, 6) indicated the need for additional sensegiving from and with leadership. The evidence suggests that leadership primarily engages in traditional sensegiving practices and has yet to embrace the opportunity for reflexive sensegiving, leaving room for implementing this co-construction strategy to improve and grow by engaging existing advocates (Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021).

Authenticity, proximity, and relevance impact storytelling and self-identification of storytellers.

When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed with telling stories from their own experience about this organization, 91% of respondents agreed overall, with 88% of team members and 93% of leaders agreeing, respectively. Interestingly, 12% of team members and 7% of leaders indicated they did not tell stories, further demonstrating the dissonance between those who do or do not identify as storytellers.



Among those interviewed, notions of experience-based storytelling ranged from direct to indirect access to opportunities for storytelling. Some interviewees explicitly identified their needs as storytellers. One leader stated, "I think great storytelling has a person at the middle of it, and I don't have very many stories that have the person at the middle of it." Additionally, one leader articulated the challenge directly: "I don't interact with our clients every day, so I don't get many stories." These excerpts highlight additional barriers leaders may face due to their job-specific demands and positionality—however, leaders are applying to these challenges. For example, one leader shared that they find ways to create access for themselves intentionally: "One of the things that was very important to me as a leader is I wanted to be in it. I wanted to experience and feel it and see it myself."

Conversely, team members were not found to face such challenges in producing stories based on their organization experiences as they are directly interacting with participants and primarily telling stories to participants as a function of their work. Several team members shared how they use their narratives to produce stories: "I really choose to tell these [stories], to share my story, and to tell the story because there's a lot of people that are just like me." Others identified ways to incorporate storytelling as an extra-duty component of their advocacy: "It is not part of my job description. I'm not mandated or asked to do it. I do it because I want to. I do it because my organization is amazing and I love to network." Team members' proximity enhances their storytelling: "That's my storytelling. Be real. That's pretty much it." Due to their access, team members also identified how their relevance benefits stories they tell about the organization's programs: "I work with businesses—minority businesses—and the Economic Empowerment Center, helping them to upscale, sustain their business through growth in capital infusion as well as helping them so they get employees and get the capital infusion. They get employees, then guess what? We as a community grow."

Several respondents identified their strategy as authenticity-dependent: "I've received the best reactions when I'm most authentic about the stories...For me, storytelling or connecting with anyone about the mission of the League is for them to be able to connect with me as a person." This strategy was recognized by another contributor who shared, "The stories I usually tell are about the culture that's presently being created [at ULGSO]. There was a big, sweeping change

about salaries and benefits and mostly identifying that if our mission is to eliminate poverty, we can't have our workers living in poverty."

However, authenticity, proximity, and relevance are only sometimes recognized as advantages of storytelling. The interviewee with the highest code application for improving program outcomes (10) missed several opportunities to identify as a storyteller while they shared direct examples of program outcomes during their interview. To illustrate, they often reframe their potential storytelling by saying, "I guess I'm getting ready to storytell. I apologize, I'm not." While their desire to tell stories to improve program outcomes was strong, they needed an awareness of their access to stories, stymying their potential as storytellers.

This kind of storytelling environment at ULGSO is articulated within the literature by traditional sensegiving practices that rely on a fixed future primarily driven by the leaders' conception of mission and vision (Gill, 2011; Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021). On the other hand, this environment also revealed the potential for a shift to reflexive sensegiving based simply on the desire for expanded access to stories and increased storyteller self-identification. One interviewee shared a convincing metaphor illustrating ULGSO's potential storytelling future: "I think sometimes we think that in order to storytell, we have to reinvent the wheel and sometimes it's just adding [an] extra branch to a tree that already exists." Authenticity, proximity, and relevance are compounding factors impacting how survey respondents and interviewees perceived their experience-based storytelling and how they self-identify as storytellers.

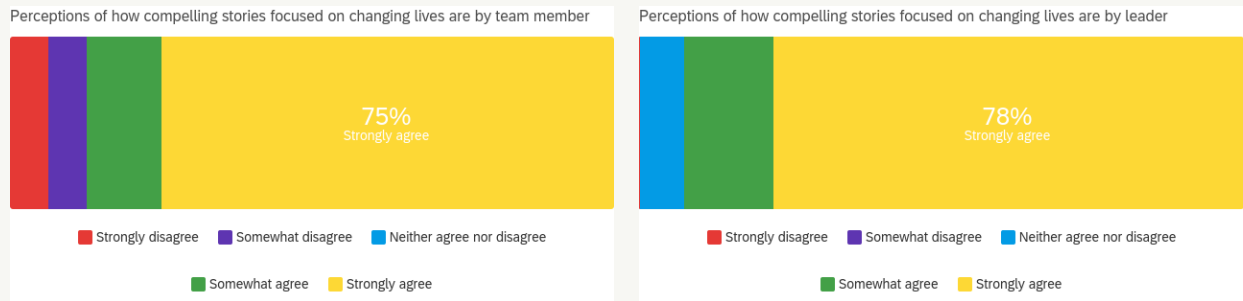
How compelling do external stakeholders find the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio's corporate storytelling strategy?

Stories focused on empowering others and life change are perceived to be most effective in encouraging action and providing evidence of impact.

Stories about this organization focused on empowering others and life change were equally perceived by survey respondents as the most compelling story topics at ULGSO. Moreover, the code application confirms that these two topics are perceived as most compelling (39, 39).

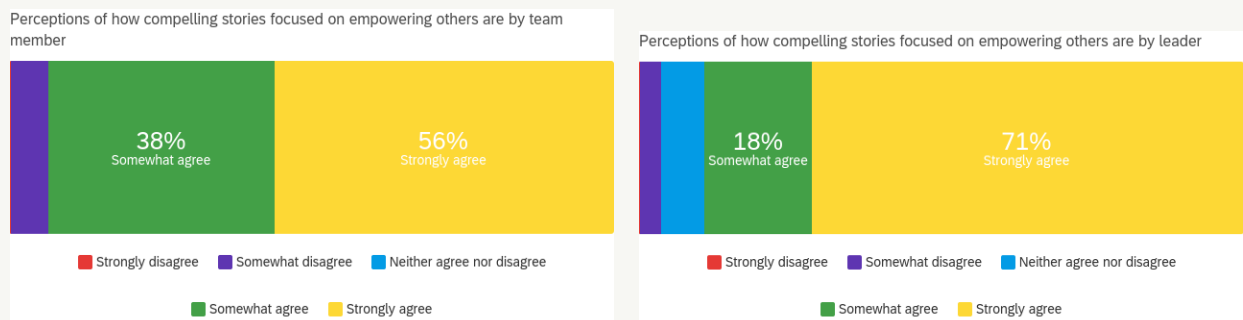
When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed, stories about this organization focused on how it changes lives are compelling; 91% of respondents agreed overall, with 88% of team members and 93% of leaders

agreeing, respectively. Notably, not a single leader disagreed that life change was a compelling story focus, though 13% of team members disagreed.



Leaders indicated that life change is this organization's most compelling story topic. One detailed: "The stories I share showcase the profound transformations that the Urban League brings about in the lives of those it serves." Similarly, one team member offered: "I have seen people's lives change after successfully completing different programs across the Urban League."

When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed that stories about this organization focused on empowering others are compelling, 91% of respondents agreed overall, with 94% of team members and 89% of leaders agreeing, respectively.



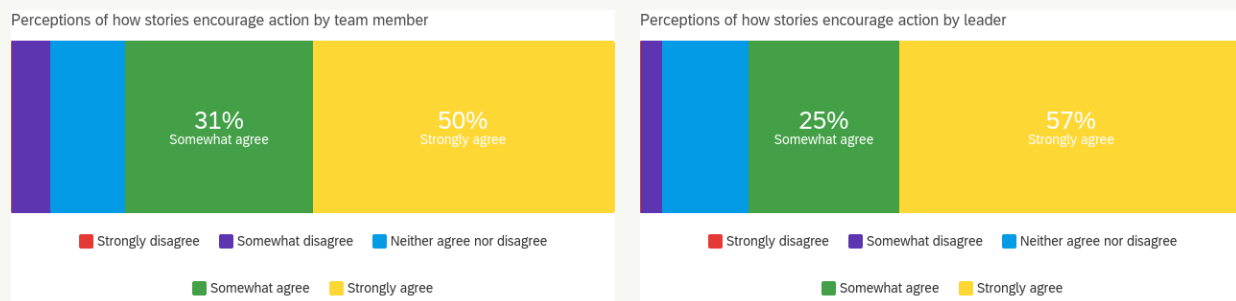
Team members indicated that this organization's most compelling story topic is empowering others. One team member clearly articulated how they make sense of the connection between the practice, purpose, and potential for storytelling at this organization:

“Stories are important to earn trust and get buy-in from the community. Change is difficult for all of us, so when we recruit clients, they are usually

hesitant to try things they have never heard of, but when we share stories of people who were able to follow their dreams with the help of our programs, they are more likely to buy in.”

Focusing on how this organization empowers others and changes lives was perceived to be most compelling because “the work that is done is needed” and “the impact [ULGSO] has on the lives we serve daily” is significant for both program participants and, as this individual testified alongside others, “but also my own life.”

These two topics are also perceived to have the most potential to produce two essential corporate storytelling outcomes at ULGSO: (1) encourage action and (2) provide evidence of impact. Among all codes applied, encourage action (553) was the most coded, and evidence of impact (447) was the fifth most coded. Co-occurrence of these two outcomes (35) was in the top 10% of all co-occurring values, revealing these reciprocal outcomes are embedded within ULGSO’s developing strategy across compelling topics and thus tightly connected in practice: “We have to report out on the work that we do-how many people-you know, and I think that’s great. I think that there’s also an opportunity for us to highlight the people behind the numbers, so I’m very intentional about doing that.”



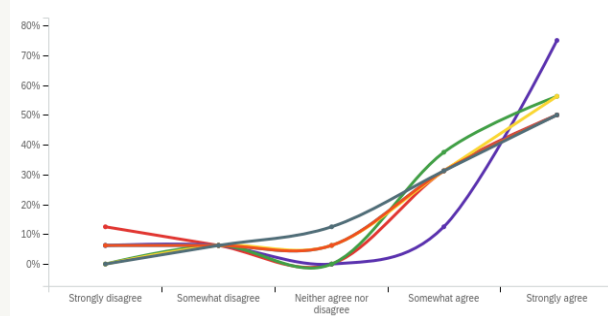
Changing lives and empowering others are essential components of ULGSO's mission and vision; they are also the most effective ways stakeholders can co-construct stories that spur action and demonstrate impact. One interviewee presented an example of how these stories not only celebrate success but also generate new successes for the organization, its participants, and the community:

"That's a success story to me to be able to share. They were able, they had everything in order to get the business, get the grant, and so they were all ready. They've been experienced, they got the grant, they use it for something that was going to allow their business to do the thing even better. And so the success story to me is to be able to tell [funders] about talking to businesses for finances, I'm gonna share that story."

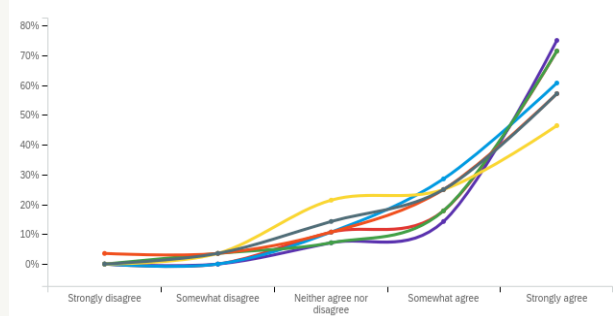
Team members and leaders hold noticeably different perceptions of how compelling stories are depending on the story's focus.

Although team members and leaders largely agree that the potential story topics surveyed are compelling, notable perception gaps are revealed when analyzing individual story topics and disaggregating rates of agreement and disagreement by role. Undoubtedly, perception gaps will exist between roles, and thus, the intensity of agreement or disagreement should be considered.

Perceptions of compelling story topics by team member

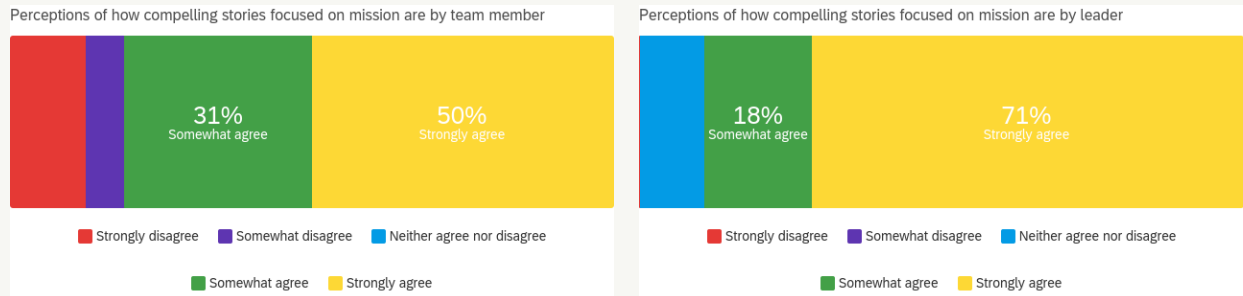


Perceptions of compelling story topics by leader



In this case, a perception gap is the measurable difference in the rate of agreement or disagreement that a particular story focuses on is compelling. While perception gaps are anticipated, gaps concerning how compelling stories focused on the mission or vision are must be acknowledged due to their essential nature within a corporate storytelling strategy.

When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed that stories about this organization focused on its mission are compelling, 86% of respondents agreed overall, with 81% of team members and 89% of leaders agreeing that mission-focused stories are compelling.



Interestingly, for this statement, no leaders disagreed, and 19% of team members disagreed, producing a 19% perception gap representing the most significant difference in the intensity of disagreement by role.

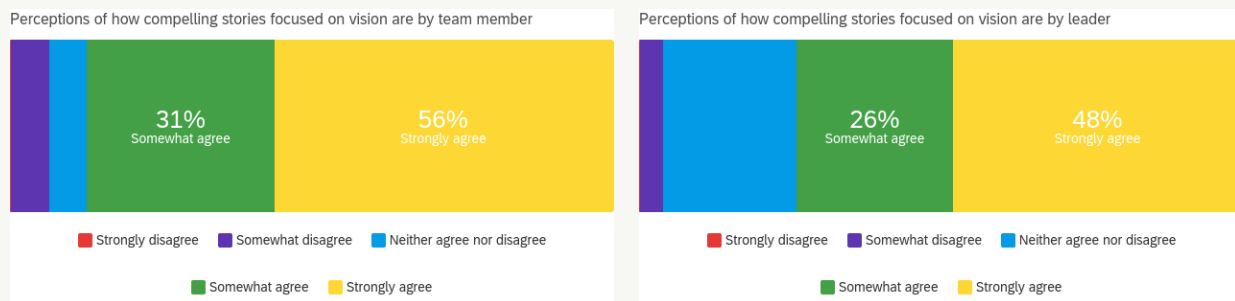
When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed that stories about this organization focused on the program outcomes are compelling, the rate of agreement by role was identical to how compelling respondents found mission-focused stories with higher code application of program outcomes (37) than compelling mission (28), demonstrating alignment and opportunity for these two topics. Promisingly, interviewees connected to mission and program outcomes within the sample stories they shared, for example:

“When I talk about my experience with the league, I talk about it from experience to tell people what amazing programs [we offer]. And when I tell you I have a setup for every department, every program: I have a thick folder of the things I put out on the tables because I believe in every aspect of the league. Even when I don't know them, right, like I don't. I don't know what you really do, but I know

you're a great program and you need me to put that out [there]. Cool, I got you.”

This identical agreement—and connected samples like the one shared above—illustrate how tightly aligned mission and program outcomes can be despite perception gaps. These gaps present a significant risk to the corporate storytelling strategy since the primary motivation for storytelling amongst respondents was advancing the mission. Traditional and reflexive sensegiving practices are known within the literature to engage stakeholders in ways that increase alignment on essential ideas such as an organization’s mission (Gill, 2011; Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021).

When asked to rate the degree to which respondents agreed or disagreed that stories about this organization focused on its vision are compelling, 79% of respondents agreed, with 87% of team members and 74% of leaders agreeing, respectively. While vision-focused stories were perceived to be compelling, this focus was identified as the least compelling story focus.



This 14% perception gap represents the most significant difference in the intensity of agreement by role. Code application for compelling vision (17) was in the lowest quartile of all codes applied, with 76% of application concentrated amongst leaders, reflecting the current limitations for vision-focused stories. Alarminglly, when analyzing co-occurrence, we found no examples of stories focused on compelling vision told by the team (0), with few examples by the leader (10).

This gap represents a significant opportunity since team members are motivated to tell stories to advance the vision but do so less than their leaders with co-occurrence of advance vision by team (3) and by leader (16) confirming this gap with practical examples. One leader identified ULGSO’s compelling vision in the story they told about finding alignment as an individual to the organization and taking action as a result:

“As I looked at what I want my legacy to be and how I want to spend my time as an individual, the work of the Urban League I found was very much aligned with what I want to contribute in terms of helping, I mean, advocating, educating, and supporting individuals in the areas of financial stability, empowerment, social justice, community and generational wealth-building, and things of that nature. Everything that I want to see for others and for our community is very much aligned with what the league is doing in our community, so it was, it became very easy for me to be a bigger supporter.”

Within ULGSO’s strategic plan, there is an emphasis on the mission and vision, both lived and espoused. Leaders perceive these stories to be compelling and can craft mission- and vision-focused stories in dynamic ways; however, we found little evidence that team members can make sense and co-construct stories to the same extent.

A structure for crafting these kinds of compelling stories about this organization’s mission and vision was defined by one leader:

“Here’s who we are, here’s what we’re doing, here’s an example of what we’re doing, and then here’s the details of that example of what we’re

doing... here's some quotes from [participant] who graduated from the program three months ago and now works at [company], he's an [occupation] and here's his story."

In sum, differences in perceptions by role have been found across project questions and within results. However, the most significant concentration of perception gaps was the extent to which team members and leaders found story topics compelling. This demonstrates the potential for corporate storytelling to improve ULGSO's reputation among internal and external audiences (Gill, 2015). These gaps present significant risks and opportunities for the organization as it continues to define, implement, and refine its corporate storytelling strategy.

Recommendations

Situating our findings within the problem of practice, 'Citizens look to the city, the city looks to the organization, and the organization looks back to the citizens and city' illustrates a potential path forward. Instead of looking at each other with questions, now ULGSO stakeholders can look at each other with co-constructed answers as a result of sensegiving and sensemaking practices that drive awareness and expand advocacy for the greater Cincinnati community. Until storytelling is supported with aligned strategies, there is potential for misalignment of message and mission, limiting the organization's overall impact. Taken together, these recommendations acknowledge that storytelling is a complex skill, storytelling can be a human-centered, justice-oriented solution, and, ultimately, we all have a compelling story that deserves to be told.

Our findings confirm the centrality of mission and vision in effective corporate storytelling strategy. The following recommendations are built upon the sequential trajectory of our conceptual framework, which builds individual skills, creates sustainable organizational habits, and ultimately transforms culture. We propose a scaffolded approach incorporating recommendations for team members and leaders at each stage so that the strategy and organization are intentional about implementation, growth, and monitoring. Additionally, we provide a SWOT analysis to contextualize each recommendation for team members and leaders. Finally, we include practical assessment tools for ULGSO to determine the effectiveness of each recommendation to drive continuous improvement and program evaluation efforts.

#1: Build storytelling skills with the elements

To begin, we recommend that team members and leaders partner in the community to articulate, define, and refine storytelling skills and the aligned strategy (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Three key findings inform this first recommendation for ULGSO:

1. A corporate storytelling strategy is in development.
2. Team members and leaders unequally perceive encouragement.
3. Co-construction is present across roles to differing degrees.

As we reviewed the evidence and triangulated the data, these three findings highlight the potential to build storytelling skills based on the existing capacity among stakeholders. Throughout this inquiry, we heard from existing and emerging storytellers who need additional support to be fully leveraged as "custodians" of the organization's future and potential (Nyagadza, 2020, p. 26). As

the following components are implemented, the organization can capitalize on measurement opportunities by integrating ULGSO-specific corporate storytelling indicators into annual engagement surveys in late 2024.

Team members should leverage existing knowledge and skills to create storytelling non-negotiables for the organization.

Storytellers need to know what the organization's story should sound like, what frameworks are relevant, and what features strategically advance the mission and vision. Gill identifies some essential elements such as [literature]. With these elements in mind, the organization should empower team members to define storytelling non-negotiables, equipping stakeholders with a checklist or tool to operationalize existing practices.

These resources could facilitate the development of a storytelling environment that promotes the charismatizing of routine (Chen, 2012) and job-specific skills. As storytellers "try on and personalize" organizational priorities and values, they can reframe their work (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012). Individuals may begin redefining their work as storytelling propels them to see tasks such as collecting data, passing out flyers, or walking the block as life-changing for participants and themselves.

This component of our first recommendation should be appealing to the organization as it is relatively low-lift and can be initiated immediately. A strength of this approach for team members is that as the non-negotiables are articulated, storytellers are engaged in ongoing learning, bolstering existing capacity. However, a possible weakness of this approach is the potential simplification of the complexities and nuances of corporate storytelling in the iteration stage; as such, a design thinking process should inform this work.

The opportunities associated with this step are exciting as the organization can up-skill team members across divisions and empower early adopters of this strategy throughout. If this recommendation is implemented, the organization should carefully monitor this initiative as non-negotiables could be perceived as a prescriptive storytelling mandate threatening the power of the descriptive guide being created.

As team members activate their knowledge and build their skills with non-negotiables, they will enhance their ability to connect their individual stories to the organization's mission and vision, leading to deeper co-construction, strengthening the internal reputation, and improving the external reputation.

Leaders should clarify the organization's storytelling strategy, develop clear models to support implementation, and encourage co-construction as it expands from traditional to reflexive.

As team members apply their knowledge and skills to develop non-negotiables, leaders should walk alongside them to better leverage our conceptual framework and the representative literature to define the organization's approach to corporate storytelling. While we know the strategy is in development, additional clarity is needed for this initiative to be effective. Leaders can begin by intentionally modeling peer-to-peer engagement utilizing storytelling to inform strategic planning at the team, division, and organizational levels.

As leaders engage in storytelling with greater consistency, models will continue to emerge—as they did within our survey and interview results—providing the opportunity to compare, evaluate, and reflect on approaches. Leaders should utilize the non-negotiables developed by team members to align models and highlight the organization's compelling stories and frontrunning storytellers. Identifying clear and effective models will support implementation efforts and lighten the load on central leadership as responsibility for practice is distributed.

Leaders should prioritize and intentionally focus on co-construction practices. To fully recognize the potential of reflexive sensegiving, leaders should begin to take stock of their current practices, recognize when they are operating in the traditional space, and reflect on missed opportunities to identify growth areas. Kihlberg and Lindberg share an essential mindset relevant for leaders enacting this component of our first recommendation: "[leaders] still play a significant role, not as authors but as co-authors of meaning, or perhaps even as editors who facilitate a co-authorship of meaning concerning issues on a broad span" (2021, p. 484). While largely aspirational at this stage, encouraging a shift to reflexive sensegiving is a worthy investment of effort and time.

A strength of this recommendation is the likely enhanced sense of loyalty as internal engagement increases, which is necessary for improved reputation and brand outcomes (Gill, 2011). Nevertheless, without robust, centralized models for storytelling based on the elements, even leaders may engage inconsistently. Again, while storytelling is "universal," its implementation at ULGSO will not be universally understood without these critical acts of articulation (Marvasti et al., 2019, p. 65).

While not unique to this organization, our respondents identified 'burnout' as a complicating factor. A valuable opportunity presented by this recommendation is that leaders can re-engage in the frontline work externally to get closer to the story and turn their existing external storytelling skills inward as they learn to craft

stories about their internal engagement. An appearance of inauthenticity could threaten the impact of this recommendation, depending on the position of the leader and their existing proximity to participant stories. Therefore, we encourage leaders of all levels to evaluate current proximity within programs and identify spaces where they can engage more directly.

Complementary to the efforts of team members, as leaders begin to define and position themselves as the chief storytelling officers of their teams, divisions, and the organization, they will find new ways to advance the mission and vision.

#2: Routinize reflexive sensegiving with a story bank

Building upon the first recommendation, two of our findings led us to our second recommendation: (3) co-construction is present across roles to differing degrees, and (4) authenticity, proximity, and relevance impact the storytelling and self-identification of storytellers. Because co-construction is present and team members and leaders desire more access to stories, ULGSO should capture the momentum from the existing internal story bank project and operationalize this reflexive story bank structure between the leaders and the team members - centering storytelling.

The development and utilization of the story bank is a critical application tool that could fuel the expansion of self-identified storytellers across the organization. Two measurement strategies for ULGSO to understand this recommendation's progress include assessing the use of the story bank via metrics of division and role and establishing a new focus group of internal and external stakeholders to complement their engagement surveys in gathering information related to implementing this strategy.

Team members should regularly host an elevator pitch workshop or "internal" gala to intentionally sensemake and sensegive what team members to every day.

Our preliminary research demonstrated that authentic and compelling storytelling occurs at formal events like the SOAR Graduation and the ULGSO Gala. Team members should regularly host an "internal" gala or elevator pitch workshop that empowers everyone to share their stories, receive feedback, align, and engage in the strategy. This component of our second recommendation utilizes the existing story bank as the foundation. From our interviews, several team members identified stories they had shared with others to garner feedback and align their understanding of the ULGSO mission and vision. From the literature, these kinds of workshops build upon the concept of charismatizing the routine, which is the

intentional and positive sensemaking and sensegiving of what team members do daily (Chen, 2012). As in our first recommendation, where we anticipate team members will have the opportunity to redefine their work, these internal storytelling events signal the priority of the organization's storytelling strategy. They also will incorporate Gill's storytelling elements, connecting individual stories of internal stakeholders and organizational outcomes with the ULGSO-specific non-negotiables (Gill, 2015). This recommendation provides a main-stage application opportunity to team members, confirming the value of their storytelling efforts.

These regular pitch workshops benefit the team members by using their strengths to form coherent narratives as they align and develop a collective identity toward a similarity cluster (Fiol & Romanelli, 2012). An advantage of this component is that it uses a known activity and format for storytelling to which team members are accustomed. These events also highlight and uncover existing story capacity and possibly new storytellers, encouraging those who may still need to see themselves as storytellers to begin to do so.

Understanding that this operationalization takes time, effort, and prioritizing by leaders, this component defines an opportunity to share the responsibility for implementing this recommendation with leadership. The external gala is a significant lift for leadership, and team members should use these workshops as complementary planning steps for that event. As with any new routine, shifting away from "what we have always done" may be considered an additive responsibility or a deprioritization of something important. However, these workshops allow team members to collaborate with leadership, expanding sensegiving and sensemaking concerning foundational elements of the mission and vision and creating new ownership and identity opportunities throughout.

No matter how team members choose to design, plan, and host these internal events for storytellers, this action will shift the mindset from 'done to me' to 'done with me,' centering storytelling as the thing team members regularly do.

Leaders should create an environment for reflexive sensegiving and model mission moments storytelling throughout the organization.

ULGSO leaders have two responsibilities to routinize the power of reflexive sensegiving. The first is to create an environment where storytelling can be operationalized. Scribner (1986) speaks to the role of the leader as the creator of space for the system. In this case, the system is for sensegiving, and ULGSO leaders create this space by making storytelling a necessary habit. The second responsibility of leadership is to model mission moments storytelling in settings throughout the organization. As a result of our preliminary research observations and our interviews, there is evidence of leadership implementing these mission

moments, however isolated. Done consistently, these mission moments can be shared in team meetings, leadership meetings, board meetings, and other organizational settings, routinizing co-construction opportunities among and among all stakeholders.

Our conceptual framework describes how the individual narrative may ultimately flow into organizational outcomes and, at moments in the model, the leadership role is pivotal. Transitioning from the community of practice, where each has an identity of their own on a common subject, towards similarity clusters, where leaders are the first to move from newcomer to journeyfolk to oldtimers, ULGSO leaders must now say: “I will model for you” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Fiol & Romanelli, 2012).

“The role of leaders is not to talk about what is right and wrong, well maybe sometimes it is, but usually it is about creating an arena for conversation and dialogue where understanding can develop.” (Kihlberg & Lindberg, 2021, p. 484)

While ULGSO has ‘oldtimers’ proficient in traditional sensegiving, this recommendation for creating the environment and modeling mission moments for the organization should enable leadership to become newcomers, journeyfolk, and oldtimers proficient in reflexive sensegiving over time.

This recommendation acknowledges that ULGSO leaders have relative strength in capitalizing on a known expectation among nonprofit leaders because stories are an integral component of their organization. At the same time, the self-measurement of this practice may lead some leaders to have a limited awareness or lack of urgency for their own needs to improve their current level of participation. In essence, ULGSO will need to message—in word and deed—that everyone is a newcomer in reflexive sensegiving to realize the benefit of this recommendation in advancing the mission and vision.

Our interviews show that some leaders may have less access than others to authentic storytelling opportunities due to their positioning and personal narratives, which could inhibit their ability to create the space or model mission moments. This may be an opportunity to alter job descriptions and functions to align with ULGSO’s vision for mission advocacy and the reputational goal of being a ‘best-in-class’ place to work. This may also present an opportunity to elevate

leaders who currently incorporate mission moments, routinely tell stories, and practice components of reflexive sensegiving as these examples prove these steps are possible with current capacity and not constraining. Instead, they are simply an embedded expectation and element of leadership.

For ULGSO, routinizing reflexive sensegiving can lead to a shared responsibility between leaders and team members for storytelling, demonstrating and representing the organization's mission and vision while elevating existing leadership approaches that leverage mission moments storytelling.

#3: Transform ULGSO's culture and identity

Our ultimate recommendation is large and lofty. We recognize that charging the organization to change its culture and identity is a significant request, but we do not make this recommendation lightly. ULGSO is doing life-changing work, and those impacted—internal and external—have stories that must be told. After the corporate storytelling strategy is articulated, models and practices become routine, and sensegiving is distributed reflexively, storytelling can transition from 'one way we win' as an organization to 'the way we win.'

Two findings confirm the importance of making and implementing this recommendation: (5) Stories focused on empowering others and life change are perceived to be most effective in encouraging action and providing evidence of impact, and (6) Team members and leaders hold noticeably different perceptions of how compelling stories are depending on the story's focus. While some influences and outcomes related to this recommendation will be hard to measure, we propose three starting points: (1) generate a synthesis of multi-year engagement survey and focus group results disaggregated by gender, race, role, tenure, and division; (2) analyze major gifts, win/loss ratios, and participation metrics; and (3) engage in continuous improvement and program evaluation metrics designed to inform ongoing strategic planning cycles.

Team members should take the opportunity to reframe their personal narratives as they align identity, goals, and values among individuals, the community, and the organization.

As a result of team members' efforts in designing non-negotiable and refining storytelling practices with internal workshops, they should have the opportunity to redefine their work and reframe their narratives in light of the organization's identity, goals, and values. Individuals need to own their narratives as they take the opportunity to align their identities with the budding organizational identity. If the organization wishes to achieve the full impact of an integrated corporate

storytelling strategy, the culture must reflect these identities and be an inclusive space for its people. While this will take time and likely multiple iterations, intentional attention to identity development should be prioritized to achieve transformation.

The literature embedded within our conceptual framework confirms this potential as improved internal public relations outcomes are identified due to internal stakeholders' intense focus on sensegiving and storytelling practices. While some team members currently do not see their narratives or identities in alignment with the organization's identity, reflexive sensegiving practices facilitate more profound engagement with the issues addressed by the organization and diverse constituencies impacted by the mission and vision. For storytelling to become the central strategy advancing the organization, identity alignment is necessary, and it should begin with team members.

As reflected in our findings, some team members still need to identify as storytellers. The evidence suggests this is likely due to concerns related to authentic personal narratives. If team members can reconsider what it means to be a part of ULGSO and acknowledge how who they are shapes what they do, these concerns may be alleviated. This new perspective rests upon the success of the first two recommendations, as effortful contribution and application opportunities are considered prerequisites to this type of shift.

While some team members may be concerned about the energy required and personal risk associated with sharing and aligning their narratives with the organization's stories, capitalizing on the early adopters and storytelling ambassadors within the organization should ease this tension. The potential to serve more of Black Cincinnati and related underserved communities is exciting for this organization, as expanded services could fuel ULGSO's desired future state.

We acknowledge that this recommendation's success for team members rests on leadership's ability to transition to a reflexive sensegiving environment. At the same time, this is one of the ways team members can be an actionable part of the organization, living up to its ideals across divisions and programs. In their investigation of storytelling, Wilson (2019) found the practice to be so powerful that "it became the preferred method of training" colleagues (p. 385). Team members should anticipate a long time horizon and be considerate of leadership during this period of transformation, as this recommendation will likely be on the scale of years instead of weeks or months as it develops into the preferred method.

Leaders should acknowledge, embrace, and plan for an unknown future, creating systems to sustain their corporate storytelling strategy.

Leaders in a traditional sensegiving environment rely on a fixed future with model stories reflecting identifiable outcomes. Acknowledging an unknown future to enable unlimited story futures is a necessary risk for leaders seeking a systems approach to a corporate storytelling strategy. As Scribner puts it, leaders create the container for these outcomes to be achievable. Thus, leaders should engage in strategic and succession planning to ensure that their emerging strategy is open to potential shifts in leadership (1986). A sustainable corporate storytelling strategy that impacts the organization's culture should persist beyond any leader's tenure.

This recommendation for leaders will be challenging to accomplish as embodied stories' impact will likely linger throughout this transition. Leaders must empathize with their teams and engage with other leaders to identify pathways to achieving this change. External factors such as umbrella organization demands, funding requirements, and the positionality of leaders will likely present additional challenges and require consistent, aligned messaging about the purpose and potential of this strategy.

While this will be a heavy lift centralized primarily on executive leadership, small steps can be taken along the way as a part of the change management process required to implement the first two recommendations. Leaders will likely need to answer questions such as 'Why storytelling?' 'Why culture and identity change?' and 'Why now?' repeatedly from various stakeholders. Collaborative vision-casting will be necessary as the greater leadership team must have belief and buy-in to advance this recommendation.

“Failure to successfully integrate context, clarity, direction, and competition with the interconnectivity of the systems and procedures results in unsustainable change.” (Wilson, 2019, p. 385)

We understand that this recommendation may only be partially actualized. However, our conceptual framework identifies the value of productive shifts of any scale as organizations shift to reflexive sensegiving with full co-construction processes. Imagine the organization's enhanced ability to advocate, impact, and lead Cincinnati and its people if every stakeholder can see themselves as storytellers, receive guidance from leaders as storytellers, and carry out a compelling mission and vision outlined by a chief storyteller.

Leaders should consult the national organization and comparable entities to identify practical strategies or models of excellence as they plan. Again, Wilson (2019) found storytelling to be an essential "part of the change management toolkit, and [it] can be used to engage in productive communication while tackling negative side effects of external factors" (p. 385). Building on the powerful history and legacy of ULGSO will be critical to implementing this recommendation, as we are not suggesting the organization should stray from its roots, core values, or messaging. Instead, this is one way leaders can fulfill their 'best-in-class' vision for the future.

Conclusion

As a result of our engagement with the people of the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio, investigation of the related literature, and data collection, analysis, and triangulation efforts, corporate storytelling could be an effective strategy for this organization's success. Our findings demonstrate the potential of developing this strategy, establishing encouragement as an expectation, expanding co-constructed meaning-making, recognizing self-identification opportunities, leveraging aligned story topics, and celebrating compelling stories. Our recommendations honor the work of existing storytellers as the organization can build skill, articulate strategy, generate stories, grow sensegiving, reframe narrative, and create systems that could ultimately transform ULGSO's culture and identity. We know ULGSO can champion its participants, celebrate their impact, and confirm the organization's internal and external value as they consider our framework, review our findings, apply our recommendations, and measure their success.

As identified throughout, the literature defines several essential frameworks for identity development, change management, sensegiving and sensemaking processes, organizational learning, and strategic storytelling. The conceptual framework we presented in this paper weaves together enabling conditions and factors across models to establish new potential for corporate storytelling. We acknowledge that this initial iteration of our framework and associated tools require additional analysis, refinement, and study to become the generalizable, reliable, and valid solutions we posit they can be. As a result, we plan to continue this line of inquiry and practice in new contexts, communities, and corporations.

Future research should consider collecting additional disaggregating factors from respondents that may lead to identifying new mediators or moderators relevant to our framework. Additionally, we can imagine contexts where human-centered, justice-oriented corporate storytelling could contribute to measurable improvements in both social and financial outcomes, strengthening double-bottom-line value propositions, and this possibility should be studied.

While storytelling is not a 'cure-all' for nuanced outcomes such as brand, engagement, and reputation, corporate storytelling could be the ultimate expression of leading and learning in organizations as internal and external stakeholders co-construct meaning through reflexive sensegiving.

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Appendix A: Corporate Storytelling Survey Tool

As doctoral students in the Leadership, Learning, and Organizations program at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, we invite you to participate in a capstone project about how the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio (ULGSO) is impacted by storytelling. ULGSO has identified storytelling as a component of its overall communication strategy. As you may know, the organization has engaged in layered strategic planning, produced a comprehensive brand guide, and hired new staff members in communications and marketing. In addition, the league is infusing new data measures, including the development of a story bank, into its operational routines.

Your participation in this study focused on the impact of corporate storytelling is extremely important to Urban League's ability to effectively and strategically communicate with all its stakeholders. In every conversation we've had with team members and leaders, we have heard the impact of ULGSO's people, programs, and partnerships. This study is designed to align, enhance, and improve storytelling across the organization to effectively execute the organization's mission and vision.

Participation is voluntary. Your responses will be kept confidential, and personally identifiable information will not be shared with ULGSO or published in study findings. You will have the option to not respond to any question that you choose. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with ULGSO.

We hope you will participate in the study so your voice can be heard and survey response rates are strong, enabling implications to be shared at the organization, division, and leadership levels. Following the analysis of survey results, we will conduct some brief virtual interviews internal and external to the organization to hear more about the impact of storytelling at ULGSO. If you'd like to be considered for this additional study component, please opt-in at the end of the survey so we can include as many unique voices as possible.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact the capstone team or the faculty advisor.

Respectfully,

Christyn P. Abaray

John Luke Bell

Marisa Cannata, PhD

Principal Investigator

Study Coordinator

Faculty Advisor

Storytelling is the process of developing a message that creates new points-of-view or reinforces opinions and/or behaviors by using narration about the people, the organization, the past, the visions for the future, the social bonding, and the work itself to effectively engage with stakeholders.

Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio

- Mission: to help Black people and historically underserved communities achieve their highest true social parity, economic self-reliance, power, civil rights, and justice through personal empowerment & economic self-sufficiency.

- Vision: best-in-class organization in Southwest Ohio for change and advocacy in our community, an employer of choice in our region, the investment of choice for our corporate, government, and philanthropic partners, and a model of integrity and excellence (Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio Strategic Plan 2023, 2023).

Corporate Storytelling Survey

Item	Q1	Q2	Q3
This organization has a model for telling stories to advance its mission and vision.	X		
This organization encourages internal storytelling to advance its mission and vision.	X		
This organization encourages external storytelling to advance its mission and vision.	X		
This organization’s employees use stories to advance its mission and vision.	X		
This organization’s leaders use stories to advance its mission and vision	X		
This organization’s participants use stories to advance its mission and vision.	X		
This organization’s donors use stories to advance its mission and vision.	X		
I tell stories from my own experience about this organization.		X	
I tell stories from my own experience about this organization to engage my colleagues.		X	
I tell stories from my own experience about this organization to engage my community.		X	
I tell stories from my own experience about this organization to feel connected to the mission.		X	
I tell stories from my own experience about this organization to feel connected to the vision.		X	
I tell stories from my own experience about this organization to improve our external reputation.		X	
I tell stories from my own experience about this organization to improve our program outcomes.		X	
Stories about this organization focused on its mission are compelling.			X
Stories about this organization focused on how we change lives are compelling.			X
Stories about this organization focused on the results of our programs are compelling.			X

Stories about this organization focused on empowering others are compelling.			X
Stories about this organization focused on its vision are compelling.			X
Stories about this organization focused on how we live up to our ideals are compelling.			X
Stories about this organization encourage me to take action in my community.			X

*All items use a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Open-ended storytelling prompt:

1. Why do you tell stories about this organization?
2. What words do you use to tell stories about this organization?
3. How do you want people to feel as they hear your stories about this organization?

Demographic information:

- Relationship to organization
 - Employee
 - Program participant
 - Board member
 - Donor
 - City official

- Role within organization
 - Team member (coordinator, specialist, manager)
 - Team leader (manager, director)
 - Organizational leader (Leadership council)
 - Executive leader (Executive leadership team)

- Years of service
 - <1 year
 - 1-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-15 years
 - 15 or more years

- Would you like to be considered for a follow-up interview about storytelling at this organization?
 - Yes, No
 - Full Name
 - Employer, Title
 - Email address
 - Cell phone number
 - Best time to contact: Morning, Midday, Afternoon, Evening

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Corporate Storytelling Interview Tool

Thank you so much for opting-in and sharing your information to be interviewed as a follow-up to the ULGSO Storytelling Survey launched in November. Christyn and I are excited to include you in the process and incorporate your stories in the project. As doctoral students in the Leadership, Learning, and Organizations program at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College we have partnered with the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio (ULGSO) to better understand the impact of corporate storytelling.

Participation is voluntary. Your interview responses will be kept confidential, and personally identifiable information will not be shared with ULGSO or published in study findings. The semi-structured interviews will be conducted informally and occur virtually. The interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes only so we can ensure all responses are accurately captured.

We plan to engage in all conversations during a 30-minute Microsoft Teams call. You do not need to prepare anything in advance of our conversation. At your convenience, please select one of the dates and times below and reply via email to confirm your appointment. We will send a calendar invite and share any additional details at that time. All times below are listed in EST.

- Thursday, December 7th: 8PM, 8:30PM
- Friday, December 8th: 6PM, 6:30PM, 7PM, 7:30PM
- Monday, December 18th: 8AM, 8:30AM, 9AM, 9:30AM, 5PM, 5:30PM, 6PM, 6:30PM, 7PM, 7:30PM, 8PM, 8:30PM
- Wednesday, December 20th: 8AM, 8:30AM, 9AM, 9:30AM, 10AM, 10:30AM, 11AM, 11:30AM, 12PM, 12:30PM, 1PM, 1:30PM, 2PM, 2:30PM, 3PM, 3:30PM, 4PM, 4:30PM, 5PM, 5:30PM, 6PM, 6:30PM, 7PM, 7:30PM, 8PM, 8:30PM

If none of these dates and times work for your schedule, please email us and let us know what might be best. If you have any questions about the project, please contact the capstone team or the faculty advisor. We are looking forward to the opportunity to connect with you!

Respectfully,

Christyn P. Abaray

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Corporate Storytelling Semi-Structured Interview

Luke reads Welcome! We would like to record your interview with us so we can ensure we've captured all your input. Is it OK that we do that?

Introductions and thanks for their participation.

Luke reads Given the high percentage of survey respondents who report co-constructing stories that advance ULGSO's mission and vision, it's crucial to delve deeper into their storytelling practices. We need to identify their target audiences, the contexts in which they share their stories, the specific storytelling methods they employ, and most importantly, the underlying reasons behind their storytelling efforts.

Christyn reads So, we have a series of questions to ask you to help us with this deeper dive. Please take your time, and if anything is unclear, we are happy to ask again or rephrase for you. If you're ready, we're ready.

Christyn Q1 Focus: Storytelling Context and Influences

- How does storytelling happen at ULGSO?
 - If team member, when and from whom did you first hear stories?
 - If team leader, when and from whom did you first hear stories?
 - If organizational leader, when and from whom did you first hear stories?
 - If external stakeholder, when and from whom did you first hear stories?

Luke Q2 Focus: Storytelling Methods and Motivation

- When did you first start telling stories about ULGSO? Why did you begin doing so?
 - If team member, why do you continue to tell stories? (sensemaking)
 - If team leader, how do you encourage your team members to tell stories? (sensegiving)
 - If organizational leader, how do you tell stories at the organizational level? (unclear role or purpose in corporate storytelling strategy)
 - If external stakeholder, where do you tell stories about ULGSO?
- How have your storytelling methods changed since you first started telling stories?
 - If team member, who do you most often tell stories to and why?

- If team leader, how do you frame and reframe the stories your team tells?
- If organizational leader, how do your methods adjust by audience?
- If external stakeholder, what do you need to tell more stories about ULGSO?

Christyn Q3 Focus: Storytelling Effectiveness and Impact

- How do you know you have a compelling story to tell about ULGSO?
 - If team member, what kind of feedback let you know the story was effective?
 - If team leader, how do you determine the impact of the stories you tell?
 - If organizational leader, how do you develop a model story about ULGSO?
 - If external stakeholder, what is the most compelling story you've heard about ULGSO?
- What is the most compelling story you have told about ULGSO?
 - What has been the impact of this story?
 - Why is this story effective?

Luke reads Next Steps:

- We finalized our survey collection earlier this month.
- We are in the midst of these interviews (restating the purpose) through the end of the calendar year.
- After our analysis, we will have recommendations for how ULGSO could proceed with deepening and strengthening their storytelling efforts to share by mid to late April.

Appendix C: Thematic Analysis Codebook

Project Question 1	Codes
<p>How effective is corporate storytelling as an engagement and public relations strategy at the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Storytelling Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ History 1 ○ Embodied Story 1 ○ Sensegiving from Community 1 ○ Sensemaking by Community 1 ● Storytelling Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Elements 1 ○ Sample Stories 1 ○ Encourages Internal Storytelling 1 ○ Encourages External Storytelling 1 ● Utilization of Storytelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ By Team 1 ○ By Leaders 1 ○ By Participants 1 ○ By Donors 1

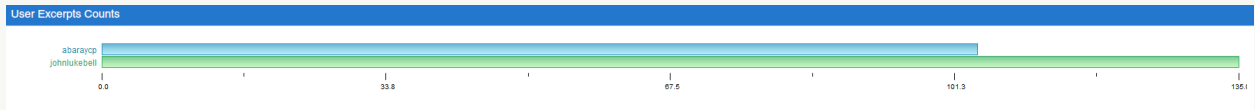
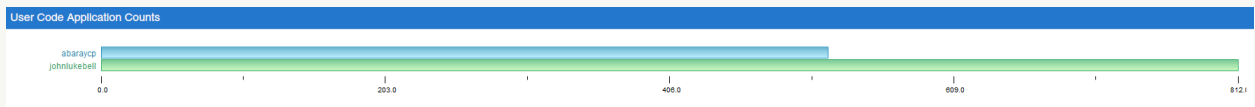
Project Question 2	Codes
<p>How do Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio employees co-construct stories that advance the organization’s mission and vision?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-construction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sensegiving from Leader 2 ○ Sensegiving from Team 2 ○ Sensemaking by Leader 2 ○ Sensemaking by Team 2 ● Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advance Mission 2 ○ Advance Vision 2 ○ Improve Internal Reputation 2 ○ Improve External Reputation 2 ○ Improve Program Outcomes 2 ● Audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To Team 2 ○ To Leaders 2 ○ To Participants 2 ○ To Donors 2

Project Question 3	Codes
<p>How compelling do external stakeholders find the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio's corporate storytelling strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Compelling Mission 3 ○ Compelling Vision 3 ○ Life Changing 3 ○ Program Outcomes 3 ○ Empowering Others 3 ○ Live Our Ideals 3 ● Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourages Action 3 ○ Evidence of Impact 3 ○ Most Compelling Story 3

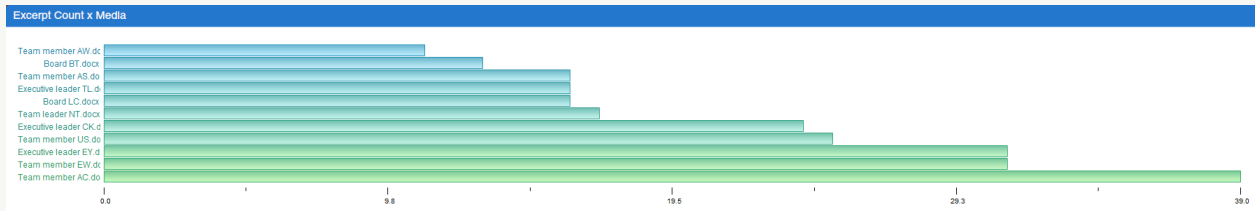
Appendix D: Code Chart (Dedoose)

Codes
1 Storytelling Context
Embodied Story 1
History 1
Sensegiving from Community 1
Sensemaking from Community 1
1 Storytelling Strategy
Encourages External Storytelling
Encourages Internal Storytelling
Sample Stories 1
Story Elements 1
1 Utilization of Storytelling
By Donor 1
By Leaders 1
By Participant 1
By Team 1
2 Audience
To Donors 2
To Leaders 2
To Participants 2
To Team 2
2 Co-construction
Sensegiving from Leader 2
Sensegiving from Team 2
Sensemaking by Leader 2
Sensemaking by Team 2
2 Motivation
Advance Mission 2
Advance Vision 2
Improve External Reputation 2
Improve Internal Reputation 2
Improve Program Outcomes 2
3 Compelling Topic
Compelling Mission 3
Compelling Vision 3
Empowering Others 3
Life Changing 3
Live Our Ideals 3
Program Outcomes 3
3 Outcomes
Encourage Action 3
Evidence of Impact 3
Most Compelling Story 3

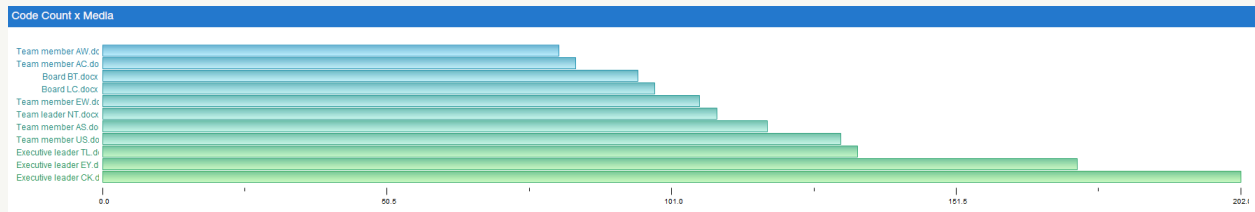
Appendix E: User Application Count and User Excerpt Count (Dedoose)



Appendix F: Excerpt Count x Media (Dedoose)



Appendix G: Code Count x Media (Dedoose)



Appendix H: Code Application (Dedoose)

Media	Codes																																											
	1 Storytelling Context	Embodied Story 1	History 1	Sensemaking from Community 1	Sensemaking from Community 1	1 Storytelling Strategy	Encourages External Storytelling	Encourages Internal Storytelling	Sample Stories 1	Story Elements 1	1 Utilization of Storytelling	By Donor 1	By Leaders 1	By Participant 1	By Team 1	2 Audience	To Donors 2	To Leaders 2	To Participants 2	To Team 2	2 Co-construction	Sensemaking from Leader 2	Sensemaking from Team 2	Sensemaking by Leader 2	Sensemaking by Team 2	2 Motivation	Advance Mission 2	Advance Vision 2	Improve External Reputation 2	Improve Internal Reputation 2	Improve Program Outcomes 2	3 Compelling Topic	Compelling Mission 3	Compelling Vision 3	Empowering Others 3	Life Changing 3	Live Our Ideals 3	Program Outcomes 3	3 Outcomes	Encourage Action 3	Evidence of Impact 3	Most Compelling Story 3	Totals	
Team member US.docx		4	3	3	1		3	1	9	6					10		6	1	6	3				11	2		10	1	8	1	4		2	1	7	4	2	3			10	11	1	131
Team member EW.docx		1	2	8			2		5	3					7		5	1	5	1		2	8		11		5		1		10		3		4	4		4		4	5	5	106	
Team member AW.docx		3	1		1		2			3					4		1		6	1			2	6		6		6	4	5		4		1		5	5	2	4		6	4	5	81
Team member AS.docx		7	3		4		8	3	1	6				3	11				4			2	3		10		5	1	8	3	6		3	1	3	6		5		7	3	2	118	
Team member AC.docx		4	4	1	5		1		1	5				1	2		2		6	2			4		5		5	3	6	2	2		1	2	2	2	2	4	3		3	4	2	84
Team leader NT.docx		4	5	5	1		3	6	5	8			1		10		3	1	7	7			4	6		5		6	1	2	3	1		2	1	3	1			3	4	1	109	
Executive leader TL.docx		4	4		2		6	4	6	11			14	1			4	1	3	1		6		7			7	6	2	1	2		4	4	6	7	2	4		8	3	4	134	
Executive leader EY.docx		6	2	2	1		11	9	10	14			20	4	3		8	5	4	6		12	4	5	1		6		6	3		3	1	4	3	1	2		6	9	3	173		
Executive leader CK.docx		7	6	1	6		2	3	6	12			2	18	1	2		4	2	2	3		18		7	1		10	7	6	5	3		7	3	1	2	9	6		16	12	12	202
Board LC.docx		2	7	1	2		2		6	9			7	7			8	1				3	4				3	3	2	1	3		1	1	1	1		2		7	6	8	98	
Board BT.docx		5	1		3		2		2	7			4	10	1		3	1	2			6		3			8	6	2		3		1	3	3	4	1	4		5	2	3	96	
Totals		44	38	21	26		42	26	51	84		13	70	11	49		44	13	45	24		53	38	26	41		71	32	48	19	38		28	17	39	39	21	37		74	63	46		

