


You're More Than A Messenger

The Practicum Strategic Communications Field Guide

 **How to Build Buy-In, Communicate Value, and Lead Strategically Without Authority**
By Robert Hornsby, Founder, Practicum Strategy

A communications methodology for high-leverage, low-visibility professionals who shape narrative, culture, and strategic alignment — even when it's not in their job description.

Section 1: Introduction — “You’re Already Doing the Work”

You lead messaging across teams, manage crises, write for execs, and build culture.

But when it comes time to budget, plan, or make strategic decisions — you're still waiting for a seat at the table. This guide is for communications professionals who are tired of just being seen as “the messenger.”

Inside, you'll find tools, prompts, and frameworks to:

- Reframe the value of your work
- Gain support from executives
- Build internal alignment
- And translate narrative power into business traction

You don't need more approval to start leading.

You need the tools to make your impact visible. Let's begin.

Section 2: Framework – Audience → Purpose → Outcome

Use this to design any message, campaign, or internal comms plan.

1. Audience

- Who do you need to influence?
- What are their pain points, priorities, and blind spots?
- How do they perceive the comms function?

Tactical Tip: Create an “*Internal Power Map*” showing where buy-in is needed (CFO, COO, Brand Lead, etc.)

2. Purpose

- Why is this message needed right now?
- What strategic priority does it align with?
- How does this support business goals — growth, retention, trust, etc.?

Tactical Tip: Write a “purpose line” at the top of every brief:

“This communication supports [business priority] by aligning [audience] around [key message].”

3. Outcome

- What is the action, shift, or result you're trying to create?
- How will you measure success internally?
- What downstream behavior should change?


Tactical Tip: Build a comms scorecard with internal outcomes like:

- Budget secured
 - Exec time allocated
 - Cross-functional collaboration initiated
 - Leadership alignment achieved
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Section 3: Internal Pitch Template — “Make the Case for Comms”

Use this 5-slide structure to pitch a comms initiative to leadership:

1. **The Problem** — What misalignment, gap, or reputational risk are we facing?
2. **The Opportunity** — How strategic communication can close that gap
3. **The Model** — Audience → Purpose → Outcome
4. **The Request** — Budget, time, participation, or approval
5. **The Impact** — What happens when we get this right? (Outcomes tied to business value)

 **Bonus Tip:** Always translate soft goals into business-aligned outcomes:

“Improved clarity” → higher engagement
“Better messaging” → faster decisions
“More alignment” → smoother change management

Section 4: Tools to Translate Comms into Strategic Value

| Comms Work | Translates To |
|--------------------------|--|
| Internal storytelling >> | Culture alignment + retention |
| Exec message support >> | Leadership trust + morale |
| Channel orchestration >> | Efficiency + clarity + reduced confusion |
| Narrative reframing >> | Change readiness + crisis prevention |
| Thought leadership >> | Brand reputation + visibility |


Positioning Statement Formula:

“My work ensures that [strategic audience] understands and aligns with [organizational priority], enabling [business outcome].”

Section 5: Checklist – “Am I Leading Strategically?”

Use this self-check tool before launching any internal or external initiative:

- Have I mapped who this message needs to influence (not just inform)?
- Do I know what business outcome this supports?
- Can I make a case for why this requires executive participation or funding?
- Do I have the language to explain this to leadership in strategic terms?
- Does this effort serve the organization’s **narrative architecture**?

 If you checked 4 or more: You're already leading like a strategist.

Now it's time to **get the influence to match**.

Final Call to Action: You’re the Leader — We Just Help You Speak Like It

You don’t need another deck template or writing tip.

You need a framework that:

- Makes strategy visible

- Helps you align teams and executives
- Equips you to speak the language of leadership

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