

# Vignettes



## BRITTANY'S STORY

# Brittany

## 29, Filipina

Call Center Rep at a health insurance company, Phoenix, AZ

Brittany kept getting yelled at by customers for things out of her control—like system outages or claim delays. She knew the problem wasn't frontline performance, it was the lack of a clear escalation process. She needed her company to create one. Her first POV draft was clunky: "We need better documentation and routing of customer issues." A coworker responded: "Just say what you mean."

So she revised it: "We need an escalation path that protects reps from customer rage, which will protect us from burnout, and gets customers answers faster." She tested it with her team lead, who agreed. By naming the issue clearly, anchoring it in the human experience on both ends of the customer call as well as company performance, Brittany had a scaffolding on which she could build a strategy.

01

## Establish Your POV Shot

See the Rule (Page 15)

## SHAYLA'S STORY

# Shayla

35, Black

Assistant Manager at a grocery chain, Atlanta, GA

Shayla wanted to introduce a more flexible shift-swapping policy after seeing too many colleagues lose pay or show up sick. She'd tried convincing her boss, but he felt she could handle it by hiring better workers and filling in more herself when they didn't show up. Rather than try and persuade him, she started mapping the ecosystem. She started with her inner circle: two moms who juggled childcare and a semi-retired clerk who covered holidays. Each had told her, "I almost didn't come in today."

The beneficiaries were a broader group: anyone dealing with transportation gaps, elder care, or burnout. The processors lived in the back office: HR folks, who tracked attendance metrics, and the district scheduling coordinator, who managed the software. Her store manager was the objector—he'd once said, "Flexibility just leads to confusion and more coverage failures."

Mapping it out helped Shayla stop spinning her wheels. She realized she didn't need to change any one person's mind—she just needed to pilot it more strategically with allies and develop a clear process the objector couldn't poke holes in. Once she had the map, she stopped trying to win everyone and focused on where the leverage lay.



02

## Map Your Ecosystem

See the Rule (Page 16)

## SARA'S STORY (PART I)

# Sara

## 33, White

Project Manager, IT Department, Chicago, IL

Sara didn't have direct reports, but she had something better: a reputation for getting complex tech projects over the finish line on time and under budget. She noticed outdated systems were slowing everyone down. She had an idea. Why not move core systems to the cloud, automate routine tasks with AI, and upskill teams on modern tools?

Rather than pitch it cold, she floated the idea in hallway chats, coffee breaks, and casual lunches. Curiosity grew. By the time she requested to present at the all-hands, several colleagues had already cosigned the ask.

She framed her proposal around those earlier conversations and suggested a cross-functional pilot team. Leadership said yes, not because of her authority or even because she'd cleared it with her manager, but because of her reputation as someone who was able to execute. The idea itself wasn't really the point, though it was important that others were in agreement. What was critical was the perception of Sara's role in relation to plans, period.



03

## Play Your Role, Not Your Title

See the Rule (Page 17)

## SARA'S STORY (PART 2)

# Sara

Project Manager, IT Department, Chicago, IL

As Sara continued socializing her point of view, she discovered something: The HR team was already deep in conversations about upskilling employees, but hadn't yet defined where to focus. By linking her tech-forward vision to their emerging priorities, Sara didn't have to start a new wave. She just caught one already building. The HR team quickly became advocates and cosponsors of her plan, helping expand its reach and credibility. She was able to reference their agenda as she presented the idea to leadership.

Sara didn't try to gain traction for her idea without linking it to existing momentum. She aligned her proposal with a current conversation. That's when she noticed acceleration. Pro tip: There's always a conversational wave you can ride somewhere in or around your organization. Your job is to ride it.



## Surf the Power Zone

See the Rule (Page 18)



## CHELSIE'S STORY

# Chelsie

## 32, White

Co-Founder, Women of Cincy

Chelsie didn't set out to run a media nonprofit—she just wanted to change how people in her city saw each other. After the 2016 election and the Women's March, she and a few friends noticed how polarized daily life had become, especially across race, class, and politics. Instead of debating, they started listening. They interviewed women on buses, at libraries, and in coffee shops, asking simple questions like, "Why are you here today?"

The goal? To create empathy and shift assumptions, not through argument, but through story. As Chelsie put it, "When you tell a story, or we connect somebody to somebody else and create a relationship, we see it as changing hearts and minds." One story at a time, they reframed what civic connection could look like.

01

## Frame

See the Strategy (Page 23)



## JASMINE'S STORY

# Jasmine

## 32, East Indian

Program Coordinator, community health clinic, Denver, CO

Jasmine wanted her nonprofit to invest in a mobile health van to reach uninsured families who rarely came into the clinic. Leadership was hesitant—they worried it would be expensive and underused. Instead of arguing, Jasmine pointed to a case study from a similar clinic in Albuquerque that had doubled patient reach within six months using the same model. She shared photos, patient testimonials, and data on reduced ER visits. By showing that it wasn't a gamble but a proven approach, Jasmine shifted the conversation. What once seemed risky suddenly looked safe, even smart. The board approved a pilot, and the van rolled out within the year.

02

## Model

See the Strategy (Page 26)



## SHELLEY'S STORY

# Shelley

63, White

Founder of The Female Quotient & the Equality Lounge

When Shelley attended CES tech conference in 2012, she saw that women weren't just underrepresented, they were missing from the conversations where deals were made. She didn't try to persuade anyone to "care more" about gender equity. Instead, she created the Equality Lounge, a high-visibility, high-value destination where showing up had immediate benefits: Companies got access to influential women; executives gained reputational capital by being seen there; and women found a place where participation came with resources, networking, and opportunity. She made equity advantageous. Sponsoring the Lounge became a badge of leadership. Suddenly, supporting women wasn't a moral appeal. It was the smart, high-status, strategic move.

03

## Incentivize

See the Strategy (Page 29)



## NAOMI'S STORY

# Naomi

## 25, Chinese American

HR Associate, regional hospital system, Boston, MA

Naomi noticed how often staff nurses vented about broken scheduling software but never filed formal complaints. Everyone agreed the system was a nightmare, but leadership assumed silence meant acceptance. Naomi set up an anonymous Google Poll and circulated it quietly through the nurses' group chat: "What's one thing about scheduling you'd fix tomorrow if you could?" Responses poured in—dozens within the first week. Patterns emerged: requests for more predictability, fairer weekend rotations, and fewer last-minute changes.

When Naomi presented the aggregated results to her boss, it was impossible to dismiss them as "a few complaints." Leadership created a task force, with nurses at the table, to redesign scheduling.

04

## Organize

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