

**COURAVEL**




**Building the Big Picture**

Mike Pounsford, Couravel  
 IABC International Conference  
 New York, June 24 2008

Internal Engagement - better results through your people

**Individualism**



**COURAVEL** Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

**Cut through and reach**



**COURAVEL** Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

**Authenticity**



**Credibility**

**COURAVEL** Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

**Complexity**



**COURAVEL** Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

**A changing world**



**COURAVEL** Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## A familiar story?

- Budgets cut
- More with less
- Threats to future business
- Different customer relationship

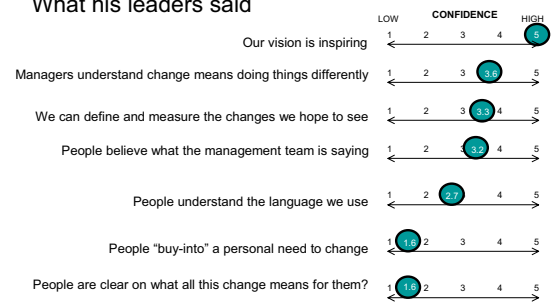
*"I need to change mindsets"*

**Chief Executive Officer**



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## What his leaders said



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## What his people said

- "I don't understand what we are talking about"
- "It's just another strategy. If you keep your head down it will be all change again in 1 or 2 years"
- "It's all **you** change, not **we'll** change"
- "It is really scary"



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Design

Interviews and discussions

Concept

Development

Top team discussions

## Equip

Launch to top 100

Communicate intention

Establish baselines

Coach facilitators

## Engage

Leadership led conversations

Team conversations

Re-measure

Review



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

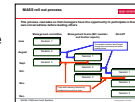
## The story



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Supporting the story

### 1. Leadership by example



### 2. Training for facilitators



### 3. Conversation Guidelines



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Conversations (illustrative questions...)

- Where do you see yourself in this picture?
- What excites you about the business opportunities? What concerns you?
- What would you see and hear people doing if we were achieving the future described here?
- What does all this change mean for you (i.e. your role, your skills, your knowledge, your behaviour)?
- What do you think your options are to improve the support you give the business?
- What should we do differently to respond to what this is telling us?



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Feedback from leadership development

"...particularly impressed that you not only used the Learning Map methodology but advanced it.

The facilitator guidelines/narrative material is superior to any application I have seen elsewhere. It enables line executives to create a context for the Map and engage employees in give and take dialogue.

Your other major innovation was asking each individual to come forward to the Map and describe where they were personally on the journey"

**Richard Pascale**

Associate Fellow, Saïd Business School, Oxford University  
Author: The Art of Japanese Management, Managing on the Edge



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Feedback from the people

*Play DVD*



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Impact

	% agree		
	Before	After	% chge
I understand the business strategy	54	82	+28
I understand our customers' expectations	79	92	+13
I know what we need to do to succeed	79	84	+5
I see how me and my team fit in the bigger picture	64	79	+15
I see how we need to change the way we work	64	81	+17
I feel that the business has an exciting future	43	68	+25
I want to be part of the company's success	93	94	+1



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Articulating strategy, and exploring "what it means for us"



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Building internal identity



"The best meeting I have ever attended at the Cabinet Office"

Chris Mace  
Non-executive Director

**CabinetOffice**



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Connecting with a geographically dispersed business



## Lessons and implications



## What is engagement?

- Involvement
- Personal commitment
- Volunteering
- My choice
- Ownership
- Having fun
- Recognition
- Feedback
- Learning
- Can-do
- Action bias
- Going the extra mile
- Getting lots done, quickly
- Under pressure
- Challenged
- Energised
- Aligned with purpose
- Clear direction
- Know where we are going



## What is engagement?

*"Everybody notices it – you can feel the buzz in high performing branches as you walk through the door."*

*"You are in the flow – you are constantly linking things you hear or read about and thinking – I can use that at work!"*

*"I was doing it for myself."*

*"I chose to perform."*

*"I knew where we were going – there was a clear vision"*



## Engaging through dialogue

### Traditional paradigm

Assume there is a right answer and you've got it

Prove the other side wrong

Aim to win

Listen to find weaknesses and prepare counter arguments

Search for flaws and weaknesses in others position

Defend one's own views against those of others

### Leading conversations

Assume many people have pieces of the answer and that together we can craft a solution

Work towards common understanding

Aim to explore common ground

Listen to understand the other's perspective and find shared meaning

Search for strengths and values in others position

Admit that others thinking can enhance one's own view

*Adapted from 'The Magic of Dialogue', by Daniel Yankelovich*



## Lessons

- Visual metaphors are memorable and appealing
- Non-technical language creates a democratic and more open conversation
- Dialogue leads to a better understanding of the Big Picture and "line of sight," translating to the local context
- The process recognises the importance of all people to the business strategy
- People like to be challenged on how they will "step up" to the strategy



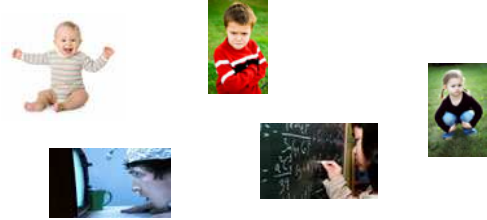
## Implications

- Engaging leadership
- Testing with front line
- Investing in line managers' (or a network of champions') coaching skills
- Asking questions (not briefing messages)
- Adult-adult
- Measure



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## New approaches for new times



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

## Find out more...

Michael Pounsford  
Couravel Limited

Riverside House  
River Lawn Road  
Tonbridge  
Kent TN9 1EP  
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0) 1732 78 35 25  
M +44 (0) 7860 19 63 43  
E: info@couravel.com



Building the Big Picture IABC International Conference New York, June 24 2008

# How to initiate meaningful dialogue in your organization

Engaging through storytelling, coaching and visual metaphor

**MIKE POUNSFORD**

**F**ew of us are motivated or engaged by a highfalutin description of the company's vision or strategy. Which is why Mike Pounsford and his team encourage clients to explore the use of storytelling, coaching and visual metaphor to stimulate important conversations within the business. Here, he explains how this approach helps people to align their jobs with the company's purpose in a fresh and adult way.

It seems that the bar keeps rising for leaders and communicators. In a media rich world in which technology and social change is shifting control from the broadcaster to the audience, it's more and more difficult to cut through and reach increasingly demanding and cynical audiences.

Therefore, despite the importance of blogs, user controlled web space, discussion forums and the like, the role of the visible leader and face-to-face conversation remains critical in order to create engaging places for people to work. Managers today face people who increasingly want the whole story and are intolerant of leadership that appears to lack openness, authenticity and credibility.

## A more conversational approach

Against this background, although the web offers a fantastic means of improving how we communicate, we're finding renewed interest and achieving significant results using communication techniques we first encounter during our childhood and continue to enjoy outside of work

life. These techniques include visual metaphor, storytelling and a more conversational approach to strategic communication. They come together in a process we call "strategic dialogue."

We're finding that these time-honored approaches appeal to people at an emotional and intellectual level, and help people engage with their company's challenges, plans and visions.

## Storytelling, pictures and conversations

About 10 years ago, Stephen Denning – a program director at the World Bank – had a vision. He wanted to transform the way the World Bank shared information. He knew the wealth of experience and knowledge within the Bank could be used more effectively to help the world's poor.

He found that his vision for knowledge sharing came alive when he envisaged the future through stories of what people could do at World Bank. His "springboard" story helped audiences begin to imagine the future, use their imagination to question what may be possible, and engage in the work to transform the way the bank shared and used information<sup>1</sup>.

## The Sears case study

Around the same time, the Sears case study made history in the retail and consulting industries because of the use of measures to link customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction and profitability. The most commonly quoted and most often remembered part of the story is that a 5-unit increase in employee attitude led to a 1.3-unit increase in customer satisfaction, which helped deliver 0.5-unit increases in revenue.

Another significant part of the story was that Sears used a highly visual education process to help people understand and discuss changes in the retail industry. The measurement helped motivate the leadership and “Learning Maps” became a core tool used to deliver change.

With this approach, small team meetings provide the opportunity for more interactive, tailored discussion that links the local perspective with the global picture. Most importantly, in terms of formal communication from the “top down,” they create a platform allowing managers to adopt new coaching styles. In other words, less “telling” and more “exploring” of the issues facing the business, the team and the individual.

In this approach, it’s the posing of the right questions that draws people in and stimulates conversation, which in turns helps create the final piece in what we call strategic dialogue – a marriage of storytelling, visual metaphor and coaching conversations.

### Building an engaging process

Bringing together these four areas of storytelling, visual imagery, conversation and coaching creates processes that lead to greater understanding and engagement, which can be dramatic, as illustrated by the following examples from BAE Systems, the global defense and aerospace company, and the British Home Office. These examples represent the output from a series of executive discussions.

#### 1. Telling stories at BAE Systems

Figure One (right) from BAE Systems tells the story of changes to Britain’s Defence Industrial Strategy and the response required from its Military Air Solutions and Support business (MASS). It was used as a tool to stimulate numerous conversations about BAE Systems’ history, why it needs to change and what happens if it doesn’t, where it wants to get to and what the change journey looks like.

In particular, it was used to engage people in conversations about what the change meant for them and their department. With the help of this approach, in four months, understanding of the business strategy went from 54 to 82 percent, and feeling that the business has an exciting future ahead from 43 to 68 percent.

#### 2. The art of conversation at the Home Office

Figure Two (page 34) tells the HR story at the UK’s Home Office. It illustrates the links between the people and business strategies, the end goal and the process of change.

The conversations around the picture, conducted in small team groups, typically focus on questions about why change is needed, the vision, what it means for the team and what it means for

individuals. People ask themselves questions about whether they want to be part of the journey or whether they need to re-think their skills and capabilities to move forward. At one Government agency, trust in leadership more than doubled before and after use of the process.

### The impact of strategic dialogue

In its early stages, the process helps executives clarify their strategic vision and then provides a tool to help their teams engage with the vision.

At BAE Systems, the executives spent more than four hours over two meetings discussing the implications of their strategy for themselves as individuals, for their leadership team and for their people. Each member of the team then developed the conversation with their colleagues, and the process cascaded down through the business.

According to communication manager Jon Bonnick, “the senior management team has seen the MASS business grow by 40 percent in the past three years. They’re firmly of the belief that one of the principle contributory factors has been the engagement process.”

### The power of visuals

There’s no doubt that a more visual approach to the communication of strategy is a major factor in explaining the results we’ve seen. Perhaps one of the most obvious reasons is that a “vision” should be something that can actually be seen. Visions should be inspiring and motivating, which is unlikely to happen in a Word document.

Using illustration to depict the strategy provides other important benefits. These include:

- **The ability to convey complex stories clearly and link different themes together.** Most large companies have a number of change programs underway at any one time covering, for example, technology change, ▶



**Michael Pounsford** is the managing director of Couravel Ltd. The company helps deliver change through people in order to improve revenue, market differentiation, market share, customer service and productivity. Couravel helps leadership groups find common focus and develop the organizational skills and tools to engage people effectively. The company has worked with Airbus, Alcatel, Barclays, BAE Systems, Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs, Lloyds TSB, Scottish Equitable, TNT and others.

Figure One: Imagery depicting change ahead for BAE Systems



## KEY POINTS

- The need to engage employees in business strategy has led to an interest in techniques that appeal on an emotional and intellectual level.
- Storytelling and visual metaphor have proved effective at helping us visualize future goals and understand our role in making them happen.
- Engagement techniques can only be successful if leaders are encouraged to support the process through coaching and conversation.
- Communicators can play an important role in engagement by introducing effective techniques and coaching leaders to play their part.

- ◀ customer relationship management, organizational restructuring and so on. Often people just don't "get it" and find it difficult to understand how these different strands fit into a coherent whole. But if we want people to accept change, one of the most important first steps is that they understand what it's all about. The process of developing a picture about the business and where it's going provides a discipline that forces clarification of how things fit together.
- **The encouragement of participation and interaction.** Put a picture up on the wall and people will gather round it and start discussing what they can see. Hierarchies become less obstructive. Everyone is entitled to a view and as people share their views they have more fun with it and find unexpected connections and links. Using visual metaphors and imagery provides a more participative and enjoyable experience and creates a climate in which people are more open to the messages and content of conversation.
- **The creation of a safe and open environment to engage people in dialogue.** The messages are not hidden behind business jargon,

Figure Two: An image used at the Home Office to visualize the HR strategy



management speak and numbers. How one person interprets the picture is as valid as how another does. The result is more democratic and adult communication, which reaches more people and enhances the credibility of the content.

### Leaders must encourage conversation

If people have a meaningful conversation with colleagues and leaders about their company's strategy, they are far more likely to understand and remember it. But it's up to leaders and managers to allow these conversations to develop.

Typically, many organizations encourage managers to debate with each other. This works well as a process for examining ideas and proposals, but it's not effective as a style to support engaging conversations. Managers and leaders need to be flexible and move between communication styles – some may need help to develop a style more focused on coaching to support a strategic dialogue. The list in Figure Three (top right) contrasts the different requirements.

A major element of a strategic-dialogue approach is helping managers to understand the different style of communication required to encourage more engaging conversations.

### Contributing to engaged workplaces

Engagement seems to be used interchangeably with communication these days. But they are different things. Communication is about creating shared meaning, whereas engagement is about creating an organization where people say "I choose to perform."

The use of more interactive, visual and democratic processes such as strategic dialogue certainly can lead to shared meaning. The process takes one central story and allows the individual to interpret it from their own perspective and link their own job to the company's strategy.

This approach is also more likely to help create engaging places to work. We've found that when we ask people to tell us about times that they've felt engaged, a number of recurring themes emerge. People emphasize that they were volunteering their discretionary effort; they didn't feel manipulated or maneuvered. There's a big emphasis on stretch, performance and challenge.

It seems that for most people, an important factor shaping engagement is the feeling that they are "going the extra mile." Team working, recognition, ownership of, and control over, the work are also important.

### Why does it matter?

A number of studies suggest correlations between engagement and performance. On analysis of such

studies, three key themes appear:

1. Organizations with engaged people are “up for change” – there’s more commitment, trust, understanding and buy-in.
2. Internal engagement creates a direct impact on customer service because customer encounters are more positive. This can drive revenue gains.
3. The costs of doing business are lower when staff are engaged; there’s less absenteeism and more flexibility around working practices

### What drives engagement?

The drivers of engagement are complex, dependent upon individuals and their jobs, and combine both intellectual and emotional components. Communication needs to improve knowledge at an organizational and individual level (see Figure Four, bottom right).

But, it’s also clear from talking to people who feel high levels of engagement that even if a company provided all this information, there would still be something missing.

The style of communication is equally important. It’s here that processes using visual imagery, coaching conversations and storytelling can help. To create engaging workplaces requires:

- Facilitating a culture of consultation and involvement (over appropriate issues).
- Ensuring the visibility of leadership and demonstrating leaders’ interest in people.
- Creating strong working relationships with managers.
- Building team work.
- Creating a climate of trust based on transparency, openness and fairness.

### Giving people the whole story

Modern organizations need processes to help link the big picture to “what it means for me.” The more opportunities people have for discussing this in non-hierarchical meetings where everybody has an equal voice the better. Using imagery that pulls together key strategic themes can help focus this discussion. If managers have been trained to use these images and ask the right questions, the shifts in employees’ awareness, understanding and engagement soon becomes apparent.

Ultimately, using this approach to give people the “whole story” creates an opportunity to communicate both emotionally and intellectually. The last word goes to change guru John Kotter who identified emotions at the heart of change in his book of the same name: *“People change what they do less because they are given analysis that shifts their thinking than because they are shown a truth that influences their feelings ...”* scm

1. From *The Springboard* by Stephen Denning, 2001

Figure Three: Measuring the impact of the strategic leaders’ meeting

DEBATING	LEADING COACHING CONVERSATIONS
Assume there’s a right answer and you’ve got it	Assume many people have pieces of the answer and together we can craft a solution
Prove the other side wrong	Work towards common understanding
Aim to win	Aim to explore common ground
Listen to find weaknesses and prepare counter arguments	Listen to understand the other’s perspective and find shared meaning
Search for flaws and weaknesses in other’s position	Search for strengths and values in other’s position
Defend one’s own views against those of others	Admit that other’s thinking can enhance one’s own view

Adapted from *The Magic of Dialogue* by Daniel Yankelovich

Figure Four: The role of communication in driving engagement

COMPANY/ORGANIZATION LEVEL	INDIVIDUAL LEVEL
Creating a compelling vision	Understanding how my piece/team fits in the big picture
Explaining the need for change	Feeling there’s something in it for me
Communicating a credible and achievable strategy	Feeling supported and challenged; creating growth and stretch
Outlining key criteria: what we need to do to succeed	Clarifying my role and performance expectations

“MODERN ORGANIZATIONS NEED PROCESSES TO HELP LINK THE BIG PICTURE TO ‘WHAT IT MEANS FOR ME.’ USING IMAGERY THAT PULLS TOGETHER STRATEGIC THEMES CAN HELP FOCUS THIS DISCUSSION.”

### CONTACT DETAILS

Mike Pounsford  
 Couravel Ltd.  
 mikep@couravel.com