



STORYTELLING IN THE NEWEST NORMAL
by Kathy Graham

There are three new market factors that were not present before 2020 that can have an impact, positive or negative, on your executive career.

1. The pandemic, with its death rates and economic disruptions and inequities, is a situation that no one living has ever experienced.

TAKE AWAY: Fear, emotional reactions, and UNCERTAINTY remain high.

TAKE AWAY: INNOVATION is in high demand for cost cutting, pivots, and growth.

2. Many companies have most of their workforce working from home...still.

TAKE AWAY: C-Suite, executives, and Board Directors have greater DISRUPTION risks than before, potentially emanating from the safety of remote data, remote stressed employees, remote intellectual property, remote work that may or may not be occurring.

3. In December 2019, The Business Roundtable said that a corporation's purpose was now to serve all stakeholders—its customers, employees, environment, community, other ESG constituents, and shareholders. That thinking is still revolutionizing corporate America's C-Suite, executives, and Board Directors' communications and approach.

TAKE AWAY: REPUTATIONAL RISK is greater than ever, given the increased social/digital proficiency spawned by the pandemic forcing people to work virtually from home, which makes many more individuals who are now stakeholders just a click away from having the potential to share a negative comment with all.

STORYTELLING is a tool that C-Suite and Board Directors can use to manage effectively the above risks.

The story message is delivered authentically in a bulleted manner, such as:

- The strategic focus of the company is X and we're driving it through this period via Z, and our department is doing Y to make this X AND Z occur.
- I remember when we faced something similar before, and we did this and that—and you were phenomenal at A (or remember when this and that happened (laughter or shared grimace), and look how well we did afterwards...we can do it again even better/faster/etc.

When this story message is delivered authentically and repeatedly at all levels in different presentation modes, the expected role of each stakeholder becomes clear. When people understand their work/role, they become less fearful and more hopeful. When people become less fearful and more hopeful, they deliver more productive work.

More productive work helps all reach their goals, goals they've contributed to, which continues a virtuous circle of success for all of a corporation's stakeholders—the employees, the Board, the executives, and the happier customers.