Category

Consulting

Insight Generation & Storylining Playbook (From Analysis to Narrative)

A structured method for turning validated analysis into a pyramid-principle storyline that survives a fifteen-minute executive readout.

- Practitioner
- Intermediate
- Template Included

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- 17 March 2022
- 8 minute(s)

Overview

Turn validated findings into a tight, pyramid-principle narrative using a governing thought and horizontal/vertical logic tests, so your recommendation survives being read in five minutes flat.

What exactly is a "governing thought" and how is it different from a topic?

A governing thought is the single-sentence answer to the question the work was meant to resolve, stated as a claim someone could act on — "Support costs rose because of a billing-integration bug, not ticket volume" — rather than a topic like "Support cost analysis." If your governing thought could be the title of a folder rather than a sentence someone could disagree with, it isn't one yet.

How many key-line arguments should a storyline have?

Three to five is the practical range — fewer than three usually means the argument is under-supported, and more than five exceeds what most audiences can hold in working memory during a live readout. If you have more than five strong arguments, look for a natural way to consolidate two of them under a shared headline.

What's the difference between the horizontal and vertical logic tests?

The horizontal test checks whether the key-line headlines, read together without their supporting evidence, fully and logically prove the governing thought above them. The vertical test checks, headline by headline, whether the evidence listed underneath actually

proves that specific headline rather than just being related to its general topic — both tests need to pass independently for the storyline to hold up under scrutiny.

Should we build the storyline before or after we've finished all the analysis?

Start building a draft storyline as soon as you have a handful of validated findings, then revise it as more evidence comes in — waiting until all analysis is complete before storylining tends to produce a chronological narrative rather than an argument, because the team has lost the discipline of asking what each new finding is actually for.

How do I convert a descriptive slide title into a proper headline?

Ask "if someone read only this title, what would they now believe, and would it be true and useful?" A descriptive title like "European Sales Trend" fails that test; a headline like "European sales growth stalled in Q2 because two distributors paused reordering" passes it, because a reader walks away with the actual finding, not just the topic it covers.

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