



MESSAGEHQ METHODOLOGY

THE NARRATIVE CAPITAL INDEX

An operational intelligence assessment for founders

WHAT IS NARRATIVE CAPITAL, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Narrative Capital is the reputational equity and cumulative value of your experience, your choices, and the story you've built along the way.

Most leaders reduce themselves to their current role and their latest metrics. That's like saying your net worth is only what's in your checking account. There's a lot of value missing from that calculation.

For me, it would mean leaving out my years in theatre and television because they don't look like the work I do now. But that's where I learned to communicate, build a message, and understand an audience. I learned it in the trenches, with investors' money at risk. Those experiences are part of why I can do the work I do today.

The detours count. So do some of the things that didn't work. You don't get authority simply because you've been through something, but what you learned there may be exactly what makes your judgment valuable now.

Narrative Capital matters because people make decisions about you with whatever they can see and understand. If all you give them is a title and a few results, you're asking them to judge a fraction of what you bring.

That carries into a company, too. Its story helps people understand what the business has earned the right to claim. When the actual experience of working there or buying from it supports that story, trust has something to build on.

Your story is a balance-sheet asset. Narrative Capital is how you account for the value that's already there—and put it to work.

There are twenty questions in this assessment — six dimensions of company clarity, plus two closing questions that name what everyone already senses but rarely says. Answer for how things actually operate today — not how you'd like them to. Behavior and outcomes only. No credit for intent, effort, or hope.

HOW TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

Answer for how things actually operate today, not how you'd like them to. There are twenty questions in all. Select one answer per question — each answer is worth the number shown next to it, 1 to 4.

At the end, add up your numbers on the scoring page to find your overall band — Fragile, Functional, Strong, or Rare. No conversion, no formula — just addition.

This is a signal, not a verdict.



STRATEGIC CLARITY

Does the company operate from a shared plan, or from you?

1. When your team makes a hard call under pressure, how do they decide?

- 1 ☐ They guess, or wait for me to decide
- 2 ☐ They reference general values, but interpretation varies
- 3 ☐ They apply a shared framework, though I'm still consulted often
- 4 ☐ They apply a shared framework independently and consistently

2. If you disappeared for a month, would your company's near-term priorities change?

- 1 ☐ Completely — no one else has the full picture
- 2 ☐ Significantly — several bets would stall
- 3 ☐ Somewhat — most work continues, big calls wait
- 4 ☐ Barely — the team operates from a shared plan

3. How often do you personally rewrite or re-explain your company's strategy to your own team?

- 1 ☐ Constantly — it shifts often
- 2 ☐ Often — it evolves faster than we document it
- 3 ☐ Occasionally — mostly to onboard new people
- 4 ☐ Rarely — it's stable and written down

NARRATIVE CLARITY

Can the market repeat back what you actually do?

4. After a first conversation, how accurately can a stranger repeat back what your company does?

- 1 ☐ They usually get it wrong
- 2 ☐ They get the category right, not the differentiation
- 3 ☐ They get the gist right, missing some nuance
- 4 ☐ They repeat it back almost word for word



5. How many different versions of your pitch exist across your team right now?

- 1** ☐ As many as there are people
- 2** ☐ A few competing versions
- 3** ☐ One version, with personal flourishes
- 4** ☐ One version — everyone uses it

6. When you explain what you do, how often do you have to correct a follow-up misunderstanding?

- 1** ☐ Almost every time
- 2** ☐ More than half the time
- 3** ☐ Occasionally
- 4** ☐ Rarely

LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT

Do the people at the top operate from the same playbook?

7. When your leadership team disagrees, what usually happens?

- 1** ☐ It goes unresolved and resurfaces later
- 2** ☐ One person — often me — makes the call and moves on
- 3** ☐ We debate and land on a decision most people buy into
- 4** ☐ We have an explicit process that resolves it and holds

8. Do your co-founder or exec team describe the company's priorities the same way you do?

- 1** ☐ No — noticeably different
- 2** ☐ Loosely similar, different emphasis
- 3** ☐ Mostly aligned
- 4** ☐ Nearly identical



9. How often do leadership decisions get quietly reversed or ignored downstream?

- 1** ☐ Regularly
- 2** ☐ Sometimes
- 3** ☐ Rarely
- 4** ☐ Never, as far as I know

EXTERNAL UNDERSTANDING

Does the market, the investor, the customer actually get it?

10. In investor or customer meetings, what's the most common question you get?

- 1** ☐ "Wait, what do you actually do?"
- 2** ☐ "How is this different from [competitor]?" asked skeptically
- 3** ☐ Clarifying detail questions, not confusion
- 4** ☐ Questions about scale or execution, not the concept

11. How often does a deal or hire stall specifically because someone didn't understand what you do?

- 1** ☐ Frequently
- 2** ☐ Sometimes
- 3** ☐ Rarely
- 4** ☐ Essentially never

12. Would a customer or investor use your language to describe you, or their own?

- 1** ☐ Neither — they're often just confused
- 2** ☐ Their own, and it's often off
- 3** ☐ A mix
- 4** ☐ Your language, almost verbatim



INTERNAL TRUST

Does bad news travel fast, or does it hide?

13. When something is going wrong, how quickly do you hear about it?

- 1** ☐ Usually too late
- 2** ☐ After it's already a problem
- 3** ☐ Fairly early
- 4** ☐ Immediately, as a matter of course

14. How comfortable is your team naming an uncomfortable truth to your face?

- 1** ☐ Not at all
- 2** ☐ Only a couple of people will
- 3** ☐ Most will, eventually
- 4** ☐ Anyone will, without hesitation

15. How often do people tell you what you want to hear instead of what's true?

- 1** ☐ Often
- 2** ☐ Sometimes
- 3** ☐ Rarely
- 4** ☐ Almost never



DECISION VELOCITY

How fast does a decision actually move?

16. How long does a meaningful decision typically take from raised to resolved?

- 1** ☐ Weeks or more
- 2** ☐ About a week
- 3** ☐ A few days
- 4** ☐ Same day or near-instant

17. How many decisions currently require your personal sign-off?

- 1** ☐ Nearly all of them
- 2** ☐ Most significant ones
- 3** ☐ Only the largest bets
- 4** ☐ Very few — the team decides

18. When a decision is made, how often does it actually get executed without further debate?

- 1** ☐ Rarely
- 2** ☐ Sometimes
- 3** ☐ Usually
- 4** ☐ Nearly always



YOUR ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM

What everyone senses but no one names — scored like everything else.

19. How much of your team's current activity would survive the question: does this move a real number, or does it just look like progress?

- 1** ☐ Most of what we're doing wouldn't survive that question
- 2** ☐ Some would, but a lot is activity for its own sake
- 3** ☐ Most would, with a few exceptions we know about
- 4** ☐ All of it ties directly to a number we can point to

20. Are the things everyone privately knows are a problem actually said out loud, and acted on?

- 1** ☐ They're known but never said, and nothing changes
 - 2** ☐ They get said occasionally, but rarely lead to action
 - 3** ☐ They get named and usually lead to some action
 - 4** ☐ They're named openly and consistently acted on
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YOUR SCORE

No math beyond addition. Write the number next to each answer you picked, add the numbers in a dimension for that dimension's total, then add all six dimension totals plus your Elephants total for your Overall Score.

Strategic Clarity

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Q1} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q2} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q3} \\ \square \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total} \\ \square \end{array} / 12$$

Narrative Clarity

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Q4} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q5} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q6} \\ \square \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total} \\ \square \end{array} / 12$$

Leadership Alignment

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Q7} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q8} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q9} \\ \square \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total} \\ \square \end{array} / 12$$

External Understanding

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Q10} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q11} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q12} \\ \square \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total} \\ \square \end{array} / 12$$

Internal Trust

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Q13} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q14} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q15} \\ \square \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total} \\ \square \end{array} / 12$$

Decision Velocity

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Q16} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q17} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q18} \\ \square \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total} \\ \square \end{array} / 12$$

YOUR ELEPHANTS IN THE ROOM

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Q19} \\ \square \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Q20} \\ \square \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{Total} \\ \square \end{array} / 8$$

Overall Score — add your six dimension totals and your Elephants total:

$$\square / 80$$



SCORE BANDS

20-34 — FRAGILE

Clarity here is assumed, not proven. What looks like alignment is often one person — usually you — holding the whole picture together. That's normal at this stage, but it's also the highest-leverage place to spend your next quarter.

35-49 — FUNCTIONAL

The company runs, but it runs on you. Most of what's working depends on your direct involvement or explanation. It's real progress, and it's also the exact profile of a company one hire, one investor conversation, or one hard quarter away from a clarity problem becoming a revenue problem.

50-64 — STRONG

This is a company whose story and structure hold up without you in the room. Repeatable, mostly visible without explanation. The work now is protecting it under pressure — growth, hiring, and fundraising are exactly when strong clarity gets tested.

65-80 — RARE

Durable, and confirmed by people other than you. This is uncommon at any stage. The risk here isn't clarity — it's complacency. Rare companies still drift; they just drift more quietly.

Where clarity is fragile, it's fixable.

This score is a signal, not a verdict. If something here landed harder than you expected, that's worth twenty minutes on a call.

Book a Clarity Session → messagehq.net/contact.html