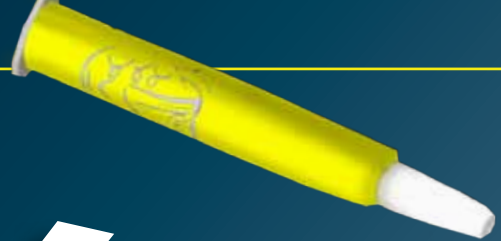
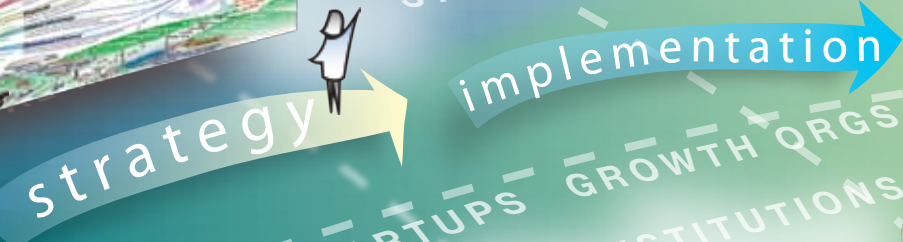


VISUAL LEADERS

NEW TOOLS FOR
VISIONING, MANAGEMENT,
& ORGANIZATION CHANGE

DESIGN THINKING VIRTUAL WORK MEETINGS VISUAL COLLABORATION STORYMAPS MODELS

VISUAL LANGUAGE TARTUPS GROWTH ORGS INSTITUTIONS



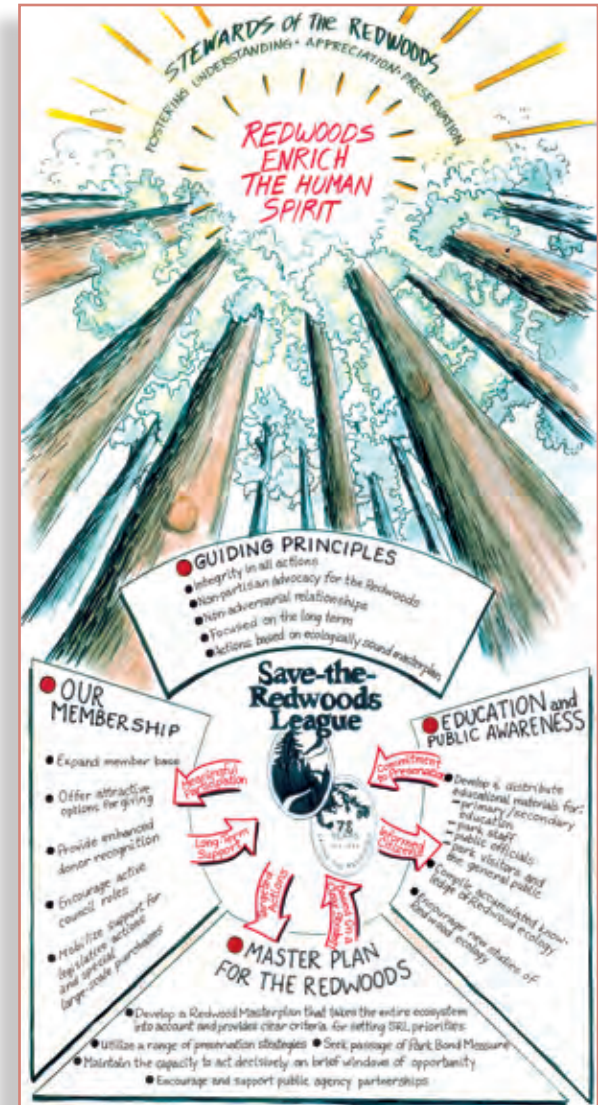
12. Graphic Storymaps Connecting Plans with Culture

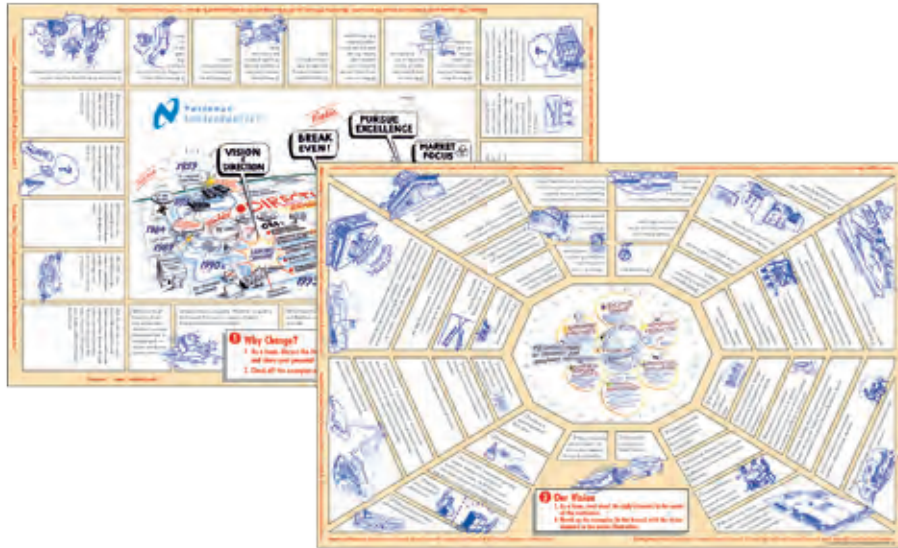
Graphic Storymaps comprise the sixth essential tool set in this section on essential tools. Storymaps is a name The Grove Consultants International uses for large murals that are designed to support leaders telling critical stories about new directions. Storymaps use words and imagery to help everyone remember not only plans but also the culture and values that make their implementation meaningful. Chapter 1 relates a classic example by describing the Quality Journey of HealthEast. The previous chapter on roadmaps included more examples. This one explains how you can use this tool for your own leadership communications.

On this page is a Storymap created for a nonprofit called Save the Redwoods League, an organization credited with inspiring today's widespread parks systems. It was created as part of an in-depth alignment process between the board and advisory committees. The redwoods were, for this organization, not only an icon of what they were saving but a metaphor for how they would like the organization to operate. Mapping guiding principles and programs to this image made complete sense to the organization. It's a great example of using a powerful, valued metaphor.

Integrating Words & Graphics in Large Murals

The practice of using large, graphic murals to integrate great amounts of information has a long tradition, if you consider the hieroglyphics in Egyptian tombs or the stained glass windows in cathedrals as examples. But the contemporary, tight integration of words and graphics in large murals is a relatively recent development. They evolved from an approach used by a Swedish firm Celeme in the 1980s. In one case it worked with Volvo to create a poster of a new car that would help train salesmen. It illustrated the new car and all its parts in an explosion drawing, like the instructions in a model kit. Unlike model instructions, no parts were labeled on these maps. The labels were all around the edges! Teams of salespeople then worked to match the labels with the parts and thereby learn the new car! This process did not require trainers delivering informa-





NATIONAL SEMICONDUCTOR LEARNING STORYMAPS

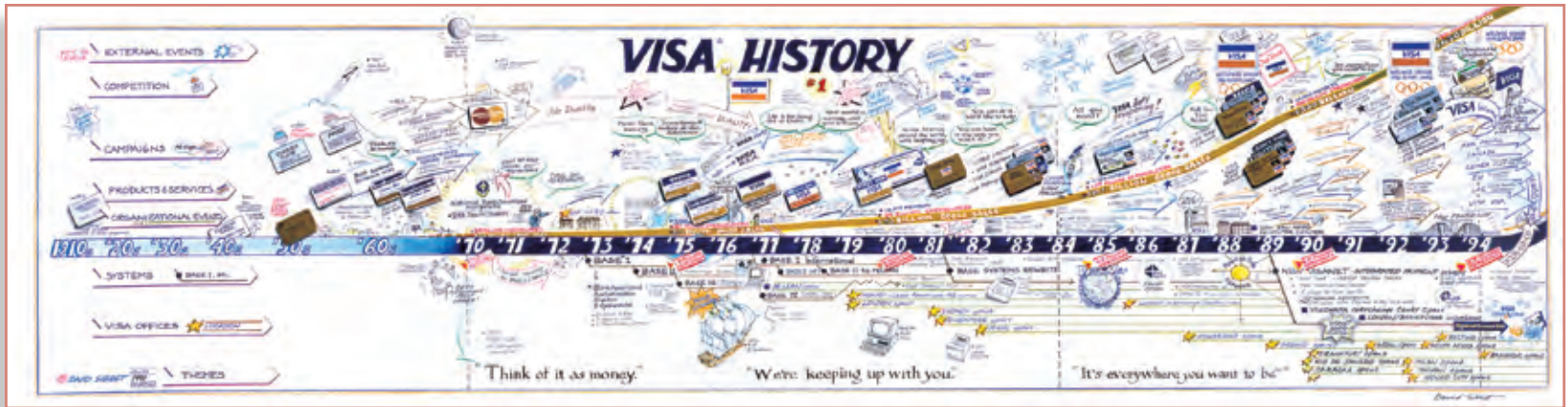
During National Semiconductor's turnaround in the early 1990s, thousands of people needed to understand the new vision and strategies depicted in a large Storymap mural (illustrated on page 160 at the end of this chapter). Segments of the vision were embedded in a second level of information that learning teams needed to associate with the central images. This discovery-learning approach is one of the ways large infographic murals are used.

tion but used facilitators who could work with large numbers at once. In educational circles this approach is called discovery-based learning. *Learning Maps* were popularized in the United States and the term registered by Root Learning in the 1990s. Root used the posters to teach companies about their customers, marketplace drivers, and most interestingly (and proprietarily) how the business made money. These business model maps were sometimes associated with decks of cards and other learning materials to create a real, discovery-based, team-learning environment. (The examples to the left were created for this purpose.)

The Grove realized early on that this same kind of visualization could support leadership-based storytelling following strategy formation processes. By using visual meetings methods to develop the imagery in a collaborative manner, the Storymap design process itself became a way to reach engagement, alignment, and commitment to the new ideas. Let's look at a couple of examples. Like graphic templates, these large visuals emphasize either spatial/structural relations between vision and plan elements, such as the maps on this page and the Yosemite vision on page 153, or they emphasize time, such as the Visa history on the following page. Let's begin to understand the Storymap tool by studying the Visa history.

New Employee Orientation at Visa

In the early 1980s Visa needed to share its unusual history with new employees. It had grown from a Diners Card amenity in the 1950s into a billion-dollar international company. No one had captured the history of its growth and success, except in profit charts and reams of financial reports that sat on several shelves in the headquarters' archives. There was a story to be told for those who had participated in Visa's creation, as well as for those who would share in its future.



The Storymap process began with the company creating a list generated by top management of who in the corporation was familiar enough with the past to bring the group into the present. This group included recent retirees, top management, and some new executives. They gathered for an initial meeting to tell the story. A long roll of white paper across one entire wall in a conference room captured their storytelling. It included information about the growth of their computer infrastructure, international offices, products, marketing campaigns, competition and external events. Ranny Riley, a consultant associated with The Grove, interviewed additional senior managers who were unable to attend the initial meeting and briefed The Grove on what should be included. A first-draft graphic was created and circulated for critique and additions from the core group of leaders. A half-dozen versions later the image you see on this page emerged.

Visa printed the history as a 4-foot by 24-foot mural and used it as a backdrop for new employee orientation. Key leaders could come into those meetings with very little preparation and bring the very engaging and human stories to life. All the facts they needed were on the mural. Participants received smaller versions to help them remember the session. In addition, the initial map was framed and given as a holiday gift to all of Visa's key member banks and partners. The Visa storytelling sessions were so successful that Visa has updated this history two times since its initial creation. On the next page is the most recent version.

VISA HISTORY

Visa successfully competed with the big bank's MasterCard offering back in the 1970s through a network of smaller banks. Visa's founding leader, Dee Hock, organized the effort around some guiding principles that have allowed the organization to develop organically in what Hock now calls a chaordic pattern. In 1994 leaders created this chart to orient new employees, allowing anyone in Visa to tell this story. All of the main facts are on the chart, so the role of the leader was to bring it to life and convey the emotion and life of the organization. The mural organizes the information on eight tracks of activity, each of which has a distinctive graphic treatment. The evolution of the large transaction systems and overseas offices illustrated below the timeline supported the product development, shown as actual portraits of the cards. Organizational efforts are arrows. Marketing campaigns are in talk balloons. External factors show along the top.



VISA HISTORY EXTENDED

In 2008 Visa decided to refresh its Storymap with this extended version. It was created in Adobe Illustrator and provides a nice comparison between the original handdrawn version on the previous page and the more formal image above. Printed out large and in smaller poster form, both graphics served the same purpose in a different style. In crafting these kinds of visuals, considering the overall look and feel is as important as aligning on the content and the messages. They need to resonate with the people using them.

Connecting with Culture Is Critical

Facts about an organization by themselves don't mean much to people. For instance, the content of the Save the Redwoods League and Visa examples shown here might not mean much to you if you have no relationship to or interest in these organizations. Facts take on life through the interpretations that people give them through storytelling. Leaders work with these stories, elevating the ones that serve current strategies and ignoring others.

If you had to script every leader who conveys an organizational story in a new employee meeting or a critical off-site or Web conference, you would need a very large staff to keep it all aligned. However, getting leadership to agree on the overarching story in a graphic form and then linking key symbols and icons from the culture creates a very flexible backdrop for storytelling that does keep everyone aligned. Over the years this approach has worked very successfully for a wide variety of organizations.

YOSEMITE LEADERSHIP

Don Neubacher, superintendent of Yosemite National Park, gathered his leadership in a two-day workshop to co-create a vision and determine priorities for the next five years at the park. They were aligned on the overall mission and their long-term, general management plan, but nearer-term priorities posed a challenge. Demand for park access was increasing and resources were shrinking. Because the way forward was not obvious, Don needed every bit of organizational intelligence focused on identifying and aligning on priorities. Here the leadership team is exploring potential graphic metaphors for organizing a large vision Storymap they intended to use to engage the branch chiefs in subsequent meetings (see the map on page 156).

Envisioning Priorities at Yosemite National Park

Don Neubacher is a great example of a visual leader who understands the power of getting everyone enrolled in a story about priorities. He is the superintendent of Yosemite National Park, one of the jewels in the National Park System in the United States. He came there from Point Reyes National Seashore, and before that he was a planner at the Presidio. There he was exposed to visual practice working with Brian O'Neill.

Yosemite, like many of the grand national parks, is run by an organizational culture very influenced by the military, in that many of its rangers and employees have prior histories in the military. Hierarchy and discipline are valued. But Don is a younger, more collaborative leader. He wanted his branch chiefs to understand and agree on priorities, not just follow orders. To do this he needed a process that would engage them appropriately. He chose to generate a strategic vision Storymap.

It began with his direct reports, a group of about eight managers responsible for the major functions of the park. They met for two days to look at the history of Yosemite, its current environment and pressing issues, and potential visions for the park. The park has, as do all national parks, a master plan and guiding mission. This really wasn't up for debate. The immediate issue was determining priorities for the next five years in a time of shrinking resources and increasing public demand on the system. Yosemite is reaching 4 million visitors a year at this point, and the park, as big as it is, is reaching its carrying capacity.





DON ORIENTS BRANCH CHIEFS

Don Neubacher engaged three dozen of his branch chiefs in critiquing and making suggestions to the Yosemite vision and five-year plan. You can see it in this picture. Don is orienting everyone to the special meeting focused on the vision and preparing the branch chiefs to help with more detailed action planning. The map was covered with sticky notes by the end of the meeting and went through six versions in the process of getting everyone aligned.

Getting All Yosemite Leadership Involved & Aligned

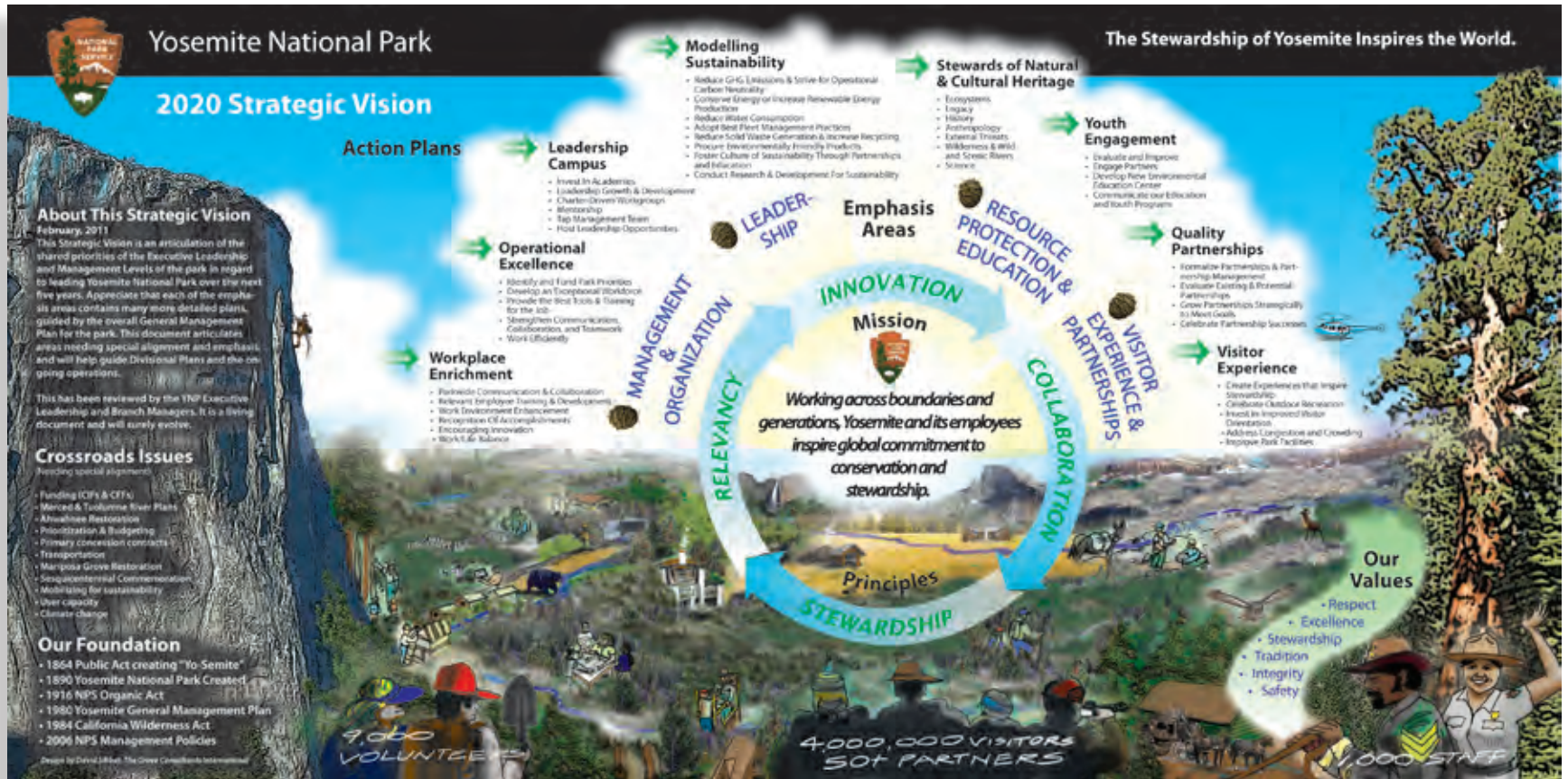
Two subsequent meetings with branch chiefs and then with all managers evolved the vision shown on the following page. Both the words and the images were the source of much debate and discussion. Each of the functional areas wanted critical icons that would serve as talking points. The image itself is not a photograph, but a composite showing the various ecosystems within the park, with a homage to the valley floor, which is the park's iconic signature. As an example of the scrutiny that went into the map, the chiefs wanted to make sure that the Grizzly Giant sequoia tree on the right side of the vision

was as tall as the tower granite face of El Capitan on the left, balancing their interest in the “charismatic granite,” as they called it, and the mega fauna represented by the giant sequoias. They also made sure that a person was shown doing a controlled burn, another innovation by the park.

Action Planning & Visual Plans

To anchor this big picture in specific objectives, the functional leaders all signed up to develop explicit action plans for each of the emphasis areas. They followed a report template that the leaders co-developed. Led by the internal communications director, Tom Medema, the park subsequently created a printed and digital visual plan with many additional images and photos. The quality of this effort attracted considerable attention within the park service and helped continue Yosemite National Park's thought leadership in their field.

The entire journey took about six months and is still alive. Members of the leadership team have moved on to other parks. New faces have joined. The stories are being told and retold. But now the park has a map that combines values, issues, visions, and immediate priorities. It literally illustrates how it supports its park-specific mission: The Stewardship of Yosemite Inspires the World.



The success of this process resulted in similar techniques being used for two big river planning efforts in the park for the Tuolumne and the Merced rivers. Citizen involvement is critical for these projects, so recording in the public meetings serves as a visual demonstration that the park personnel are listening. The various alternatives are then shared and critiqued visually as well. For natural resource planning, visual-meeting methods are tried-and-true tools.

YOSEMITE VISION

This is the final version, as approved by three dozen branch managers and leadership at Yosemite National Park and featured in a colorful internal plan that included all the emphasis area action plans.



STORYMAPPING PROCESS MAP

This is a Storymap used to illustrate The Grove Storymapping Process. The blue arrow represents ongoing work in an organization. The spiral is the process of creating a Storymap graphic. It begins with message development, then design, and finally support of a rollout communication process. The benefits are listed on the far right. The substages are shown as bullet points in the spiral. The talk balloons show what people along the way might be saying.

communicate about your history, customer interests, marketplace, or your business model, apart from a special planning process.

2. **Conceptual and Final Designs:** Once the message is clear, then finding the right graphic metaphor and overall design is the next step. This is a wonderful place to involve key stakeholders. Playing with the graphic imagery invites everyone to start thinking about the organization as a whole system and the characteristics in the culture that leadership would like to support. This is what HealthEast did in its Quality Journey Process (pages 21 to 23) and Yosemite National Park in its strategic vision map development (page 151 to 153).

This step usually requires involving information designers who know how to work in a collaborative way. They work with an internal design team that reviews different examples and decides how best to represent the organization. At National Semiconductor, the metaphor of *Star Trek* rang true and was understood by its employees (see page 156). At Save the Redwoods League it was a redwood grove. HealthEast chose a soulful image of a nurse. Designers will generally provide you with some conceptual sketches and work with your design team to find the right overall look and feel. You would also decide whether you want

Implementing a Storymap Process

If you are interested in having your organization use Storymap methods, here is how you would go about it:

1. **Message Development:** This is where you and your leadership team determine what it is that you need to communicate. You would, during this process, identify who your audience is and who you would want to involve in the co-creation process. Your leadership team or a selected group would then be involved in developing and agreeing on the overall story. It may be that you have completed a planning process and have a new vision and strategy to communicate. You might want to

HOW A STORYMAP EVOLVES

The three graphics shown here are versions of an illustration of a Storymap from a public policy center in a major corporation. The challenge was showing the flows of information.

it polished and computer generated or drawn by hand. (The latter invites more interaction when you review things. The former may have more authority.)

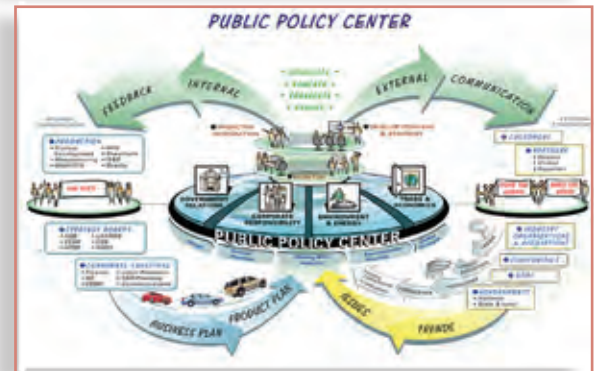
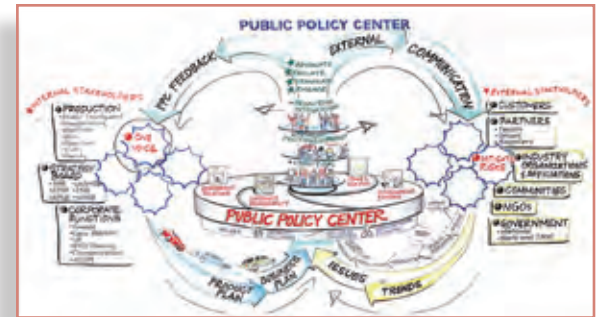
After the concept is approved, a detailed workup of all the content is included in a first version of the map. Now the process proceeds, shaped by how important it is to involve other people. If alignment is a real concern, more reviews are better. In general, once the design, or what is sometimes called the architecture, is complete, then making changes in the details, or the interior decorating part, can easily go through many rounds. The more people who have a hand in this, the more ownership will be experienced.

When the content and design stabilize, a final version is created.

- Rollout Process:** Graphic murals are often used in explicit communication campaigns, sometimes called rollouts. These might be processes in which your leadership teams review the map with their units and solicit feedback about what is compelling and what could be improved. It may be that the rollout is at a large annual gathering and reinforces a vision and strategy presentation. The variations are numerous. Usually associated communications go along with the map itself. It's common for organizations to create a book that explains the map in more detail, pulling examples from the map as illustrations. Key leaders make videos explaining the story. It's also common to have the image appear online, linking to additional information. These links can be embedded right in the image to allow information to pop up when a cursor rolls over it.

Sustaining communication of this nature is important. If you treat these maps as a type of organizational thinking software, then version 1.0 is like version 1.0 software for computers. It can improve. If you republish the mural the following year as version 2.0, reflecting changes and inputs from the larger organization, you can begin to support what amounts to an organization-wide interactive dialogue on vision, direction, and values. It's a slow and deep process rather than fast and flickering, and it can have a lot of impact.

The following page illustrates a set of National Semiconductor (NSC) vision maps. These went through a series of revisions over four years when Gil Amelio was chief executive officer. The





VISION OF NSC

Gil Amelio and the change team at National Semiconductor used large Storymaps to drive a turnaround in the early 1990s. Annual versions illustrated progress in the process as well as worldwide input from Leading Change workshops.

vision had a 95 percent recognition rate worldwide, as assessed in employee surveys at the time. The change team at NSC included a creative internal communications leader, Mark Levin, who linked magazine articles, videos, and case studies to these graphics. A half-dozen other members of the change team learned to work visually leading many strategic visioning sessions internally. They subsequently went on to support many other high-tech companies with visual practice.