# 5 PROVEN STORYTELLING FRAMEWORKS FOR AUTOMOTIVE LEADERS

Win more RFQs and increase profitability by mastering the art of technical communication

the **Storytelling** tribe

# INTRODUCTION

In the automotive industry, technical excellence alone doesn't win deals. The companies that consistently secure RFQs are those that can translate complex engineering into compelling narratives that resonate with decision-makers.

After interviewing many automotive leaders - from CEOs to CTOs, from startup founders to Fortune 500 executives - a clear pattern emerged: *the most successful leaders are master storytellers*.

This guide distills battle-tested frameworks from industry veterans who've used storytelling to break into new markets, secure multi-million dollar contracts, and transform organizational cultures.

**Stéphane Lagresle**

**Founder, The Storytelling Tribe**

# FRAMEWORK #1

## What / So What / Now What

**THE FRAMEWORK**

Use this three-step structure originally developed by Terry Borton:

- **WHAT** - State the situation/facts clearly
- **SO WHAT** - Explain why it matters to your audience
- **NOW WHAT** - Define clear next action steps

**Example:**
- *What*: "Our current testing process takes 12 weeks per validation cycle"
- *So What*: "This delays your time-to-market by 6 months compared to competitors who are moving to software-defined vehicles"
- *Now What*: "We propose a phased implementation starting with pilot testing on your next platform"

**Dr. Jan Wehinger, Partner, MHP (A Porsche Company)**

*"In case of a storytelling emergency, I would recommend to use this 3 step structure so that you can tackle every situation!"*

# FRAMEWORK #2

## Story First, Technology Second

**THE FRAMEWORK**
Lead with brand/business value narrative, then introduce technology as the enabler.

1. **Understand** before being understood (listen first)
2. **Tell the business story** (brand, market, competitive advantage)
3. **Introduce technology** as the solution enabler
4. **Demonstrate proof** through immersive experiences

**Jon Husby, President & CEO, ADAC**

*"Back in 2016, at HARMAN, we broke Cadillac's 30+ year incumbent relationship with Bose by starting in 2014 with brand strategy, not audio specs.*

*The approach:*
- *Started with Cadillac brand executives, not purchasing*
- *Focused on brand differentiation challenges first*
- *Demonstrated AKG's brand heritage and artistic credibility*
- *Created immersive experience*
- *Only then introduced the 50-speaker technical solution*

*Result: We won the contract and fundamentally changed the relationship dynamic."*

# FRAMEWORK #3

## The "Multiple Audience Adaptation" Strategy

**THE FRAMEWORK**
Same core story, different angles for different stakeholders.

**Adaptation approach:**
- **Assembly teams**: Focus on job security and engaging work
- **Engineers**: Emphasize problem-solving and innovation opportunities
- **Executives**: Highlight profit, sustainability, and competitive advantage

**Example: same vision, different messages:**
- Assembly: "We're building cool products that will sell like hotcakes! the team will be busy for the foreseeable future"
- Engineers: "You'll work on cutting-edge problems that make a real difference"
- Executives: "This drives company profits and ensures sustainability"

**Stefan Balkowiec, Business Consultant**

*"Tell the stories from their perspective. Ask yourself - what are the personas? How will they better understand the story?"*

# FRAMEWORK #4

## The Power of Naming

**THE FRAMEWORK**
Give clarity to ideas through precise, evocative naming.

Application areas:
- **Project proposals**: Create memorable names that capture essence
- **Technical concepts**: Use analogies that create instant understanding
- **Design elements**: Names that help stakeholders visualize and choose
- **Strategic initiatives**: Language that makes abstract concepts concrete

**Valentin Janiaut, SW Solution Task Leader at LG**

Valentin explains the reason why LG developed the AlphaWare naming:

*"We needed to associate the idea that there is an initiative, there is investment, there is an ambition for us [to invest in automotive software]. Having a name to do that was feeling more easy to talk about it."*

# FRAMEWORK #5

## The "Foundation First" Method

**THE FRAMEWORK**

Lead with capability enablement, not problem prevention.

Structure:

1. **ASSUME EXCELLENCE** - Present your technology as an expected foundation, not a necessary burden
2. **ENABLE POSSIBILITIES** - Show how your foundation unlocks new opportunities
3. **NEVER ASSUME** - Challenge hidden assumptions in your narrative
4. **FLIP THE NARRATIVE** - Reframe your field from reactive problem-solving to proactive opportunity creation



**Andrew Till, General Manager Secure Platform at Trustonic**

*"When it comes to security, don't make assumptions. That's where the failures happen.*

*The stories that you share and you tell really define what your culture is as an organization. So make sure to write stories that are being told, amplify them on a regular basis and this will pay huge dividends."*

These frameworks are drawn from in-depth conversations on "Under the Hood: Automotive Storytelling," where automotive leaders share the human stories behind technological innovation.

Want to hear the full conversations and discover more storytelling insights?

Listen to "Under the Hood: Automotive Storytelling" wherever you get your podcasts, or visit **podcast.thestorytellingtribe.com**.



Under the Hood:
**Automotive Storytelling**
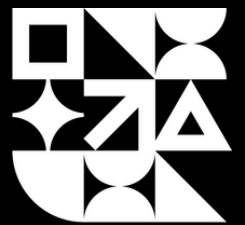
# Create narratives that convince customers, employees and board members.

## Pitch Deck Analyzer

In just 2 calls, get game-changing recommendations for your pitch deck.

## Executive Story Accelerator

Make an impact on your audience with a story that will call them to act in your favor.

## Strategic Story Blueprint

Develop an unified narrative architecture based on a strong positioning that wins deals

## Team Storytelling System

Show your team the power of storytelling + the tools to communicate effectively.

You need help to turn your complexity into clear, compelling stories that win deals and align teams?

Visit our website
**thestorytellingtribe.com**