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WINNING A NARRATIVE BATTLE WITH PROTAGONIST

HELPING MARKETERS CONQUER THE DISCOURSE IN THEIR SPACE

UNDERSTANDING BELIEFS THROUGH NARRATIVES

Every organization is influenced by Narratives, the deeply held beliefs that motivate and drive behavior in the world around them. Whether you are a business, a foundation, a public figure or a government agency, understanding people's perceptions and beliefs about you is essential for engaging with them.

We are reminded daily about big misses in human understanding. Our news feeds are filled with negative Narratives about tactless comments, false allegations, cringe-worthy ads and political gaffes. If your brand is the main character, they can make a significant dent on your business.

> **"** *Feelings—especially at a grand scale—are notoriously hard to track. That makes a next-generation, data-driven solution like Protagonist's Narrative Analytics invaluable.* **"**

- Joe Fuller, Harvard Business School

TRADITIONAL MARKET RESEARCH METHODS ARE NO LONGER ENOUGH

Marketers have had ways to analyze and measure public perception for decades, but these methods alone don't give us the insight we need to be effective in the ever changing Digital Age. Traditional research through polling and focus groups relies on data collection methodology, looks at small segments of the population and is often misinterpreted by human bias.

Using marketing automation tools, we can test things like promotion, message and subject line, but there are deep dynamics behind campaign success not visible through simplistic response traffic and sales numbers. Listening tools and AI allow us to guess at keywords, sentiment, and basic topics in social conversation, but this view won't get to a fully articulated belief motivating a person to ignore you, only how you can optimize the model. They won't tell you if a large portion of your market has a real problem with your organization, the perceptual battle you need to fight, and how to win it.

HOW TO WIN A NARRATIVE BATTLE

You need a better way to navigate complex and polarizing public conversations about you. That's where Narrative Analytics comes into play. It's modern market research that ends the guessing game for modern marketers. Maybe you need to sell a new policy, respond to changing market demand, facilitate a merger, design a new product or address a media disaster. In a crisis situation, you only get one chance to take a stand, and it's critical to know what you're up against. Whatever the situation, sending the wrong message could mean losing the battle, losing the trust of your audience, relinquishing credibility in your field, loss of revenue, possibly even losing the license to operate.

To win a Narrative Battle, you need to know which Narratives are really impacting you and what you can do to get them working in your favor. That's what we do at Protagonist. We've developed technology over the past eight years to isolate the most important Narrative patterns across billions of structured and unstructured data points in public discourse. Through a data science we call Narrative Analytics, we look at the entire digital landscape (media, blogs, social commentary, forums) to find which Narratives are really standing in the way of you and your goals, and we provide a quantified strategy to push the discourse in your favor.

People used to say that reputation is what other people say about you and brand is what you say about yourself. That just isn't true anymore. Your brand is how people feel about you. It is a mixture of people trusting you to do the right thing, to handle doing the wrong thing honestly, to create a product that lives up to expectations, and to align with who you say you are. Every person has their own set of criteria for what's important to you. Brands that match those criteria are more emotionally rewarding to buy from and easier to forgive.

- Ryan Smith, VP Insights and Analytics at FleishmanHillard

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HOW A GLOBAL ENERGY COMPANY OWNED A CRITICAL ETHICS DIALOGUE

Despite ongoing investments to evolve industry standards and technology, a global energy company faced existential and operational threats posed by pending legislation. Messaging derived from traditional polling had failed to deliver a favorable public dialogue and their business was at risk. Their executive team (PR, Compliance, Marketing) asked Protagonist for help understanding and navigating the polarizing Narratives about energy that had their brand on the ropes.

> *Looking at this analysis last night changed how we talked to the media this morning.*

- CEO, Global Energy Company

Protagonist surfaced the Narratives around energy and the perception of their brand in the debate. Our platform's unique ability to filter out fleeting and niche beliefs based on their impact and momentum allowed the energy company to focus on the Narratives most important to their cause. They were able to see and size their detractors, the unfavorable Narratives that had dominated the discourse over the previous year. Protagonist uncovered opportunities to align to Narratives that highlighted the positive impact of their efforts on the public well-being and played to their strengths operating in a market known for being ecologically conscious. We developed a communication strategy that addressed negative narratives for both company employees and the general community. Armed with this new data-driven approach to messaging, influencers, voice, tonality, emotiveness, and imagery, the energy company was able to create a dialogue that kept the lights on.

HELPING A NATIONAL FOUNDATION BOOST ENROLLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A national foundation leads public conversations about disruption in education, aiming to create a 21st century system that meets the needs of all Americans. They wanted to influence the discourse on postsecondary education in order to increase enrollment in underrepresented segments of the country. While the foundation's communication strategy drew attention and support within their field of education and policy experts, their messages were not resonating with the audience that mattered most, the public.

In order to help more people see the value of higher education and pursue it, they needed a critical understanding of the beliefs at play, in the raw, unsolicited language and channels where those beliefs were exchanged. Protagonist uncovered that the most favorable Narratives in the education discourse were about educational ties to economic opportunity, so we created a messaging strategy to amplify them in a way that would resonate with the American people. In the years implementing this strategy, the foundation has seen a 75% increase in the size and impact of the Narratives they set out to amplify, which has resulted in a measurable boost of higher education enrollment in previously inactive segments.

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THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY THAT HELPED A FOUNDATION PROTECT US EDUCATION STANDARDS

A national foundation is dedicated to improving American K-12 education policy and creating a better future for the country. Unfortunately, a new policy they were advocating had developed a negative reputation among teachers, the strongest influencers in the debate.

They had been unsuccessful in reversing this reputation despite heavy spending on market research and testing different outreach campaigns. On this course, the policy would not get the majority vote needed for nationwide acceptance and implementation.

HOW PROTAGONIST HELPED THEM FIGHT THIS NARRATIVE BATTLE

1 Uncover What People Believe Today

CURATING YOUR DATA SET

Every engagement begins by gathering data. Protagonist data scientists curate a custom data set by selecting the relevant sources that contain issues impactful to you. We collect data wherever people express beliefs. And, we do so passively. That means the narratives you get include the real words, the emphases and context around the issues you care about.

WHAT THIS MEANT FOR THE FOUNDATION

The foundation had been struggling to find a large-scale understanding of teachers opposing their policy. Protagonist uncovered hidden gold in the blogosphere. We found a rich, vibrant, active discourse of teachers blogging, interacting, and commenting in a raw, honest way about subjects they were passionate about. By passively observing, we heard things they just weren't saying when being prompted or polled about the policy. Teachers were freely talking about the topics that really mattered to them, in the places they talk, in the way they talk.

THE PROTAGONIST ADVANTAGE

Unlike traditional market research methods like polls or surveys, we can go beyond small sample sizes and pre-defined questions. We access the entire digital landscape and filter out noise, paid content and surface-level chatter to isolate only the content bearing rich Narrative structure.

SURFACING YOUR NARRATIVE LANDSCAPE

Protagonist algorithms then surface a set of Narratives based on predictable structures, emotionally loaded words, arguments, grammatical phrases and linguistic patterns.

WHAT THIS MEANT FOR THE FOUNDATION

Based on the predominant dialogue, the foundation learned that teachers were associating the negative beliefs around teaching standards: testing, treatment of pupils, and top-down decision making, which wasn't at all how it was designed. The foundation's messaging was failing to drive their key points with their audience, and a deeper look told us why.

THE PROTAGONIST ADVANTAGE

Our platform has the unique ability to determine the full cognitive argument wherever one exists regardless of location, length or format. The Narrative Landscape shows you the full range of beliefs that matter to your priorities. These are the chess pieces you need to drive strategy.

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Know how beliefs are associated with your brand, competitor brands, and key issues

DECIPHERING THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF KEY NARRATIVES

Protagonist technology isolates the most impactful Narratives affecting you by scoring each on its reach, engagement, and consistency. You see both positive and negative Narratives in the debate, highlighting the highest volume, fastest rising or most polarizing presence to help you prioritize.

We also show you how competitor actions are reaching your audience, the measured contribution of their language and actions to the beliefs against you.

WHAT THIS MEANT FOR THE FOUNDATION

Teacher Narratives against the policy revealed strong negative feelings about themes and phrases that were present in the foundation's messaging, and the way that messaging was delivered. The policy had been advocated by politicians and corporate figures, which invoked a connection to a strong negative belief that non-educators were not fit to call the shots in the classroom.

THE PROTAGONIST ADVANTAGE

We not only tell you why your brand is favorable, but the stories that people are connecting with it. This is a unique look at: What's working against you? Is it strong? Polarizing? Fleeting? Changeable? Worth spending dollars to fight?

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3 Know how to work with those beliefs to win

NARRATIVE STRATEGY

Once Narratives are deciphered, we create a strategy that targets different Narratives to amplify, reframe, counter, or avoid based on the Landscape, available resources and alignment with your overall strategic objectives. We also find the "white space" are as in the public discourse aligned to your goals, those that have no clear owner and allow to you to carve out a winning position.

WHAT THIS MEANT FOR THE FOUNDATION

Protagonist determined that there were significant opportunities to more effectively attach to several teacher Narratives that align with their policy's goals and amplify them through the educator conversations where they lived and thrived. They needed to attach to and amplify positive Narratives we surfaced about their policy, things like the freedom it gave to teachers around curriculums or that it helped the American education system keep pace with the rapidly changing world.

THE PROTAGONIST ADVANTAGE

Unlike traditional market research or automated testing, Narrative Analytics taps into the sentiment behind expressed beliefs, navigating the complexity of human dialogue on a mass scale. Your resulting Narrative Strategy is a data-driven way to change the overall conversation, an approach that drives the entire discourse affecting your business.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY VIA MESSAGING ARCHITECTURE

Protagonist's Messaging Architecture becomes the basis for the strategy used by teams in communications, creative, product and others across the organization. We provide recommendations on how to alter messaging, syntax, voice, leverage influencers, media channels or other factors significant in managing the Landscape.

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THE PROTAGONIST ADVANTAGE

We reveal which media channels to activate, which stakeholders to address, how to leverage partners, and which messaging will strengthen your target Narratives to affect the behavior you want. This is a strategic approach only made possible by social scientists and advances in modern machine learning. It's a way to validate what Marketers could only intuit until now.

4 *Win and keep on winning*

CONTINUOUS CONTROL WITH NARRATIVE SUBSCRIPTION

Many factors can sway public perception at the drop of a dime. Narrative Subscription helps you stay in the driver's seat by tracking changes in your Narrative Landscape and signature over time so you can continue to proactively maneuver the dialogue. As new data emerges, it is mapped against benchmarks and measured to identify new Narratives. Real-time tracking and correlation show impact to your campaigns and actions against competitors.

It's the ultimate way of evaluating the effectiveness of a campaign, with closed feedback loops to improve marketing decision-making. Finally, your Narrative Subscription provides access to Narrative Experts who provide strategic guidance on a monthly or quarterly basis to help you maintain control.

WHAT THIS MEANT FOR THE FOUNDATION

The foundation completely restructured their communication strategy to meet teachers where they were in terms of things they really cared about. They continued to monitor and navigate their changing Landscape through Narrative Subscription to position against threats and effectively control the dialogue.

Within two years, the foundation's reputation moved from 20% positive to more than 50% positive. In that same interval, their policy standards were adopted in 42 states and the District of Columbia.

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HERE ARE SOME OF OUR WINNERS

TECHNOLOGY	RETAIL & ENTERTAINMENT	FINANCIAL SERVICES
vmware, hp, Marketo, Microsoft, LinkedIn	WB, HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL, Starbucks	MetLife, charles SCHWAB

PHARMA & HEALTHCARE

Blue Shield of California · The Advisory Board Company · Pfizer · California Health Care Foundation · NOVANT HEALTH

FOUNDATIONS

BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation · Lumina FOUNDATION · OMIDYAR NETWORK · THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

ENERGY	GOVERNMENT	CPG
AERA, PG&E	United States Government Seals	General Mills, MARS

Check out our other use cases here:

Energizing and Protecting Your Brand

Understanding and Activating a Target Audience

Contact us at info@protagonist.io to get started

PROTAGONIST

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