



# Defining Your Narrative:

## A Better Shot at Success

**W**hy did Donald Trump win? How did Hillary Clinton lose? And, what the hell do either of these things have to do with you?

In 2016, American voters made it clear that they were tired of retread politicians. With his brash character and outlandish speeches, Trump made it clear that he was going to be unlike any candidate they had ever seen before. Hillary, on the other hand, tried to convince the public that she was offering something new and yet everything she said came out sounding just like every other politician before her. She promised her audiences whatever she thought they wanted to hear.

Trump essentially said: "This is who I am; take it or leave it," and we all know what happened. That day he came down the escalator with Melania, he presented a narrative that, regardless of what anyone said, he never wavered from. Pundits said that he didn't have a chance, but Trump and his team saw that his narrative – that of a disrupter – was resonating with more and more people and they rode that growing wave all the way to the White House.

Oddly enough, Trump's strategy was not all that different from Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, whose narrative was built around a message of hope and change. A strong, unwavering narrative helped both to focus on an effective plan, galvanize a following, and achieve their ultimate goal.

A clearly defined narrative will help you develop a plan to achieve your goals, too.

### Narrative vs. Brand

Now, before I go on, I want to explain what I mean by "narrative." I have been asked if what I'm describing is the same as "building your brand." Kleenex and McDonald's are brands. Artists are people, and people have stories to tell. Those stories become the artist's narratives. When you become ubiquitous, feel free to call yourself a brand. Think of the narrative as your way of telling people what makes you unique. Having a clearly-defined narrative can

keep you focused while you create and keep your team focused on your vision as an artist.

### Defining Your Narrative

My first job in the music industry was working for legendary manager Bill Aucoin. Bill gave me my first lesson on how to achieve success in music. "Our job," he told me, "is to facilitate the artist's vision so that they can concentrate on writing and performing while we take care of everything else." Bill Aucoin made a name for himself in the '70s working with KISS, and when I started working in his office, his number one client was Billy Idol. Both artists had the vision that helped them control their own narratives, which ultimately led to them achieving their goals.

Of course, it all starts with a great song. Writing great songs is hard. Writing great songs that don't sound like anyone else's is even harder. Understanding who you are as an artist is an invaluable asset when you are creating. That understanding will help you recognize when you've created something truly special that sounds uniquely you. Once you've discovered that sound, you are on your way.

There are two important points I want to emphasize in relation to the previous paragraph. If longevity is your ultimate goal, it is crucial to your career as a creator to be original and not just chase trends. Secondly, once you've found your path, it is important that you don't waiver. Prepare for the long haul. There are far too many examples of artists that grow impatient rather than stay the course and let an audience discover and embrace them.

With a well-defined narrative and an original sound and presentation, you can build the foundation of your career. From there, you will be better equipped to articulate your goals as you begin to put a team in place. The more prepared you are, the more control you have.

The ultimate control is messaging. Whether it be to your management team, your agent, your publicist, your promotion person, your label, or the media, you can now control the message, which means that everyone will

be on the same page when it comes to communicating that to the world at large.

Speaking of messaging, there has been no better time for you to control your message. Social media gives you the opportunity to engage directly with your current and potential audience and to deliver your message the way you want them to receive it.

### Sharing Your Narrative

Now that you have defined your narrative, you can strategically create content that consistently fortifies the story you want to tell. All of the tools you create should be consistent with your narrative, be it your bio, photos, the songs you choose as singles, music videos, or online content, etc.

Remember, people are busy and not always paying attention, so by being consistent, you stand a better chance of having your message heard. There was a report several years ago that said you needed to hear all or a part of a song 90 times on the radio before it would be recognized. Even though social media is the best way to reach your audience, you will still have to cut through a lot of noise.

When you think of the most successful artists in the world, you can generally define them in one or two sentences. Think of The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Madonna, or Bruce Springsteen. Think of Ed Sheeran, Lady Gaga, Billy Eilish, or Lizzo. All of these artists have clearly-defined narratives and set the agenda for their own careers.

Think about it. What do all of the artists I've named have in common? They are originals. Be original. Be a disrupter. Don't be concerned about being liked by everyone. Be obsessed with being great. The originality of your art is what helps define your character, and from that emerges your narrative.

Establishing a narrative will help keep you focused on staying true to who you are as you write songs, perform live, create content, build your team, and ultimately, build and nurture a relationship with your audience. It's your best shot at success.