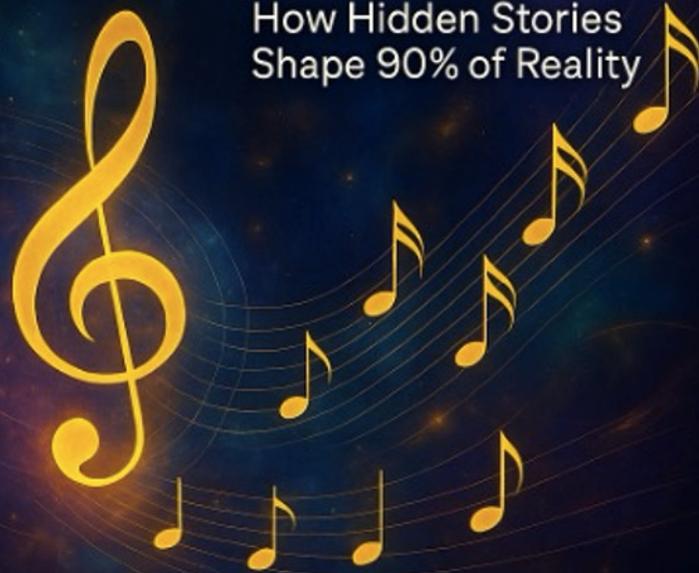


The Melody That Keeps People Afloat

Quantum Storytelling for
Organizational Transformation

How Hidden Stories
Shape 90% of Reality



DAVID MICHAEL BOJE

TANYA AKINS CANE

with DOUG BRECKENRIDGE

QuantumStorytelling.org

The 7 Principles of Quantum Storytelling Melody Transformation

From “*The Melody That Keeps People Afloat: Quantum Storytelling for Organizational Transformation*”



1. The Observer Effect

Principle: Your presence changes what you observe. There is no neutral stance—observation is



2. Superposition

Principle: Your organization exists in multiple story-states simultaneously.



3. Wave-Particle Duality

Principle: Stories flow as waves (possibility) and crystallize as particles (decisions).



4. Spacetime mattering

Principle: When and where a story is told changes its meaning: Time, space, and mattering are entangled.



5. Polyphony

Principle: Multiple valid voices must coexist without being forced into false harmony.



7. Unfinalizability

Principle: Stories are never finished— they are always becoming.

 Master these 7 principles to lead transformational storytelling—adaptive, resilient, and quantum-aware.

Learn more at: QuantumStorytelling.org

The Melody That Keeps People Afloat: Quantum Storytelling for Organizational Transformation

How Hidden Stories Shape 90% of Reality

David Michael Boje, Tanya Akins Cane, with Doug Breckenridge

October 20, 2025

<https://QuantumStorytelling.org>

Table of Contents for Quantum Melody

David Michael Boje, Tanya Akins Cane, with Doug Breckenridge.....	3
October 20, 2025.....	3
https://QuantumStorytelling.org	3
Table of Contents for Quantum Melody	4
For publisher: QUANTUM STORYTELLING: Book Cover Copy & Front Matter	7
BACK COVER COPY	7
DEDICATION	11
PREFACE	12
The 7 Principles of Quantum Storytelling: Melody Transformation.....	12
Most Important for Veterans	17
AUTHOR'S NOTE: Why "Quantum" Isn't Bullshit (When Done Right)	21
FOREWORD INVITATION	23
Chapter 1: The Observer Effect	24
Why Your Presence Changes Everything You're Trying to Change	24
Endnotes for Chapter 1	32
Additional Resources	33
Chapter 2: Superposition	35
Why Your Organization Exists in Multiple Story-States Simultaneously (And Why That's Your Strategic Advantage)	35
Schrödinger's Organization.....	35
The Three Types of Double-Voiced Discourse	36
A Global Pharmaceutical Organization Case: When Superposition Saved the Initiative	37
Mapping Your Organization's Superposition Field	38
The Vujade Assessment and Superposition Capacity.....	40
The Startup That Embraced Superposition	41
When Superposition Becomes Destructive.....	42
EXTENDED CASE STUDY: The Golyadkin Effect	42
Your Superposition Mapping Exercise	48
The Paradox of Superposition Strategy	49
APPENDIX C (CHAPTER 2): Superposition Conversation Starters	50
Learn More.....	52

Endnotes for Chapter 2	52
Additional Resources	54
Chapter 3: Wave-Particle Duality	56
When to Let Stories Flow and When to Make Them Crystallize.....	56
Endnotes for Chapter 3	65
Additional Resources	66
Chapter 4: Spacetime mattering.....	68
When and Where Your Story Comes Alive.....	68
Endnotes for Chapter 4	79
Additional Resources	80
Chapter 5: Entanglement	81
How Stories Stay Connected Across Distance.....	81
Endnotes for Chapter 5	91
Additional Resources	92
Chapter 6: Polyphony.....	94
Multiple Valid Voices Without Forced Harmony	94
Dostoevsky's Revolution: Characters as Subjects, Not Objects	95
The Monologic Organization: One Voice, Many Echoes.....	95
The Polyphonic Alternative: Jazz, Not Choir	96
My Storytelling Organizations Research: Polyphony in Practice.....	97
The Three Types of Double-Voiced Discourse Revisited	98
EXTENDED CASE STUDY: The Golyadkin Effect.....	99
Staging Polyphony: The Six Conditions.....	111
When Polyphony Becomes Cacophony: The Dark Side	113
The Vujade Polyphonic Capacity Assessment	114
Ensemble Leadership: Grace Ann's Polyphonic Framework	114
Your Polyphonic Audit.....	115
The 30-Day VOICE Practice Plan	116
The Polyphonic Imperative.....	117
APPENDIX A: Glossary of Key Terms for Practitioners	118
APPENDIX B: Dialogue Health Assessment.....	119
APPENDIX C (CHAPTER 6): Polyphony Conversation Starters	122
APPENDIX D: The 90-Day Polyphony Practice Plan	124
Learn More.....	126

Endnotes for Chapter 6	126
Additional Resources	128
Final Practitioner Note	129
Chapter 7: Unfinalizability	131
Continuous Becoming Without Fixed Definitions	131
Endnotes for Chapter 7	143
Additional Resources	144

For publisher: QUANTUM STORYTELLING: Book Cover Copy & Front Matter

BACK COVER COPY

Main Headline

Your Organization Already Thinks Quantum. You Just Don't Have the Language Yet.

Body Copy

Most change initiatives fail because we treat organizations like machines: push a lever, get predictable results. But anyone who's actually worked in an organization knows better.

The same message lands differently in different departments. Stories you thought were "aligned" turn out to exist in multiple contradictory versions simultaneously. A leadership change in Chicago instantly affects morale in Singapore, with no email chain to explain why.

That's not chaos. That's quantum.

For thirty years, David M. Boje has researched how real organizations actually work—through the messy, contradictory, entangled stories people tell. Not the org chart version. The lived version.

Now, partnering with Tanya Akins Cane (senior change management consultant who's led transformation at ALPHA CORPORATION, IBM, and across military installations) and the team behind vujade.ai's breakthrough assessment technology, Boje translates quantum organizational principles into tools you can use Monday morning.

This isn't quantum mysticism. It's quantum realism.

Seven principles. Peer-reviewed research. Field-tested frameworks. Real case studies from Fortune 500 companies, Department of Defense installations, and veteran-owned businesses.

And here's what makes this book different:

Every dollar supports Perview Inc.'s mission to train veterans and their families in quantum storytelling methodology. Three veteran authors (Vietnam, Air Force, Air Force) teaching the next generation of veterans to translate military wisdom into civilian organizational success.

You're not just buying a business book. You're funding a veteran's coaching certification. Their family business launch. Their path from service to entrepreneurial success.

Rigorous theory. Practical tools. Mission-driven impact.

That's Quantum Storytelling.

Author Bios (Back Cover)

DAVID M. BOJE, Ph.D. is a Vietnam War veteran (Sergeant, Company Clerk), Agent Orange survivor, and Visiting Scholar at Fisk University. Emeritus Regents Professor at New Mexico State University and former Visiting Professor at Aalborg University and Copenhagen Business School, he originated the concept of "storytelling organizations" (1991) and is editor-in-chief of the *Business Storytelling Encyclopedia*. He has published 20+ books and 150+ articles on organizational narrative, quantum storytelling, and antenarrative theory. With Grace Ann Rosile, he co-founded the True Storytelling Institute and Perview Inc.

TANYA AKINS CANE, CCMP™, LSSBB is a U.S. Air Force veteran and Senior Change Management Consultant with 15+ years leading enterprise transformation at ALPHA CORPORATION, IBM, Cognizant, and across Department of Defense installations. Her doctorate from Colorado Technical University focused on Military Sexual Trauma and organizational healing. As a Certified Change Management Professional and Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, she translates quantum storytelling theory into Fortune 500 practice. She has trained over 400 change practitioners in quantum organizational methodologies.

WITH DOUG BRECKENRIDGE (U.S. Air Force veteran, co-founder of vujade.ai) **AND DR. MONTY G. MILLER, Ed.D.** (co-founder of vujade.ai, 40+ years organizational development across 16 countries), who provide the breakthrough assessment technology making quantum storytelling measurable and scalable.

Pull Quotes for Cover

"Finally, a book that explains why change initiatives fail—and what to do about it."

"Not quantum mysticism. Quantum realism. The difference matters."

"Three veterans teaching the principles they learned under fire—now applied to boardrooms."

"Buy this book. Fund a veteran's future. Learn how organizations actually work."

Spine Copy

QUANTUM STORYTELLING | *The Melody of Organizational Transformation* | BOJE • CANE

Front Flap Copy

The Problem: Your organization has seven different versions of "what we do" existing simultaneously. Your change initiative succeeded in one department and failed in another—with identical implementation. A story you thought was settled keeps resurfacing in mutated forms. Distance doesn't prevent narrative infection—Seattle's gossip reaches Singapore by lunch.

Welcome to quantum organizational reality.

The Solution: Stop treating organizations like Newtonian machines (linear, predictable, controllable) and start working with their actual quantum nature (superposed, entangled, observer-dependent, irreducibly uncertain).

This book provides seven principles—grounded in three decades of peer-reviewed research and field-tested in Fortune 500 companies, military installations, and veteran-owned businesses—that translate quantum physics into practical organizational wisdom.

You'll learn:

- Why your presence as leader/consultant changes what you're trying to observe (and how to work with that)
- How to map multiple story-states existing simultaneously before forcing "alignment"
- When to let narratives flow (wave state) vs. when to crystallize them (particle state)
- How to recognize chronotopic moments when "time thickens" and change becomes possible
- Why stories in Chicago instantly affect Singapore (quantum entanglement in organizations)
- The difference between genuine polyphony (jazz) and false harmony (forced choir)
- How to lead from productive uncertainty instead of false certainty

Includes:

- The Vujade™ Assessment framework (making invisible narrative patterns visible)
- Chronotope mapping tools (when/where stories materialize)
- Entanglement audit protocols (non-local narrative connections)
- Horse Sense at Work embodied storytelling methods
- Real case studies: sexual assault prevention in military, digital accessibility at ALPHA CORPORATION, startup narrative superposition, post-flood sustainability transformation

The Mission: All proceeds fund Perview Inc.'s 501 c3 (non-profit) training programs for veterans and their families—business accelerators, coaching certifications, and embodied leadership development.

Three veteran authors. Rigorous methodology. Practical tools. Mission-driven impact.

DEDICATION

To Veterans and Their Family Members

You know what civilians are still learning:

That multiple truths coexist without contradiction.

That observing a situation changes it—your presence matters.

That distance doesn't break connection—your unit remains your unit.

That uncertainty isn't weakness—it's the only honest response to complexity.

That leadership isn't control—it's creating conditions for others to succeed.

That timing is everything—the same action at different moments yields different results.

That the mission continues long after the uniform comes off.

You already think quantum. You just didn't know it had a name.

This book translates what you learned in service into language that opens civilian doors—not because you need to change, but because they need to understand what you already know.

To the spouses and partners who held the home front: Your resilience through deployment, reintegration, and transition isn't background—it's foreground. Family storytelling is organizational storytelling. You've been practicing these principles in the hardest laboratory there is.

To the children of military families: You learned early that home is not a place but a story that travels. That absence and presence can coexist. That "Where are you from?" has no simple answer. This makes you quantum natives in a world still thinking Newtonian.

And to Grace Ann Rosile, David's partner in life and work—this book wouldn't exist without you. Not just because you co-founded Perview Inc. and pioneered Horse Sense at Work and Ensemble Leadership, but because you insisted we could be rigorous AND accessible, scholarly AND practical, mission-driven AND sustainable.

Every page honors your service. Every principle reflects your wisdom. Every dollar supports your next mission.

Thank you.

— David, Tanya, Doug, and Monty

PREFACE

The 7 Principles of Quantum Storytelling: Melody Transformation

From “The Melody That Keeps People Afloat: Quantum Storytelling for Organizational Transformation”

1. The Observer Effect

Principle: Your presence changes what you observe. There is no neutral stance—observation is participation.

Application:

- Conduct *Observer Effect Audits* before interventions.
- Ask: “*What stories am I making speakable/un-speakable by my questions or presence?*”
- Practice polyphonic listening to avoid collapsing complexity.

2. Superposition

Principle: Your organization exists in multiple story-states simultaneously.

Application:

- Map narrative multiplicity instead of forcing alignment.
- Identify where each story lives (chronotope).
- Choose between preserving, dialoguing, or collapsing competing narratives.

3. Wave–Particle Duality

Principle: Stories flow as waves (possibility) and crystallize as particles (decisions).

Application:

- Don’t rush to “alignment”—use wave state to explore multiple options.
 - Crystallize decisions only when context (chronotope) supports resolution.
 - Know when to flow and when to firm.
-

4. Spacetime mattering

Principle: When and where a story is told changes its meaning. Time, space, and mattering are entangled.

Application:

- Choose storytelling moments with care.
 - Identify “chronotopic moments” where meaning is heightened.
 - Use embodied storytelling methods to activate presence.
-

5. Entanglement

Principle: Stories remain connected across distance and time without direct communication.

Application:

- Audit narrative entanglements—how one story changes another remotely.
 - Use *Vujade™ entanglement mapping* to trace invisible influences.
 - Work with distributed storytelling networks (not just local context).
-

6. Polyphony

Principle: Multiple valid voices must coexist without being forced into false harmony.

Application:

- Create dialogic spaces for conflicting narratives.
 - Facilitate *sideward glances*—where one voice anticipates another.
 - Resist the urge for “one true story”; instead foster generative tension.
-

7. Unfinalizability

Principle: Stories are never finished—they are always becoming.

Application:

- Embrace organizational becoming instead of chasing fixed identity.
 - Revisit narratives regularly—no “final version” exists.
 - Let the story evolve with the context and community.
-

🧠 *Master these 7 principles to lead transformational storytelling—adaptive, resilient, and quantum-aware.*

Learn more at: QuantumStorytelling.org

Why This Book Exists (And Why Booksellers Should Care)

For Booksellers:

You've seen the quantum shelf explode—quantum healing, quantum manifestation, quantum consciousness, quantum [insert wishful thinking here]. Readers are hungry for quantum thinking, but skeptical of quantum bullshit.

This book is the antidote.

Real quantum physics (Copenhagen Interpretation, superposition, entanglement, Heisenberg uncertainty). Real organizational research (30 years, peer-reviewed, published in top journals). Real practitioners (Fortune 500 consultants, not seminar circuit gurus). Real outcomes (measurable with vujade.ai assessment technology).

And a real mission that sells itself:

Three veterans (Vietnam, Air Force, Air Force) teaching quantum organizational principles to other veterans—with 100% of proceeds funding veteran business training.

You're not selling a business book. You're selling a veteran support program that happens to be a business book.

Shelf it in:

- Business/Management (primary)
- Leadership (cross-reference)
- Military/Veterans (absolutely—this is veteran-written, veteran-focused)
- Organizational Development/Change Management
- Psychology/Consciousness (but NOT with the quantum woo-woo)

Why This Book Will Move:

1. **The veteran angle is marketing gold.** Every sale supports veteran entrepreneurs. That's not CSR theater—that's the actual business model. Military communities will buy it. Corporations will bulk-purchase for veteran hiring programs. Gift-giving season for veteran families. Memorial Day/Veterans Day promotions write themselves.
2. **"Quantum" is hot but under-served in serious business books.** Readers want quantum thinking without quantum nonsense. This delivers.

3. **The practitioner angle solves the "too academic" problem.** Co-authored by PhD scholar AND Fortune 500 consultant. Bridges theory-practice gap that frustrates both audiences.
4. **Built-in training infrastructure = repeat sales.** Book feeds into Quantum Coaching Sprint program (\$75/seat), which requires the book. Every corporate sponsor buying books for veteran cohorts is 10-100 unit orders.
5. **Multiple audiences, single book:**
 - Consultants/coaches seeking new methodologies
 - HR/OD professionals managing change
 - Veterans transitioning to civilian careers
 - MBA students/professors (academic credibility)
 - General readers interested in how organizations really work
 - Anyone who bought *Thinking in Systems* or *The Fifth Discipline* and wants the next evolution

For Reviewers:

If you're tired of:

- Leadership books that ignore the messy reality of organizational life
- Change management frameworks that work in consulting decks but not in practice
- Quantum books that abuse physics to sell magical thinking
- Business books with no theoretical grounding
- Academic books with no practical application

Read this one.

What makes it reviewable:

1. **The veteran mission is the story.** Lead with that. "Three veterans translate military wisdom into organizational transformation—and every sale funds the next generation."
2. **The quantum physics is rigorous.** We actually cite Heisenberg, Bohr, Bell's Theorem, and Schrödinger. Not as metaphor—as organizational reality. Physicists won't hate this book.
3. **The Bakhtin scholarship is deep.** Polyphony, chronotope, double-voiced discourse—all precisely defined, properly cited, actually applied. Lit theorists will recognize real engagement with the source material.
4. **The case studies are specific.** Not "a tech company" but "sexual assault prevention across DoD installations" and "digital accessibility transformation at ALPHA CORPORATION." Real organizations, real challenges, real outcomes.
5. **The technology is innovative.** Vujade™ assessment makes invisible narrative patterns quantifiable. That's newsworthy—AI meeting organizational storytelling.
6. **The controversy is built-in.** We explicitly reject "quantum mysticism" while embracing quantum realism. That's a position reviewers can engage with, argue about, champion or critique.

Suggested review angles:

- "Finally, quantum thinking without quantum bullshit"
- "Why veterans make better organizational consultants than MBAs"
- "The assessment technology changing how we measure culture"
- "Horse Sense at Work: When organizational development meets equine wisdom"
- "How three veteran authors are funding veteran entrepreneurship through book sales"
- "Bakhtin's revenge: Russian literary theory solves American management problems"

Bottom line for booksellers and reviewers:

This isn't another quantum book. It's not another leadership book. It's not another veteran memoir.

It's a field manual for organizational transformation, written by people who know what field manuals need to do: Work under pressure. With incomplete information. When lives and livelihoods are on the line.

And every copy sold trains a veteran to teach these principles to the next generation.

That story sells itself.

Most Important for Veterans

The book, *The Melody That Keeps People Afloat: Quantum Storytelling for Organizational Transformation*, by David Michael Boje, Tanya Akins Cane, and Doug Breckenridge, helps veterans and family members through its core mission, funding mechanism, and the application of its methodologies to address issues like reintegration and healing, which are often related to trauma and transition.

The book's impact is structured around two main areas: **Mission and Funding** and **Methodological Application (Quantum Storytelling and Embodied Practices)**.

1. Mission and Financial Support

The primary way the book supports veterans and their families is through its financial model:

- **Proceeds Fund Training: Every dollar supports Perview Inc.'s mission to train veterans and their families in quantum storytelling methodology.** This is the actual business model, not just Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) theater.
- **Veteran Certification and Business Launch:** The funds specifically support veterans' coaching certification, their family business launch, and their path from service to entrepreneurial success. The proceeds fund business accelerators, coaching certifications, and embodied leadership development through Perview Inc..
- **Veteran Credibility:** The book itself is written by three veterans (Vietnam, Air Force, Air Force). David M. Boje is a Vietnam War veteran and Agent Orange survivor. Tanya Akins Cane is a U.S. Air Force veteran whose doctorate focused on Military Sexual Trauma and organizational healing.

PTSD Prevalence by War Era

PTSD remains one of the most significant factors linked to veteran suicide risk, with variation by service era and exposure intensity.

War Era	Current PTSD Prevalence	Lifetime PTSD Prevalence	Notes
WWII / Korean War	~2%	~3%	Lower rates due to age and survivor bias
Vietnam War	4–12% current; up to 31% lifetime	17–30% lifetime	One of the highest long-term burdens
Gulf War (1991)	2–13%	~20% lifetime	Moderate rates, often linked to chemical

War Era	Current PTSD Prevalence	Lifetime PTSD Prevalence	Notes
			exposure and stressors
Iraq & Afghanistan (OIF/OEF)	11–20%	~29% lifetime	High exposure-related PTSD; younger and often chronic cases

Overall, 7% of all veterans experience PTSD during their lifetime, but this climbs sharply with combat intensity—especially for post-9/11 veterans.

Summary

Since World War II, the data highlight a consistent escalation of psychological toll with modern conflicts:

- Annual veteran suicides have exceeded 6,000 for more than 15 consecutive years.
- PTSD prevalence can reach up to 1 in 5 among combat-exposed veterans.
- Families of service members, while less affected statistically, demonstrate measurable parallel increases in suicide and distress over time.

These findings show that both veteran and family mental health impacts endure across generations, underscoring the need for sustained preventive efforts and accessible trauma-informed care.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among veterans profoundly affects their families—spouses, children, and caregivers—producing what researchers call secondary or intergenerational PTSD. Across U.S. war eras, data show a strong correlation between veterans’ trauma exposure and the psychological health of their family members.

Across War Eras: Family-Level PTSD Effects

War Era	PTSD in Veterans	Reported Secondary/Family Effects
World War II & Korea	2–3% current, 3% lifetime	Estimates suggest <5% of spouses experienced secondary trauma; limited early recognition and few studies

War Era	PTSD in Veterans	Reported Secondary/Family Effects
Vietnam	10–30% lifetime prevalence	Up to 20–25% of spouses and children showed depressive/anxiety syndromes linked to veterans' PTSD; increased domestic conflict reported
Gulf War (1991)	~12–20% veterans with PTSD	15–20% of family members displayed stress-related symptoms, often due to repeated deployments and marital strain
Iraq & Afghanistan (OEF/OIF/OND)	11–20% veterans with PTSD	30–55% of immediate family members display probable PTSD, severe depression, or anxiety; 84% of caregivers report high stress, with one-third meeting PTSD diagnostic thresholds themselves

Measured Family Impacts

Recent research from 2025 found that 55.5% of family members of veterans and first responders screened positive for probable PTSD, alongside 38.5% with moderate-to-severe depression and 36.6% with generalized anxiety disorder. These symptoms often include emotional numbing, chronic worry, intrusive memories, and fear-based responses to loud noises or conflict reminiscent of combat environments.

Studies of Vietnam and Iraq veterans' families show elevated rates of marital discord, child behavioral issues, and emotional detachment correlated with the veteran's PTSD severity and combat exposure.

In children, secondary trauma manifests in poor academic performance, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation. Children in veteran households experience 1.45 times greater risk of mental illness than peers from non-veteran families.

2. Methodological Application for Healing and Transition

The book's quantum storytelling framework provides tools that address the unique cognitive and narrative challenges veterans face during transition, helping them avoid being trapped by rigid past identities:

Translating Military Wisdom

The book is dedicated to veterans and their families, acknowledging that they "already think quantum" because they understand core principles like multiplicity, observer effect, and entanglement intuitively due to the inherent complexity of service. The goal is to **translate what veterans learned in service into language that opens civilian doors.**

The quantum principles directly relate to experiences that challenge traditional, linear thinking:

- **Superposition:** The understanding that "multiple truths coexist without contradiction".
- **Observer Effect:** The knowledge that "observing a situation changes it—your presence matters".
- **Entanglement:** The reality that "distance doesn't break connection—your unit remains your unit".
- **Unfinalizability:** The acceptance that "uncertainty isn't weakness—it's the only honest response to complexity" and that the mission continues long after the uniform comes off.

Embodied Restorying and Healing

The book features methods designed to specifically address deep-seated issues like trauma and the difficulty of post-deployment transition:

- **Tanya Akins Cane's Research:** Her doctorate focused on Military Sexual Trauma and organizational healing.
- **Horse Sense at Work:** The book includes the **Horse Sense at Work embodied storytelling methods**. This practice is recognized as a masterfully staged chronotope for leadership development.
- **Embodied Chronotope Creation: Horse Sense at Work** creates a unique chronotope (charged space, thick time, peer arrangements) where abstract concepts become visceral, immediate, and undeniable. The research cited in the book notes that this embodied work creates conditions for **military family narrative healing** and is a theoretical and applied review of **embodied restorying for post-deployment family reintegration**.
- **Addressing Finalization of Identity:** Veterans often have a highly finalized military identity ("I'm a warrior," "I'm a sergeant"), which can be limiting in civilian life. The Horse Sense method forces them to respond to their "present-moment embodied state" rather than their "finalized story about yourself," creating space for veterans to discover their **unfinalizable civilian selves**.
- **Case Studies:** The book notes that real case studies covered include **sexual assault prevention in the military**.

By funding these programs and providing a framework (quantum storytelling) and practices (embodied storytelling) that allow for the safe, non-finalizing exploration of complex, contradictory, and deeply held narratives, the book supports veterans and their families in organizational healing, successful civilian transition, and entrepreneurial success.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Why "Quantum" Isn't Bullshit (When Done Right)

By David M. Boje, Ph.D.

I'm a storytelling scholar, not a physicist. But I spent two years of radiation and hormone therapy with a lot of time to think about why "quantum" became both irresistible and insufferable in organizational literature.

The problem isn't quantum thinking. The problem is quantum appropriation without rigor.

When I say "quantum storytelling," I don't mean:

- Your thoughts create reality (that's magical thinking)
- Consciousness collapses wave functions (that's Deepak Chopra, not Niels Bohr)
- Quantum entanglement enables telepathy (that violates relativity and common sense)
- You can "vibrate at a higher frequency" to manifest success (that's not how frequencies work)

What I DO mean:

Organizations exhibit genuine quantum properties that classical (Newtonian) management frameworks cannot explain:

Superposition: Your company's "culture" isn't singular—it's multiple contradictory story-states coexisting simultaneously until leadership "measurement" collapses possibilities into one actualized narrative. That's not metaphor. That's observable organizational behavior that maps precisely onto Schrödinger's quantum superposition.

Observer Effect: The Copenhagen Interpretation proved that measurement changes what's measured. In organizations: Your "culture survey" doesn't neutrally discover culture—it creates the culture it purports to measure by making certain narratives speakable. Again, not metaphor. Direct parallel.

Entanglement: Bell's Theorem showed particles remain correlated across distance. In organizations: Story changes in one location instantly affect narratives elsewhere with no mediating communication chain. Non-local correlation is real and measurable (we use Vujade™ network analysis to track it).

Uncertainty Principle: Heisenberg proved you cannot know both position and momentum precisely. In organizations: You cannot know both where you are (current state assessment) and where you're going (future strategy) with perfect clarity. The act of measuring one introduces uncertainty in the other.

I'm not abusing physics. I'm recognizing organizational isomorphism—genuine structural similarity between quantum systems and organizational narrative systems.

The difference between quantum bullshit and quantum rigor:

Bullshit says: "Quantum physics proves thoughts create reality!"

Rigor says: "Quantum physics shows observation participates in reality-construction—which organizational ethnography has independently verified for decades."

Bullshit says: "Entanglement means we're all connected in mystical oneness!"

Rigor says: "Entanglement shows correlation without communication—which explains non-obvious organizational narrative patterns we can measure and map."

Bullshit says: "Be the quantum leader of your life!"

Rigor says: "Leadership in quantum organizations means creating conditions for polyphonic emergence rather than imposing monologic control."

See the difference? One uses quantum as magical decoration. The other uses quantum as precise analytic framework.

Why this matters:

Mikhail Bakhtin never read quantum physics, yet his literary analysis of Dostoevsky's "polyphonic novels" (1929) describes organizational dynamics that map perfectly onto quantum principles. Karen Barad, a quantum physicist and feminist theorist, developed "agential realism" showing matter and meaning are entangled—which is exactly what organizational storytelling research has shown.

These aren't coincidences. These are convergent discoveries of how complex systems actually work.

So when you read "quantum storytelling" in this book, know:

- Every quantum principle is properly sourced to physics literature
- Every organizational application is grounded in peer-reviewed research
- Every framework is field-tested in real organizations
- Every claim is falsifiable (that's what makes it science)

We're not selling quantum pixie dust. We're reporting quantum reality.

And the veterans I served with in Vietnam already understood these principles intuitively—because war is irreducibly quantum. Multiple truths coexisting. Observer effects everywhere. Entangled outcomes. Fundamental uncertainty.

They didn't need the physics vocabulary. But the physics vocabulary can help them translate what they know into language that opens civilian doors.

That's why this book exists.

— *David M. Boje*

Visiting Scholar, Fisk University

Written during recovery from Agent Orange-related cancer treatment

With gratitude to the horses, who teach without words

FOREWORD INVITATION

We are seeking a foreword from a prominent voice in organizational development, military leadership, or conscious capitalism who can speak to:

1. Why quantum thinking represents the next evolution beyond systems thinking
2. The unique credibility veterans bring to organizational transformation work
3. The importance of mission-driven business models (book sales → veteran training)
4. The bridge between rigorous scholarship and practical application

Potential foreword authors we'd love to invite:

- **Simon Sinek** (Start With Why, military family background)
- **Margaret Wheatley** (Leadership and the New Science, quantum organizational pioneer)
- **Otto Scharmer** (Theory U, MIT, systems thinking evolution)
- **Brené Brown** (vulnerability, courage, veteran support advocate)
- **General Stanley McChrystal** (Team of Teams, veteran leader, organizational transformation)

If you know someone who'd be perfect, please connect us.

END OF COVER COPY & FRONT MATTER

Chapter 1: The Observer Effect

Why Your Presence Changes Everything You're Trying to Change

Principle 1: The Observer Effect—In quantum storytelling, you cannot observe organizational culture without changing it. Your presence as leader, consultant, or coach participates in constructing the reality you're trying to understand. The Copenhagen Interpretation proved that measurement doesn't discover pre-existing reality—it participates in creating reality. Similarly, organizational "assessment" doesn't reveal what's already there—it collapses narrative possibilities into specific actualities based on who's observing, what questions they ask, and how their presence is interpreted.

Application: Before every organizational intervention, ask: "How is my presence changing what I'm trying to understand?" Conduct observer effect audits that map how your observation position, questions, and social role collapse organizational narrative superposition in specific directions. Use this awareness to stage observations strategically—recognizing you're always participating in reality-construction, never neutrally recording it. The power isn't in being "objective" (impossible). The power is in being conscious about how you're participating.

The new Chief Operating Officer thought she was being smart. Before announcing any changes, she'd spend her first sixty days "just listening." She scheduled one-on-ones with every director. She attended team meetings as a silent observer. She read through quarterly reports and employee survey results. Only after gathering all this "objective data" would she develop her transformation strategy.

Six months later, her carefully researched initiative was dying on the vine. The Sales team claimed she didn't understand their constraints. Engineering insisted she'd never grasped their workflow realities. HR told her privately that people had been "managing up" during those listening sessions—telling her what they thought a new COO wanted to hear, not what was actually true.

"But I was just observing," she told me during our first coaching conversation. "I didn't change anything. I was neutral."

That's when I had to tell her what quantum physicists figured out in 1927, and what anyone who's actually worked in an organization has always known: There is no such thing as neutral observation. Your presence changes what you're trying to see. The act of measuring alters what you're measuring. And the sooner you accept this, the sooner you can work with it instead of pretending it doesn't exist.

Welcome to the Observer Effect—the first principle of quantum storytelling, and the one that changes everything about how you lead, consult, coach, or facilitate organizational transformation.

The Copenhagen Problem

In 1927, Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg shocked the physics world with a radical claim: at the quantum level, there is no objective reality independent of observation. Before you measure an electron's position, it doesn't HAVE a position in the classical sense—it exists in a probability cloud of possible positions. The act of measurement doesn't discover where it is. The act of measurement participates in creating where it is.¹

Werner Heisenberg put it bluntly: "We have to remember that what we observe is not nature herself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning."²

Most physicists hated this. Einstein famously rejected it, insisting that "God does not play dice with the universe." But experiment after experiment confirmed it. Observation isn't passive reception of information about an independent reality. Observation is active participation in reality-construction.

For eighty years, physicists have wrestled with this uncomfortable truth. Meanwhile, organizational leaders, consultants, and HR professionals have been living it every day without the vocabulary to name it.

That COO's "listening tour" wasn't neutral data collection. It was an intervention that changed the organizational narrative field the moment she announced it. Every conversation people had with her collapsed multiple possible stories about "what the new COO cares about" into one actualized story based on what they observed her asking, how she reacted, what she wrote down, where her attention lingered.

She thought she was gathering information ABOUT the organization. Actually, she was participating in constructing the organization by making certain narratives speakable and others unspeakable, certain concerns legitimate and others off-limits, certain futures imaginable and others impossible.

The Storytelling Organization Never Sleeps

Here's what I've learned in thirty years of researching how organizations actually work: They're not machines. They're not systems. They're not even organisms. They're ongoing narrative accomplishments—stories being told, contested, revised, and performed by multiple voices simultaneously, with no single author in control.³

I call these "storytelling organizations" because the storytelling never stops. Right now, while you're reading this, someone in your organization is telling a story about what happened in this morning's meeting. Another person is telling a different story about the same meeting. These stories will intersect, contradict, merge, split, and mutate as they move through the organization.

By tomorrow, there will be seven versions of "what the meeting meant." By next week, one version might dominate—but the others won't disappear. They'll go underground, waiting for the right moment to resurface.

This isn't a bug. This is how organizations work. The multiplicity, the contradiction, the constant narrative flux—that's organizational life.

And here's the Observer Effect kicker: The moment you, as a leader or consultant or coach, start trying to "understand the culture," you change it. Your questions become people's answers. Your frameworks become their interpretations. Your presence doesn't reveal the organization—it participates in constructing a version of the organization that includes you as observer.

Let me give you a concrete example from my consulting work.

The Case of the Hospital That Wasn't

A hospital system hired me to help them understand why their patient satisfaction scores were declining despite significant investment in service excellence training. The CEO wanted an "objective assessment" of the culture.

I started the way most consultants do: interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations. But I stayed alert to the Observer Effect. I paid attention not just to what people told me, but to how my presence was changing what they were willing to say.

In the official leadership meetings I attended, everyone spoke confidently about "patient-centered care" and "service excellence." The story was clear: we're committed, we're improving, we just need to execute better.

But I noticed something. When I hung around the break room—not interviewing, just being present—the story changed. People told different stories about why satisfaction was declining: staffing shortages, new electronic medical records that took attention away from patients, physicians who treated nurses like servants, administrators who'd never worked a shift on the floor making decisions about floor operations.

Same hospital. Completely different narrative reality. Which one was "true"?

Both. And neither. The hospital existed in narrative superposition⁴—multiple valid story-states coexisting simultaneously. The leadership meetings collapsed that superposition into one official story. The break room maintained a different story-state. My presence in either location didn't reveal some objective truth. It participated in constructing different versions of the hospital depending on where I was observing from.

Here's where it gets interesting. When I presented my findings to the CEO, I didn't tell her what the culture "really was." I told her about the narrative superposition—that her hospital existed in multiple story-states simultaneously, and that different interventions would collapse those states differently.

The leadership training programs she'd invested in? Those were targeting the official story-state that existed in leadership meetings. They weren't wrong. They just weren't reaching the break room story-state where the actual patient care was being narrated.

She made a decision that most CEOs wouldn't: instead of trying to impose one unified story, she created spaces for polyphonic dialogue⁵ where both story-states could be voiced, heard, and placed in productive tension with each other. Not forced into false harmony. Not one story conquering the other. Both stories present, both valid, both informing action.

Patient satisfaction scores started climbing within three months. Not because she "fixed the culture." Because she stopped pretending there was one culture to fix.

What This Means for You

If you're a leader, consultant, coach, or HR professional reading this, you might be feeling uncomfortable right now. Because if there's no neutral observation—if your presence always changes what you're trying to understand—then everything you thought you knew about "assessing organizational culture" or "gathering stakeholder input" or "conducting objective evaluations" becomes suspect.

Good. That discomfort means you're taking this seriously.

But here's the paradox: accepting the Observer Effect doesn't make you powerless. It makes you more powerful, because now you're working with reality instead of fighting it.

Think about that COO. Once she understood that her listening tour had already changed the organization—that people had formed stories about her based on what she asked, how she reacted, what she prioritized—she could make strategic choices about her observation practices. She could decide what kind of observer she wanted to be. She could use her presence intentionally instead of pretending she didn't have one.

She started showing up differently. Instead of "neutral listening," she practiced what I call polyphonic observation—being present in a way that explicitly invited multiple contradictory narratives to coexist. She'd say things like, "I'm hearing different stories about why this project stalled. Instead of figuring out which one is 'right,' let's get all the stories on the table and see what we learn from the contradictions."

That changes everything. Because now people aren't performing for her assessment. They're contributing their perspective to a genuinely polyphonic conversation where multiple truths can coexist without one having to defeat the others.

The Vujade Principle: Seeing the Familiar as Fresh

My colleague Doug Breckenridge and Dr. Monty Miller have spent years developing assessment technology that takes the Observer Effect seriously. They call it Vujade—the opposite of déjà vu.

Instead of experiencing something new as if you've seen it before, Vujade is experiencing something familiar as if you're seeing it for the first time.⁶

That's the quantum storytelling skill. Not pretending you're a neutral observer (you're not). Not imposing your framework as "objective truth" (it's not). But learning to observe in a way that holds your frameworks lightly enough that you can see what they're revealing AND what they're obscuring.

The Vujade Assessment measures this capacity. It looks at how you see familiar organizational patterns—budgets, conflicts, strategy sessions, performance reviews—and whether you can observe them with fresh eyes or whether you're trapped in habitual narrative patterns that predetermine what you see.

Leaders with high Vujade capacity don't see culture surveys as revealing truth. They see them as interventions that collapse narrative superposition in specific ways, revealing some stories while driving others underground. That awareness changes how they use surveys, what questions they ask, and what they do with the results.

Consultants with high Vujade capacity don't present findings as "objective assessments." They present them as "what became visible from this particular observation position, with these particular questions, at this particular chronotopic moment"⁷—which opens space for clients to say, "Yes, and here's what you couldn't see from that position."

The Practical Framework: Four Observer Effect Questions

Every time you're about to engage with an organization—whether you're the CEO walking the floor, the consultant starting discovery interviews, the HR director launching an engagement survey, or the coach beginning a leadership development program—ask yourself these four questions:

Question 1: What version of the organization am I collapsing into view by how I'm showing up?

Your presence is never neutral. You're always collapsing narrative superposition. The question isn't whether you're changing things. The question is: are you collapsing the organization into a version where people perform for your assessment, or a version where people contribute their authentic narrative perspectives?

That COO's mistake wasn't that she changed things. Her mistake was not recognizing that her "neutral listening" was collapsing the organization into performance-for-the-new-boss mode.

Question 2: What stories am I making speakable, and what stories am I driving underground?

Every question you ask makes certain narratives legitimate and others unspeakable. If you ask, "What's working well?" you get different stories than if you ask, "What's broken that nobody

wants to talk about?" Neither question is more "objective." They're different observation positions that collapse different narrative states into view.

The art is asking questions that make multiple contradictory narratives speakable simultaneously. Questions like, "Tell me about a time this initiative succeeded AND a time it failed—and why those might both be true."

Question 3: Am I observing for confirmation or for disconfirmation?

This is the killer. Most of us observe in ways that confirm what we already believe. We ask questions designed to generate data that supports our frameworks. We interpret ambiguous information in ways that fit our theories. We're not lying—we genuinely believe we're being objective. But we're unconsciously collapsing the organization into shapes that match our expectations.

The Vujade capacity is observing for disconfirmation—actively looking for evidence that your framework is wrong, that your interpretation is incomplete, that the story you're telling about the organization is missing something essential.

Question 4: How can I observe in a way that increases rather than decreases the organization's narrative complexity?

Most observation practices reduce complexity. They take the messy, contradictory, multiple-voiced reality of organizational life and collapse it into clean categories, simple causes, and unified themes. That's useful for PowerPoint presentations. It's death for actual transformation.

Quantum storytelling observation increases complexity. It makes visible narratives that were hidden. It surfaces contradictions that were papered over. It reveals entanglements⁸ that weren't obvious. It makes the organization more complex, not simpler—which paradoxically makes it more workable, because now you're dealing with reality instead of a simplified model.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Let me show you how this works in practice. I was coaching a VP of Engineering who was frustrated that his team wasn't "being honest" with him. In one-on-ones, everyone said the sprint planning process was working fine. But in anonymous surveys, people complained it was chaotic and demoralizing.

"They're not telling me the truth," he said.

"They're telling you a truth," I replied. "The question is: which version of the team are you collapsing into view when you show up?"

We did an experiment. In his next one-on-one, instead of asking, "How's sprint planning going?" (which invites performance-for-the-boss), he said, "I'm genuinely confused. In our conversations,

people tell me sprint planning is fine. In anonymous surveys, people say it's chaotic. Both of those can't be the whole story. Help me understand what I'm missing."

That question changed everything. Because now he wasn't asking them to report on sprint planning. He was inviting them into the Observer Effect—acknowledging that different observation positions reveal different truths, and that his presence as VP was collapsing one narrative state into view while driving others underground.

The engineer he was talking to sat back and said, "Okay, I'm going to tell you something I haven't said before. Sprint planning IS working fine—for the process. But it's demoralizing because we never have time to talk about whether we're building the right things. We're great at execution. We're terrible at direction. And I can't say that in sprint planning because you're there, and saying 'we don't know if this is the right priority' feels like questioning your judgment."

There it is. The Observer Effect in full force. The VP's presence in sprint planning meetings was collapsing the team's narrative superposition—their simultaneous sense that "we're executing well" AND "we don't know if we're building the right thing"—into just the execution story, because that was the story his presence made speakable.

Once he saw this, he could work with it. He started occasionally NOT attending sprint planning. He created separate "direction and purpose" conversations where his role was explicitly to question whether they were building the right things. He acknowledged openly that his presence changed what people felt comfortable saying.

The team's engagement scores went up. Not because he fixed a broken process. Because he stopped collapsing the organization into a simplified version that couldn't hold the complexity people were actually experiencing.

Your Turn: The Observer Effect Audit

Here's your homework before moving to the next chapter. Take out a notebook—actual paper, not a device—and complete this Observer Effect Audit:

Think of a recent organizational intervention you led, participated in, or observed. It could be a change initiative, a culture assessment, a strategy session, a performance review process, a team building offsite—anything where someone was trying to "understand" or "improve" the organization.

Now answer these questions:

1. Who was the observer (leader, consultant, HR, all of the above)?
2. What did they claim they were doing (assessing, gathering input, diagnosing, evaluating)?
3. How did their presence change what people said or did?
4. What narrative states became speakable in their presence?
5. What narrative states went underground?

6. Did the observer acknowledge their participation in constructing what they were observing, or did they present findings as "objective truth"?
7. Looking back now, what version of the organization got collapsed into view, and what versions remained invisible?

If you can't answer these questions easily, that's data. It means you're still operating under the illusion of neutral observation. Which means you're changing organizations without knowing how you're changing them.

And that's not strategic. That's accidental.

The Invitation

The Observer Effect is just the first of seven quantum storytelling principles. But it's the foundation for everything that follows. Because once you accept that you're never a neutral observer—that your presence always participates in constructing what you're trying to understand—everything else becomes possible.

You stop trying to "discover the truth" about organizational culture and start asking: "What version of this organization am I helping to construct, and is that a version I want to strengthen or shift?"

You stop treating stakeholder interviews as data gathering and start treating them as reality-shaping interventions where the questions you ask collapse narrative possibilities in consequential ways.

You stop presenting consultant findings as "objective assessments" and start presenting them as "what became visible from this particular observation position"—which opens space for dialogue about what remained invisible.

This is quantum storytelling. Not quantum mysticism. Not quantum metaphor. Quantum realism about how organizations actually work when you pay attention to the role of observation in constructing organizational reality.

In the next chapter, we'll explore the second principle: Superposition. You'll learn why your organization doesn't have "a culture"—it has multiple culture-states existing simultaneously, and why trying to force them into false alignment is killing your change initiatives.

But first, take the Vujade Assessment. It's free if you mention "Quantum" when you register at vujade.ai. It takes fifteen minutes and will show you your current observation patterns—how you see familiar situations, where you're trapped in habitual narratives, and where you have capacity to see the familiar as fresh.

Because here's the truth that makes some leaders uncomfortable and sets others free: You're going to change the organizations you touch whether you mean to or not. The only question is whether you're doing it consciously and strategically, or unconsciously and accidentally.

The Observer Effect doesn't give you a choice about whether to participate in organizational reality-construction.

It gives you a choice about how.

Choose wisely.

Learn More

Take the Vujade Assessment (free with code "Quantum"): vujade.ai

Explore quantum storytelling frameworks and tools: quantumstorytelling.org

Join the Monday GrowthOD sessions (free): growthod.org

Quantum Coaching Sprint registration (6-session practitioner certification):
quantumstorytelling.org/sprint

Connect with the authors:

- David Boje: dboje@nmsu.edu
 - Tanya Akins Cane: [LinkedIn/tdakinscane](#)
 - Perview Inc. veteran programs: quantumstorytelling.org/perview
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Endnotes for Chapter 1

1. The Copenhagen Interpretation, developed primarily by Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg in the 1920s, remains the most widely taught interpretation of quantum mechanics despite ongoing philosophical debate. It fundamentally challenges classical notions of objective reality independent of observation. See: Heisenberg, W. (1958). *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*. Harper & Row.
2. Heisenberg, W. (1958), p. 58. This quote captures the essence of the Observer Effect—that measurement is not passive discovery but active participation in reality construction.
3. Boje, D. M. (1991). The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(1), 106-126. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2393432> This foundational article introduced the concept that organizations are not containers for stories but ongoing narrative accomplishments.
4. Superposition—the second quantum storytelling principle explored fully in Chapter 2—describes how organizations exist in multiple narrative states simultaneously until observation collapses them into specific actualities.
5. Polyphonic dialogue refers to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of polyphony—genuine dialogue where multiple voices maintain autonomy without merging into forced unity.

- See: Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press, p. 6. This principle is explored fully in Chapter 6.
6. The term "Vujade" (opposite of déjà vu) was popularized by comedian George Carlin and has been refined by Doug Breckenridge and Dr. Monty G. Miller into an assessment methodology that measures capacity to see familiar patterns with fresh eyes—a core quantum storytelling competency.
 7. Chronotopic moment refers to Bakhtin's concept of chronotope—the inseparability of time and space in narrative. Bakhtin borrowed the term from Einstein's relativity theory. See: Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (pp. 84-258). University of Texas Press. This principle is explored fully in Chapter 4.
 8. Entanglement in quantum storytelling refers to non-local narrative correlations—how stories in one organizational location affect narratives in distant locations without obvious causal chains. This maps onto quantum entanglement where particles remain correlated across space. We explore this fully in Chapter 5.
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Additional Resources

For deeper understanding of storytelling organizations and the Observer Effect:

Boje, D. M. (1991). The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(1), 106-126. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2393432>

Boje, D. M. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*. Sage Publications. Available at: <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/narrative-methods-for-organizational-communication-research/book210248>

Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Sage Publications. The definitive text on how organizations exist as ongoing narrative accomplishments rather than static structures.

For understanding the Copenhagen Interpretation and Observer Effect:

Heisenberg, W. (1958). *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*. Harper & Row. Heisenberg's own explanation of quantum mechanics and its philosophical implications.

Bohr, N. (1958). *Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge*. Wiley. Bohr's accessible explanation of complementarity and the role of observation in quantum mechanics.

End of Chapter 1

Next: Chapter 2 - Superposition: Why Your Organization Exists in Multiple Story-States Simultaneously

Chapter 2: Superposition

Why Your Organization Exists in Multiple Story-States Simultaneously (And Why That's Your Strategic Advantage)

Principle 2: Superposition—Every organization exists in multiple narrative states simultaneously until leadership "measurement" collapses them into one actualized story. The strategic question isn't whether multiple stories exist, but which stories you're making visible and which you're driving underground.

Application: Before forcing "narrative alignment," map your organization's superposition field. Identify which story-states exist, where they live, who voices them, and what conditions would make them productively coexist rather than destructively contradict. Use this map to stage interventions that honor multiplicity instead of imposing false unity.

The Chief Marketing Officer was frustrated. She'd spent three months developing what she thought was a crystal-clear brand narrative for her company: "We're the accessible luxury option—premium quality without the premium price." Every department head had signed off on it. The executive team loved it. The brand consultants praised its clarity.

Six months after launch, the narrative was in shambles. Sales was telling customers they were "the affordable alternative to luxury brands." Product development was building features that matched genuine luxury competitors, ignoring the "accessible" part. Customer service was caught in the middle, not knowing whether to apologize for prices being higher than discount brands or defend them as appropriate for quality. Marketing's social media voice didn't match the sales pitch, which didn't match the product roadmap, which didn't match what the CEO was telling investors.

"Why can't we get aligned?" she asked me. "Everyone agreed to the narrative. Why is everyone telling a different story?"

I had to tell her something that felt counterintuitive: Her organization wasn't failing to align. Her organization was successfully existing in narrative superposition—multiple valid story-states coexisting simultaneously—and her attempt to force collapse into one "official" story was creating more problems than it solved.

Welcome to quantum storytelling's second principle: Superposition. And once you understand it, you'll never think about organizational culture the same way again.

Schrödinger's Organization

In 1935, physicist Erwin Schrödinger proposed a thought experiment that became famous as "Schrödinger's Cat." Place a cat in a sealed box with a radioactive atom that has a fifty percent chance of decaying and triggering a poison. Quantum mechanics says that until you open the box

and observe, the atom exists in superposition—both decayed AND not decayed simultaneously. Which means the cat exists in superposition too—both alive AND dead—until observation collapses the wave function into one actuality.¹

Physicists have argued about this for ninety years. But here's what anyone who's worked in an organization knows intuitively: Organizations ARE Schrödinger's Cat. They exist in multiple contradictory states simultaneously until someone with authority "opens the box" and collapses the superposition through a decisive act of measurement.

Your company isn't "the accessible luxury brand" OR "the affordable alternative" OR "the premium quality leader." It's all of those simultaneously, existing in different departments, different customer conversations, different strategic documents, different employee mindsets. These aren't competing versions fighting for dominance. They're quantum superposition—multiple valid states coexisting in the same organizational space-time.

The question isn't how to eliminate this multiplicity. The question is how to work with it strategically.

The Three Types of Double-Voiced Discourse

Mikhail Bakhtin, writing in 1929 about Dostoevsky's novels, identified something that maps perfectly onto organizational superposition. He called it "double-voiced discourse"—utterances that contain two semantic intentions simultaneously.² Every time someone in your organization speaks, they're navigating multiple narrative layers: what they're saying, what they think you want to hear, what they actually believe, what their department's story demands, what the official corporate story requires, and what the shadow story whispers.

Bakhtin distinguished three types of double-voiced discourse that every consultant, coach, and HR professional needs to recognize:³

Type 1: Unidirectional Double-Voicing (Stylization). This is when someone adopts the official story but inflects it with their own meaning. The sales rep who says, "Yes, we're accessible luxury"—meaning it genuinely. The product manager who says, "Yes, we're accessible luxury"—meaning "premium quality that happens to cost less." The customer service rep who says, "Yes, we're accessible luxury"—meaning "we're trying to be both and satisfying neither." Same words. Three different semantic intentions. All coexisting in superposition.

Type 2: Varidirectional Double-Voicing (Parody). This is when someone voices the official story while signaling that they don't believe it. The engineer who says in the all-hands meeting, "We're absolutely committed to accessible luxury," with just enough ironic inflection that everyone on the engineering team knows he thinks it's marketing nonsense. The official story is voiced. The counter-story is present. Both exist simultaneously in the same utterance.

Type 3: The Sideward Glance. This is the most interesting—discourse that anticipates and incorporates the listener's potential reaction even while being spoken. The product manager pitching a feature who says, "I know this seems expensive for an 'accessible' brand, but the

quality demands it." She's voicing the premium story while simultaneously acknowledging the accessible story's judgment of her premium story. Both stories are active in the same sentence, held in productive tension.

Your organization operates in all three modes constantly. And traditional change management tries to eliminate Types 2 and 3, collapsing everyone into Type 1: unidirectional alignment with the official story. That's not just impossible. It's counterproductive.

To see how double-voiced discourse operates at the level of individual interaction—and how quickly it can collapse from brotherhood to betrayal—see the extended case study on Dostoevsky's "The Double" at the end of this chapter. Golyadkin's evening with his doppelgänger demonstrates superposition collapse in microcosm.

A Global Pharmaceutical Organization Case: When Superposition Saved the Initiative

Tanya Akins Cane was leading a digital accessibility transformation at ALPHA CORPORATION, the financial services company serving military members and their families. The official story was clear: "We're making our digital platforms accessible to comply with ADA requirements and serve disabled veterans better."

But Tanya recognized immediately that the organization existed in superposition around this initiative. She mapped at least five different story-states coexisting:

The Compliance Story: "We're doing this to avoid lawsuits and meet legal requirements." (Legal department, risk management, some executives)

The Mission Story: "We're doing this because it's the right thing for veterans who sacrificed for our country." (Some executives, veteran employee resource groups, front-line member services)

The Technical Story: "We're doing this to improve overall code quality and user experience design." (IT leadership, UX designers)

The Burden Story: "We're doing this even though it's expensive, time-consuming, and slows down other priorities." (Engineering teams, project managers, some product managers)

The Performative Story: "We're doing this to look good in diversity reports and marketing materials." (Cynical middle managers who'd seen initiatives come and go)

Most consultants would try to collapse this superposition into one unified story—probably the Mission Story, since it's most inspiring. Force everyone to "align" around serving disabled veterans. Declare the other stories invalid or cynical.

Tanya did something different. She created space for all five stories to coexist in what Bakhtin called genuine polyphony⁴—multiple valid voices without one dominating. She explicitly named

all five story-states in leadership meetings. She acknowledged that for some people, this WAS about compliance, and that was okay. For others, it was about mission, and that was equally valid. For others, it was technical improvement. All true. All valuable. All contributing different energy and motivation to the initiative.

Here's what happened: Instead of people having to secretly hold their "real" story while performing the official story, they could openly contribute from their actual narrative position. The compliance-focused people brought rigor around standards and legal requirements. The mission-focused people brought emotional energy and stakeholder engagement. The technically-focused people brought innovation in implementation. The burden-focused people brought realistic project planning and resource allocation.

The initiative succeeded faster and more thoroughly than anyone predicted. Not because Tanya forced narrative collapse into false unity. Because she mapped the superposition field and worked with its multiplicity strategically.

Tanya's superposition mapping prevented the kind of rapid narrative collapse that Dostoevsky illustrated in "The Double"—where goodwill inverts to cynicism in hours. See the extended case study for how such collapses unfold when superposition isn't recognized and managed.

Mapping Your Organization's Superposition Field

Here's where quantum storytelling gets practical. You can't work with narrative superposition if you can't see it. Most organizations have elaborate mechanisms for maintaining the fiction of unified culture—official values statements, brand guidelines, strategic narratives, culture surveys that force-rank attributes as if everyone experiences one culture.

These mechanisms don't eliminate superposition. They drive it underground.

Your job as leader, consultant, coach, or HR professional is to make superposition visible so you can work with it strategically. Here's how:

Step 1: Identify the Official Story-State

This is easy. It's in your strategy documents, your website's "About Us" page, your CEO's all-hands presentations, your recruiting materials. It's the story your organization tells itself and the world about who you are and what you're doing.

Write it down. One paragraph. "According to our official narrative, we are..."

Step 2: Listen for the Shadow Story-States

These are harder to find because they're not officially sanctioned. But they're everywhere if you listen right. Shadow stories live in:

- Break room conversations when leadership isn't present

- The gap between what people say in meetings vs. what they say afterward in the hallway
- Anonymous employee surveys (read the comments, not just the ratings)
- Exit interviews (especially from good performers who left voluntarily)
- Customer complaints that get dismissed as "not understanding our value proposition"
- Project post-mortems that never make it into official lessons learned

Don't judge these stories. Don't label them "cynical" or "negative" or "not aligned." They're data about superposition. They're story-states that exist simultaneously with the official story.

Write them down. As many as you can identify. "Another story-state in our organization is..."

Step 3: Map Where Each Story-State Lives

Superposition isn't uniform. Different story-states dominate in different organizational spaces, times, and social networks. This is what Bakhtin called the *chronotope*⁵—the time-space configuration where specific narratives can exist.

For each story-state you identified, map:

- **Where it's speakable:** Which departments, which meeting types, which communication channels?
- **When it's speakable:** What organizational moments make this story legitimate vs. illegitimate?
- **Who voices it:** Which roles, which levels, which social networks?
- **What makes it speakable/unspeakable:** What conditions allow this story vs. suppress it?

This is chronotope mapping in practice. You're identifying the specific time-space-social conditions where each narrative state can exist.

Step 4: Assess Superposition Type

Not all superposition is created equal. Some multiplicity is productive. Some is destructive. You need to distinguish:

Productive Superposition: Multiple story-states that genuinely see different aspects of organizational reality, contributing different valuable perspectives. Like the ALPHA CORPORATION case—compliance story, mission story, and technical story all contributed real value.

Contradictory Superposition: Story-states that directly contradict each other in ways that create genuine confusion about what's real. Like that CMO's brand narrative—"accessible luxury" became meaningless because different groups collapsed it into opposite meanings.

Parasitic Superposition: Story-states that exist primarily to undermine other stories without contributing alternative value. Pure cynicism, pure parody, pure resistance without alternative vision.

Most organizational superposition is a mix. Your job is assessing which story-states add value through multiplicity and which create destructive confusion.

Step 5: Design for Polyphonic Coexistence vs. Narrative Collapse

Now comes strategy. For each story-state, you have three options:

Option A: Let it remain in superposition. Some multiplicity should be preserved. The organization is richer, more adaptive, more resilient when multiple valid story-states coexist. Don't force collapse.

Option B: Facilitate polyphonic dialogue. Create spaces where contradictory story-states can be voiced simultaneously, heard genuinely, and held in productive tension. Not forced into agreement. Not one dominating the other. Both present, both informing action. This is genuine polyphony.

Option C: Strategic narrative collapse. Sometimes superposition IS destructive and needs decisive resolution. But do it consciously, recognizing you're making a choice about which stories will be legitimated and which will be driven underground. Make that choice strategically, not accidentally.

The art is knowing which option fits which story-state. That requires what we call superposition literacy—the ability to read organizational multiplicity and know what it needs.

The Vujade Assessment and Superposition Capacity

Here's where Doug Breckenridge and Monty Miller's work becomes invaluable. The Vujade Assessment⁶ measures something critical: your capacity to hold multiple narrative states simultaneously without collapsing them prematurely into false simplicity.

Low Vujade capacity: You see organizational contradictions as problems to eliminate. You push for "alignment" and "clarity" and "one unified message." You experience narrative multiplicity as threatening.

High Vujade capacity: You see organizational contradictions as data about superposition. You ask, "What makes both of these contradictory stories true from their respective positions?" You experience narrative multiplicity as strategic advantage.

The assessment shows you where you naturally collapse superposition (often unconsciously) and where you maintain it productively. It measures your comfort with uncertainty, your ability to hold paradox, your capacity for polyphonic thinking.

When I work with leadership teams, I have everyone take the Vujade Assessment before we do superposition mapping. It tells us who's going to push for premature collapse ("We need one clear message!") and who's going to maintain productive multiplicity ("Let's explore why both stories feel true to different groups."). Both tendencies have value. But you need to know your default pattern so you can choose differently when needed.

The Startup That Embraced Superposition

Let me give you a different kind of case study. A tech startup came to me with what the founders called "identity crisis." They'd discovered that different teams had completely different stories about what the company did:

- Engineering team: "We build infrastructure for data processing"
- Sales team: "We solve customer analytics problems"
- Founders: "We're changing how companies understand their users"
- Early customers: "We're the cheaper alternative to enterprise solutions"
- Investors: "We're the next-generation data platform"

Traditional startup advice: Pick one story. Get everyone aligned. Focus your positioning.

But when we mapped the superposition field, we discovered something fascinating. Each story-state was TRUE from its position and VALUABLE for its purpose. Engineering's infrastructure story motivated technical excellence. Sales' problem-solving story opened customer conversations. Founders' vision story attracted talent. Customer's affordability story drove adoption. Investors' platform story justified valuations.

The founders made a radical decision: instead of collapsing superposition into one "official" story, they created what they called a "polyphonic brand"—explicitly different stories for different audiences, with transparent acknowledgment that all were true from their respective positions.

On their website, they didn't hide this multiplicity. They showcased it: "Engineers see us as infrastructure. Sales teams see us as solutions. Customers see us as accessible. Investors see us as platforms. They're all right."

It sounds like it would create confusion. Instead, it created authenticity. Because everyone in every stakeholder group recognized their own experience in the multiplicity rather than being forced to adopt a story that didn't match their reality.

The company raised Series B funding with investors explicitly praising the "authentic, multifaceted vision" that didn't try to paper over real complexity. Different customers connected with different aspects of the story. Engineering hired better because the technical story was honored rather than subordinated to marketing fluff.

They didn't eliminate superposition. They architected it.⁷

When Superposition Becomes Destructive

I need to be clear about something: Not all superposition should be preserved. Sometimes narrative multiplicity IS destructive and needs resolution.

The test is this: Are the multiple story-states seeing different aspects of a complex reality (productive superposition), or are they contradicting each other in ways that make coherent action impossible (destructive superposition)?

That CMO's "accessible luxury" problem was destructive superposition. Sales couldn't simultaneously sell "affordable alternative" and "premium quality." Product couldn't simultaneously design for mass market and luxury expectations. The contradiction wasn't adding value through multiplicity—it was creating paralysis through incoherence.

In cases like this, strategic narrative collapse is necessary. But here's the key: Do it consciously, with full awareness of what you're collapsing and what you're driving underground.

That CMO eventually made a choice. After mapping the superposition field, she recognized that "accessible luxury" was trying to hold incompatible story-states together. She made a strategic decision: They would be the "premium value" brand—genuinely higher quality than mass market, genuinely lower price than luxury competitors, but not trying to be both accessible AND luxury simultaneously.

She didn't pretend this was neutral discovery of "what we really are." She acknowledged it was a strategic choice—collapsing narrative superposition in a specific direction, which would legitimate some stories (the value story, the quality story) and delegitimize others (the luxury positioning story, the mass market accessibility story).

Some people left. The ones who'd been telling the luxury story found themselves in a company that had collapsed into a different narrative state. That's okay. Not every person fits every story-state.

The organization became more coherent not because superposition was eliminated but because it was strategically collapsed in a direction that made coherent action possible.

EXTENDED CASE STUDY: The Golyadkin Effect

Dostoevsky's Double-Voiced Discourse in Modern Organizations

Reading Time: 20-25 minutes

Learning Objective: Understand how narrative superposition operates at the micro-level of individual interactions, and learn to recognize the warning signs of impending collapse.

Note: This case study examines the same evening from Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1846 novella *The Double* that we'll revisit in Chapter 6. Here in Chapter 2, we focus on **superposition dynamics**—how contradictory story-states coexist and collapse. In Chapter 6, we'll return to examine **polyphony dynamics**—why the collapse happened through monologic rather than dialogic interaction.

Case Overview

In 1846, Fyodor Dostoevsky published a novella called *The Double* that perfectly captures what happens in organizations when two contradictory stories exist at the same time—what quantum physicists call "superposition." The story follows Mr. Golyadkin, a mid-level government clerk who encounters his exact physical double. Within a single evening, Golyadkin's narrative about this relationship collapses from "we are brothers" to "this is a burlesque"—a complete disaster.

This case study examines that evening to help executives and coaches recognize when organizations are operating in dangerous narrative superposition: publicly championing one story while a shadow story festers underneath.

PART A: The Official Story - "We Are Brothers"

The Congenial Voice

When Golyadkin first meets his double (who shares his exact name: Yakov Petrovitch), he sees a victim who needs help. The double appears embarrassed, poor, and "crushed" by life's troubles. Golyadkin immediately adopts the role of generous patron and protector.

After dinner and several glasses of punch, Golyadkin's official narrative reaches its peak. He makes an unconditional promise of eternal partnership:

"You and I will take to each other like fish to the water, Yakov Petrovitch; we shall be like brothers; we'll be cunning, my dear fellow, we'll work together; we'll get up an intrigue, too, to pay them out."⁸

He even reassures his double about their strange physical similarity, saying it's simply nature's doing: "Mother Nature is liberal with her gifts, so there, brother Yasha!"⁹

Organizational Translation

This is the classic "official story" we hear in organizations:

- "We're all one team here"
- "We have an open-door policy"
- "We welcome diverse perspectives"
- "This reorganization will make us stronger together"

The language is warm, inclusive, and optimistic. Leaders genuinely believe it in the moment. But here's what makes this dangerous: **a second story is already forming.**

PART B: The Shadow Story - "This Is a Burlesque"

The Treacherous Voice Emerges

As Golyadkin prepares for bed, something shifts. He thinks to himself, "I've been over-excited and let myself go."¹⁰ This moment of self-reflection cracks open the door for what literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin calls the "treacherous role change in the double-voiced discourse."¹¹

Watch how rapidly the story collapses:

Stage 1 - Private Mockery: Golyadkin whispers to his sleeping guest: "Come, you must own, Yasha, you're a rascal, you know; what a way you've treated me!"¹²

Stage 2 - Internalized Ridicule: He talks to himself about his double: "You are drunk today, my dear fellow, Yakov Petrovitch, you rascal, you old Golyadkin... You'll be crying tomorrow, you know, you sniveller; what am I to do with you?"¹³

Stage 3 - Final Judgment: Standing over his sleeping guest, Golyadkin renders his verdict: "An unpleasant picture! A burlesque, a regular burlesque, and that's the fact of the matter!"¹⁴

In less than an hour, the story has completely inverted. The "brother" is now a "rascal" and a "sniveller." The natural gift has become a "burlesque"—a ridiculous farce.

Organizational Translation

This is the shadow story that runs beneath official messaging:

- "This new VP talks a good game, but they're clueless"
- "These 'culture values' are just HR speak"
- "Management has no idea what's really happening"
- "This change initiative is a joke—we'll just wait it out"

PART C: Understanding Narrative Superposition

Key Concept: Superposition

In quantum physics, superposition describes a state where a particle exists in multiple states simultaneously until it's observed—at which point it "collapses" into one definite state.¹⁵

In organizations, **narrative superposition** means two contradictory story-states coexist at the same time:

- The **official story** (what's said in meetings, town halls, and performance reviews)

- The **shadow story** (what's thought privately, whispered in hallways, or expressed through tone and body language)

Both stories are real. Both are happening. The question isn't whether the shadow story exists—it's **when it will collapse into the dominant reality**.

The Golyadkin Pattern in Organizations

The Official Story (Convivial) The Shadow Story (Tracherous)

"We're building a partnership" "They're taking advantage of us"

"We value all voices equally" "Leadership only listens to favorites"

"This is a growth opportunity" "This is a demotion in disguise"

"We're a collaborative culture" "It's every person for themselves"

The danger: **The official story often collapses much faster than leaders expect**. Just as Golyadkin moved from "brothers" to "burlesque" in a single evening, organizational trust can evaporate in a single meeting, email, or decision.

PART D: What Creates Narrative Collapse?

The Trigger Mechanism

In Golyadkin's case, the trigger was internal reflection combined with alcohol-fueled loss of inhibition. But the deeper cause was **cognitive dissonance**—the psychological discomfort of holding two contradictory beliefs simultaneously.¹⁶

Golyadkin wanted to be a generous patron (positive self-image), but he also felt suspicious and burdened (negative reality). The shadow story was always there; the punch just dissolved the filter keeping it hidden.

Organizational Triggers for Collapse:

1. **Resource Scarcity:** Budget cuts, layoffs, or competition for promotions force the shadow story to surface
2. **Broken Promises:** When stated values conflict with visible actions (e.g., "we value work-life balance" + weekend emails from executives)
3. **Authentic Moments:** Informal settings (after-work drinks, off-sites) where people drop their professional mask
4. **Crisis Pressure:** High-stakes situations reveal what people really believe vs. what they perform
5. **New Information:** Data that contradicts the official narrative (e.g., engagement scores, turnover rates, customer complaints)

PART E: Reading Double-Voiced Discourse

Key Concept: Double-Voiced Discourse (DVD)

Mikhail Bakhtin defined **double-voiced discourse** as an utterance that simultaneously carries two different, often conflicting, semantic intentions.¹⁷ It's a single statement speaking with two voices:

- **Voice 1:** The surface meaning (the official message)
- **Voice 2:** The hidden meaning (irony, parody, or critique)

Example from the Case:

When Golyadkin says "we shall be like brothers," he genuinely means it in that moment. But the way he frames their alliance—"we'll be cunning... we'll get up an intrigue, too, to pay them out"¹⁸—reveals his underlying suspicion and adversarial mindset. The supposedly generous offer is already laced with paranoia.

How to Spot DVD in Organizations:

Surface Statement	Possible Hidden Voice	Clue
"That's a great idea!"	"This will never work"	Flat tone, no follow-up questions
"I'm happy to take that on"	"I'm drowning in work already"	Hesitation, sighing, delayed response
"We're all aligned"	"We fundamentally disagree"	Rushed agreement, no discussion
"Let me think about it"	"Absolutely not"	Polite deflection with no timeline

PART F: Practitioner Implications

For Executives:

1. Assume Superposition Exists

- Stop trying to force "alignment." Instead, acknowledge that multiple story-states coexist
- Ask: "What's the official story about this change? What's the shadow story?"
- Create safe spaces for the shadow story to emerge before it collapses destructively

2. Monitor for Collapse Triggers

- Pay attention when decisions involve resource allocation, promotions, or strategic pivots
- Watch for increased cynicism, disengagement, or "malicious compliance"
- Notice when people perform agreement without genuine dialogue

3. Lead with Transparent Ambivalence

- Model comfort with contradiction: "This change is both exciting AND disruptive"
- Acknowledge the shadow story directly: "I know some of you are skeptical about this initiative. Let's talk about why."
- Avoid toxic positivity that denies legitimate concerns

For Coaches and Consultants:

1. Teach Superposition Mapping Help leaders create a simple two-column map:

- Left column: "What we say publicly"
- Right column: "What people might be thinking/saying privately"

This isn't about exposing hypocrisy—it's about developing **narrative literacy**.

2. Practice DVD Detection Train teams to notice mismatches between:

- Stated enthusiasm vs. body language
- Meeting behavior vs. hallway conversations
- Written commitments vs. actual resource allocation

3. Facilitate Collapse Conversations When shadow stories emerge, don't suppress them. Instead:

- Name the contradiction without judgment
- Explore what needs are being expressed through each story
- Co-create a third story that honors both truths

PART G: Reflection Questions for Practitioners

For Self-Assessment:

1. Think of a recent change initiative. What was the official story leadership communicated? What shadow story did you hear (or tell yourself)?
2. When have you personally experienced rapid narrative collapse—moving from optimism to cynicism about a project, relationship, or strategy? What triggered it?
3. In your current role, where are you performing the official story while privately holding a contradictory view? What would it cost to voice the shadow story? What does it cost to keep hiding it?

For Team Discussion:

4. What are three official organizational narratives in your company (about culture, values, or strategy)? For each one, what shadow story might coexist?
5. When has your team experienced a "Golyadkin moment"—where goodwill suddenly inverted into cynicism or mockery? What triggered that collapse?

6. How does your organization typically respond when shadow stories surface? Suppression? Denial? Exploration?

For Strategic Planning:

7. Before launching a change initiative, how might you surface shadow stories **before** they collapse destructively?
8. What structural conditions in your organization make it unsafe to voice contradictory perspectives? (Hierarchy? Performance reviews? Cultural norms?)
9. How could you design meetings or processes that allow superposition to exist productively—where contradictory truths can coexist without immediate resolution?

Key Takeaway for Superposition

The Golyadkin case teaches us that **organizational narratives exist in superposition—multiple story-states simultaneously true until forced to collapse**. The official story and the shadow story are both real. Leaders who pretend only the official story exists are like Golyadkin at the beginning of the evening: blindly optimistic and headed for disaster.

The skill isn't eliminating shadow stories. It's **learning to read them, respect them, and create conditions where they can coexist without destructive collapse**.

As organizational storytelling scholar David Boje notes, Golyadkin's word particles "move from one mouth to another's, in the content, tone, and meaning of the conversational storytelling."¹⁹ Leaders speak with more than their words—their hidden suspicions, doubts, and ridicule leak through tone, pacing, and micro-expressions. Employees read these quantum signals even when the official story sounds supportive.

The question isn't whether your organization has shadow stories. The question is: What will trigger their collapse, and will you be ready?

Connection to Chapter 6: This same evening reveals a second critical dynamic: the failure of genuine dialogue. While superposition explains *what* happened (two contradictory stories collapsing), polyphony explains *why* it happened (one voice attempting to dominate and objectify the other). We'll return to Golyadkin's story in Chapter 6 to explore how his inability to maintain polyphonic dialogue made the superposition collapse inevitable.

Your Superposition Mapping Exercise

Before you move to the next chapter, you need to map your organization's superposition field. This isn't optional. If you don't know what story-states exist in your organization, you're navigating blind.

Get a large sheet of paper or whiteboard. You'll need space.

Step 1: Write the official story in the center. "According to our official narrative, we are..."

Step 2: Around the perimeter, write every shadow story-state you can identify. Use the listening practices from Step 2 above. Don't judge. Don't label. Just capture the multiplicity.

Step 3: For each story-state, draw a chronotope map:

- Where is this story speakable? (physical locations, meeting types, communication channels)
- When is this story speakable? (organizational moments, phases, conditions)
- Who voices this story? (roles, levels, networks)

Step 4: Draw lines connecting story-states that:

- Support each other (productive multiplicity)
- Contradict each other (need polyphonic dialogue or strategic collapse)
- Parasitize each other (pure opposition without alternative value)

Step 5: For each story-state, make strategic choice:

- **Preserve in superposition:** Creates valuable multiplicity
- **Facilitate polyphonic dialogue:** Contradictory but both valid
- **Strategic collapse:** Destructive contradiction requiring resolution

This exercise takes two to three hours done thoroughly. Don't rush it. The quality of your superposition map determines the quality of your transformation strategy.

And here's the thing: You can't do this alone. Superposition is invisible from any single observation position. You need multiple observers reporting what they see from their positions.

Bring your leadership team. Bring representatives from different departments. Use the Vujade Assessment to understand each person's superposition literacy. Then map together, with everyone contributing the story-states they see from their position.

The map itself becomes an intervention. Because the moment you make organizational superposition visible, you've changed the organization. People who thought they were crazy for seeing contradictions suddenly realize everyone sees contradictions—just different ones from different positions. That shared recognition of multiplicity creates new possibilities for working with it.

The Paradox of Superposition Strategy

Here's the paradox that makes some leaders uncomfortable and sets others free: The goal of superposition mapping isn't to eliminate multiplicity. It's to make multiplicity workable.

Organizations that try to force everyone into one story-state become brittle, fragile, vulnerable to disruption. Because reality is multiple, contradictory, shifting. A single story can't hold it all. When the story breaks—and it will—the organization shatters.

Organizations that maintain productive superposition become resilient, adaptive, anti-fragile.²⁰ Because they're already holding multiple truths simultaneously. When conditions change, they don't have to rebuild from one collapsed story. They shift emphasis from one story-state to another already present in their superposition field.

This is quantum organizational strategy. Not eliminating uncertainty and multiplicity. Not forcing false unity. But maintaining productive superposition where multiple valid stories coexist, inform each other, and create resilience through multiplicity.

The next chapter explores Principle 3: Wave-Particle Duality—how organizational narratives exist as flowing possibilities until specific decisions crystallize them into actualities, and how you can learn to work with both wave-state fluidity and particle-state commitment.

But first, take the Vujade Assessment if you haven't already. It's free when you mention "Quantum" at vujade.ai. It will show you your superposition capacity—whether you naturally preserve multiplicity or collapse it, an

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Continue

d what that means for your leadership, consulting, or coaching practice.

Because here's what thirty years of studying storytelling organizations has taught me: The organizations that thrive aren't the ones with the clearest single narrative. They're the ones that can hold multiple narratives simultaneously without falling apart.

That's not chaos. That's quantum organizational intelligence.

And it's learnable.

APPENDIX C (CHAPTER 2): Superposition Conversation Starters

Use these prompts to facilitate discussions about narrative superposition:

Opening Prompt:

"We just read the case of Mr. Golyadkin, who moved from 'we are brothers' to 'this is a burlesque' in a single evening. Let's talk about times we've seen that pattern in our organization—where goodwill collapsed surprisingly fast."

Superposition Questions:

1. "What's our official story about [specific initiative/value]? What might the shadow story be?"

- Give people permission to voice the unspoken
- Create two-column format: Official Story | Shadow Story
- Don't judge or dismiss—just map the multiplicity

2. "When have we seen narrative collapse happen here? What triggered it?"

- Learn from past collapses to predict future ones
- Identify the organizational "Golyadkin moments"
- Map the triggers: resource scarcity, broken promises, crisis pressure

3. "Where are we currently operating in superposition—where contradictory stories coexist?"

- Surface current tensions before they explode
- Identify which superpositions are productive vs. destructive
- Assess whether they need preservation, dialogue, or collapse

4. "What conditions make shadow stories speakable vs. unspeakable in our organization?"

- Explore chronotopic factors (time, space, social configuration)
- Identify structural barriers to narrative honesty
- Design interventions that make productive dialogue possible

5. "How do we know when superposition has shifted from productive multiplicity to destructive contradiction?"

- Develop criteria for assessment
- Practice distinguishing types of superposition
- Build capacity for strategic collapse decisions

6. "What would happen if we explicitly named and worked with our superposition rather than pretending alignment exists?"

- Explore the risks and benefits of transparency
 - Consider the ALPHA CORPORATION case where naming multiplicity enabled success
 - Design a pilot experiment in one domain
-

Learn More

Take the Vujade Assessment (free with code "Quantum"): vujade.ai

Access superposition mapping templates and tools: quantumstorytelling.org/superposition

Join the Monday GrowthOD sessions for live superposition mapping practice: growthod.org

Quantum Coaching Sprint—Module 2 focuses on superposition literacy:
quantumstorytelling.org/sprint

Connect with the authors:

- David Boje: dboje@nmsu.edu
- Tanya Akins Cane: [LinkedIn/tdakinscane](#)

Endnotes for Chapter 2

1. Schrödinger, E. (1935). Die gegenwärtige Situation in der Quantenmechanik [The present situation in quantum mechanics]. *Naturwissenschaften*, 23(48), 807-812. The famous "Schrödinger's Cat" thought experiment was designed to show the absurdity of quantum superposition at macroscopic scales, but ironically became the defining metaphor for quantum mechanics itself.
2. Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press, pp. 185-204. Bakhtin's analysis of double-voiced discourse provides the theoretical foundation for understanding how organizations maintain multiple narrative states simultaneously.
3. Ibid., pp. 199-204. Bakhtin distinguishes three types of double-voiced discourse in remarkable detail, showing how utterances can contain multiple semantic intentions without collapsing into single meanings. This directly parallels quantum superposition in organizational narratives.
4. Ibid., p. 6. Bakhtin defines polyphony as "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices." This is the organizational equivalent of maintaining quantum superposition rather than forcing premature collapse. See Chapter 6 for full exploration of polyphony.
5. Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (M. Holquist, Ed., C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans., pp. 84-258). University of Texas Press. Bakhtin explicitly borrowed "chronotope" from Einstein's relativity theory to describe the inseparability of time and space in narrative. See Chapter 4 for full exploration of spacetimemattering.

6. The Vujade Assessment, co-created by Doug Breckenridge and Dr. Monty G. Miller, measures capacity to see familiar patterns with fresh eyes—essential for maintaining superposition rather than collapsing into habitual interpretations. Learn more at vujade.ai.
7. "Architecting superposition" is a quantum storytelling practice of deliberately designing organizational narrative structures that maintain productive multiplicity rather than forcing false unity. See: Boje, D. M. (1995). Stories of the storytelling organization: A postmodern analysis of Disney as 'Tamara-Land.' *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(4), 997-1035. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/256618>
8. Dostoevsky, F. (1846/2014). *The Double*. In *The Gambler and Other Stories* (C. Garnett, Trans.), Chapter VII, p. 270-271. Project Gutenberg.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 271.
11. Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.), p. 216-217. University of Minnesota Press.
https://monoskop.org/images/1/1d/Bakhtin_Mikhail_Problems_of_Dostoevskys_Poetics_1984.pdf
12. Dostoevsky, Chapter VII, p. 271.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. The concept of superposition originates in quantum mechanics, most famously illustrated by Schrödinger's cat thought experiment, where a cat in a sealed box exists simultaneously in both alive and dead states until observed. See: Schrödinger, E. (1935). "Die gegenwärtige Situation in der Quantenmechanik" [The present situation in quantum mechanics]. *Naturwissenschaften*, 23(48), 807-812.
16. Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford University Press. Festinger's theory explains the psychological tension that arises when holding contradictory beliefs, leading to behavioral changes to reduce discomfort.
17. Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 185-204. Bakhtin identifies three types of double-voiced discourse: unidirectional (stylization), varidirectional (parody), and active (hidden polemic). Golyadkin's shift represents varidirectional double-voicing, where the second voice actively contradicts the first.
18. Dostoevsky, Chapter VII, p. 270-271.

19. Boje, D. M. (2025). Analysis of Dostoevsky's *The Double*. In *The Melody That Keeps People Afloat: Quantum Storytelling for Organizational Transformation* (manuscript). This analysis appears in the uploaded document "David Boje analyzes the use of the Double by Fyodor Dostoevsky."
 20. Taleb, N. N. (2012). *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*. Random House. Taleb's concept of antifragility—systems that benefit from stress and volatility—maps onto organizations that maintain narrative superposition. Multiplicity creates resilience.
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Additional Resources

For deeper understanding of storytelling organizations and narrative superposition:

Boje, D. M. (1991). The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(1), 106-126. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2393432>

Boje, D. M. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*. Sage Publications. Available at: <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/narrative-methods-for-organizational-communication-research/book210248>

Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Sage Publications. The definitive text on how organizations exist as ongoing narrative accomplishments rather than static structures.

For understanding polyphony and dialogism in organizational contexts:

Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press. Available at: https://monoskop.org/Mikhail_Bakhtin

For understanding quantum superposition:

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press. Barad's concept of "intra-action" describes how observation isn't a neutral act but creates the reality being observed—directly relevant to how leaders' observations shape organizational narrative superposition.

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Sage Publications. Weick's sensemaking theory describes how people create reality through the narratives they tell about ambiguous situations—connecting directly to the superposition concept.

End of Chapter 2

Next: Chapter 3 - Wave-Particle Duality: When to Let Stories Flow and When to Make Them Crystallize

Chapter 3: Wave-Particle Duality

When to Let Stories Flow and When to Make Them Crystallize

Principle 3: Wave-Particle Duality—Organizational narratives exist in two states: as flowing possibilities (wave state) where multiple futures remain open, and as crystallized actualities (particle state) where specific commitments are made. Leaders who only work with particle states kill organizational adaptability. Leaders who only maintain wave states paralyze decision-making. Mastery means knowing when to preserve flow and when to trigger collapse.

Application: Before making "strategic decisions," assess whether your organization needs more wave-state exploration (keeping possibilities open) or particle-state commitment (crystallizing direction). Use chronotopic staging to create the conditions where the right collapse happens at the right moment, rather than forcing premature crystallization or allowing endless deferral.

The CEO of a regional healthcare system was proud of his collaborative leadership style. Every major decision went through extensive stakeholder engagement—months of meetings, committees studying the issue, input sessions with staff at all levels, revision after revision of proposals based on feedback. He saw this as honoring multiple voices, building consensus, ensuring buy-in.

But the organization was dying. Market share was shrinking. Talented people were leaving. Competitors were moving faster. And in our coaching conversations, the same phrase kept appearing in different forms: "We can't get anything decided around here."

One physician told me, "We've been 'exploring options' for electronic health records for three years. Every time we get close to a decision, someone raises a new concern, and we go back to studying alternatives. Meanwhile, our paper-based system is costing us patients and driving staff crazy."

The CEO thought he was being polyphonic—maintaining multiple narrative voices. Actually, he was trapped in permanent wave state, unable to collapse possibility into actuality. The organization needed particle-state commitment, and he couldn't pull the trigger.

Six months later, I worked with a different CEO at a manufacturing company. She had the opposite problem. Every strategic question got answered with swift, decisive action. No endless committees. No paralysis by analysis. Just clear decisions and immediate implementation.

But the decisions kept being wrong. The company lurched from one "strategic pivot" to another, each announced with great confidence, each abandoned within months when it became clear the direction wasn't working. Employees were whipsawed between contradictory initiatives. "We

don't take time to explore possibilities," one manager told me. "We just make decisions and start executing, even when we don't really understand the problem yet."

She was trapped in permanent particle state—collapsing wave functions prematurely, crystallizing commitment before enough exploration had happened. The organization needed more wave-state flow, more time for possibilities to emerge, but she couldn't stand the ambiguity.

Two leaders. Opposite problems. Same underlying issue: Neither understood wave-particle duality.

The Quantum Melody: Flow and Crystallization

In quantum mechanics, particles exhibit wave-particle duality—they behave as waves of possibility until measurement forces them into particle-state actuality.¹ Before measurement, an electron exists as a probability wave spread across space. The measurement doesn't discover where it is. The measurement collapses the wave function, forcing the electron to "choose" a position.

But here's what makes this fascinating for organizational storytelling: The wave state and particle state aren't just different descriptions of the same thing. They're fundamentally different modes of existence, and you can't have both simultaneously. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle proved that measuring position (particle property) necessarily introduces uncertainty in momentum (wave property).² The more precisely you know where something is, the less you know about where it's going. The more you pin down current state, the less you can predict future motion.

Organizations are exactly the same. Strategic narratives exist in wave state—flowing, multiple, exploratory, open to possibilities—until leadership collapses them into particle state through decisive commitments: budget allocations, organizational restructures, product launches, market positioning, staffing decisions. These collapses are necessary. An organization in permanent wave state never acts. But premature collapse kills the exploration that makes wise action possible.

The quantum storytelling skill is knowing which state your organization needs at any given chronotopic moment,³ and how to shift between them without getting stuck in either.

Think of it as musical melody. A melody exists in time—flowing, developing, exploring harmonic possibilities. But eventually it must resolve to a tonic, a point of crystallization where the musical journey arrives somewhere definite. A melody that never resolves feels unfinished, suspended, frustrating. But a melody that crystallizes too quickly, before sufficient development, feels shallow and unsatisfying.

Organizations need both: the wave-state melody of exploration and the particle-state resolution of commitment. The art is timing the transitions.

Tamara-Land: Where Multiple Melodies Play Simultaneously

In 1995, I published research on Disney as what I called "Tamara-Land"⁴—an organizational form where multiple stories unfold simultaneously in different spaces, and you can't experience all of them at once. The name comes from a theatrical performance called "Tamara" where the audience moves between rooms, following different characters, experiencing different narrative threads, knowing that other stories are happening in rooms they're not in.

Disney theme parks operate this way. The Pirates of the Caribbean experience is one narrative thread. Space Mountain is another. Main Street USA is another. They're happening simultaneously, each complete in itself, but you can only experience one at a time. Your Disney experience is the particular path you trace through this multiplicity.

At the time, I was analyzing this through postmodern narrative theory. But looking back with quantum storytelling eyes, I see something I didn't fully articulate then: Tamara-Land is organizational wave function made visible.

Each experience at Disney—each ride, each show, each interaction with a character—exists in wave state as possibility until you, the guest, collapse it into actuality by choosing that path. Before you enter Pirates of the Caribbean, it exists for you as one possibility among many. The moment you enter, you collapse that wave function—this becomes your actualized experience while other possibilities remain unrealized.

But here's the crucial insight: The other possibilities don't disappear. They remain in wave state, potentially accessible to other guests, or to you later if you return. The organizational narrative field maintains multiple story-threads in superposition, allowing different guests to collapse different possibilities into their own actualized experiences.

This is quantum organizational design: maintaining rich wave-state multiplicity while allowing particle-state collapse at the point of individual experience.

Most organizations don't design for this. They try to force everyone through the same experience, collapsing all possibilities into one mandatory narrative. That's not quantum organizational intelligence. That's Newtonian control fantasy.

Nike and the Sweatshop Narrative: When Particles Become Waves Again

Let me show you wave-particle duality in organizational crisis. In the 1990s, Nike faced intense criticism about labor conditions in their overseas factories. For years, Nike had operated with a crystallized particle-state narrative: "We're a design and marketing company. Manufacturing is outsourced to independent contractors. Their labor practices aren't our responsibility."

That was particle state—a clear, definite position that made certain organizational actions possible (outsourcing) and certain conversations unnecessary (direct involvement in factory conditions).

But pressure from activists, journalists, and consumers forced that particle back into wave state. The crystallized narrative dissolved. Suddenly, multiple possible stories about Nike's relationship

to factory workers existed simultaneously: "We're responsible for their conditions." "We're not responsible but should be." "We're victims of unfair criticism." "We're complicit in exploitation." "We're making improvements but it takes time." "We're fundamentally restructuring our supply chain."

Nike spent years in this wave state—multiple narratives in flux, no clear particle-state resolution. Different spokespeople articulated different stories. Different divisions took different approaches. The corporate communications were contradictory because the underlying narrative was still in wave function.

Eventually, Nike crystallized a new particle state: public commitment to supply chain transparency, independent auditing, and direct involvement in improving factory conditions. That collapse from wave state exploration to particle state commitment wasn't instantaneous. It took years of exploring possibilities, testing approaches, experiencing failures, learning from criticism.

Could Nike have collapsed sooner into a clear position? Yes. But premature collapse might have crystallized the wrong narrative—either continued denial or unsustainable promises. The wave state, uncomfortable as it was, allowed multiple approaches to develop until one emerged that could actually be sustained.

This is organizational wave-particle duality in action. Crisis dissolved a crystallized narrative back into wave state. Extended exploration in wave state allowed new possibilities to emerge. Strategic collapse crystallized a new particle-state commitment that became the new organizational reality.

The lesson: Sometimes you need to dissolve particle states back into wave state before new crystallization can happen.⁵

Chronotopic Staging: Creating Conditions for Collapse

Bakhtin's concept of chronotope—the inseparability of time and space in narrative⁶—becomes crucial for understanding when and how to collapse organizational wave functions. A story doesn't just happen "in" time and space. The time-space configuration is part of what makes the story possible or impossible.

In organizations, this means certain narratives can only crystallize in certain chronotopic moments. You cannot force particle-state collapse at the wrong time-space junction. The wave function won't cooperate.

Let me give you a specific example. I was consulting with a nonprofit addressing homelessness. They'd been "developing a new strategic direction" for eighteen months—classic stuck-in-wave-state problem. Endless meetings exploring possibilities, but no crystallization into commitment.

But here's what I observed: Every time they got close to decision, they were in their regular conference room, during regular business hours, with the same people sitting in the same chairs

having the same conversations. The chronotope wasn't allowing collapse. The time-space configuration kept reproducing wave-state exploration without creating conditions for particle-state resolution.

I suggested something radical: Change the chronotope. Don't have the next meeting in the conference room. Go to an actual site where homeless individuals gather. Make the meeting happen not during business hours but at the chronotopic moment when your stakeholders are actually experiencing the problem you're trying to solve.

They resisted initially—seemed inefficient, uncomfortable, unprofessional. But they tried it. Board members, staff, and clients met at 6:00 PM in a park where homeless individuals congregated. The conversation was different. The stories that emerged were different. And within ninety minutes, a strategic direction crystallized that had eluded them for eighteen months of conference room meetings.

The chronotope made the difference. Same people. Same issues. Different time-space configuration. The wave function collapsed because the chronotopic conditions finally allowed it.

This is what I mean by chronotopic staging—deliberately creating the time-space conditions where the organizational narrative can shift from wave state to particle state, or vice versa.

McDonald's and Dialogism: The Polyphonic Organization

In my research on McDonald's,⁷ I analyzed how a single organization maintains radically different narrative states across its global operations. McDonald's corporate headquarters operates in one story-world. Individual franchises operate in different story-worlds. Customers experience yet another story-world. Employees live in still different narrative realities.

What fascinated me was how McDonald's doesn't try to collapse this multiplicity into false unity. Corporate doesn't force franchises to reproduce the headquarters narrative exactly. Franchises have enormous latitude to adapt to local conditions, local tastes, local chronotopes. The McDonald's you experience in Mumbai exists in a different narrative state than the McDonald's in Montana.

This is wave-particle duality at organizational scale. The McDonald's brand exists in wave state—a probability field of possible actualizations. Each individual restaurant collapses that wave function into particle-state reality appropriate to its specific chronotope. But the wave state—the field of brand possibility—remains available for other restaurants to collapse differently.

The brilliance is maintaining both simultaneously: strong wave-state brand identity (the flowing possibility field) AND location-specific particle-state actualization (the crystallized local reality). Most global organizations fail at this. They either maintain such rigid particle state that they can't adapt locally (collapse the wave function identically everywhere), or they allow such diffuse wave state that brand coherence disappears (never collapse at all).

McDonald's found the quantum sweet spot: wave AND particle, flow AND crystallization, exploration AND commitment—with the wisdom to know which is needed when.

The Vujade Moment: Seeing Crystallization Before It Happens

Doug Breckenridge and Monty Miller's Vujade Assessment⁸ measures something critical for wave-particle mastery: your ability to recognize when organizational narratives are shifting state.

Low Vujade capacity means you don't see state transitions until they've already happened. You're surprised when the flowing exploration you thought you were leading suddenly crystallizes into commitment (often around something you didn't intend). Or you're surprised when the clear decision you thought you'd made dissolves back into wave state as people reopen questions you thought were settled.

High Vujade capacity means you can read the organizational field and sense when wave state is ready to collapse, or when particle state is about to dissolve. You feel the chronotopic moment approaching when crystallization becomes possible. You recognize when forced collapse will fail because the wave state isn't ready. You sense when maintaining wave state has shifted from productive exploration to destructive deferral.

This isn't mystical intuition. It's pattern recognition, honed through practice and measured through assessment. The Vujade framework trains you to see the subtle signals:

Signs wave state is ready to collapse into particle state:

- Conversations that were expansive become repetitive
- New possibilities stop emerging, existing ones just recombine
- Energy shifts from excitement about exploration to frustration about lack of closure
- People start asking "So what are we actually going to do?" instead of "What else might we consider?"
- The chronotope feels ripe—the right time-space conditions have aligned

Signs particle state is ready to dissolve back into wave state:

- The crystallized commitment isn't working but people keep defending it
- New information contradicts the decided direction but gets dismissed to maintain consistency
- Energy shifts from confidence in the decision to anxiety about its consequences
- People start telling shadow stories that contradict the official narrative
- The chronotope has shifted—the time-space conditions that allowed that collapse no longer apply

When you can read these signals, you can work with organizational state transitions instead of being surprised by them.

The Two-CEO Problem Revisited: Intervention Points

Remember our two CEOs? The one trapped in permanent wave state, the one trapped in permanent particle state? Once I helped them understand wave-particle duality, we could identify specific intervention points.

For the wave-state-trapped CEO (the collaborative leader who couldn't decide):

Intervention 1: Set chronotopic deadlines for collapse. Not arbitrary time deadlines ("We'll decide by March 1") but chronotopic moments ("We'll decide after we've gathered input from these three stakeholder groups, tested these two prototypes, and seen one quarter of data"). The deadline isn't temporal—it's based on the conditions needed for wise collapse.

Intervention 2: Recognize the cost of maintaining wave state. He thought endless exploration was free. It's not. Every day in wave state is a day competitors are acting in particle state. Every month of "gathering more input" is a month of organizational energy spent on process rather than action. Wave state has value, but it has cost. Make the cost visible.

Intervention 3: Practice small collapses. He was afraid of big particle-state commitments because he'd seen them go wrong. So we practiced with smaller decisions. Collapse a wave function on something lower-stakes. Experience that particle state isn't permanent—you can always dissolve back into wave state if needed. Build confidence that collapse doesn't have to be catastrophic.

Within six months, he'd made three significant strategic decisions that had been trapped in wave state for years. The organization began moving again.

For the particle-state-trapped CEO (the decisive leader who kept being wrong):

Intervention 1: Force wave-state exploration before collapse. We created a rule: No strategic decision until we've identified at least five genuinely different possibilities and explored the chronotopic conditions under which each would succeed. This kept her from collapsing too quickly to the first option that felt decisive.

Intervention 2: Recognize premature collapse. She thought quick decisions demonstrated leadership strength. But when you collapse the wave function before sufficient exploration, you're not deciding wisely—you're deciding blindly. We tracked her "strategic pivots" and calculated the cost of premature crystallization: wasted resources, organizational whiplash, lost credibility. The data was sobering.

Intervention 3: Build comfort with ambiguity. Her discomfort with wave state was driving premature collapse. We used the Vujade Assessment to measure her tolerance for narrative uncertainty, then deliberately practiced staying in wave state longer than felt comfortable. Not forever—just long enough for real possibilities to emerge.

Within six months, her strategic decisions were succeeding more often because they were based on genuine exploration rather than reflexive crystallization.

Same quantum principle. Opposite applications. Both leaders needed wave-particle literacy.

Your Wave-Particle Audit

Here's your diagnostic before we move to the next chapter. This isn't hypothetical. This is practical assessment of your current organizational state and your personal tendencies.

Part 1: Assess Your Organization's Current State

For each major initiative, project, or strategic question currently active in your organization, answer:

1. Is this initiative currently in wave state (possibilities still flowing, exploration ongoing, no crystallized commitment) or particle state (clear decision made, resources committed, implementation underway)?
2. How long has it been in this state?
3. Is that timeline appropriate, or is the initiative stuck?
4. If stuck in wave state: What chronotopic conditions would allow collapse? What's preventing those conditions from occurring?
5. If stuck in particle state: Is the commitment still serving, or has the chronotope shifted making that particle state obsolete? If obsolete, what would it take to dissolve back into wave state?

Do this for at least five significant organizational questions. You'll see patterns.

Part 2: Assess Your Personal Tendencies

Answer honestly:

1. When faced with organizational decisions, do you tend to maintain wave state too long (seeking more input, exploring more options, deferring commitment) or collapse to particle state too quickly (making decisions before sufficient exploration)?
2. Think of a decision you made in the last six months that didn't work out. Was it because you collapsed too quickly (premature particle state) or committed too late (stuck in wave state)?
3. When someone reopens a question you thought was decided, do you experience it as productive dissolution back into wave state, or as frustrating resistance to your authority?
4. When someone pushes for decision before you feel ready, do you experience it as helpful pressure to collapse, or as dangerous rushing of the process?

Your answers reveal your default pattern. Neither extreme is wrong—both wave maintenance and particle collapse are necessary. But if you always default to one state, you need to develop capacity for the other.

Part 3: The Chronotope Mapping

For the most important stuck decision in your organization right now, map:

Wave-State Chronotopes: Where and when does exploration happen? Who participates? What makes possibilities speakable in those time-space configurations?

Particle-State Chronotopes: Where and when have successful crystallizations happened in your organization? What chronotopic conditions allowed collapse?

Stuck Chronotopes: Where and when are you currently trying to resolve this decision? Is that chronotope allowing the state transition you need, or reproducing the stuck pattern?

Then experiment: Change the chronotope. Move the conversation to a different time-space configuration. See if that allows the state transition that's been eluding you.

The Collapse That Isn't Permanent

Here's the liberating truth about wave-particle duality that most leaders miss: Particle state isn't permanent. Decisions can be unmade. Commitments can be revised. Crystallized narratives can dissolve back into wave state when chronotopic conditions change.

This terrifies leaders who think decisiveness means never revisiting decisions. But quantum organizational intelligence recognizes that particle states are chronotopically contingent. A crystallized commitment that made sense in one time-space configuration may need to dissolve when that configuration shifts.

The skill isn't making perfect particle-state decisions that never need revision. The skill is recognizing when particle state is serving and when it needs to dissolve back into wave state for fresh exploration.

COVID-19 demonstrated this at global scale. Organizations that had crystallized elaborate particle-state commitments—office locations, work schedules, collaboration processes, performance metrics—suddenly found all those particles dissolving back into wave state. The chronotope shifted so radically that existing commitments couldn't hold.

Organizations that could rapidly shift from particle to wave, explore new possibilities, and collapse into new particle states thrived. Organizations that tried to maintain obsolete particle states, or stayed in wave state too long, struggled.

That's the quantum melody: flow and crystallization, wave and particle, exploration and commitment, always in motion, always responsive to chronotopic conditions, never permanently stuck in either state.

The next chapter explores Principle 4: Spacetimemattering—how organizational stories don't exist "in" space and time but as configurations of space-time-matter that you can learn to read and shape.

But first, take the Vujade Assessment if you haven't already. Use the code "Quantum" for free access at vujade.ai. It will show you your wave-particle tendencies, your chronotopic reading capacity, and where you need to develop capability.

Because here's what decades of research has taught me: Organizations don't fail because they make wrong decisions. They fail because they can't shift between wave and particle states appropriately.

Learn that quantum skill, and everything else becomes possible.

Learn More

Take the Vujade Assessment (free with code "Quantum"): vujade.ai

Access wave-particle state assessment tools and chronotope mapping templates:
quantumstorytelling.org/wave-particle

Join Monday GrowthOD sessions for live wave-particle dynamics practice: growthod.org

Quantum Coaching Sprint—Module 3 focuses on wave-particle mastery:
quantumstorytelling.org/sprint

Endnotes for Chapter 3

1. Wave-particle duality was first demonstrated in the famous double-slit experiment and is fundamental to quantum mechanics. See: Feynman, R. P., Leighton, R. B., & Sands, M. (1965). *The Feynman Lectures on Physics, Vol. 3: Quantum Mechanics*. Addison-Wesley.
2. Heisenberg, W. (1927). Über den anschaulichen Inhalt der quantentheoretischen Kinematik und Mechanik [On the perceptual content of quantum theoretical kinematics and mechanics]. *Zeitschrift für Physik*, 43(3-4), 172-198. The Uncertainty Principle proves you cannot simultaneously know both position (particle property) and momentum (wave property) with arbitrary precision.
3. Chronotope (literally "time-space") refers to Bakhtin's concept of the inseparability of temporal and spatial indicators in narrative. See: Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (pp. 84-258). University of Texas Press.
4. Boje, D. M. (1995). Stories of the storytelling organization: A postmodern analysis of Disney as 'Tamara-Land.' *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(4), 997-1035. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/256618> This article introduces Tamara-Land as organizational form where multiple stories unfold simultaneously in different spaces.

5. The Nike sweatshop case demonstrates organizational narrative dissolving from particle state (clear position) back into wave state (multiple possibilities) before re-crystallizing in new particle state (new commitment). This cycle of dissolution and re-crystallization is fundamental to organizational adaptation.
 6. Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). The chronotope concept explicitly borrows from Einstein's relativity theory to describe how time and space are inseparable in narrative construction. Bakhtin writes: "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (p. 84).
 7. Boje, D. M. (2001). Tamara manifesto: Critical postmodern theory of organizations. In *Narrative Methods for Organizational & Communication Research* (pp. 106-125). Sage. The McDonald's analysis explores dialogism—how multiple voices and story-threads coexist in global organizations. Available through: <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/narrative-methods-for-organizational-communication-research/book210248>
 8. The Vujade Assessment, co-created by Doug Breckenridge and Dr. Monty G. Miller, includes specific metrics for wave-particle state recognition and chronotopic reading capacity. Free assessment with code "Quantum" at vujade.ai
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Additional Resources

For deeper understanding of organizational narrative states and transitions:

Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Sage. Comprehensive framework for understanding organizations as ongoing narrative accomplishments that exist in multiple states simultaneously.

Boje, D. M. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*. Sage. Methodological approaches for studying organizational stories in their natural complexity without forcing premature collapse into simplified themes.

Boje, D. M., Rosile, G. A., Durant, R. A., & Luhman, J. T. (2004). Enron spectacles: A critical dramaturgical analysis. *Organization Studies*, 25(5), 751-774. Analysis of how Enron's narrative collapse from particle state (confident commitment) to wave state (chaotic uncertainty) to catastrophic organizational failure demonstrates the importance of appropriate state transitions.

For understanding chronotope and its organizational applications:

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. University of Texas Press. Essential reading for understanding how time-space configurations shape what narratives are possible in organizations.

End of Chapter 3

Next: Chapter 4 - Spacetime mattering: When and Where Your Story Comes Alive

Chapter 4: Spacetime mattering

When and Where Your Story Comes Alive

Principle 4: Spacetime mattering—Organizational stories don't exist "in" space and time as if those were neutral containers. Space-time-matter are entangled—the when-where-what of organizational narrative are inseparable. The same story told in different chronotopes (time-space configurations) materializes differently. Leadership mastery means reading chronotopic conditions and staging interventions when/where stories can "take flesh."

Application: Before launching change initiatives, conduct chronotope readiness assessment. Map where certain narratives are speakable vs. unspeakable, when time "thickens" making stories urgent vs. when time "thins" making them abstract, and what material conditions allow narratives to become embodied rather than remaining rhetorical. Stage interventions at chronotopic moments of maximum resonance.

The manufacturing company had been talking about sustainability for three years. The CEO championed it. Environmental consultants produced reports. Committees studied best practices. Sustainability metrics appeared in quarterly presentations. Everyone agreed it was important.

Nothing changed.

The carbon footprint stayed the same. Waste reduction targets were missed. Renewable energy investments were perpetually "under consideration." The sustainability story existed—in PowerPoints, in strategy documents, in executive speeches—but it wasn't materializing into actual organizational practice.

Then the river flooded.

Not just routine spring flooding. The climate-change-amplified deluge that happens "once every hundred years" except it happened twice in eighteen months. The factory floor was underwater. Production stopped for three weeks. Insurance covered the equipment damage but not the lost contracts, the scramble to fulfill orders, the reality of being unreliable to customers.

Within six weeks of the flood, the company had implemented more sustainability initiatives than in the previous three years combined. Solar panels on the rebuilt roof. Waste reduction protocols in every department. New supplier contracts prioritizing environmental standards. Investment in climate resilience infrastructure.

Same CEO. Same organization. Same sustainability story. But now the chronotope had changed—and suddenly the story could "take flesh."

What happened? The story had been existing in abstract space-time: boardroom discussions, future projections, moral imperatives disconnected from immediate material reality. The flood changed the chronotope. Suddenly sustainability wasn't abstract future concern—it was concrete

present crisis. Space (the flooded factory floor) and time (the immediate disruption) and matter (the ruined equipment, the mud, the loss) fused together, making sustainability visceral, urgent, embodied.

Bakhtin called this chronotopic thickening—when "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history."¹ That's not poetic metaphor. That's precise description of how organizational narratives shift from rhetoric to reality.

Welcome to spacetimemattering—quantum storytelling's fourth principle and the one that separates leaders who can read organizational fields from those who can't.

Einstein, Bakhtin, and Barad: The Entanglement of Space-Time-Matter

Mikhail Bakhtin borrowed the term "chronotope" directly from Einstein's theory of relativity, which proved that space and time aren't separate dimensions—they're a unified spacetime continuum.² Before Einstein, people thought of time as flowing uniformly everywhere (Newton's absolute time) and space as a fixed stage where events happened. Einstein showed that space and time are relative to the observer's frame of reference and fundamentally entangled.

Bakhtin applied this insight to narrative: stories don't happen "in" time and "in" space as if those were neutral containers. The time-space configuration IS part of the story. Change when/where a narrative unfolds, and you change what narrative is possible.³

Then quantum physicist and feminist theorist Karen Barad took it further. In her concept of "spacetimemattering," she argued that space, time, and matter aren't just entangled—they're mutually constitutive. Matter doesn't exist in spacetime. Matter and spacetime co-emerge through intra-action.⁴

This sounds abstract until you see it in organizations. That sustainability story wasn't "in" abstract spacetime waiting to be implemented. It needed specific spacetimemattering—the flooded factory, the ruined equipment, the immediate crisis—to materialize from rhetoric into reality. The matter (flood, mud, loss) and the space (factory floor, not boardroom) and the time (now, not future) weren't separate conditions that happened to align. They were entangled phenomena that together created the chronotope where sustainability could become embodied organizational practice.

The Office-Supply Firm: Where Stories Live and Die

In my 1991 study of an office-supply firm,⁵ I discovered something that puzzled me at the time but makes perfect sense through chronotope theory: The same organizational story existed in radically different forms depending on where and when it was told.

In the Monday morning executive meeting, the company story was about growth, efficiency, market expansion, strategic positioning. Clear narrative. Confident tone. Future-oriented.

In the warehouse at 3:00 PM on Thursday, the story was completely different. Workers told stories about order fulfillment chaos, inventory systems that didn't match reality, pressure to ship products that weren't quality-checked, managers who'd never worked the floor making impossible demands.

Same company. Same week. Radically different stories.

Traditional organizational analysis would say one story is "true" and the other is "distorted perception" or "resistance." But chronotope theory reveals something more interesting: Both stories were true in their respective chronotopes. The Monday morning executive meeting created a time-space configuration where the growth story could exist. The Thursday afternoon warehouse created a different time-space configuration where the chaos story could exist.

The stories weren't just being told in different spaces. The space-time configuration was constitutive of what stories were possible.

Notice the specificity: Not just "different locations" but different chronotopic configurations. The executive meeting wasn't just a different room—it was a different time (Monday morning, fresh start of week), different space (conference room designed for strategic thinking), different material arrangements (seated around table, PowerPoint on screen, coffee cups), different social organization (hierarchy visible in seating, CEO at head of table).

The warehouse wasn't just a different location—it was different time (Thursday afternoon, week wearing down), different space (open floor, no privacy, noise and movement), different material arrangements (standing, moving, handling physical products), different social organization (peers working together, supervisors absent or distant).

Change any element of these chronotopic configurations and you change what stories can materialize.

This is why "town halls" where leadership tries to "hear from employees" so often fail. You've taken the employee story out of its natural chronotope (break room, informal, peers present) and forced it into leadership chronotope (auditorium, formal, hierarchy visible, HR taking notes). The chronotope determines what's speakable. Employees know instinctively that their break room stories won't survive the town hall chronotope, so they tell a different story—the one the chronotope allows.

Chronotope Mapping: Reading Organizational Space-Time-Matter

Before you can stage interventions at chronotopic moments of resonance, you need to map the chronotopes where different organizational narratives live. Here's the framework I've developed over three decades of fieldwork:

Dimension 1: Temporal Thickness

Some organizational times are "thick"—dense with significance, urgent, consequential. Other times are "thin"—routine, abstract, disconnected from immediate stakes.

Annual strategic planning retreats are temporally thin for most employees. They're about future possibilities, not present reality. Stories told in thin time remain abstract, theoretical, disconnected from material conditions.

Product launch deadlines are temporally thick. They're immediate, consequential, materially real. Stories told in thick time have urgency, embodiment, connection to actual stakes.

Map your organization's temporal thickness:

- When does time thicken (crisis moments, critical deadlines, consequential decisions)?
- When does time thin (routine meetings, bureaucratic processes, distant planning)?
- What stories can only materialize in thick time vs. thin time?

Dimension 2: Spatial Charge

Some organizational spaces are "charged"—loaded with history, meaning, power dynamics. Other spaces are "neutral"—generic, interchangeable, without accumulated significance.

The CEO's office is charged space. Stories told there carry different weight than stories told in neutral conference rooms. The factory floor is charged differently than the corporate campus. The break room has different charge than the all-hands auditorium.

Bakhtin talked about this as space becoming "responsive to the movements of time, plot and history."⁶ Charged spaces have accumulated narrative history. They're not blank containers—they're saturated with previous stories, previous conflicts, previous triumphs or failures.

Map your organization's spatial charge:

- Which spaces carry heavy narrative history (positive or negative)?
- Which spaces are relatively neutral, allowing fresh narratives?
- What stories can only materialize in charged space vs. neutral space?

Dimension 3: Material Arrangements

This is what Barad emphasized: matter isn't passive backdrop to stories—it's constitutive of what stories are possible. How bodies are arranged in space, what objects are present, what technologies mediate interaction—these material configurations enable and constrain narrative possibilities.⁷

Sitting around a table (material arrangement) creates different narrative possibilities than standing in a circle. Having PowerPoint (material technology) creates different storytelling than having a whiteboard. Wearing business attire (material embodiment) creates different stories than wearing work uniforms.

I saw this vividly in a healthcare organization. Patient satisfaction meetings held in administrative offices (material arrangement: seated, formal, documented) produced completely different stories than satisfaction conversations held in patient rooms (material arrangement: patient in bed, visitor standing, informal, not recorded). Same questions. Same issues. Radically different narratives emerged because the material arrangements were different.

Map your organization's material arrangements:

- How do bodies arrange themselves in different organizational spaces?
- What objects and technologies mediate storytelling?
- What material conditions enable certain stories and constrain others?

Dimension 4: Social Configuration

Who's present and who's absent radically changes what narratives are possible. Not just in obvious ways (you don't criticize the boss when she's in the room) but in subtle chronotopic ways (certain stories only emerge in certain social configurations).

Bakhtin analyzed this in Dostoevsky's novels—how the presence of a particular character changes what other characters can say, not because of explicit censorship but because the social configuration determines the chronotope.⁸

In organizations, this is everywhere. Stories that emerge in peer groups evaporate in cross-hierarchical meetings. Stories told when the CEO is traveling differ from stories told when she's on-site. Customer stories told by salespeople to each other differ from customer stories told by salespeople to product development.

Map your organization's social configurations:

- Which narratives require certain people to be present (or absent)?
- How do different social configurations enable different story performances?
- What stories exist only in specific social chronotopes?

Antenarrative: The Story Before the Story

In my work on antenarrative theory,⁹ I explored how organizational stories exist in multiple states before crystallizing into official narratives. Antenarratives are the fragmented, contradictory, not-yet-coherent story bits that circulate before (ante-) the narrative gets formalized.

What I didn't fully articulate then, but see clearly now through chronotope lens: Antenarratives are chronotopically specific. They exist in certain time-space-matter-social configurations but not others. They're like quantum wave functions—spread across possible chronotopes until something collapses them into particle-state narratives.

That sustainability story at the manufacturing company? It existed as antenarrative for three years—fragments, possibilities, contradictory impulses. The flood didn't create the sustainability story. The flood created the chronotope where antenarrative could collapse into embodied narrative.

This is crucial for leadership: You can't force antenarrative into narrative by declaration. You can't command coherent story where only fragments exist. But you CAN create chronotopic conditions where antenarrative naturally crystallizes into narrative.

The art is reading what antenarratives are circulating, understanding what chronotopes they need to materialize, and staging those chronotopes intentionally rather than waiting for crisis to create them accidentally.

Enron: When Chronotopes Collapse

My analysis with colleagues of Enron's spectacular failure¹⁰ revealed chronotopic dynamics at catastrophic scale. Enron created elaborate chronotopic stagings—spectacular headquarters building, theatrical all-hands meetings, analyst presentations choreographed like Broadway shows. These charged spaces and thick times created conditions where the "Enron as energy revolution" story could materialize powerfully.

But the chronotopes were artificial. They existed in disconnect from the material reality of Enron's actual operations. The spectacular spacetime of corporate headquarters was radically different from the spacetime of trading floors, from the spacetime of energy production, from the spacetime of accounting practices.

Eventually, chronotopic disconnection became unsustainable. When investigators started asking questions, when journalists started reporting, when employees started talking—different chronotopes emerged where different stories could materialize. Stories about fraud, manipulation, fantasy financials.

The Enron narrative didn't just fail because it was false. It failed because it could only exist in artificially staged chronotopes that couldn't be sustained once other chronotopes (courtrooms, journalistic investigations, employee testimonies) created conditions for alternative narratives to materialize.

The lesson: You can stage chronotopes temporarily, but unless they connect to material organizational reality, they collapse. Sustainable narratives need chronotopic grounding in actual space-time-matter configurations.

Practical Chronotope Staging: The Four-Step Framework

Now let's get practical. You're leading a change initiative, coaching an executive team, facilitating strategic planning, or implementing new organizational practices. How do you use chronotope theory to increase success probability?

Step 1: Identify the Chronotope Where Current Story Lives

Every organizational story has its natural chronotope—the space-time-matter-social configuration where it exists most powerfully.

If you're trying to change that story, you first need to understand its chronotopic home. Where is it spoken? When does it emerge? What material conditions support it? Which social configurations keep it alive?

That office-supply firm's chaos story lived in the warehouse on Thursday afternoons (temporally thick—end of week pressure), among workers (specific social configuration), handling physical products (material embodiment), without managers present (social absence that allowed the story).

You can't change a story by arguing against it in a different chronotope. You have to meet it where it lives.

Step 2: Design Chronotopes Where Alternative Stories Can Emerge

If you want different stories to materialize, create different chronotopes.

That CEO trying to hear the "real" employee experience? Don't hold town halls in auditoriums. Create chronotopes that match where employee stories naturally live: small groups, informal settings, peer-only configurations, material arrangements that signal safety rather than surveillance.

I worked with a hospital system trying to understand why patient satisfaction was low despite excellent clinical outcomes. They were gathering feedback through surveys (thin time—abstract assessment after discharge), administered by administrative staff (social configuration—authority present), in standardized format (material arrangement—constrained responses).

We created different chronotope: Patient conversations in hospital rooms (charged space—where actual care happened), during afternoon visiting hours (thick time—family present, energy high), led by former patients (social configuration—peer experience), using open-ended dialogue (material arrangement—fluid conversation not recorded forms).

Completely different stories emerged. Not because patients were lying before—because the chronotope determined what stories could materialize.

Step 3: Stage Thick-Time/Charged-Space Interventions

The most powerful organizational transformations happen at chronotopic moments when time thickens and space charges simultaneously.

That flooded factory was thick-time (immediate crisis) + charged-space (the physical destruction) + material embodiment (the mud, the ruined equipment) + social configuration (everyone experiencing it together, hierarchy temporarily irrelevant).

You can't manufacture crisis. But you can recognize chronotopic moments when time-space-matter align to make transformation possible—and seize them.

I was coaching an executive team struggling with cultural change. We'd spent months in conference rooms (neutral space, thin time) making no progress. Then their largest customer threatened to leave over service issues. Suddenly time thickened (immediate threat), space charged (emergency meeting in operations center, not boardroom), social configuration changed (customer-facing staff included, not just executives).

The cultural change that had been impossible in months of conference room meetings crystallized in one three-hour emergency session. Not because the ideas were different. Because the chronotope finally allowed transformation.

Step 4: Link Abstract Narratives to Material Conditions

The sustainability story stayed abstract for three years because it existed in thin time (future concern) and neutral space (boardrooms and reports), disconnected from material conditions.

The flood forced linkage: abstract environmental values → concrete factory flooding. Abstract sustainability metrics → tangible equipment loss. Future climate scenarios → present operational crisis.

Effective chronotope staging intentionally creates those linkages BEFORE crisis forces them. Connect abstract strategic narratives to concrete operational realities. Connect future scenarios to present material conditions. Connect theoretical frameworks to embodied experience.

Ask: "What material conditions would make this abstract story tangible? What spatial arrangements would make this future concern present? What temporal moments would make this theoretical framework urgent?"

Then stage those chronotopes deliberately.

Horse Sense at Work: Embodied Chronotope Creation

Grace Ann Rosile's *Horse Sense at Work*¹¹ represents masterful chronotope staging for leadership development. Traditional leadership training happens in classrooms (neutral space), over scheduled hours (thin time), with cognitive content (abstract learning), in hierarchical arrangements (instructors teaching students).

Horse Sense happens in round pens and pastures (charged space—nature, animals, unpredictability), over unscheduled time (thick time—horse interaction follows horse rhythms,

not clock), with embodied learning (you can't intellectualize a 1,200-pound horse), in peer arrangements (the horse doesn't care about your org chart).

This chronotope creates conditions where leadership narratives that couldn't materialize in conference rooms suddenly become visceral, immediate, undeniable. A CEO who intellectually understands "authentic presence" but can't embody it gets instant feedback from a horse who won't cooperate with performed authority. The chronotope makes abstract concepts materialize.

The research shows this works for military veterans and their families¹² precisely because the chronotope matches their embodied experience. Veterans don't need more PowerPoint about trauma—they need chronotopes where their body-held stories can safely materialize. Horses create that chronotope: safe enough to be vulnerable, real enough to bypass intellectual defenses, present enough to work with what is rather than what should be.

Your Chronotope Assessment

Before moving to the next chapter, map the chronotopes where your most important organizational stories live—and where they die.

For each major narrative in your organization (strategic direction, culture values, change initiatives, customer promises), map:

Question 1: Where does this story materialize powerfully?

- What spaces? (Charged or neutral? Why?)
- What times? (Thick or thin? What makes them so?)
- What material arrangements? (Bodies, objects, technologies?)
- What social configurations? (Who must be present? Who must be absent?)

Question 2: Where does this story evaporate?

- What spaces kill it?
- What times make it abstract?
- What material arrangements constrain it?
- What social configurations delegitimize it?

Question 3: What chronotopic interventions could you stage?

If the story needs to materialize more powerfully:

- How could you thicken time? (Create urgency, consequences, immediacy)
- How could you charge space? (Use history-laden locations, create memorable settings)
- How could you embody matter? (Make abstract tangible, theoretical concrete)
- How could you shift social configuration? (Change who's present, how they're arranged)

Question 4: What chronotopic moments are you missing?

Think about the last major change initiative that failed or stalled:

- Was it launched in thin time when thick time was needed?
- Was it staged in neutral space when charged space would have resonated?
- Was it kept abstract when material embodiment was required?
- Was it presented in hierarchical configurations when peer dialogue was necessary?

Most failed initiatives aren't wrong ideas poorly executed. They're right ideas launched in wrong chronotopes.

The Vujade Chronotopic Scan

The Vujade Assessment includes specific metrics for chronotopic reading—your ability to sense when spacetime mattering is aligned for narrative transformation vs. when chronotopic conditions will defeat even the best initiative.¹³

High chronotopic literacy means you walk into a meeting and immediately sense: This is the right time-space-matter-social configuration for this conversation. Or: This chronotope will kill what we're trying to accomplish.

You don't need mystical intuition. You need trained pattern recognition:

Chronotopic Misalignment Signals:

- People physically withdrawing (body-space misalignment)
- Repeated clock-checking (time anxiety, thick time forcing thin time agenda)
- Stories told in past or future tense, never present (temporal abstraction)
- Frequent "Yeah, but..." responses (social configuration preventing genuine dialogue)
- Quick agreement without energy (neutral space preventing charged engagement)

Chronotopic Alignment Signals:

- People leaning forward (body-space engagement)
- Time expanding subjectively (thick time allowing necessary exploration)
- Stories told in present tense, vivid detail (temporal concreteness)
- Build-on responses, collaborative completion (social configuration enabling polyphony)
- Disagreement with energy (charged space creating productive tension)

The Vujade Assessment measures your baseline chronotopic sensitivity, then provides frameworks for developing it systematically.

Why This Matters More Than You Think

I've watched brilliant change initiatives fail because leaders didn't understand chronotope dynamics. They had the right vision, the right strategy, the right resources—but they staged interventions in chronotopes where those narratives couldn't materialize.

And I've watched mediocre ideas succeed beyond expectations because someone intuitively understood chronotope staging. They didn't have the best plan, but they launched it at chronotopic moments when time-space-matter aligned to make transformation possible.

The difference between success and failure often isn't the quality of your ideas. It's your chronotopic literacy.

Learn to read organizational space-time-matter configurations. Learn to recognize when chronotopes are ripe for intervention and when they're hostile to change. Learn to stage chronotopes deliberately rather than accepting whatever chronotope happens to exist.

That's quantum organizational mastery.

Next chapter explores Principle 5: Entanglement—how organizational narratives remain correlated across distance without obvious causal chains, and why what happens in Chicago instantly affects Singapore even when no one sends an email about it.

But first, practice chronotope mapping on your own organization. Use the assessment questions above. Notice where stories materialize powerfully and where they evaporate. Start experimenting with chronotope staging for your next significant intervention.

And if you haven't yet, take the Vujade Assessment (free with code "Quantum" at vujade.ai). The chronotopic reading section will show you patterns you didn't know you had—and opportunities you've been missing.

Because organizational transformation isn't about having the right message.

It's about delivering that message in the right chronotope.

Learn More

Take the Vujade Assessment (free with code "Quantum"): vujade.ai

Access chronotope mapping templates and staging frameworks:
quantumstorytelling.org/chronotope

Experience Horse Sense at Work embodied chronotope creation: horsesenseatwork.com

Join Monday GrowthOD sessions for live chronotope practice: growthod.org

Quantum Coaching Sprint—Module 4 focuses on chronotopic mastery:
quantumstorytelling.org/sprint

Endnotes for Chapter 4

1. Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (M. Holquist, Ed., C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans., pp. 84-258). University of Texas Press, p. 84. This definition of chronotope as the "thickening" of time and "charging" of space remains foundational for understanding narrative spacetime mattering.
2. Einstein, A. (1916). Die Grundlage der allgemeinen Relativitätstheorie [The foundation of the general theory of relativity]. *Annalen der Physik*, 354(7), 769-822. Einstein's general relativity proved that space and time are unified into spacetime and that matter/energy curves spacetime.
3. Bakhtin explicitly states: "The term chronotope literally means time-space... We are borrowing it for literary criticism almost, but not entirely, as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely is an important qualification). It expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space)." Bakhtin (1981), p. 84.
4. Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, pp. 179-180. Barad's concept of "spacetime mattering" extends beyond Bakhtin's chronotope to argue that space, time, and matter are mutually constitutive rather than independently existing.
5. Boje, D. M. (1991). The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(1), 106-126. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2393432> This ethnographic study revealed how organizational stories exist differently in different space-time-social configurations.
6. Bakhtin (1981), p. 84. The concept of space becoming "charged and responsive" captures how organizational spaces accumulate narrative history and shape what stories are possible.
7. Barad (2007) emphasizes that matter is not passive backdrop but active participant in meaning-making. Material arrangements don't just house narratives—they constitute what narratives are possible. This maps directly onto organizational chronotopes.
8. Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press. Bakhtin's analysis shows how Dostoevsky's characters change their speech and storytelling based on who is present in the chronotopic moment.
9. Boje, D. M. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*. Sage, pp. 1-25. Available at: <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/narrative-methods-for-organizational-communication-research/book210248> Introduction to antenarrative theory—the fragmented, pre-narrative story bits that circulate before crystallizing into coherent narratives.
10. Boje, D. M., Rosile, G. A., Durant, R. A., & Luhman, J. T. (2004). Enron spectacles: A critical dramaturgical analysis. *Organization Studies*, 25(5), 751-774. Analysis of how Enron staged elaborate chronotopes (spectacular headquarters, theatrical presentations) that ultimately collapsed when disconnected from material reality.
11. Rosile, G. A., & Boje, D. M. (Horse Sense at Work). See: <https://horsesenseatwork.com> and Boje, D. M., Rosile, G. A., Saylor, J., & Saylor, R. (2015). Using storytelling theatrics for leadership training. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 17(3), 348-362.

12. Flora, J., Boje, D., Rosile, G. A., & Hacker, K. (2016). A theoretical and applied review of embodied restorying for post-deployment family reintegration. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 1(1), 129-162. Research showing how embodied chronotopes (working with horses) create conditions for military family narrative healing.
 13. The Vujade Assessment includes chronotopic literacy metrics measuring your capacity to read space-time-matter configurations and stage interventions at moments of maximum resonance. Free with code "Quantum" at vujade.ai
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Additional Resources

For deeper understanding of chronotope theory and applications:

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. University of Texas Press. Essential reading for chronotope theory—Bakhtin's most systematic exploration of how time-space configurations shape narrative possibilities.

Bemong, N., Borghart, P., De Dobbeleer, M., Demoen, K., De Temmerman, K., & Keunen, B. (Eds.). (2010). *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*. Academia Press. Contemporary applications of chronotope theory across disciplines.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press. Quantum physics meets feminist theory—essential for understanding how matter and meaning co-emerge.

For organizational applications:

Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Sage. Framework for understanding how chronotopes operate in organizations.

Boje, D. M. (2014). *Storytelling Organizational Practices: Managing in the Quantum Age*. Routledge. Extended treatment of quantum organizational principles including chronotope dynamics.

End of Chapter 4

Next: Chapter 5 - Entanglement: How Stories Stay Connected Across Distance

Chapter 5: Entanglement

How Stories Stay Connected Across Distance

Principle 5: Entanglement—Organizational narratives remain correlated across space without obvious causal chains connecting them. When one node in the narrative network shifts, distant nodes respond immediately even when no communication explains the correlation. This isn't mystical—it's the organizational equivalent of quantum entanglement, where measuring one particle instantly affects its entangled partner regardless of distance. Leaders who ignore narrative entanglement are surprised when local changes produce non-local effects.

Application: Before making leadership decisions, conduct entanglement audits. Map which organizational narratives are correlated—which stories in Sales are entangled with stories in Engineering, which frontline narratives are entangled with executive strategies, which customer stories are entangled with employee morale. Recognize that changing one entangled narrative affects the entire network, often in unexpected ways. Use this understanding to leverage positive entanglement and prevent destructive ripple effects.

The global financial services company made what seemed like a purely internal decision. Their Chicago headquarters announced a reorganization affecting how customer service managers reported up the chain. The change was structural, rational, well-communicated through proper channels. It would take three months to implement fully.

Within forty-eight hours—before the reorganization had actually changed anything operationally—customer satisfaction scores dropped in Singapore. Not Chicago. Singapore. Eight thousand miles away. In call centers that wouldn't be affected by the reorganization. With customers who had no knowledge of the internal restructure. With employees who'd received no communication about it yet through official channels.

The executive team was baffled. "How could customers in Singapore react to a decision that hasn't even been implemented yet and doesn't affect their service delivery?"

But the customer service representatives in Singapore weren't surprised. "We heard," one told me during interviews. "Someone's sister works in Chicago. She texted that management doesn't trust customer service to manage ourselves anymore. So now we're all wondering what we did wrong. You can hear it in our voices when we talk to customers. We're tentative. Apologetic. Customers sense something's off."

That's organizational entanglement. Change the narrative at one node—Chicago headquarters announces reorganization—and the narrative field shifts at distant nodes—Singapore call center employee morale—without any direct causal chain connecting them. No official communication. No operational change. Just narrative correlation across space that defies linear cause-effect logic.

Einstein called quantum entanglement "spooky action at a distance" because he couldn't accept that measuring one particle could instantly affect another particle miles away.¹ But experiment after experiment proved it real. Entangled particles maintain correlation regardless of spatial separation.

Organizations work the same way. And until you understand narrative entanglement, you'll be perpetually surprised by how local decisions produce non-local effects.

Bell's Theorem and Organizational Non-Locality

In 1964, physicist John Bell proved that quantum entanglement couldn't be explained by "local hidden variables"—there was no classical mechanism transmitting information between entangled particles at light speed or slower.² The correlation was real, immediate, and non-local. Measure one particle's spin, and its entangled partner's spin instantly becomes determined, regardless of distance.

This violated everything classical physics assumed about causality. Causes should be local—affecting only their immediate surroundings—and should propagate through space at finite speeds. Entanglement showed that quantum systems could be non-local—correlated across space without signals traveling between them.

Most organizational theory still operates under classical assumptions: changes propagate through communication channels, effects follow causes through linear chains, distance insulates parts of the organization from changes elsewhere. These assumptions make organization charts and reporting structures seem like they explain how information flows.

But anyone who's actually worked in a large organization knows better. Morale shifts happen without announcements explaining them. Strategic pivots in one division somehow affect hiring decisions in distant divisions before any official policy change. Customer perception shifts before the company communicates anything about internal changes.

That's because organizational narratives are entangled. They're correlated in ways that don't show up on org charts, don't follow communication protocols, and don't respect spatial boundaries.

The Tamara-Land Network: Multiple Stories, Multiple Entanglements

In my research on Disney as "Tamara-Land,"³ I focused on how multiple stories unfold simultaneously in different spaces. But what I didn't fully articulate then—and see clearly now through entanglement theory—is that those multiple stories aren't independent. They're entangled.

The story unfolding in Fantasyland affects the story unfolding in Tomorrowland, even though guests experiencing one can't directly observe the other. A child's disappointing experience on one ride changes their parents' interpretation of the next ride, even when the rides are physically distant and operationally independent. The stories are entangled through the guest's narrative

network—each experience correlated with others through emotional resonance, expectation patterns, and meaning-making processes that span space.

Disney understands this intuitively. They don't optimize individual rides in isolation. They design for the entangled narrative field—recognizing that every experience is correlated with every other experience through the guest's evolving story of their Disney day.

Most organizations don't think this way. They optimize departments independently, assuming that what happens in Engineering doesn't affect Sales unless Engineering changes something that Sales needs to communicate. But the stories in Engineering and Sales are entangled. Engineering's morale affects Sales' confidence in the product, even when no technical specifications change. Sales' customer stories affect Engineering's motivation, even when no formal requirements get updated.

The entanglement is real. The correlation is measurable. The effects are consequential. And ignoring it because you can't see the causal chain doesn't make it go away.

Enron's Entanglement Collapse

The Enron case⁴ demonstrates entanglement dynamics at catastrophic scale. Enron's various divisions—energy trading, broadband, international projects—were supposed to be independent business units. On organizational charts, they were separate. In operational terms, they were siloed.

But their narratives were entangled. When trading division's accounting practices came under scrutiny, broadband division's story about technological innovation suddenly became suspect—even though broadband had nothing to do with trading's accounting. When international projects started failing, energy trading's narrative about market sophistication lost credibility—even though the failures were in completely different markets with different operations.

The entanglement worked both directions. Enron's overall "most innovative company" story was entangled with every division's local story. When the corporate narrative shifted from "innovative" to "fraudulent," every division's story collapsed, even divisions that had legitimate operations and honest accounting.

This is narrative entanglement's dark side. Positive correlation works until one node in the network collapses, then the entanglement propagates collapse throughout the network. You can't insulate one part of the organization's story from another part's failure when they're entangled.

Mapping Entanglement Networks

Before you can work with narrative entanglement strategically, you need to see it. Most organizational analysis focuses on formal connections—reporting relationships, communication channels, process dependencies. But narrative entanglement operates through informal, often invisible networks.

Here's the framework I've developed for making entanglement visible:

Step 1: Identify Narrative Nodes

A narrative node is any organizational location where distinct stories are told: departments, teams, levels, locations, customer segments, product lines, strategic initiatives. Don't use org chart boxes—use actual storytelling communities.

For that financial services company, narrative nodes included:

- Chicago headquarters leadership
- Chicago customer service managers
- Singapore call center teams
- Singapore call center supervisors
- Customers served by each location
- HR in both locations
- The informal network of employees with family/friends in multiple locations

Step 2: Map Story Content at Each Node

What story does each node tell about the organization, its work, its challenges, its future? Not the official story they're supposed to tell—the actual story they perform in their daily work.

Before the Chicago reorganization:

- Chicago leadership story: "We're optimizing for scale"
- Chicago manager story: "We're doing good work but leadership doesn't see it"
- Singapore team story: "We're the high-performing team that delivers results"
- Singapore supervisor story: "We prove international operations can match headquarters quality"
- Customer story: "This company provides reliable, confident service"

Step 3: Identify Entanglement Correlations

Which stories at different nodes shift together, even without obvious causal connection? This requires careful observation over time, but patterns emerge:

- When Chicago leadership story shifts to "we need more control," Chicago manager story shifts to "we're not trusted"—those are directly causally connected
- But watch: When Chicago manager story shifts to "we're not trusted," Singapore team story shifts to "something's wrong at headquarters" even though no communication occurred—that's entanglement
- And: When Singapore team story shifts to "something's wrong," customer story shifts to "service feels uncertain" even though service delivery hasn't changed—that's also entanglement

The correlations happen without direct causal chains. They're non-local narrative effects.

Step 4: Trace Entanglement Pathways

How do entangled correlations propagate? Not through official channels but through:

Informal Social Networks: That Chicago manager's sister in Singapore. The WhatsApp group of customer service reps across locations. The LinkedIn connections between peers. These aren't on any org chart, but they're the pathways through which narrative entanglement propagates.

Emotional Resonance: Stories that carry strong emotion—fear, betrayal, excitement, pride—entangle more strongly than neutral information. That's why morale shifts propagate faster than policy changes.

Identity Connections: When people share professional identity ("we're all customer service professionals"), their stories entangle across distance. Chicago customer service managers' story affects Singapore customer service reps because they're entangled through shared identity, not because they report to the same boss.

Material Correlations: Sometimes narrative entanglement follows material connections we don't normally notice. Both locations use the same software system, which means both experience the same technical frustrations, which entangles their stories about organizational competence even when the locations never communicate.

The Helping It Along Principle: Working With Entanglement

The fifth True Storytelling principle⁵ is "helping it along"—recognizing that organizational change faces resistance and requires what Bakhtin called restorying.⁶ But through entanglement lens, "helping it along" takes on new meaning: You're not just overcoming resistance at one location. You're working with entangled resistance across the entire narrative network.

When you change a story at one node, entanglement means you're automatically affecting stories at correlated nodes. Sometimes that's helpful—positive change at headquarters propagates to distant divisions. Sometimes it's destructive—anxiety at one location propagates everywhere.

Strategic use of entanglement means:

Leverage Positive Entanglement: When you create positive narrative shift at one node, recognize that entanglement will propagate it. Don't just celebrate local success—use entanglement to amplify it throughout the network. That Singapore team's "high-performing" story was positively entangled with customer satisfaction. Strengthen that story at the Singapore node, and entanglement propagates it to customer experience.

Prevent Negative Entanglement: When you must make changes that could create negative narratives at one node, understand that entanglement will propagate them. That Chicago reorganization created "we're not trusted" story, which was entangled with distant nodes through

multiple pathways. If leadership had mapped the entanglement network first, they could have staged the change differently to prevent negative propagation.

Create Intentional Entanglement: You can deliberately entangle narratives that weren't previously correlated. That's what narrative interventions do—they create new entanglement pathways. Town halls, cross-functional teams, shared metrics, common language—these create entanglement between previously independent stories.

Break Destructive Entanglement: Sometimes you need to disentangle stories that are correlated in destructive ways. If one division's failure story is entangled with the whole organization's identity story, you might need to break that entanglement before the correlation propagates collapse.

Restorying and Collective Intelligence

My work on restorying⁷ explores how organizational narratives can be revised, reinterpreted, and reconstructed. But restorying isn't just about changing individual stories—it's about working with entangled narrative networks where changing one story affects correlated stories throughout the system.

Effective restorying requires what I call collective intelligence networking⁸—recognizing that intelligence isn't located in individual minds or even individual organizational units. Intelligence is distributed across the entangled narrative network. Insights that emerge in Engineering are entangled with insights emerging in Customer Service, even when they never formally communicate.

I saw this in a healthcare system where quality improvement initiatives kept failing. Leadership would implement evidence-based protocols that should have worked—they had research backing, expert design, proper training. But actual quality didn't improve.

The problem was treating quality improvement as if each unit operated independently. Implement the protocol in cardiology, measure cardiology outcomes. But cardiology's quality story was entangled with emergency department's overcrowding story, which was entangled with primary care's access story, which was entangled with insurance authorization story. Change one node without understanding the entangled network, and other nodes' resistance overwhelms your local improvement.

Once we mapped the entanglement network and designed interventions that worked with entanglement rather than ignoring it, quality improved dramatically. Not because the clinical protocols changed—because we stopped treating stories as independent and started working with their entangled reality.

The Vujade Network Analysis

The Vujade Assessment⁹ includes network analysis tools that make narrative entanglement visible. Traditional org network analysis maps who communicates with whom. Vujade network

analysis maps whose stories are correlated with whose stories, regardless of formal communication patterns.

It reveals surprising entanglements:

- The engineer who never talks to customers but whose morale strongly correlates with customer satisfaction (entangled through product quality story)
- The frontline employee in Texas whose narrative state correlates with executive decisions in New York (entangled through informal networks leadership doesn't see)
- The two departments that officially collaborate but whose stories aren't actually entangled (formal connection without narrative correlation)

High network entanglement literacy means recognizing these invisible correlations before you make changes. You see that shifting narrative at node A will affect nodes C, F, and M even though there's no formal connection between them. You anticipate non-local effects because you understand the entanglement topology.

Low network entanglement literacy means being perpetually surprised: "Why did morale drop in the Singapore office when we only changed reporting structure in Chicago?" Because you didn't see the entanglement.

McDonald's: Franchising as Designed Entanglement

My McDonald's research¹⁰ revealed sophisticated understanding of entanglement, though they wouldn't use that language. McDonald's doesn't try to control every franchise identically. They manage entanglement.

The brand story—"McDonald's means reliable, familiar, fast food"—is intentionally entangled with every local franchise's story. But the entanglement is designed to allow local variation while maintaining brand correlation.

A McDonald's in Mumbai can tell a very different local story than a McDonald's in Montana—different menu items, different cultural positioning, different service style. But both stories remain entangled with the global brand story through specific touchpoints: the golden arches, core menu items, cleanliness standards, service speed expectations.

This is entanglement architecture—deliberately designing which aspects of organizational stories should be tightly entangled (brand core) and which should be loosely entangled or independent (local adaptation). Most organizations either over-entangle (central control kills local agency) or under-entangle (brand becomes meaningless when nothing correlates across locations).

McDonald's found the sweet spot: strong entanglement on brand essentials, loose entanglement on local expression. That's why McDonald's in Tokyo feels unmistakably McDonald's while simultaneously feeling unmistakably Tokyo.

Practical Entanglement Audit

Before your next major organizational decision, conduct this entanglement audit:

Question 1: What narrative nodes will this decision directly affect?

List every group whose story will change because of this decision: departments, teams, roles, locations. These are the first-order effects.

Question 2: What nodes are entangled with those directly affected nodes?

For each directly affected node, map:

- Who shares professional identity with them?
- Who has informal social connections with them?
- Who experiences similar material conditions?
- Whose emotional state correlates with theirs?
- Whose work depends on them (even indirectly)?

These entangled nodes will experience narrative shifts even though the decision doesn't directly affect them. These are second-order effects.

Question 3: What narrative correlations will propagate through the network?

If you shift the story at directly affected nodes in this direction, what correlated shifts will happen at entangled nodes?

That Chicago reorganization shifted the directly affected nodes (Chicago managers) toward "we're not trusted." The entanglement audit should have revealed: Singapore teams are entangled through professional identity → they'll shift toward "headquarters doesn't trust customer service" → their customer interactions will shift toward tentative/apologetic → customer satisfaction will drop.

All predictable. All preventable. If you map entanglement before implementing change.

Question 4: What's the entanglement topology?

Some nodes are highly entangled hubs—shifting their story affects many correlated nodes. Other nodes are peripheral—shifting their story has minimal non-local effects. Still others are entanglement bridges—connecting otherwise separate narrative networks.

Identify:

- Hub nodes (high entanglement, many correlations)
- Peripheral nodes (low entanglement, few correlations)
- Bridge nodes (connecting separate networks)

Strategic changes target hub nodes to maximize propagation, or bridge nodes to connect networks, or peripheral nodes to minimize disruption—depending on your goal.

Question 5: Where can you leverage positive entanglement?

If your change creates positive narrative shift at one node, how can entanglement amplify it? Don't just implement and hope—actively use entanglement pathways to propagate the positive story.

That means: Strengthen the narrative at hub nodes (high propagation). Create entanglement pathways to nodes that need the story (deliberate correlation). Use bridge nodes to carry positive narratives across network boundaries.

Question 6: Where must you prevent negative entanglement?

If your change risks negative narrative shift at one node, how can you prevent entanglement from propagating it destructively?

That might mean: Temporarily break entanglement pathways (reduce correlation during risky transition). Stage changes at peripheral nodes first (test before hub node implementation). Create competing positive entanglements to counterbalance negative ones.

When Entanglement Breaks: Organizational Fragmentation

Sometimes organizational trauma breaks entanglement pathways that should remain connected. I've seen this in mergers, mass layoffs, leadership scandals—events so disruptive that previously entangled narratives become isolated, independent, incoherent.

Symptoms of broken entanglement:

- Stories in different parts of the organization become radically disconnected (no correlation where there should be)
- Local changes have no non-local effects (isolation rather than entanglement)
- The organization feels fragmented, with no shared narrative holding it together
- Each unit tells completely different stories about organizational identity with no recognition of the contradictions

Healing broken entanglement requires reconstructing correlation—not through forced messaging (that's not how entanglement works) but through material conditions that naturally create correlation: Shared experiences. Cross-functional collaboration. Common challenges. Joint successes. Identity reconnection.

I worked with a hospital system where physician stories and nursing stories had become completely disentangled. Decades of professional tribalism, reinforced by separate meetings, separate leadership tracks, separate identity narratives. When physicians' stories shifted, nurses' stories didn't correlate. When nurses' stories shifted, physicians didn't notice.

This made patient care improvements nearly impossible because physicians and nurses are materially entangled in actual care delivery. Their work is correlated. But their stories weren't.

We couldn't force story correlation through messaging. We had to create material conditions where narrative entanglement could naturally emerge: Joint quality committees. Shared patient outcome metrics. Cross-professional mentoring. Common language frameworks. Over eighteen months, stories that were independent began correlating again. Not identical stories—entanglement doesn't mean uniformity. But correlated stories—what happened in nursing narratives began showing up in physician narratives and vice versa.

That's how you rebuild broken entanglement. Not through communication campaigns. Through material and social conditions that create natural correlation.

Why This Matters For Leaders

Most leaders think about organizational change as if they're moving furniture: You pick something up in one location and move it to another location. The two locations are independent. What you do in Location A doesn't affect Location B unless you physically move something between them.

But narrative entanglement means organizational change is more like plucking one string on a spider web: Touch one strand and the vibration propagates throughout the connected network. You can't isolate effects. You can't change one story without affecting entangled stories.

This is either paralyzing or liberating, depending on your mindset:

Paralyzing if you think: "I can't change anything without affecting everything, so I'm trapped."

Liberating if you think: "I can change many things by changing one thing, if I understand entanglement and use it strategically."

The quantum organizational leader learns to read entanglement networks and work with them rather than being surprised by them.

Next chapter explores Principle 6: Polyphony—why genuine transformation requires multiple autonomous voices in dialogue rather than one dominant story that objectifies all others. We'll see how polyphonic organizations maintain entangled narrative networks without forcing false unity.

But first, map one entanglement network in your organization. Pick a recent change initiative. Track its first-order effects (directly affected nodes). Then trace its second-order effects (entangled nodes that shifted without direct causation). You'll see patterns you didn't know existed—and opportunities you've been missing.

Take the Vujade Assessment if you haven't yet (free with code "Quantum" at vujade.ai). The network analysis module will show you entanglement patterns in your own organization—who's

narratively correlated with whom, where hub nodes create leverage points, where broken entanglement needs reconstruction.

Because the most powerful leadership insight isn't learning to change stories.

It's learning to work with how stories are already entangled.

Learn More

Take the Vujade Assessment network analysis (free with code "Quantum"): vujade.ai

Access entanglement audit templates and network mapping tools:
quantumstorytelling.org/entanglement

Join Monday GrowthOD sessions for live entanglement mapping: growthod.org

Quantum Coaching Sprint—Module 5 focuses on entanglement literacy:
quantumstorytelling.org/sprint

Endnotes for Chapter 5

1. Einstein's famous critique of quantum entanglement appeared in: Einstein, A., Podolsky, B., & Rosen, N. (1935). Can quantum-mechanical description of physical reality be considered complete? *Physical Review*, 47(10), 777-780. Einstein argued that quantum mechanics must be incomplete because "spooky action at a distance" violated his understanding of local causality.
2. Bell, J. S. (1964). On the Einstein Podolsky Rosen paradox. *Physics Physique Fizika*, 1(3), 195-200. Bell's Theorem proved that quantum entanglement cannot be explained by local hidden variables—the correlation is genuinely non-local. This was one of the most profound discoveries in twentieth-century physics.
3. Boje, D. M. (1995). Stories of the storytelling organization: A postmodern analysis of Disney as 'Tamara-Land.' *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(4), 997-1035. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/256618> The Tamara-Land concept describes how multiple stories unfold simultaneously in different organizational spaces, now understood through entanglement as correlated rather than independent narratives.
4. Boje, D. M., Rosile, G. A., Durant, R. A., & Luhman, J. T. (2004). Enron spectacles: A critical dramaturgical analysis. *Organization Studies*, 25(5), 751-774. The Enron case reveals how narrative entanglement can propagate collapse throughout an organizational network when one node fails catastrophically.
5. The True Storytelling principles, developed by David Boje, Jens Larsen, and Lena Bruun, include Principle 5: "Helping it along"—restorying to overcome resistance and create sustainable change. See: Larsen, J., Boje, D. M., & Bruun, L. (2020). *True Storytelling*:

Seven Principles for an Ethical and Sustainable Change-Management Strategy.
Routledge.

6. Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press. Bakhtin's concept of restorying (though he doesn't use that exact term) appears in his discussion of how Dostoevsky's characters continually revise their self-narratives in dialogue with others.
7. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2008). Specters of Wal-Mart: A critical discourse analysis of stories of Sam Walton's ghost. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 5(2), 153-180. Explores how organizational narratives get restoried over time, with founding stories revised through multiple retellings.
8. Boje, D. M. (2011). Collective intelligence networking. In *Storytelling and the Future of Organizations: An Antenarrative Handbook* (pp. 308-324). Routledge. Explores how organizational intelligence is distributed across narrative networks rather than located in individual minds.
9. The Vujade Assessment, co-created by Doug Breckenridge and Dr. Monty G. Miller, includes network analysis modules that map narrative correlations across organizational networks. This reveals entanglement patterns that traditional org network analysis misses. Free assessment with code "Quantum" at vujade.ai
10. Boje, D. M. (2001). Narrative methods for organizational communication research. In *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research* (pp. 106-125). Sage. Available at: <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/narrative-methods-for-organizational-communication-research/book210248> The McDonald's case study reveals how franchise organizations manage narrative entanglement across global operations.

Additional Resources

For deeper understanding of organizational networks and narrative entanglement:

Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Sage. Comprehensive framework for understanding how organizational stories are networked and correlated.

Boje, D. M. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*. Sage. Methodological approaches for studying narrative networks in their natural complexity.

Boje, D. M., Haley, U. C. V., & Saylor, R. (2016). Antenarratives of organizational change: The microstoria of Burger King's storytelling in space, time and strategic context. *Human Relations*, 69(2), 391-418. Analysis of how narratives entangle across organizational space-time.

For understanding quantum entanglement and non-locality:

Bell, J. S. (2004). *Speakable and Unsayable in Quantum Mechanics* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. Bell's collected papers on quantum entanglement and non-locality.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press. Extends entanglement concepts to show how matter and meaning are correlated non-locally.

End of Chapter 5

Next: Chapter 6 - Polyphony: Multiple Valid Voices Without Forced Harmony

Chapter 6: Polyphony

Multiple Valid Voices Without Forced Harmony

Principle 6: Polyphony—Genuine organizational transformation requires multiple autonomous voices in dialogue, each maintaining its own validity without being subordinated to a dominant voice. Most organizational change is monologic: one voice (leadership's vision) objectifies all others into supporting roles. Polyphonic organizations honor what Bakhtin called "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices"—like jazz improvisation rather than a conducted choir. The challenge isn't getting everyone to sing the same song. It's creating conditions where multiple voices can dialogue productively without dissolving into cacophony.

Application: Before declaring "we need alignment," assess whether you're trying to force monologic unity where polyphonic dialogue would be more powerful. Map which voices are being objectified (treated as supporting characters in leadership's story) vs. which are genuine subjects (autonomous centers of consciousness with their own valid perspective). Create staging conditions where polyphonic dialogue can occur—not debate where one voice wins, not compromise where everyone loses something, but genuine dialogue where multiple truths coexist in productive tension.

The technology startup's leadership team was proud of their inclusive culture. They ran extensive stakeholder engagement before every major decision. Town halls where employees could voice concerns. Anonymous surveys collecting feedback. Cross-functional committees studying alternatives. "We really listen," the CEO told me. "Everyone has a voice here."

But during my fieldwork, I kept hearing the same phrase from employees: "They listen, but nothing changes based on what we say."

I sat in on one of their town halls. The CEO presented a strategic pivot toward enterprise customers—moving away from the consumer market that had been the company's original focus. He asked for questions, concerns, alternative perspectives.

Multiple employees raised serious concerns: "Our engineering team is built for consumer products. Enterprise requires completely different architecture." "Our brand is associated with consumer simplicity. Enterprise buyers won't take us seriously." "We've never done enterprise sales. We'll be competing against companies with decades of relationships."

The CEO listened carefully, took notes, thanked people for their input. Then summarized: "I hear that this transition will require some adjustments, and we'll work through those challenges together. But the strategic direction is clear—enterprise is where the growth is."

Later, an engineer told me: "That's what always happens. They ask for our perspective, we give it, they thank us, then do exactly what they planned anyway. Our voices are in the room, but they're just decoration. The CEO's voice is the only one that matters."

That's monologism masquerading as dialogue. One voice (leadership's) remains the ultimate semantic authority, while other voices are objectified—treated as data points to be acknowledged rather than as autonomous subjects whose perspective might genuinely alter the outcome.

Welcome to the difference between polyphony and monologue—a distinction that determines whether your organization can genuinely transform or just performs transformation theater.

Dostoevsky's Revolution: Characters as Subjects, Not Objects

In 1929, Mikhail Bakhtin published *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*,¹ arguing that Dostoevsky had invented a completely new type of novel—the polyphonic novel—where characters exist as autonomous centers of consciousness rather than as objects defined by the author's perspective.

In traditional novels (what Bakhtin called monologic novels), the author's voice dominates. Characters are objects in the author's world, defined by the author's consciousness, subordinated to the author's vision. We see them from the author's perspective, understand them through the author's judgment, experience them as pieces in the author's narrative puzzle.

But in Dostoevsky's novels, something radically different happens. Characters exist as subjects—autonomous consciousnesses with their own full validity, their own worldviews, their own semantic authority. The author doesn't illuminate the character's reality from outside. The author illuminates the character's self-consciousness from within.²

Bakhtin wrote: "A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels."³

This isn't just literary technique. It's an entirely different way of understanding human existence—one that maps perfectly onto organizational life when you see it.

To see the precise mechanisms by which polyphony collapses into monologism, we'll analyze Dostoevsky's "The Double"—a case that Bakhtin used to develop his theory of dialogic failure. This extended case study appears later in this chapter.

The Monologic Organization: One Voice, Many Echoes

Most organizations operate monologically. Leadership has the semantic authority—the ultimate right to define organizational reality. Other voices can speak, but they speak as supporting characters in leadership's story, not as autonomous subjects with their own valid worldviews.

This shows up everywhere:

In strategic planning: Leadership develops the vision. "Stakeholder engagement" means gathering input that will be incorporated into leadership's predetermined direction. Other voices get to speak, but leadership's voice determines what gets heard, what gets dismissed, what matters.

In culture initiatives: Leadership defines the desired culture. Employee surveys measure how close current culture is to leadership's vision. "Culture change" means moving everyone toward alignment with leadership's definition. Other voices can describe their experience, but leadership's voice defines what the culture should be.

In performance management: Leadership defines excellence. Employees get evaluated against leadership's standards. "Feedback" flows both directions, but leadership's voice has ultimate authority to determine what counts as good performance.

In change management: Leadership identifies the change needed. Employees get consulted about implementation challenges. "Change resistance" means voices that don't align with leadership's vision, which need to be "managed" (read: subordinated or eliminated).

Notice the pattern: Other voices are objects in leadership's story, not subjects with their own stories. They can speak, but leadership's voice determines reality.

Bakhtin called this objectification—treating conscious beings as objects defined from outside rather than as subjects with their own autonomous self-consciousness.⁴ And while objectification works fine for actual objects (a chair is what I say it is), it fails catastrophically when applied to conscious beings with their own semantic authority.

The Polyphonic Alternative: Jazz, Not Choir

Polyphony doesn't mean everyone speaks at once creating chaos. It means multiple independent voices enter into genuine dialogue where each voice maintains its autonomy while engaging with other voices.

The metaphor is jazz improvisation. Each musician has their own voice—their instrument, their style, their interpretation. They're not playing from one unified score that dictates every note. But they're not playing random unrelated music either. They're in dialogue—responding to each other, building on each other's phrases, creating something together that none could create alone, while each maintains their distinct voice.

Compare this to a conducted choir. One voice (the conductor) determines everything—tempo, dynamics, interpretation, who sings when. Individual singers subordinate their voices to unified sound. That can be beautiful, but it's not polyphony in Bakhtin's sense. It's monologism with multiple people performing it.

Organizational polyphony looks like:

Multiple autonomous perspectives on strategic direction: Engineering's voice says enterprise architecture is wrong direction. Sales' voice says enterprise is where money is. Product's voice says consumer loyalty is the foundation. All voices are valid. All remain in productive tension. Leadership doesn't resolve the tension by imposing one view—leadership creates conditions where the tensions generate insight that none of the voices had alone.

Multiple valid interpretations of organizational culture: Frontline employees experience culture as "we grind it out despite obstacles." Middle managers experience culture as "we translate strategy into reality." Executives experience culture as "we're building something transformative." All true from their positions. Polyphony doesn't force them into one unified culture story. It maintains the multiple valid perspectives in dialogue.

Multiple legitimate definitions of success: Finance measures success as profitability. Engineering measures success as technical elegance. Customer service measures success as client satisfaction. HR measures success as employee retention. These aren't competing claims where one wins. They're multiple valid voices that need to stay in dialogue, with each maintaining its own semantic authority.

This makes some leaders deeply uncomfortable. "How can we have strategic direction if everyone has equal authority to define reality?" But that's monologic thinking. Polyphony doesn't mean all voices have equal power to determine organizational action. It means all voices are recognized as autonomous subjects whose perspective is genuinely valid from their position, rather than being objectified as supporting characters in leadership's story.

My Storytelling Organizations Research: Polyphony in Practice

When I studied that office-supply firm in 1991,⁵ I discovered what I then called "story performance"—how people in organizations constantly perform stories for each other. But looking back through polyphonic lens, I see something I didn't fully articulate then: Those story performances were polyphonic dialogues, not monologic narratives.

The warehouse workers told stories about order fulfillment challenges. The sales team told stories about customer demands. The executives told stories about market positioning. These weren't competing versions of one true story where someone had to be right and others wrong. They were multiple valid voices, each seeing organizational reality from their position, each with autonomous semantic authority.

The organization thrived not when leadership imposed one unified story, but when the multiple voices remained in productive dialogue. The warehouse voice kept the sales voice grounded in operational reality. The sales voice kept the warehouse voice connected to customer needs. The executive voice kept both connected to market dynamics.

When leadership tried to force monologic unity—"this is the one true story of who we are"—the other voices didn't disappear. They went underground, became resistant, or left the organization. But when leadership created conditions for polyphonic dialogue—spaces where multiple voices could speak their truth without being subordinated—the organization became more intelligent, adaptive, resilient.

That's the polyphonic advantage: Organizations where multiple voices remain autonomous generate more intelligence than organizations where one voice dominates.

The Three Types of Double-Voiced Discourse Revisited

In Chapter 2, we explored Bakhtin's three types of double-voiced discourse.⁶ Now let's see them through polyphony lens—because they reveal how organizations slide from polyphony into monologism without realizing it.

Type 1: Unidirectional Double-Voicing (Stylization)

This is when someone adopts leadership's language while maintaining their own semantic intention underneath. The sales team says "yes, we're pivoting to enterprise" (leadership's words) while meaning "we'll try but it won't work with our current capabilities" (their own intention).

This looks like polyphony—multiple voices speaking. But it's actually collapsing into monologism because one voice (leadership's language) is colonizing other voices. They still speak, but increasingly in leadership's vocabulary, with their own semantic authority eroded.

Type 2: Varidirectional Double-Voicing (Parody)

This is when someone voices leadership's story while signaling they don't believe it. The engineering team says in the all-hands "we're absolutely committed to enterprise architecture" with just enough ironic inflection that everyone knows they think it's a mistake.

This is resistance to monologism, but it's not yet polyphony. It's one voice (engineering) maintaining autonomy by parodying another voice (leadership), but the voices aren't in genuine dialogue. They're in opposition.

Type 3: The Sideward Glance

This is the most interesting—discourse that simultaneously speaks its own truth while anticipating the other voice's response. The product manager says, "I know the enterprise pivot makes financial sense [acknowledging leadership's voice], but our brand equity is in consumer simplicity [speaking her own voice], and I'm concerned we're trading long-term brand value for short-term revenue [holding both voices in tension]."

This is approaching genuine polyphony. Multiple voices present. Neither dominating the other. Both in productive tension.

The polyphonic organization moves from Type 1 and 2 (monologism with resistance) toward Type 3 (genuine dialogue where multiple voices remain autonomous while engaging each other).

EXTENDED CASE STUDY: The Golyadkin Effect

How Monologism Destroys Dialogue in Organizations

Reading Time: 25-30 minutes

Learning Objective: Understand the precise mechanisms by which polyphonic dialogue collapses into monologic objectification, and learn to recognize when you're treating others as objects rather than subjects.

Building on Chapter 2: In Chapter 2, we examined how Golyadkin's narrative collapsed from "we are brothers" to "this is a burlesque" through the lens of superposition—multiple contradictory story-states coexisting until forced to collapse. Now we'll revisit that same evening to understand *why* the collapse was so rapid and destructive: because Golyadkin never practiced genuine polyphonic dialogue. From the start, he was objectifying his double rather than treating him as an autonomous subject.

Case Overview

The same evening we examined in Chapter 2 reveals a second, equally critical dynamic: the failure of genuine dialogue. While superposition explains *what* happened (two stories collapsing), polyphony explains *why* it happened (one voice attempting to dominate and define the other).

This version of the case study focuses on how Mr. Golyadkin's inability to maintain authentic, multi-voiced dialogue led to what Mikhail Bakhtin calls **monologism**—the reduction of another person to an object in your own story.

PART A: The Promise of Polyphonic Partnership

Key Concept: Polyphony

In music, polyphony occurs when multiple independent melodies are played simultaneously, each maintaining its integrity while creating a complex, harmonious whole. In organizations, **polyphony** means multiple autonomous voices coexist in genuine dialogue—each voice retaining its unique perspective without being absorbed into a dominant narrative.⁷

Philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin contrasted polyphony with **monologism**—where one voice (typically leadership or authority) defines reality for everyone else, treating other voices as mere echoes or obstacles.⁸

The Initial Promise

When Golyadkin first welcomes his double, he appears to offer genuine polyphonic partnership. Notice the language:

"You and I will take to each other like fish to the water, Yakov Petrovitch; we shall be like brothers; we'll be cunning, my dear fellow, we'll work together; we'll get up an intrigue, too, to pay them out."⁹

This sounds like an invitation for **two equal subjects** to collaborate. There's even an acknowledgment of their shared vulnerability (both are outsiders, both face "enemies," both need allies).

The double responds with appropriate gratitude while maintaining his own voice. He tells his story—hardships in the provinces, losing his job, arriving in Petersburg on foot, sleeping rough.¹⁰ He's not just agreeing with Golyadkin; he's contributing his own narrative thread to the conversation.

This is what polyphonic dialogue looks like: Two people speaking from their own centers of consciousness, each validating the other's reality.

PART B: The Collapse into Monologism

The Shift: From Subject to Object

As the evening progresses and Golyadkin drinks more punch, something subtle but deadly occurs: **he stops hearing his double as an independent subject and starts defining him as an object in his own story.**

Watch the progression:

Stage 1 - Paternalistic Possession: Even in the generous phase, Golyadkin is already positioning himself as superior: "the fellow's hard up... Most likely he's suffered in his time... Ah, poor fellow, how crushed he seems!"¹¹

This isn't dialogue between equals—it's patronage. Golyadkin assigns meaning to his double's experience without asking.

Stage 2 - Private Judgment: As Golyadkin prepares for bed, he begins talking *about* his double rather than *with* him: "Come, you must own, Yasha, you're a rascal, you know; what a way you've treated me! You see, you've got my name, do you know that?"¹²

Notice the double isn't awake to respond. This isn't dialogue—it's monologue. Golyadkin is assigning guilt and judgment unilaterally.

Stage 3 - Complete Objectification: The final blow comes when Golyadkin looks at his sleeping guest and thinks: "An unpleasant picture! A burlesque, a regular burlesque, and that's the fact of the matter!"¹³

This is what Bakhtin calls **finalization**—the attempt to impose a fixed, complete, and ultimate definition on another person, denying them the capacity for change or response.¹⁴ Golyadkin has frozen his double as a ridiculous burden, an embarrassment, a joke.

The double can no longer speak. He's been objectified.

PART C: Understanding Monologism

Key Concept: Monologism vs. Dialogue

Polyphonic Dialogue

Other person as **subject** with their own center of consciousness

"What's your perspective?"

Genuine uncertainty and openness

Multiple valid interpretations coexist

"Both/and" thinking

Monologic Control

Other person as **object** in my narrative

"Here's what you really think/mean/need"

Need to control/define the outcome

One "correct" interpretation must win

"Either/or" thinking

The Illusion of Listening

Here's what makes Golyadkin's monologism so dangerous: **He thinks he's being generous.** He offers food, shelter, partnership. He listens to his double's story for hours. He even cries at the man's misfortunes.

But he never actually *hears* his double as an autonomous subject. He's already written the script:

- "You are pitiful and need my protection"
- "You are grateful and will follow my lead"
- "You exist to validate my generosity"

When the double doesn't perfectly perform this script—when Golyadkin feels burdened or suspicious—the only option is to rewrite him as "rascal" and "burlesque."

Organizational Translation

This pattern plays out constantly in organizations:

Example 1: The "Open Door" That Isn't

- Leader: "My door is always open—come to me with any concerns!"
- Employee: *Raises concern about workload*
- Leader (internal monologue): "They're not a team player. They can't handle pressure. I need to performance-manage them out."

The leader thinks they were listening. But they already had a script: "Good employees don't complain." When the employee broke the script, they were objectified as "the problem."

Example 2: The "Collaborative" Strategy Session

- Facilitator: "We want everyone's input on this strategy!"
- Participants share diverse perspectives
- Leader: "Great discussion. Now here's what we're actually doing." [Announces pre-determined decision]

The session performed polyphony but practiced monologism. Other voices were allowed to speak but not to genuinely influence the outcome.

PART D: The Three Forms of Finalization

Bakhtin identified finalization as the key mechanism by which monologism destroys dialogue.¹⁵ When we finalize someone, we deny their capacity to surprise us, contradict us, or evolve beyond our definition of them.

Golyadkin demonstrates all three forms:

1. Biographical Finalization

- Golyadkin decides his double's entire life story means: "poor victim who needs saving"
- He doesn't ask about the double's strengths, dreams, or agency—only his suffering

Organizational Example: "She's from a non-traditional background, so she'll need extra support" (without asking what she actually needs)

2. Psychological Finalization

- Golyadkin assigns fixed personality traits: "artless, pitiful, insignificant person"¹⁶
- Later: "rascal," "sniveller"
- The double is frozen in these definitions

Organizational Example: Performance review labels like "not strategic," "too tactical," "lacks executive presence" that follow someone for years

3. Ideological Finalization

- Golyadkin decides what the double's presence *means*: first "natural gift," then "burlesque"
- The double has no say in this interpretation

Organizational Example: "The team is resistant to change" (defining their concerns as psychological deficiency rather than legitimate critique)

PART E: The Observer Effect in Dialogue

Key Concept: Quantum Storytelling

David Boje describes Golyadkin's narrative collapse as "gestures of quantum storytelling" where "particles of word move from one mouth to another's, in the content, tone, and meaning of the conversational storytelling."¹⁷

This connects to the **Observer Effect** from Chapter 1: The act of observation changes what's being observed.

In dialogue, this means: **How you observe someone shapes who they become in the interaction.**

When Golyadkin observes his double as:

- "Pitiful victim" → the double performs gratitude and humility
- "Rascal taking advantage" → the double becomes defensive or withdrawn (though we don't see this since he's asleep)

The double "recognizes himself inwardly" through Golyadkin's gaze.¹⁸ He has to navigate the identity being imposed on him.

Organizational Application

Leaders often don't realize their "observation" is shaping reality:

Example: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

- Manager thinks: "This employee isn't ready for promotion"
- Manager behavior: Assigns routine tasks, micromanages, excludes from strategic meetings
- Employee behavior: Stops volunteering ideas, loses confidence, performs at lower level
- Manager conclusion: "See? They weren't ready."

The manager thinks they're observing objective reality. Actually, they're creating it through monologic finalization.

PART F: What True Polyphony Requires

The Conditions for Genuine Dialogue

Based on Golyadkin's failure, we can identify what authentic polyphonic dialogue requires:

1. Genuine Uncertainty

Golyadkin thought he knew who his double was from the first moment. True dialogue requires leaders to approach conversations with real not-knowing.

Questions that signal genuine uncertainty:

- "I'm curious—how do you see this situation?"
- "What am I missing?"
- "What's it like to be you in this role right now?"

Questions that signal finalization:

- "Don't you think you should...?"
- "Help me understand why you're resistant to..."
- "What can I do to help you get on board?"

2. Resistance to Closure

Golyadkin rushed to judgment: first "brother," then "burlesque." Both are premature closures. True polyphony stays in the productive discomfort of ambiguity.

Organizational practice:

- When someone shares a concern, don't immediately problem-solve
- When someone disagrees, don't immediately defend or correct
- Sit with the tension. Ask more questions.

3. Willingness to Be Changed

In genuine dialogue, all participants risk transformation. Golyadkin wanted his double to be grateful and compliant—but he himself refused to be challenged or surprised.

Test for true dialogue: "Am I willing to discover I was wrong? Am I willing to change my mind based on what I hear?"

4. Structural Safety

The power dynamic between Golyadkin (host, patron, established) and his double (guest, supplicant, desperate) made true polyphony nearly impossible. The double couldn't safely challenge or contradict Golyadkin.

Organizational implication: You can't have polyphonic dialogue when people fear consequences for speaking honestly. This requires:

- Separating feedback from evaluation/consequences
- Modeling leader vulnerability
- Rewarding constructive dissent

- Addressing power imbalances explicitly

PART G: The Role of Servant Petrushka

An Often-Overlooked Voice

There's a third character in this scene whose voice is completely silenced: Petrushka, Golyadkin's servant. His brief appearances reveal the consequences of chronic monologism:

Interaction 1: When Golyadkin asks if Petrushka is surprised by the identical visitor, "to his intense astonishment he saw that his servant showed no trace of surprise, but seemed, on the contrary, to be expecting something of the sort. Of course he did look morose, as it was; he kept his eyes turned away and looked as though he would like to fall upon somebody."¹⁹

Interaction 2: When Golyadkin tries to be friendly, Petrushka remains silent: "You go to bed now, Pyotr... I only mention it that you might be happy and at rest. Now we are all happy, so I want you, too, to be happy and satisfied."

Petrushka's response: "Why, I know that; what's the use of telling me?" He "grumbled to himself" and "did not even turn round to face his master, which he ought to have done out of simple respect

Retry
DD

Continue

.²⁰

The Lesson

Petrushka has been finalized so completely and for so long that he's given up on dialogue. He performs the minimum requirement (bringing dinner, making beds) but offers no genuine engagement.

Golyadkin concludes: "One jests with the rascal, his master does him too much honour, and the rascal does not feel it... But there, that's the nasty way of all that sort of people!"²¹

Notice: Even here, Golyadkin can't see Petrushka as a subject. He's "that sort of people"—objectified by class, finalized as ungrateful and surly.

Organizational Parallel: The Disengaged Employee

When organizations practice chronic monologism, they create armies of Petrushkas—employees who:

- Do the minimum required
- Keep their heads down
- Have given up trying to be heard
- Are labeled "not engaged" or "low performers"

The organization finalizes them as "the problem" rather than recognizing they're the symptom of dialogue failure.

Signs of Organizational Petrushkas:

Use this diagnostic checklist to identify employees who've been silenced by chronic monologism:

- Minimal Engagement:** Do only what's explicitly required, no discretionary effort
- Stopped Contributing Ideas:** Once voiced suggestions, now silent in meetings
- Dismissive Responses:** "I know that, what's the use?" when engaged by leadership
- Averted Eyes:** Won't make eye contact with authority figures, physically withdrawn
- Suppressed Anger:** Morose demeanor, looks like they "would like to fall upon somebody"
- Performative Compliance:** Go through motions without genuine commitment
- Lost Voice:** Used to speak up, now stays silent—learned that voice doesn't matter

What Creates Organizational Petrushkas:

- **Chronic Objectification:** Being treated as "that sort of person" rather than as individual subject
- **Finalized Identity:** Labeled with fixed traits ("not strategic," "not leadership material") that follow them
- **Unheard Voice:** Repeatedly speaking up without impact, learning silence is safer
- **Patronizing "Generosity":** Leadership "does them too much honour" by listening performatively without genuine dialogue
- **Class/Role Stratification:** Certain voices automatically discounted based on position/level

How to Restore Voice:

If you've identified Petrushkas in your organization, monologic "engagement initiatives" won't work. You need structural change:

1. **Acknowledge the Silencing:** Name explicitly that certain voices have been objectified
2. **Create Genuine Dialogue Spaces:** Not performative listening, but real influence over outcomes
3. **Demonstrate Changed Response:** When Petrushkas speak, show that it matters through action
4. **Address Power Dynamics:** Make psychological safety structural, not just rhetorical
5. **Practice Non-Finalization:** Actively resist the urge to label and define—see them as becoming

Warning: Petrushkas won't re-engage quickly. They've learned over time that their voice doesn't matter. Rebuilding trust requires sustained demonstration that the monologic pattern has genuinely changed.

PART H: Practitioner Implications

For Executives:

1. Audit for Monologism

Ask yourself honestly:

- In this week's meetings, whose perspectives genuinely surprised me?
- When was the last time someone's input changed my mind about a strategic decision?
- Who in my organization has stopped trying to share contrary views with me?

If you can't answer these questions positively, you may be practicing monologism.

2. Create Polyphonic Structures

Design processes that force multiple voices to remain autonomous:

- **Devil's advocate roles** (formally assigned, rotated)
- **Pre-mortem exercises** ("Assume this initiative failed spectacularly—what happened?")
- **Anonymous input channels** for sensitive topics
- **Diverse decision-making panels** where no single voice dominates

3. Model Non-Finalization

Language matters. Compare:

Finalizing Language	Non-Finalizing Language
"You are resistant to change"	"You have concerns about this change—tell me more"
"That's not a strategic mindset"	"I'm seeing this differently—help me understand your reasoning"
"She's not leadership material"	"What development would help her grow in this direction?"
"The team can't handle complexity"	"We haven't yet built the capacity for this—what would that require?"

For Coaches and Consultants:

1. Teach the Subject-Object Test

Help leaders notice when they're treating others as objects vs. subjects:

Subject: A center of consciousness with their own valid reality

Object: A problem to solve, resource to deploy, or obstacle to manage

Exercise: Review recent 1-on-1 conversations. For each one, honestly assess:

- Did I approach them as a subject or object?
- Did I genuinely not-know what they would say?
- Was I willing to be changed by what I heard?

2. Facilitate Polyphonic Meetings

Traditional meeting structures reinforce monologism (leader speaks, others respond). Try:

- **Liberating Structures** (methods like "1-2-4-All" or "Troika Consulting" that distribute voice)
- **Silent brainstorming** (everyone writes first, then shares—prevents dominant voices from finalizing the conversation early)
- **Rotating facilitators** (distribute the power to structure conversation)

3. Address Power Dynamics Explicitly

Polyphony can't exist when people fear consequences. Coach leaders to:

- Name the power differential openly ("I know this is awkward because I control your promotion")
- Create separation between dialogue and evaluation ("This conversation won't affect your review")
- Demonstrate genuine consequence-free candor ("Last year, three people told me my leadership style was too abrasive. They were right. Here's what I'm working on.")

PART I: Reflection Questions for Practitioners

For Self-Assessment:

1. Think of someone you manage or work closely with. Write down three adjectives describing them. Now ask yourself: Have you finalized them in these categories? Are you allowing space for them to surprise you or evolve beyond these definitions?
2. When was the last time you entered a conversation with genuine uncertainty—truly not knowing what the "right" answer was? What made that possible?
3. Recall a recent conflict or disagreement. Did you treat the other person as a subject (with their own valid center of consciousness) or as an object (wrong, resistant, or problematic)? What evidence supports your answer?

For Team Discussion:

4. As a team, discuss: "Where do we practice monologism?" Look for patterns:

- Whose voices dominate meetings?
 - Whose ideas get implemented?
 - Who has stopped speaking up?
 - What topics are considered "settled" and can't be reopened?
5. Identify someone in your organization who seems disengaged (like Petrushka). What would it cost to genuinely listen to their perspective—not to fix them, but to understand their reality? Are you willing to do that?
 6. When has your team experienced genuine polyphonic dialogue—where multiple perspectives remained in productive tension without premature resolution? What made that possible?

For Strategic Planning:

7. Review your organization's decision-making processes. Where is genuine dialogue structurally possible? Where is it structurally prevented?
8. Who in your organization holds perspectives that contradict the dominant narrative? How are they currently being treated—as valuable polyphonic voices or as problems to be managed?
9. Design one pilot process in your organization that structurally enforces polyphony (e.g., all major decisions require a formal "opposing view" presentation, rotating leadership of strategic conversations, anonymous idea submission with blind review).

PART J: The Coaching Framework - "VOICE"

To help practitioners apply these concepts, here's a diagnostic framework for assessing organizational dialogue:

V - Validate Multiple Realities

- Do we acknowledge that different people experience the same situation differently?
- Or do we insist everyone should see things the same way?

O - Observe Without Finalizing

- Do we label people in ways that allow evolution and surprise?
- Or do we assign fixed identities (high/low performer, strategic/tactical, engaged/disengaged)?

I - Invite Genuine Uncertainty

- Do leaders enter conversations not-knowing the answer?
- Or are "discussions" really just pre-determined decisions seeking buy-in?

C - Create Structural Safety

- Can people speak honestly without career consequences?

- Or is dissent punished (subtly or overtly)?

E - Expect to Be Changed

- Are leaders willing to fundamentally change their minds?
- Or are they only "listening" to be polite before doing what they already decided?

Using the VOICE Framework:

Step 1: Self-Assessment

Rate yourself on each dimension (1=Strongly Monologic, 5=Strongly Polyphonic)

Step 2: Team Assessment

Have your team rate the organization on each dimension anonymously

Step 3: Gap Analysis

Compare self-perception with team perception—gaps reveal blind spots

Step 4: Action Planning

Choose one dimension to improve over next 30 days with specific practices

Step 5: Re-Assessment

After 30 days, measure again to track progress and adjust approach

Key Takeaway for Polyphony

The Golyadkin case reveals the devastating consequences of **monologic leadership**—when one voice attempts to define reality for everyone else. What begins as generous patronage collapses into ridicule and objectification because Golyadkin never allows his double to exist as an autonomous subject.

Organizations replicate this pattern constantly: leaders who think they're listening are actually finalizing, defining, and controlling. Employees who appear disengaged (like Petrushka) are often those who've learned that genuine dialogue isn't actually available.

True polyphony requires:

- Genuine uncertainty (not-knowing)
- Resistance to closure (staying in productive ambiguity)
- Willingness to be changed (real dialogue is risky)
- Structural safety (consequences can't punish honesty)

As David Boje notes, words are "particles" that "move from one mouth to another's."²² When leaders speak, they're not just transmitting information—they're shaping the very identity and reality of those who hear them. This is the quantum nature of organizational storytelling: **observation changes the observed.**

The question isn't whether you're finalizing others—it's whether you're willing to stop.

Golyadkin ended the evening standing over his sleeping double, rendering final judgment: "A burlesque, a regular burlesque."²³ The dialogue was over. The other voice was silenced.

What voices are you silencing in your organization?

Staging Polyphony: The Six Conditions

You can't command polyphony into existence. "Everyone speak your truth!" declared in a hierarchical meeting doesn't make it so. Polyphony requires specific conditions—what Bakhtin called chronotopic staging²⁴ and what I've operationalized into six practical requirements:

Condition 1: Psychological Safety

Voices can only remain autonomous if they're safe from retribution for disagreeing with dominant voices. This goes beyond Google's psychological safety research²⁵—it's not just "can I speak without being punished" but "can I maintain my own semantic authority without being objectified."

That tech startup CEO thought he provided psychological safety because no one got fired for disagreeing. But employees learned their disagreement didn't change outcomes, which is a form of objectification. "You can speak, but your voice doesn't matter" is psychologically safe but not polyphonically viable.

True polyphonic safety means: "Your voice might genuinely alter the outcome because your perspective has autonomous validity, not because I'm generously incorporating your feedback into my predetermined direction."

Condition 2: Chronotopic Staging

Polyphony requires specific space-time-matter-social configurations.²⁶ You can't have polyphonic dialogue in an auditorium with the CEO on stage and employees in rows. That chronotope creates monologic hierarchy—one voice speaking, others listening.

Polyphonic chronotopes look like: Circle seating (no hierarchical head position). Extended time (polyphony can't be rushed). Facilitator rather than authority figure (creating conditions for dialogue rather than determining outcomes). Material arrangements that signal equality (everyone uses same equipment, sits on same chairs, has same access to information).

I worked with a manufacturing company trying to create polyphonic dialogue between engineering and operations. It kept failing in conference rooms with PowerPoint. It succeeded when we moved the conversation to the factory floor, standing in a circle around the actual

machines, with both engineers and operators holding the same tools, literally touching the material reality they were discussing together.

The chronotope made polyphony possible.

Condition 3: Genuine Uncertainty in Leadership

Polyphony can't exist when leadership already knows the answer and is just performing consultation. The other voices immediately sense they're being objectified—given the appearance of voice without actual semantic authority.

Polyphonic leadership means entering dialogue with genuine uncertainty: "I don't know the right answer. I have my perspective, you have yours, and I believe we need multiple autonomous perspectives in dialogue to discover what we can't see alone."

This terrifies many leaders because it looks like weakness or indecision. But it's actually deeper strength—the ability to hold one's own perspective firmly while recognizing it's not the only valid perspective.

Condition 4: No Voice Objectifies Other Voices

In monologic organizations, leadership's voice objectifies other voices. But polyphony can also fail when any voice tries to dominate—including formerly marginalized voices that suddenly gain power and use it to objectify others.

I've seen "empowerment" initiatives where previously subordinated voices (frontline workers, minority groups, customer service reps) finally get heard, then use their newfound voice to objectify the voices they see as former oppressors (managers, majority groups, corporate staff). That's not polyphony—that's monologism with different voices in charge.

True polyphony means no voice gets to define reality for others, regardless of which voice it is. Everyone maintains autonomous semantic authority. Everyone's voice is subject, not object.

Condition 5: Productive Tension Without Resolution

Monologic thinking assumes disagreement requires resolution—someone wins, someone loses, or we compromise (everyone loses a little). Polyphonic thinking maintains disagreement as productive tension.

Engineering says enterprise architecture is wrong. Sales says it's necessary. In monologic organization, leadership resolves the tension by deciding who's right. In polyphonic organization, leadership maintains the tension: "Both voices are valid from their positions. We need both perspectives in ongoing dialogue as we figure this out together."

This doesn't mean paralysis. It means action taken with full awareness of the tensions it creates, with commitment to keep the dialogue going rather than declaring the question settled.

Condition 6: Embodied Practice, Not Just Rhetoric

Many organizations claim to want "diverse perspectives" and "all voices heard" while structurally organizing for monologism. The rhetoric is polyphonic. The practice is monologic.

True polyphony requires structural embodiment: Decision-making processes that give multiple voices genuine power. Resource allocation that supports multiple perspectives. Promotion criteria that reward maintaining autonomy rather than aligning with dominant views. Meeting designs that create polyphonic chronotopes. Information systems that make multiple perspectives visible rather than aggregating everything into leadership dashboards.

If your organization's structure remains monologic, your polyphonic rhetoric is just performance.

When Polyphony Becomes Cacophony: The Dark Side

I need to be honest about polyphony's risks. It can fail. It can become destructive. Not every organization should aim for maximum polyphony.

Risk 1: Paralysis Through Endless Dialogue

Some organizations mistake polyphony for consensus requirement. "Everyone must feel heard before we act." This can create paralysis where the organization talks forever but never acts, because achieving genuine polyphonic consensus is nearly impossible.

Polyphony doesn't require consensus. It requires that multiple voices remain in dialogue even as the organization acts. You can move forward with strategic decision while maintaining engineering's autonomous voice saying "I still think this is wrong" in productive tension with leadership's voice saying "I think this is necessary." The action happens. The dialogue continues.

Risk 2: Dominant Voices Abuse Polyphonic License

Sometimes voices that should be constrained claim polyphonic autonomy. The finance director who says "my perspective is valid" as justification for blocking every initiative that has risk. The cynic who says "my voice deserves to be heard" as excuse for undermining every change.

Polyphony doesn't mean all voices are equally constructive. Some voices need to be constrained—not objectified, but bounded. The art is distinguishing between voices that add value through autonomous perspective and voices that are simply destructive.

Risk 3: Fragmentation into Tribalism

Polyphony can fragment into warring camps where voices stop dialoguing and just defend their positions. Engineering tribe vs. Sales tribe vs. Operations tribe. Each maintains autonomy but loses connection with other voices.

That's not polyphony—that's the breakdown of dialogue. Polyphony requires ongoing contact between autonomous voices. When contact breaks, autonomy becomes isolation.

The Vujade Polyphonic Capacity Assessment

The Vujade Assessment includes metrics for polyphonic capacity²⁷—both individual and organizational. It measures:

Individual Polyphonic Capacity:

- Can you hold your perspective firmly while recognizing other perspectives are genuinely valid from their positions?
- Can you engage with voices that contradict yours without either subordinating them or being subordinated?
- Can you maintain productive tension without requiring resolution?
- Can you distinguish between voices that deserve autonomous authority and voices that need boundaries?

Organizational Polyphonic Capacity:

- Do your structures enable multiple voices to maintain autonomy, or do they funnel everything toward leadership authority?
- Do your chronotopes create conditions for polyphonic dialogue, or do they reproduce monologic hierarchy?
- Does your culture reward maintaining autonomous perspective, or does it reward aligning with dominant views?
- Can your organization act decisively while maintaining polyphonic dialogue, or does polyphony create paralysis?

Low polyphonic capacity: You experience disagreement as threat requiring resolution. You're uncomfortable with unresolved tensions. You want clear answers, single truths, unified stories.

High polyphonic capacity: You experience disagreement as resource for insight. You're comfortable with ongoing tensions. You seek multiple truths, parallel stories, autonomous voices in productive dialogue.

Neither is absolutely right or wrong. Some situations require monologic clarity and decisive action. Others require polyphonic dialogue and maintained tensions. The question is: Can you choose appropriately, or are you stuck in one mode?

Ensemble Leadership: Grace Ann's Polyphonic Framework

Grace Ann Rosile's ensemble leadership theory²⁸ provides practical framework for polyphonic organizing. Drawing from indigenous leadership practices and archaeological studies of pre-

Hispanic Southwest cultures, ensemble leadership challenges the "hero leader" model that dominates Western organizations.

Ensemble leadership is:

- **Collectivist rather than individualist:** Leadership emerges from group dialogue, not individual vision
- **Relational rather than positional:** Authority comes from relationships and dialogue, not from hierarchical position
- **Heterarchical rather than hierarchical:** Multiple centers of power coexist rather than one center dominating
- **Dynamic rather than static:** Leadership shifts based on situation, not fixed in permanent positions

This is organizational polyphony operationalized. Instead of one leader's voice defining reality (monologism), multiple voices participate as autonomous subjects in ongoing dialogue (polyphony), with leadership emerging from the dialogue rather than imposed on it.

Grace Ann's Horse Sense at Work embodied practices²⁹ make ensemble leadership tangible. When groups work with horses, the horse doesn't recognize human hierarchy—horses respond to presence, clarity, authenticity, not to org chart position. This forces polyphonic dialogue: Whoever can move the horse in this moment has relevant authority for this moment. Authority emerges from the situation rather than being predetermined.

Veterans particularly benefit from this because military hierarchy is deeply monologic. Transitioning to civilian organizations requires learning polyphonic skills—maintaining your own voice while dialoguing with other autonomous voices, rather than either commanding subordinates or deferring to superiors. Horse Sense provides embodied practice in polyphonic dialogue where hierarchy doesn't determine who speaks with authority.

Your Polyphonic Audit

Before moving to the final chapter, assess your organization's polyphonic capacity:

Question 1: Map the voices in your organization

Identify the distinct voices—not individuals, but perspectives that represent autonomous worldviews:

- Frontline operations voice
- Customer-facing voice
- Technical/engineering voice
- Financial/business voice
- Leadership/strategic voice
- Emerging voices (new hires, diverse perspectives, dissidents)

Question 2: Which voices are subjects vs. objects?

For each voice, ask:

- Does this voice have autonomous semantic authority (subject), or is it defined and interpreted by other voices (object)?
- Can this voice genuinely alter organizational direction, or can it only provide input that other voices incorporate into their predetermined direction?
- Does this voice dialogue with other voices as equals, or does it speak as supporting character in another voice's story?

Question 3: What conditions prevent polyphony?

Identify structural and chronotopic barriers:

- What meeting formats force monologic hierarchy?
- What decision processes subordinate some voices to others?
- What spaces lack psychological safety for autonomous voice?
- What time pressures prevent polyphonic dialogue?
- What power dynamics objectify certain voices?

Question 4: Where does polyphony already exist?

Find pockets where genuine polyphonic dialogue happens:

- What teams or projects maintain multiple autonomous voices productively?
- What chronotopes enable polyphony that others don't?
- What leaders create conditions for polyphonic dialogue?
- What practices keep tensions productive rather than requiring resolution?

Question 5: What would polyphonic staging require?

Design conditions for polyphony in one significant decision:

- What chronotope would enable it? (space, time, material arrangements, social configuration)
- What psychological safety needs exist?
- What genuine uncertainty must leadership embrace?
- What structural changes would give multiple voices authentic authority?
- How would action happen while maintaining dialogue?

The 30-Day VOICE Practice Plan

For leaders committed to developing polyphonic capacity:

Week 1: Validate Multiple Realities

- **Daily Practice:** In every meeting, explicitly acknowledge that different people experience the situation differently
- **Language Shift:** Replace "Here's what's happening" with "Here's what I'm seeing—what are you seeing?"
- **Reflection:** Journal each evening: "Whose reality did I validate today? Whose did I dismiss?"

Week 2: Observe Without Finalizing

- **Daily Practice:** Catch yourself assigning fixed labels to people or situations
- **Language Shift:** Replace "She is X" with "In this context, she's showing X"
- **Reflection:** "Where did I finalize someone today? How could I have kept them unfinalizable?"

Week 3: Invite Genuine Uncertainty

- **Daily Practice:** Enter one conversation daily with real not-knowing
- **Language Shift:** Replace "Here's what we should do" with "I genuinely don't know—help me think through this"
- **Reflection:** "When did I pretend to know today? When was I genuinely uncertain?"

Week 4: Create Structural Safety + Expect to Be Changed

- **Daily Practice:** Explicitly separate one dialogue from consequences, AND allow yourself to be genuinely changed by input
- **Language Shift:** "This conversation won't affect your review, and I'm open to changing my mind based on what you tell me"
- **Reflection:** "Did anyone change my mind today? If not, was I really practicing dialogue?"

Month-End Assessment:

- Re-take VOICE self-assessment
- Ask trusted colleague to assess you on VOICE dimensions
- Identify which dimension needs continued focus
- Design next month's practice based on gaps

The Polyphonic Imperative

Here's why polyphony matters more than ever: The world is too complex for monologic leadership. One voice, no matter how brilliant, cannot see what needs to be seen. One perspective, no matter how experienced, cannot grasp organizational reality from all positions simultaneously.

The organizations that thrive are the ones that maintain multiple autonomous voices in genuine dialogue—not performing diversity while maintaining monologic control, but genuinely

allowing multiple subjects to shape reality together while each maintains their autonomous perspective.

This is scary for leaders raised in monologic traditions. It feels like losing control. But control is illusion anyway—other voices always have their own perspectives, whether you recognize them as subjects or objectify them. Polyphony just makes the multiplicity visible and workable.

The final chapter explores Principle 7: Unfinalizability—how organizations and people in quantum storytelling remain open, becoming, never frozen into fixed definitions. We'll see how polyphony and unfinalizability together create organizational capacity for continuous transformation.

But first, practice polyphonic listening. In your next meeting, notice:

- Which voices are subjects (autonomous perspectives genuinely shaping the dialogue)?
- Which voices are objects (data points to be considered but not genuinely dialogued with)?
- What would shift if you treated every voice as subject rather than object?

Take the Vujade Assessment if you haven't yet (free with code "Quantum" at vujade.ai). The polyphonic capacity module reveals your default patterns and capacities you haven't developed.

Because the future belongs to organizations that can maintain multiple truths in productive dialogue.

And that requires polyphonic mastery.

APPENDIX A: Glossary of Key Terms for Practitioners

Cognitive Dissonance: The psychological discomfort experienced when holding two contradictory beliefs simultaneously. Leads to behavioral changes to reduce tension. (Festinger, 1957)

Double-Voiced Discourse (DVD): An utterance that carries two different, often conflicting, semantic intentions simultaneously—speaking with two voices at once. (Bakhtin, 1984)

Finalization: The attempt to impose a fixed, complete, and ultimate definition on another person, denying them capacity for change, growth, or surprise. The opposite of genuine dialogue. (Bakhtin, 1984)

Monologism: A communication pattern where one dominant voice (typically authority/leadership) defines reality for everyone else, treating other voices as objects rather than subjects. (Bakhtin, 1984)

Narrative Superposition: The simultaneous existence of multiple contradictory story-states in an organization (e.g., official story vs. shadow story), both real until circumstances force collapse into one dominant reality. (Boje, 2025)

Objectification: Treating another person as an object in your narrative rather than as a subject with their own center of consciousness and valid reality. (Bakhtin, 1984)

Official Story: The sanctioned organizational narrative—what's said in town halls, mission statements, and public communications. Often optimistic and values-aligned.

Polyphony: Multiple autonomous and unmerged voices coexisting in genuine dialogue, each maintaining its own perspective and validity without being absorbed into a dominant narrative. (Bakhtin, 1984)

Quantum Storytelling: A framework understanding organizational narratives through quantum physics principles—particularly that observation changes reality, multiple states coexist simultaneously, and meaning "particles" move between people. (Boje, 2025)

Shadow Story: The unofficial organizational narrative—what's thought privately, whispered in hallways, or expressed through tone and body language. Often cynical or contradictory to the official story.

Subject: A person recognized as having their own center of consciousness, valid perspective, and autonomous agency—capable of genuine dialogue.

Superposition: In quantum physics, the principle that particles exist in multiple states simultaneously until observed. In organizations, the coexistence of contradictory narratives until circumstances force collapse. (Schrödinger, 1935; adapted by Boje, 2025)

APPENDIX B: Dialogue Health Assessment

Use this tool to assess the quality of dialogue in your organization or team. Rate each dimension on a scale of 1-5:

1 = Strongly monologic | 5 = Strongly polyphonic

Section 1: Voice Distribution

1.1 Meeting Participation

- 1: Same 2-3 people speak 80%+ of the time
- 3: Roughly half the group contributes regularly
- 5: All voices participate roughly equally

1.2 Decision Influence

- 1: Decisions clearly predetermined; "input" is performative
- 3: Input sometimes influences outcomes
- 5: Diverse perspectives genuinely shape final decisions

1.3 Idea Attribution

- 1: Ideas only gain traction when endorsed by senior leaders
- 3: Good ideas sometimes succeed regardless of source
- 5: Ideas evaluated on merit regardless of who proposes them

Score: ___/15

Section 2: Narrative Complexity

2.1 Contradiction Tolerance

- 1: Organization insists on single "aligned" narrative
- 3: Some contradictions acknowledged but quickly resolved
- 5: Multiple contradictory perspectives can coexist productively

2.2 Shadow Story Awareness

- 1: Leaders unaware of or deny shadow stories exist
- 3: Leaders vaguely aware but don't engage directly
- 5: Leaders actively surface and explore shadow narratives

2.3 Closure Resistance

- 1: Ambiguity creates anxiety; quick closure demanded
- 3: Some tolerance for productive ambiguity
- 5: Organization comfortable sitting in tension without premature resolution

Score: ___/15

Section 3: Finalization Patterns

3.1 Label Permanence

- 1: People quickly labeled and labels stick (high/low performer, strategic/tactical)
- 3: Some opportunity to evolve beyond initial impressions
- 5: Organization actively resists fixed labels; people can surprise

3.2 Career Narratives

- 1: "Not ready" or "not a fit" judgments rarely reconsidered
- 3: Some second chances or reassessments possible
- 5: Growth and change explicitly expected and supported

3.3 Dissent Treatment

- 1: Disagreement interpreted as disloyalty or poor attitude
- 3: Constructive disagreement tolerated if framed carefully
- 5: Dissent actively valued; devil's advocates rewarded

Score: ___/15

Section 4: Structural Safety

4.1 Psychological Safety

- 1: People fear career consequences for honest feedback
- 3: Some topics safe, others dangerous
- 5: Can speak honestly without fear on any work-relevant topic

4.2 Power Acknowledgment

- 1: Power differentials ignored or denied
- 3: Power acknowledged but not actively addressed
- 5: Power dynamics explicitly named and mitigated

4.3 Consequence Separation

- 1: Candor directly affects performance reviews/promotions
- 3: Some separation but not fully trusted
- 5: Clear structural separation between dialogue and evaluation

Score: ___/15

Section 5: Leader Orientation

5.1 Genuine Uncertainty

- 1: Leaders enter conversations with predetermined conclusions
- 3: Leaders sometimes genuinely don't know the answer
- 5: Leaders regularly demonstrate not-knowing and learning from others

5.2 Willingness to Change

- 1: Leaders rarely change positions based on input
- 3: Leaders occasionally shift based on compelling arguments

- 5: Leaders frequently changed by dialogue with team

5.3 Subject vs. Object Treatment

- 1: Employees treated as resources/problems to manage
- 3: Mix of subject and object treatment depending on situation
- 5: Employees consistently treated as subjects with valid autonomous perspectives

Score: ___/15

Scoring Interpretation:

60-75: Healthy Polyphonic Culture Your organization demonstrates strong dialogue practices. Continue modeling these behaviors and watch for regression during crisis/stress.

45-59: Mixed Culture with Monologic Tendencies You have pockets of genuine dialogue but also significant monologic patterns. Focus on the lowest-scoring dimensions. High leverage opportunity for improvement.

30-44: Predominantly Monologic Culture Dialogue is more performative than real. Leadership likely unaware of how much they finalize and control. Significant culture work needed. Start with psychological safety.

15-29: Severely Monologic Culture This culture likely produces high turnover, disengagement, and suppressed innovation. Urgent intervention needed. Consider external facilitation to surface shadow stories safely.

APPENDIX C (CHAPTER 6): Polyphony Conversation Starters

Use these prompts to facilitate discussions about dialogue quality:

Opening Prompt:

"We just read the case of Mr. Golyadkin, who moved from 'we are brothers' to 'this is a burlesque' in a single evening. Let's talk about times we've seen that pattern in our organization—where goodwill collapsed surprisingly fast."

Polyphony Questions:

4. "Who has stopped speaking up in our meetings? What does that tell us?"

- Notice whose voices have been silenced

- Explore what conditions led to their withdrawal
- Consider the Petrushka dynamic: chronic objectification leading to disengagement

5. "When was the last time someone's input genuinely changed the outcome of a decision?"

- Test for real vs. performative dialogue
- Distinguish between input being "considered" vs. actually influencing outcomes
- Assess whether voices are subjects (shaping reality) or objects (providing data)

6. "What perspectives are missing from this conversation? Why?"

- Actively seek excluded voices
- Examine structural barriers to participation
- Design interventions to make absent voices present

Finalization Questions:

7. "What labels do we use for people that might be preventing us from seeing them accurately?"

- Challenge fixed categorizations
- Explore how labels like "not strategic" or "high performer" freeze people
- Practice non-finalizing language

8. "Tell me about a time someone here surprised you—when they contradicted a label you'd given them."

- Celebrate moments that break finalization
- Use these stories to build comfort with unfinalizable identities
- Recognize people's capacity for becoming

9. "Where do we treat employees as problems to solve rather than subjects to understand?"

- Name objectification patterns
- Distinguish between managing performance vs. engaging with autonomous consciousness
- Shift from fixing objects to dialoguing with subjects

Action Questions:

10. "What's one structural change we could make to improve dialogue quality?"

- Move from awareness to action
- Focus on changes that create polyphonic chronotopes
- Design decision processes that distribute semantic authority

**11. "What would need to be

Retry

DD

Continue

true for people to speak more honestly in this team?"**

- Surface barriers to psychological safety
- Identify power dynamics that need explicit acknowledgment
- Create concrete conditions for genuine uncertainty and consequence-free candor

12. "What's a topic that feels 'undiscussable' in our organization? Why?"

- Identify shadow stories ready for collapse
- Explore what makes certain narratives unspeakable
- Design safe spaces for surfacing the undiscussable

APPENDIX D: The 90-Day Polyphony Practice Plan

For leaders serious about shifting from monologic to polyphonic culture:

Month 1: Awareness & Assessment

Week 1-2: Self-Audit

- Keep a dialogue journal: After each significant conversation, note:
 - Did I treat the other person as subject or object?
 - What was I genuinely uncertain about vs. what had I predetermined?
 - Did I finalize them (assign fixed labels/judgments)?
- Complete the Dialogue Health Assessment (Appendix B)

Week 3-4: Team Feedback

- Share the Golyadkin case with your team
- Facilitate discussion using Appendix C prompts
- Ask directly: "Where do I practice monologism? When do I finalize people?"
- Listen without defending

Month 2: Structural Changes

Week 5-6: Create Polyphonic Processes

- Implement one structural intervention:
 - **Option A:** Devil's advocate role (rotated, formally assigned)
 - **Option B:** Anonymous pre-decision input channel
 - **Option C:** Reverse meeting structure (most junior speaks first)

Week 7-8: Address Shadow Stories

- Hold one "shadow story session" about a current initiative
- Two columns on whiteboard: "Official story" | "Shadow story"
- Facilitate without judgment
- Don't try to "resolve"—just surface and validate

Month 3: Modeling & Embedding

Week 9-10: Model Non-Finalization

- Publicly change your mind about something based on team input
- Acknowledge when you were wrong
- Practice saying: "I don't know—what do you think?"
- Use non-finalizing language (see Chapter 6, Part F)

Week 11-12: Measure & Reflect

- Re-administer Dialogue Health Assessment
- Calculate change in scores
- Share results transparently with team
- Co-create next steps

Success Metrics:

Track these indicators of polyphonic capacity development:

- Increased Voice Distribution:** More people contributing in meetings
- Changed Decisions:** Documented instances where input altered outcomes
- Surfaced Shadow Stories:** Previously hidden narratives made speakable
- Leader Mind-Changes:** Times you genuinely changed position based on dialogue
- Reduced Petrushkas:** Previously disengaged employees re-engaging
- Productive Tensions:** Contradictions maintained without forced resolution
- Non-Finalizing Language:** Shift from "is" to "showing/becoming"

Maintenance Practices:

After the initial 90 days, sustain polyphonic capacity through:

Monthly: Dialogue Health Assessment (track trends)

Quarterly: Shadow story sessions (keep underground narratives surfaced)

Annually: Full polyphony audit with external facilitator
Ongoing: VOICE framework in daily practice

Learn More

Take the Vujade Assessment polyphonic capacity module (free with code "Quantum"):
vujade.ai

Access polyphonic staging templates and dialogue frameworks:
quantumstorytelling.org/polyphony

Experience ensemble leadership through Horse Sense at Work: horsesenseatwork.com

Join Monday GrowthOD sessions for live polyphonic practice: growthod.org

Quantum Coaching Sprint—Module 6 focuses on polyphonic leadership:
quantumstorytelling.org/sprint

Connect with the authors:

- David Boje: dboje@nmsu.edu
 - Tanya Akins Cane: [LinkedIn/tdakinscane](#)
 - Grace Ann Rosile: garosile@nmsu.edu
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Endnotes for Chapter 6

1. Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press. Originally published in Russian in 1929, this text introduces polyphony as Dostoevsky's fundamental innovation—creating novels where multiple independent consciousnesses coexist without being subordinated to authorial monologue.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 49. Bakhtin writes: "The author does not speak about the hero but with the hero. The consciousness of the hero is not objectified, not finalized, not made material for the author's consciousness."
3. *Ibid.*, p. 6. This is Bakhtin's defining statement of polyphony—not harmony where multiple voices merge into one, but genuine multiplicity where each voice maintains autonomous validity.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-53. Bakhtin's discussion of objectification vs. subjectification in narrative applies directly to how organizations treat different voices—as objects to be defined and controlled, or as subjects with autonomous semantic authority.
5. Boje, D. M. (1991). The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(1), 106-126. Available at:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2393432> This ethnographic study revealed how organizational stories are performed polyphonically—multiple voices telling different stories from different positions, all valid from their perspectives.

6. Bakhtin (1984), pp. 199-204. The three types of double-voiced discourse (unidirectional, varidirectional, and sideward glance) reveal how organizations move from monologic control toward polyphonic dialogue or get stuck in intermediate states.
7. The term "polyphony" comes from musical theory describing multiple independent melodic lines sounding simultaneously. Bakhtin adapted this to describe novels (particularly Dostoevsky's) where multiple consciousnesses coexist without being subordinated to a single authorial perspective. See: Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 6-7.
8. Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 292-293. In monologism, "the consciousness of the creator encompasses the consciousnesses of the heroes" rather than engaging with them dialogically.
9. Dostoevsky, F. (1846/2014). *The Double*. In *The Gambler and Other Stories* (C. Garnett, Trans.), Chapter VII, p. 270-271. Project Gutenberg.
10. Ibid., p. 270. The double's story includes: "details of service in some lawcourt in the provinces, of prosecutors and presidents, of some department intrigues, of the depravity of some registration clerks, of an inspector, of the sudden appointment of a new chief in the department."
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 271.
13. Ibid.
14. Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 58-63. Bakhtin writes: "To finalize a person is to treat him as if his entire life could be summed up, completed, and sealed... It denies the person any ability to surprise us, to exceed our definitions."
15. Ibid., p. 58-63.
16. Dostoevsky, Chapter VII, p. 270.
17. Boje, D. M. (2025). Analysis of Dostoevsky's *The Double*. In *The Melody That Keeps People Afloat: Quantum Storytelling for Organizational Transformation* (manuscript). Boje states: "In what Boje calls gestures of quantum storytelling by Bakhtin, the particles of word move from one mouth to another's, in the content, tone, and meaning of the conversational storytelling. Golyadkin makes Petruska recognize himself inwardly."
18. Ibid.
19. Dostoevsky, Chapter VII, p. 270.
20. Ibid., p. 271.
21. Ibid.
22. Boje, D. M. (2025). Analysis of Dostoevsky's *The Double*.
23. Dostoevsky, Chapter VII, p. 271.
24. Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel. In *The Dialogic Imagination* (pp. 84-258). University of Texas Press. Chronotopic staging—creating the time-space conditions where certain narratives become possible—applies directly to creating conditions for polyphonic dialogue.
25. Edmondson, A. C. (2018). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth*. Wiley. While Edmondson's work

- on psychological safety is valuable, polyphony requires more than safety from punishment—it requires recognition of autonomous semantic authority.
26. See Chapter 4 for full exploration of chronotopic staging and how space-time-matter-social configurations enable or prevent certain narrative possibilities, including polyphonic dialogue.
 27. The Vujade Assessment, co-created by Doug Breckenridge and Dr. Monty G. Miller, includes specific metrics for polyphonic capacity—both individual ability to maintain autonomous voice while dialoguing with others, and organizational structural capacity for polyphony. Free with code "Quantum" at vujade.ai
 28. Rosile, G. A., Boje, D. M., Carlon, D. M., Downs, A., & Saylor, R. (2013). Storytelling diamond: An antenarrative integration of the six facets of storytelling in organization research design. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(4), 557-580. Introduces ensemble leadership as collectivist, relational, and heterarchical alternative to hero-leader models.
 29. Boje, D. M., Rosile, G. A., Saylor, J., & Saylor, R. (2015). Using storytelling theatrics for leadership training. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 17(3), 348-362. Horse Sense at Work creates embodied conditions for polyphonic dialogue where hierarchy doesn't determine semantic authority.
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Additional Resources

For deeper understanding of polyphony and dialogism:

Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. University of Minnesota Press. Essential reading for understanding polyphony—not just as literary technique but as fundamentally different understanding of how consciousness works.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. University of Texas Press. Extends dialogism beyond individual novels to show how all discourse operates polyphonically when not forced into monologic unity.

Holquist, M. (2002). *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (2nd ed.). Routledge. Accessible introduction to Bakhtin's dialogic philosophy and its implications for understanding human communication.

For organizational applications:

Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Sage. Framework for understanding organizations as polyphonic rather than monologic entities.

Rosile, G. A. (Ed.). (2016). *Tribal Wisdom for Business Ethics*. Emerald Publishing. Explores indigenous ensemble leadership practices as alternatives to Western hero-leader monologism.

Cunliffe, A. L., & Eriksen, M. (2011). Relational leadership. *Human Relations*, 64(11), 1425-1449. Contemporary organizational theory moving toward relational, dialogic understanding of leadership that aligns with polyphonic principles.

For understanding finalization and objectification:

Buber, M. (1970). *I and Thou* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). Scribner. Buber's distinction between I-Thou (subject-subject) and I-It (subject-object) relationships parallels Bakhtin's polyphony vs. monologism.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). Continuum. Freire's critique of "banking education" (where teachers deposit knowledge into passive students) parallels Bakhtin's critique of monologism—both deny the other's subjectivity.

Final Practitioner Note

The Golyadkin case isn't just a literary curiosity—it's a mirror. Every leader has been Golyadkin: generous and gracious one moment, judgmental and objectifying the next. The difference isn't whether you finalize others (you do), but whether you're willing to notice and correct it.

The work of polyphony is never finished. Monologic patterns are the default in hierarchical organizations. They require constant, conscious resistance.

But the cost of monologism is steep: disengagement, turnover, suppressed innovation, and organizations that can't adapt because they've silenced the very voices that see reality most clearly.

The question Dostoevsky leaves us with is simple:

Will you treat the other person as a brother—a subject with autonomous validity—or as a burlesque—an object in your predetermined story?

The choice shapes not just that conversation, but the entire culture you create.

End of Chapter 6

Next: Chapter 7 - Unfinalizability: Continuous Becoming Without Fixed Definitions

This case study is designed for inclusion in "The Melody That Keeps People Afloat: Quantum Storytelling for Organizational Transformation" by David Michael Boje, Tanya Akins Cane, and

Doug Breckenridge. All proceeds support veteran business development through PerView Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

End of Chapter 6

Next: Chapter 7 - Unfinalizability: Continuous Becoming Without Fixed Definitions

Chapter 7: Unfinalizability

Continuous Becoming Without Fixed Definitions

Principle 7: Unfinalizability—In quantum storytelling, organizations and people remain open, becoming, never frozen into fixed definitions. The moment you finalize organizational culture ("this is who we are"), identity ("this is what we do"), or individuals ("this is how she performs"), you kill the quantum possibility that makes transformation real. Heisenberg proved you cannot simultaneously know position and momentum with perfect precision. Bakhtin proved that genuine dialogue leaves participants unfinalizable—changed by the encounter, open to further change. Organizations that embrace unfinalizability maintain adaptive capacity. Organizations that demand finalization become brittle, defending fixed definitions against living reality.

Application: Before declaring "this is our culture" or "this defines our strategy" or "this employee is X type," recognize that finalization closes possibilities. Instead, practice continuous reflection and adjustment—True Storytelling's seventh principle. Create organizational rhythms where stories get revisited, identities get revised, and definitions remain open to becoming. Use measurement not to finalize reality ("this is what we are") but to notice patterns in ongoing becoming ("this is where we've been moving"). Build comfort with productive uncertainty rather than demanding false certainty.

The multinational corporation spent eighteen months developing their new culture framework. Consultants interviewed hundreds of employees. Focus groups explored values. Leadership retreats debated wording. Finally, they announced: "Our culture is defined by five core values: Innovation, Integrity, Collaboration, Excellence, Customer-Focus."

Beautiful posters appeared on every floor. Wallet cards with the five values were distributed. Performance reviews were redesigned to evaluate employees against the values. Town halls celebrated the new cultural identity. The CEO declared: "Now we know who we are."

I was brought in two years later because employee engagement had dropped twenty percent, innovation metrics had declined, and the culture felt "stale and performative," according to exit interview data.

What happened? They had finalized their culture. "This is who we are" became "this is who we must remain." The five values shifted from description to prescription, from observation to control. Employees who embodied values in ways that didn't match the official framework got corrected. Behaviors that didn't fit the five-value schema got discouraged. The living, evolving reality of organizational culture got frozen into a fixed definition that couldn't adapt to changing conditions.

The culture framework wasn't wrong. The finalization was deadly.

Welcome to quantum storytelling's seventh and final principle: Unfinalizability. And understanding this principle might be the most important thing you learn from this entire book.

Heisenberg's Uncertainty: You Cannot Pin Reality Down

In 1927, Werner Heisenberg proved something that shook physics to its foundation: You cannot simultaneously measure a particle's position and momentum with arbitrary precision. The more accurately you determine where something is, the less accurately you can know where it's going. The act of measuring position necessarily introduces uncertainty in momentum, and vice versa.¹

This isn't about measurement limitations. It's about the nature of reality itself. Quantum particles don't HAVE precise position and momentum simultaneously. They exist in states of fundamental uncertainty—defined by probability distributions, not fixed values.

Classical physics assumed everything had definite position and momentum—we just needed better instruments to measure them. Heisenberg proved that assumption wrong. Reality at quantum scale is irreducibly uncertain. Finalization is impossible.

Organizations are exactly the same, though we keep pretending otherwise.

We treat organizational culture as if it has fixed, measurable properties that we can pin down: "Our culture score is 7.2 on the engagement scale." We treat strategic direction as if it can be definitively stated: "We are the market leader in enterprise solutions." We treat employee identity as if it's stable: "She's a high performer," "He's not leadership material."

But organizational reality is quantum, not classical. It exists in states of becoming, not being. Any attempt to finalize it—to pin it down with perfect precision—necessarily kills the momentum, the evolution, the adaptive capacity that makes living organizations work.

Bakhtin's Unfinalizable Hero

While Heisenberg was proving uncertainty in physics, Bakhtin was discovering something parallel in literature. In Dostoevsky's novels, characters remain unfinalizable—they never become fixed, defined objects that we fully understand. Every time we think we've grasped who they are, they surprise us, reveal new depths, become something we didn't expect.²

Bakhtin wrote: "Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future."³

This isn't just literary technique. It's recognition of how consciousness actually works. Conscious beings are fundamentally unfinalizable. We're always becoming, always in dialogue, always capable of surprising ourselves and others with new responses we didn't predict.

Traditional novels (what Bakhtin called monologic novels) finalize their characters. The author defines who they are, what they represent, how they'll behave. We understand them completely by the end—their essence is captured, fixed, finalized.

But Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels⁴ keep characters open, becoming, unfinalizable. We never fully grasp them because they never stop becoming. They remain subjects with autonomous consciousness, not objects we can pin down and label.

The parallel to organizations is precise: Monologic organizations try to finalize everything—culture, strategy, roles, performance, identity. "This is who we are, this is what we do, this is how we measure success, and anyone who doesn't fit this definition needs to change or leave."

Polyphonic organizations maintain unfinalizability—culture keeps evolving, strategy keeps adapting, roles keep shifting, performance keeps being reinterpreted, identity remains open to becoming.

The Living Story vs. The Finalized Narrative

In my research on antenarrative theory,⁵ I distinguished between stories (coherent narratives with beginning, middle, end) and antenarratives (fragmented, unfolding, not-yet-coherent story bits that remain in process).

Stories are finalized. They have closure. We know what they mean, how to interpret them, what lessons they teach. They're useful for communication—you can tell a finalized story efficiently, and people understand it.

But antenarratives are unfinalizable. They're still becoming. We don't yet know what they mean, how they'll resolve, what we'll learn from them. They're alive, evolving, open to multiple futures.

Organizations need both. Some narratives should be finalized: "This is how we built this product and succeeded." "This is what happened when we failed to listen to customers." These finalized stories carry organizational memory and learning.

But if EVERYTHING gets finalized, the organization dies. Living organizations maintain antenarrative spaces—domains where stories are still unfolding, meanings aren't yet fixed, possibilities remain open.

That culture framework? It finalized organizational identity into five values. What got lost were all the antenarratives—the ongoing, unfinalized stories about who we're becoming, what we're discovering, how we're evolving. The antenarrative "we're figuring out how to balance innovation with stability" got collapsed into the finalized narrative "we value Innovation and Excellence." The complexity, tension, and ongoing becoming got frozen into static definition.

The employees didn't resist the five values. They resisted the finalization. They wanted their organization to remain unfinalizable—open to becoming, not trapped in fixed identity.

Restorying: The Practice of Unfinalizability

The True Storytelling seventh principle is "continuous reflection and adjustment"⁶—what Grace Ann Rosile and I call restorying.⁷ Restorying means revisiting narratives that seemed settled, reinterpreting stories that seemed finalized, opening definitions that seemed closed.

This isn't revisionist history or inconsistent flip-flopping. It's recognition that stories don't get told once and remain fixed. They get retold, reinterpreted, revised as conditions change and understanding deepens.

I saw this powerfully in work with a hospital system dealing with a patient safety crisis. Initially, they finalized the story as "individual clinician error." Clear cause. Clear solution (discipline the clinicians, implement better protocols). Story finalized.

But when we created space for restorying, different narrative emerged: systemic understaffing, impossible workloads, electronic records that interrupted rather than supported care, administration prioritizing efficiency metrics over safety margins. The "individual error" story was true from one position. The "systemic failure" story was true from another position. Both were antenarrative fragments of larger, unfinalizable reality.

The restorying process didn't replace one finalized story with another finalized story. It maintained multiple stories in ongoing dialogue, with all stories remaining open to further revision as understanding evolved.

That's unfinalizability in practice. Not closing stories prematurely. Not declaring "now we know the truth." Keeping narratives alive, open, becoming.

The Enron Tragedy: When Finalization Kills

My work on Enron⁸ reveals what happens when organizations finalize their identity so completely that they can't adapt when reality diverges from the finalized story.

Enron finalized itself as "America's Most Innovative Company." That identity became so frozen, so defended, so central to organizational existence that any information contradicting it got suppressed, denied, or attacked. The company couldn't restory itself as "we made mistakes and need to change" because that would contradict the finalized identity.

When accountants raised concerns, they were dismissed because acknowledging problems would undermine the finalized story. When traders warned about unsustainable practices, they were ignored because sustainability concerns didn't fit the finalized innovation narrative. When journalists investigated, they were attacked because external voices couldn't be allowed to redefine the finalized identity.

The more Enron defended its finalized story, the more it diverged from actual reality, until the gap became catastrophic and the whole structure collapsed.

This is finalization's ultimate danger: It makes organizations brittle. They become so invested in their fixed definition that they can't adapt when conditions change. They defend their finalized identity against living reality, and reality always wins that fight.

Unfinalizable organizations remain adaptive because they never get trapped defending fixed definitions. "We're America's Most Innovative Company" as ongoing aspiration and self-challenge? That's unfinalizable and healthy. "We ARE America's Most Innovative Company and anyone questioning that is wrong"? That's finalized and deadly.

The Measurement Paradox

Here's where leaders get confused about unfinalizability: "If we can't finalize, how do we measure? How do we know if we're succeeding? How do we hold people accountable?"

The answer lies in understanding measurement not as finalization but as noticing patterns in ongoing becoming.

When you measure quantum particles, you're not discovering their "true state" that existed before measurement. You're participating in creating a particular state through the act of measurement itself—and that state will change as soon as conditions change.

When you measure organizational culture, you're not discovering the "true culture" that exists independent of measurement. You're participating in constructing a particular version of culture through the questions you ask, the timing of measurement, the social configuration doing the measuring—and that version will shift as soon as chronotopic conditions change.

The question isn't "should we measure?" The question is "what do our measurements finalize, and what do they leave open?"

Finalization measurements:

- "Our culture is 7.2/10 on engagement" (as if culture is fixed property with definite value)
- "This employee is a 3/5 performer" (as if performance is stable trait)
- "We are the market leader" (as if competitive position is permanent status)

Unfinalizability measurements:

- "Engagement patterns show increase in these areas, decrease in others, suggesting evolution toward..." (patterns in becoming, not fixed state)
- "This employee's performance in these contexts has been strong, in other contexts challenged, indicating..." (context-dependent performance, not trait)
- "Market data shows we're gaining ground here, losing ground there, pointing toward..." (dynamic positioning, not static status)

See the difference? Finalization measurements pin reality down. Unfinalizability measurements notice patterns while keeping reality open to ongoing becoming.

The Vujade Assessment⁹ embodies this principle. It doesn't measure your "type" or finalize your "leadership style." It measures patterns in how you see familiar situations, with explicit recognition that those patterns can evolve, that your capacity for seeing fresh is unfinalizable, always capable of development.

The Horse Knows You're Unfinalizable

Grace Ann's Horse Sense at Work¹⁰ provides visceral experience of unfinalizability. Horses don't finalize you. They don't see your job title, your resume, your performance review history. They respond to your present-moment embodied state, which is always changing, always becoming.

You can't tell a horse "I'm a confident leader" (finalized identity) and have the horse accept that definition. The horse responds to whether you're embodying confidence in this moment, with this horse, in this context. If you're not, the horse won't cooperate—regardless of your finalized story about yourself.

This is initially frustrating for executives used to having their finalized identities respected. "I'm the VP of Operations" means nothing to a horse. "I've been doing this for twenty years" doesn't matter. The horse responds to unfinalizable present-moment becoming, not finalized past-based identity.

But once people accept this, it's liberating. You're not trapped by your finalized story about yourself. Every moment is fresh opportunity to become different. The horse gives instant feedback about who you're being right now, with no weight of past finalization holding you in fixed patterns.

Veterans particularly benefit from this¹¹ because military identity can become heavily finalized: "I'm a sergeant," "I'm infantry," "I'm a warrior." True statements about past experience. Potentially limiting finalizations that make civilian transition difficult. Horses don't care about military rank. They respond to present embodied state. This creates space for veterans to discover unfinalizable civilian selves—not replacing military identity but expanding beyond its finalization.

Collective Intelligence and Unfinalizable Systems

My work on collective intelligence networking¹² explores how organizational intelligence emerges from interactions across unfinalizable networks. When you finalize organizational roles, knowledge, expertise—"this person is the expert on X," "this department owns Y," "this is how we do Z"—you constrain intelligence to flow only through finalized channels.

But real collective intelligence requires unfinalizable networks where anyone might suddenly have the insight that matters, where expertise emerges in unexpected locations, where solutions come from surprising connections.

I studied a software company where product innovation had stagnated. They had finalized their innovation process: "Product managers identify opportunities, engineering builds solutions, marketing launches them." Clean. Clear. Finalized.

But a customer service representative noticed a pattern in support calls that suggested a completely different product direction. When she mentioned it to her manager, she was told, "That's not your role. Focus on handling calls. Product direction is product management's job."

The finalized roles prevented collective intelligence from flowing. The company had defined who could contribute to innovation, and anyone outside those finalized boundaries got constrained.

We didn't change the roles. We unfinalized them. "Product managers lead product strategy, AND anyone who notices patterns that inform product direction can contribute them." The AND matters—it maintains structure while opening possibility.

Within six months, innovations were emerging from customer service, from sales, from implementation consultants—places the finalized system had excluded. Collective intelligence increased because the system became unfinalizable.

The Practical Rhythms of Unfinalizability

You can't just declare "we're unfinalizable now!" and expect it to work. Unfinalizability requires specific practices, rhythms, and disciplines that prevent premature finalization while maintaining enough stability to function.

Here are seven practical rhythms for organizational unfinalizability:

Rhythm 1: Regular Restorying Sessions

Schedule explicit times when previously finalized stories get reopened for revision. Not crisis-driven ("we have to change because we're failing") but rhythmic practices that normalize revision.

Quarterly strategy reviews that genuinely reconsider strategic direction, not just report progress on finalized strategy. Annual culture conversations that ask "who are we becoming?" not "are we living our defined values?" Monthly team retrospectives that restory recent projects, opening them to multiple interpretations rather than finalizing single lessons-learned.

Rhythm 2: Multiple Interpretation Frameworks

Never allow single framework to finalize organizational understanding. Always maintain multiple interpretive lenses in productive tension.

That culture isn't just "five values." It's also "what customers experience," "what competitors see," "what new hires discover," "what longtime employees miss," "what exit interviews reveal." All valid. All partial. None final.

Rhythm 3: Embrace Contradiction

When data contradicts your current story, don't dismiss it as outlier or error. Treat it as invitation to restory.

"We're a high-performing culture" AND "we have serious retention problems in these departments"—both true, apparently contradictory, requiring restorying that can hold both rather than finalizing one as truth and dismissing other as exception.

Rhythm 4: Chronotopic Variation

Tell your organizational story in different chronotopes (time-space configurations) and notice how it changes. The story told in boardrooms differs from story told on factory floors. The story told during quarterly earnings differs from story told at holiday parties. The story told to investors differs from story told to employees' families.

None of these is the "true story." They're all partial perspectives that together reveal unfinalizable reality.

Rhythm 5: Future Anterior Narrative

Instead of finalizing "this is what we are," practice future anterior narration: "this is what we will have been becoming." Shifts from fixed identity to ongoing trajectory.

Not "we are innovative" (finalized state) but "we are becoming increasingly innovative, and looking back a year from now we'll see this as when that trajectory accelerated" (unfinalizable becoming).

Rhythm 6: Error as Revelation

When finalized predictions fail, treat failure as revelation about what we didn't know, not as deviation from truth we already had.

"We predicted this strategy would succeed, it failed, therefore the strategy was wrong" finalizes. "We predicted this strategy would succeed, it failed, revealing aspects of reality our prediction couldn't see—what did failure teach us?" maintains unfinalizability.

Rhythm 7: Reflection Loops Before Decision Loops

Build systematic reflection into decision processes. Before deciding, reflect. After deciding, reflect again. Before implementing, reflect. During implementation, reflect. After implementation, reflect.

Not reflection to improve next decision (that assumes finalized learning). Reflection to maintain awareness that we're always understanding partially, always seeing from limited positions, always open to discovering we were wrong.

These rhythms don't prevent action or decision. They prevent finalization from killing organizational capacity to adapt.

The True Storytelling Integration

The seven True Storytelling principles¹³ map onto the seven quantum storytelling principles in ways that now should be clear:

True Storytelling 1: You yourself must be true → **Quantum Principle 1:** Observer Effect (your presence participates in constructing reality)

True Storytelling 2: Respect stories already there → **Quantum Principle 2:** Superposition (multiple stories coexist before collapse)

True Storytelling 3: Clear plot creating direction → **Quantum Principle 3:** Wave-Particle Duality (crystallize when needed, maintain flow when needed)

True Storytelling 4: Time and space awareness → **Quantum Principle 4:** Spacetime mattering (stories materialize in specific chronotopes)

True Storytelling 5: Helping it along → **Quantum Principle 5:** Entanglement (work with narrative correlations across distance)

True Storytelling 6: Staging → **Quantum Principle 6:** Polyphony (create conditions for multiple voices)

True Storytelling 7: Continuous reflection and adjustment → **Quantum Principle 7:** Unfinalizability (never freeze into fixed definitions)

Together, these principles create what we call quantum organizational intelligence—capacity to work with uncertainty, multiplicity, entanglement, and becoming rather than demanding classical clarity, unity, independence, and being.

Your Unfinalizability Practice

Before we close this chapter and this journey through quantum storytelling, engage in unfinalizability practice:

Exercise 1: Identify Your Finalizations

Write down the stories your organization has finalized:

- "We are..." (cultural identity)
- "We do..." (strategic identity)
- "Our strength is..." (competitive identity)
- "Success means..." (definition of achievement)
- "That person is..." (employee identity)

Now ask: What does each finalization prevent us from seeing, becoming, or doing?

Exercise 2: Practice Restorying

Take one finalized organizational story. Restory it from three positions:

- Someone inside the organization who benefits from the finalized story
- Someone inside the organization harmed by the finalized story
- Someone outside the organization who sees it differently

Notice how the story shifts without losing validity. All three restoryings are true from their positions.

Exercise 3: Create Unfinalizability Rhythm

Choose one domain where you'll practice systematic unfinalizability:

- Schedule: Monthly restorying of this domain
- Question: "What about this domain are we finalizing that should remain open?"
- Practice: Deliberately introduce contradictory data, alternative interpretations, chronotopic variations
- Intention: Keep this domain alive, becoming, unfinalizable

Exercise 4: Measure Becoming, Not Being

Redesign one measurement system from finalization to unfinalizability:

Current (finalization): "Employee engagement score: 7.2" **Redesign (unfinalizability):** "Employee engagement patterns show increasing in teams with X conditions, decreasing in teams with Y conditions, suggesting we're becoming more engaged when..."

Notice how the redesigned measurement maintains utility while keeping reality open.

The Quantum Organizational Leader

We've journeyed through seven principles of quantum storytelling:

1. Observer Effect: You participate in constructing what you observe
2. Superposition: Multiple stories coexist until collapsed
3. Wave-Particle Duality: Flow and crystallization both necessary

4. Spacetime mattering: Stories materialize in specific chronotopes
5. Entanglement: Narratives correlate across distance
6. Polyphony: Multiple voices maintain autonomy in dialogue
7. Unfinalizability: Organizations remain becoming, never finalized

Together, these principles don't just describe how organizations work. They provide quantum organizational operating system—fundamentally different from classical management paradigms that assume organizations are machines, stories are data, culture is property, change is linear, and leadership is control.

Quantum organizational leaders work with:

- **Uncertainty instead of false certainty:** Recognizing we see partially from positions, never completely from nowhere
- **Multiplicity instead of forced unity:** Maintaining multiple valid stories in productive tension
- **Entanglement instead of independence:** Understanding that local changes have non-local effects
- **Becoming instead of being:** Keeping organizations alive, adaptive, unfinalizable

This is radically different from most leadership training, which teaches you to:

- Reduce uncertainty through better data
- Create unified culture through alignment
- Control outcomes through careful planning
- Define organizational identity clearly and permanently

Those classical approaches work fine for simple, stable, predictable environments. They fail catastrophically in complex, volatile, uncertain conditions—which describes most contemporary organizational reality.

Quantum storytelling is the operating system for leading in complexity.

The Call to Action

You've reached the end of these seven chapters. But this isn't conclusion—it's invitation to beginning.

Take the Vujade Assessment (free with code "Quantum" at vujade.ai). Measure your quantum organizational capacities. Discover where you're already operating quantum and where you're stuck in classical patterns.

Join the Monday GrowthOD sessions (free at growthod.org). Practice these principles with other practitioners. Learn from each other's quantum organizational experiments.

Register for the Quantum Coaching Sprint (quantumstorytelling.org/sprint). Six sessions where David, Tanya, Doug, and Monty guide you through applying all seven principles to your actual organizational challenges.

Experience Horse Sense at Work (horsesenseatwork.com). Get embodied quantum organizational training where 1,200-pound mirrors show you what your mind alone can't see.

Support veteran transformation through every action above. Remember: Every dollar flows to Perview Inc., funding veteran business training, coaching certification, and family programs. You're not just learning quantum storytelling—you're enabling veterans to teach it.

And most importantly: **Practice unfinalizability in your own leadership.**

Start small. Pick one domain where you'll stop finalizing and start maintaining open becoming. Notice what changes. Share what you learn. Experiment with what emerges.

Because here's the final truth about quantum organizational leadership:

It's not something you learn once and apply forever (that would be finalization).

It's something you practice continuously, becoming more capable while remaining unfinalizable, knowing more while embracing uncertainty, leading more effectively while recognizing you participate in rather than control organizational reality.

The quantum organizational future doesn't belong to those with the right answers.

It belongs to those who can maintain the right questions, hold multiple perspectives, work with entangled complexity, and remain unfinalizable while helping others do the same.

Welcome to quantum storytelling.

Now the real work begins.

Learn More & Get Involved

Take the Vujade Assessment (free with code "Quantum"): vujade.ai

Access all seven quantum principles frameworks and tools: quantumstorytelling.org

Experience embodied quantum leadership: horsesenseatwork.com

Join free Monday GrowthOD practice sessions: growthod.org

Quantum Coaching Sprint (6-session certification): quantumstorytelling.org/sprint

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Connect with the authors:

- David Boje: dboje@nmsu.edu
- Tanya Akins Cane: [LinkedIn/tdakinscane](#)
- Grace Ann Rosile: garosile@nmsu.edu

Follow the quantum storytelling community:

- LinkedIn: Quantum Storytelling Practitioners
- Monthly newsletter: quantumstorytelling.org/newsletter
- Annual Quantum Storytelling Conference: quantumstorytelling.org/conference

Endnotes for Chapter 7

1. Heisenberg, W. (1927). Über den anschaulichen Inhalt der quantentheoretischen Kinematik und Mechanik [On the perceptual content of quantum theoretical kinematics and mechanics]. *Zeitschrift für Physik*, 43(3-4), 172-198. The Uncertainty Principle proves that position and momentum cannot both be measured with arbitrary precision—this isn't measurement limitation but fundamental property of quantum reality.
2. Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press, pp. 58-59. Bakhtin's concept of the "unfinalizable hero" describes characters who remain open, becoming, never fully defined or understood.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 166. This quote captures Bakhtin's conviction that genuine dialogue leaves all participants unfinalizable—open to further becoming rather than frozen in fixed definitions.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8. Polyphonic novels maintain characters as unfinalizable subjects rather than collapsing them into finalized objects that the author fully defines and controls.
5. Boje, D. M. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*. Sage, pp. 1-25. Available at: <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/narrative-methods-for-organizational-communication-research/book210248> Introduction to antenarrative theory—the distinction between finalized stories and unfinalizable antenarratives still in process of becoming.
6. The seven True Storytelling principles, developed by Boje, Larsen, and Bruun, culminate in Principle 7: continuous reflection and adjustment—the practice of keeping organizational narratives open rather than finalized. See: Larsen, J., Boje, D. M., & Bruun, L. (2020). *True Storytelling: Seven Principles for an Ethical and Sustainable Change-Management Strategy*. Routledge.
7. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2003). Life imitates art: Enron's epic and tragic narration. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 17(1), 85-125. Explores restorying as ongoing practice of narrative revision rather than one-time reframing.
8. Boje, D. M., Rosile, G. A., Durant, R. A., & Luhman, J. T. (2004). Enron spectacles: A critical dramaturgical analysis. *Organization Studies*, 25(5), 751-774. The Enron case

reveals catastrophic consequences of finalizing organizational identity so rigidly that adaptation becomes impossible.

9. The Vujade Assessment, co-created by Doug Breckenridge and Dr. Monty G. Miller, explicitly rejects finalization—it measures patterns in becoming rather than fixed traits, with recognition that capacity for seeing familiar situations freshly is always developing. Free with code "Quantum" at vujade.ai
 10. Rosile, G. A., & Boje, D. M. (Horse Sense at Work). See: horsesenseatwork.com and Boje, D. M., Rosile, G. A., Saylor, J., & Saylor, R. (2015). Using storytelling theatrics for leadership training. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 17(3), 348-362.
 11. Flora, J., Boje, D., Rosile, G. A., & Hacker, K. (2016). A theoretical and applied review of embodied restorying for post-deployment family reintegration. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 1(1), 129-162. Research on how embodied practices help veterans avoid finalizing military identity while discovering unfinalizable civilian selves.
 12. Boje, D. M. (2011). Collective intelligence networking. In *Storytelling and the Future of Organizations: An Antenarrative Handbook* (pp. 308-324). Routledge. Explores how organizational intelligence emerges from unfinalizable networks rather than finalized expertise locations.
 13. The seven True Storytelling principles developed by Boje, Larsen, and Bruun map precisely onto the seven quantum storytelling principles, providing both theoretical foundation and practical methodology. See: Larsen, J., Boje, D. M., & Bruun, L. (2020). *True Storytelling: Seven Principles for an Ethical and Sustainable Change-Management Strategy*. Routledge.
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Additional Resources

For deeper understanding of unfinalizability and becoming:

Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. University of Minnesota Press. Essential reading on unfinalizability—not just as literary concept but as fundamental understanding of consciousness and dialogue.

Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Sage. Framework for understanding organizations as unfinalizable living systems rather than finalized static structures.

Boje, D. M. (2011). *Storytelling and the Future of Organizations: An Antenarrative Handbook*. Routledge. Comprehensive treatment of antenarrative theory and practices for maintaining organizational unfinalizability.

For understanding quantum uncertainty:

Heisenberg, W. (1958). *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*. Harper & Row. Heisenberg's own explanation of uncertainty principle and its philosophical implications.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press. Extends quantum indeterminacy to show how matter and meaning remain unfinalizable, always becoming through intra-action.

For practical application:

Larsen, J., Boje, D. M., & Bruun, L. (2020). *True Storytelling: Seven Principles for an Ethical and Sustainable Change-Management Strategy*. Routledge. Practical methodology for implementing all seven principles in organizational practice.

Rosile, G. A. (Ed.). (2016). *Tribal Wisdom for Business Ethics*. Emerald Publishing. Indigenous perspectives on unfinalizable, ongoing becoming rather than fixed definitions.

End of Chapter 7

The Seven Quantum Storytelling Principles: Complete

You now have the full framework. The question isn't whether you understand it intellectually—the question is whether you'll practice it experientially.

Start today. Choose one principle. Practice it this week. Notice what changes.

Then share what you learn at quantumstorytelling.org

Because quantum storytelling isn't a solo practice.

It's a polyphonic dialogue.

And your voice matters.

All book proceeds support veteran business training through Perview Inc. Thank you for being part of the mission.