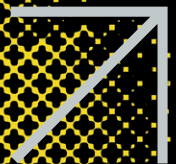


TOMORROW'S
BRIEFING EDITION 1

HELLO TOMORROW

THE DEFICIT OF
'AGENCY'

WHAT'S REALLY HOLDING
BUSINESSES BACK - AND
WHY COMMUNICATIONS
IS THE ANSWER



A NOTE FROM HELLO TOMORROW

We started Hello Tomorrow because we saw something hiding in plain sight: the organisations winning today - commercially, culturally, politically - are those that make people believe the future is worth investing in.

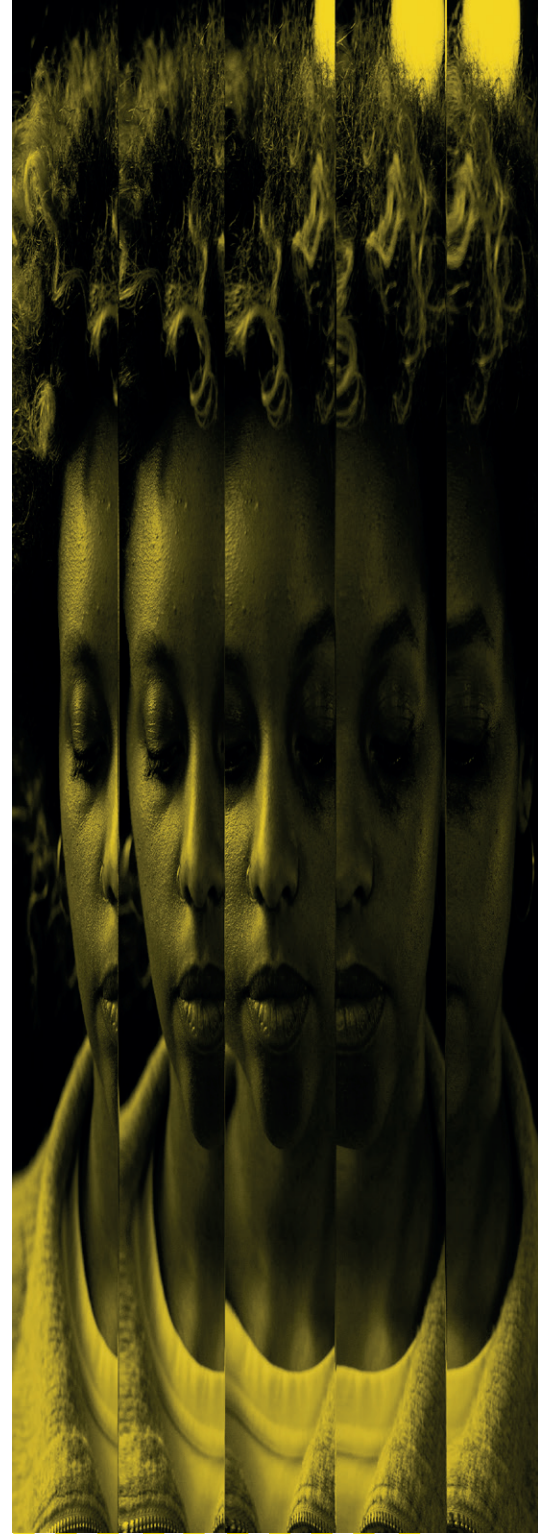
Not the ones with the biggest budgets. Not the ones with the most sophisticated targeting. The ones with the most compelling belief in tomorrow.

This isn't a soft idea. It's a hard commercial one. Belief drives spending. Optimism unlocks investment. Stories that restore confidence move markets, shift share price and turn challengers into category leaders.


'Tomorrow's Briefing' is where we share what we're seeing - at the intersection of culture, business, policy and media - and what we think it means for the leaders, brands and organisations trying to make things happen in a complicated world.

This is Edition 1. We hope it makes you think. We hope it makes you act.

Fenella Grey & Frankie Cory, co-founders, Hello Tomorrow



**HELLO TOMORROW**



There is a word that sits at the heart of every brief we've ever worked on. Every campaign that has driven growth. Every leader who has cut through noise. Every brand that has turned a challenger position into a category-defining one.

That word is agency.

Not us - though we'll come to that. Agency as in the belief that you can shape events, not just react to them. That change is possible. That your actions matter.

Agency is the engine of ambition - the conviction.

And right now, it is draining out of business, culture and society.

When customers lose faith in the future, they spend less. When employees stop believing their actions change anything, they check out. When leaders stop believing the future is theirs to shape, ambition collapses.

The deficit of agency may be the most expensive problem in business. And it's one our industry is uniquely equipped to solve. So why aren't we all talking about it?

This whitepaper explores where this crisis is happening and why it matters culturally. We lay out our belief that agency is the most important idea the communications industry needs to focus on if we want to move people, drive growth and effect the sorts of ambitious changes in business and society we need and desire.

THE DEFICIT OF 'AGENCY'



WHERE DO WE SEE THIS DEFICIT OF 'AGENCY' HAPPENING

"Pessimism is the world's main economic problem." - The Economist

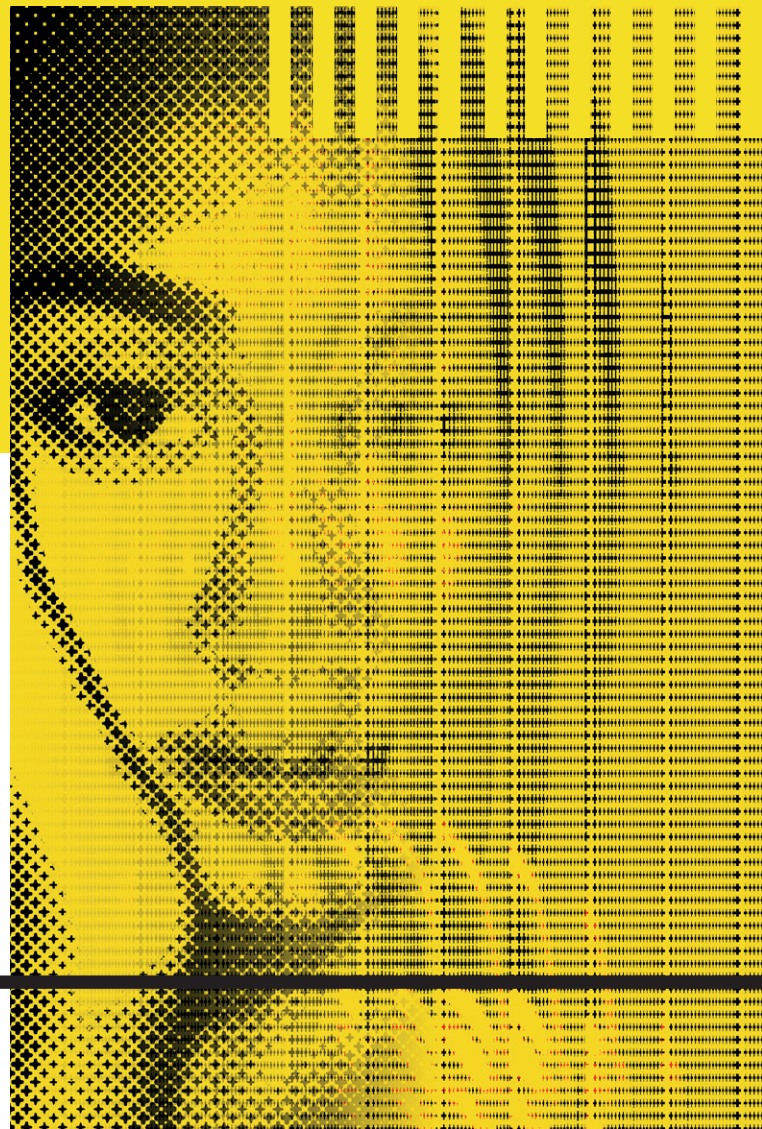
The scale of the problem of agency deficiency exists across multiple dimensions of our lives. We identify three different levels where we see the impact:

- » **Commerce:** A wait-and-see economy, slowed down by stagnation
- » **Individuals:** A declining belief that our actions matter and a loss of faith in our institutions
- » **Society and culture:** A growing perma-pessimism

Agency is the lifeblood of growth and progress.

"As gloom becomes entrenched across rich economies, it risks turning into a self-reinforcing drag on growth. The consequences of entrenched pessimism are threefold: less investment in the future, governments that drift away from growth towards zero-sum protection and a politics that makes fiscal restraint harder to sustain." The Economist: 'Pessimism is the World's Main Economic Problem'⁷

- 6. ft.com
- 7. economist.com
- 8. mckinsey.com
- 9. businessinsider.com





I) COMMERCIAL IMPACT

Agency is intrinsically linked to a sense of possibility and when it's in deficit, pessimism takes its place.

The Economist recently identified pessimism as the world's main economic problem.

It means people and corporations turn towards safety and protectionism, "wait-and-see" positions which prevent investment in the future.

Gloomy outlooks and lack of optimism don't just depress people, they depress markets.

Businesses in this context feel stuck in holding patterns. 84% of CEOs believe innovation is critical to growth, but only 6% are satisfied with their innovation performance (McKinsey⁸) - yet innovation is stalling. The language of progress, growth and possibility has been replaced by the language of risk, resilience and mitigation.

Across culture and commerce alike, we're caught in cycles of pessimism, fear and inertia.

This filters down to consumer spending. As of January 2026, UK GfK Consumer Confidence has remained in negative territory for a full decade. In this climate, consumers take a wait and see approach, they bunker down, more reluctant to plan holidays, to buy cars, new washers and dryers and so on.



In Silicon Valley, in an attempt to halt this slide into stagnation and spark innovation, firms have put "high agency" at the top of their hiring agenda. High agency has become a buzzword:

"Early last year, there was a 500% jump in mentions of "agency" across X, Reddit and other social media sites. Not one but two podcasts titled "High Agency" have launched - one dedicated to AI, the other to entrepreneurship." Business Insider⁹

AND WHY?



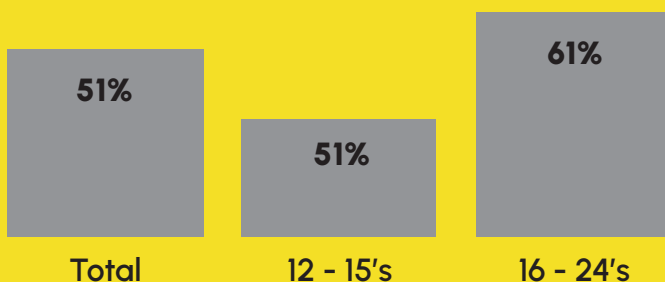
II) IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS

The More in Common research identifies "loss of agency" as one of the key drivers of a "Shattered Britain". They link individuals' own feeling of powerlessness with a lack of faith in our institutions and government to improve things for them:

"Among many Britons there is a feeling that they do not have control over their own lives. That feeling of lack of control extends to the government - almost three in four believe it does not have things under control. This powerlessness fuels the belief that Britain's best days are behind it."

- More in Common, "Shattered Britain"²

% Feeling negatively about their future



The feeling of powerlessness exists even amongst the youngest cohorts, who society has long assumed to be the powerhouses of change, counter-culture and innovation.

1 in 2 young people in the UK and US feel negatively about their future. Half of young people feel anxious, overwhelmed and uncertain about their future - especially 16 to 24 year olds.

- The Rift Research, Starling and Tapestry

Pollster James Kanagasooriam's recent research shows agency has become the defining fault line in society: people who feel they've agency invest, build and trust institutions. Those who've lost it disengage, disrupt or hand power to whoever promises to shake things up.

"Many of the movements on the left and right which have momentum are those basically campaigning for agency."

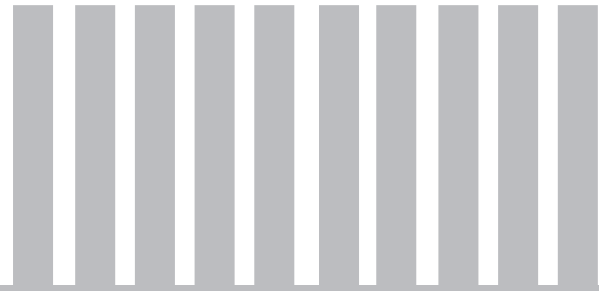
- James Kanagasooriam, Substack³

² moreincommon.org

³ substack.com/@jameskanag

⁴ www.ipsos.com

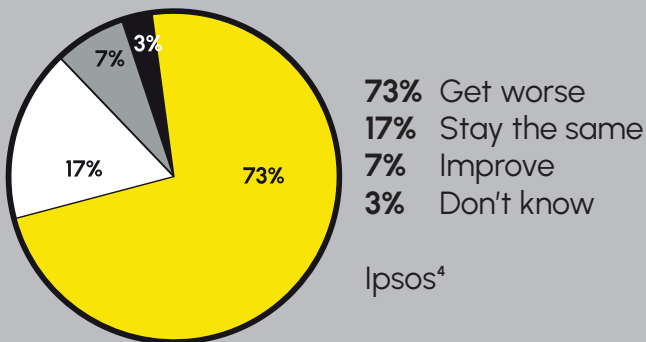
⁵ fgsglobal.com



III) IMPACT ON SOCIETY AND CULTURE

At a societal level, the collective faith in progress towards better futures has stalled. The deficit of agency isn't just one that impacts us today, it has a huge bearing on how people feel about tomorrow.

According to Ipsos' Economic Optimistic Index, right now, only 7% of Britons believe the economy will improve in the next year:



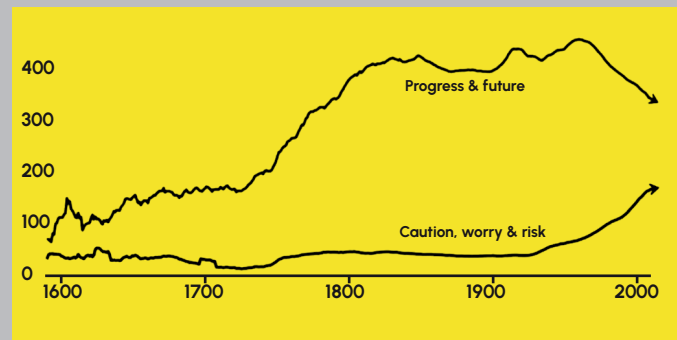
Looking further out, FGS Global's polling of 20,000 voters and business leaders across the US, Canada, Europe, the UK and Japan, 73% believe that "life will be harder for the next generation." FGS Global⁵

In culture more broadly, there's a scarcity of stories which have a brighter future at their heart.

The Financial Times studied how language

in books has changed over time. They found that since the 1960s, words linked to progress, improvement and the future have dropped by about 25%, while words about threats, risks and worries have become much more common.

The West has shifted away from a culture of progress in recent decades, and towards one of caution, worry and risk-aversion.



Words per million related to themes of progress vs caution in English, French and German books: The Financial Times, *Is the West Talking itself into Decline?*⁶

Fenella Grey, co-founder of Hello Tomorrow:
"We're living through a Deficit of 'Agency'. A pessimistic outlook is a psychological handbrake on growth: when people believe the future will be worse, they spend and invest less. They take fewer risks. They expect less from institutions and themselves. People feel powerless. Stuck. Possibilities feel narrower. Horizons seem shorter. Pessimism breeds passivity but optimism unlocks agency".



THE AGENCY DEFICIT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR COMMUNICATIONS?

For over a decade, the communications industry has been told we're in a crisis of attention. We built strategies, tools and entire business models around capturing it.

But attention was never the broken thing. Agency was. We don't have an attention deficit. We have an agency deficit.

People are inundated with messages, but few make them feel possible or empower action. To reverse this, we need to restore

belief that change is achievable and that belief is carried, shared and amplified through a living system of communications.

Frankie Cory, co-founder of Hello Tomorrow:
"If we stop asking "Did people see it?" ...and start asking: "Did it make people believe change is possible?" we will move from attention to agency. At a time of widespread pessimism and inertia our job isn't just to inform or persuade but to restore belief and deliver results"

THE AGENCY DEFICIT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR COMMUNICATIONS?

There are three things that restore agency: Narrative, Networks, Optimism.

A dynamic, self-reinforcing loop - each feeds the others, creating momentum, influence and magic that spreads and compounds over time.

In a flattened, low-agency world, the organisations that win will be the ones that tell stories restoring belief, electrify networks for change and spark hope that moves people to act. That's where growth lives.





RESTORING AGENCY: COMMUNICATIONS THAT MOVES PEOPLE

1. Narrative

Flat, generic messaging drains agency; bold, future-focused narrative makes possibility tangible. Agency lives in narrative: in human voices, lived experiences, and stories people actually care about.

2. Networks

Agency is relational, not owned by any single person. It flows between people, across silos, communities and boundaries. The right people in the room - advocates, experts, connectors, voices people trust - amplify narrative, carry momentum and allow agency to propagate organically. The more intersections, the stronger the current of change.

3. Optimism

Faith in the future, even in moments of fear or uncertainty, is what liberates action. Without optimism, agency stalls. With it, people move out of passivity, energised by a vision of what can be.



1. NARRATIVE AGENCY VS THE GREAT FLATTENING OF COMMS

Narrative fuels agency, giving people a sense that change isn't only necessary, but possible, and that they themselves have a role in making it happen. The right story doesn't just move people emotionally. It moves markets, shifts share price and turns challengers into category leaders.

But narrative agency is in short supply at the moment. Part of the problem is acceleration of content. Creation is now faster and easier than ever and we're set to become even more saturated. According to Statista, global data generation will triple between 2025 and 2029¹⁰.

It's not just the scale, it's the tone. Communications are increasingly saturated with generic, templated language, what many recognise as an "AI accent."

Prof Rob Drummond, a sociolinguist at Manchester Metropolitan University, describes this generic tone as "the ultimate superficiality". He says:

"We are giving control of forming our identity to a machine. It is creating an extra layer of inauthenticity to this identity creation. I do wonder if longer term people are going to react against that."

Widespread LLM use tends to "flatten" language and tone, making writing more predictable and less creative, which in turn makes it harder to produce ideas that challenge the status quo by breaking from convention. "Stylistic diversity" fell by 20 per cent after the introduction of AI-assisted editing.¹¹ A greying effect begins to take hold: colour drains from language, from culture and from the collective imagination.

The former CEO of five businesses and author of *Uncharted: How to Navigate the Future* Margaret Heffernan explains this flattening.

"What all of these technologies attempt to do is to force-fit a standardised model of a predictable reality onto a world that is infinitely surprising. What gets left out? Whatever can't be measured: style, taste, discernment, intuition, thinking, love."

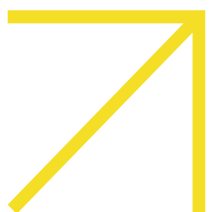
In the pursuit of polish and professionalism, the power of real and raw human voice is stripped away. Audiences are being asked to peer through an additional layer of robotic inauthenticity, paying a cognitive tax to determine whether something is real, meaningful or even worth their attention. As cultural commentator Ted Gioia wrote in his essay "The World Was Flat. Now It's Flattened"¹²

¹⁰ [tatista.com](https://www.statista.com)

¹¹ [thetimes.com](https://www.thetimes.com)

¹² [honest-broker.com](https://www.honest-broker.com)

¹³ [profgalloway.com](https://www.profgalloway.com)



"When culture becomes flatter from predictability and standardisation, there is a human toll: agency slowly drains away."

In response, a counterforce is emerging. Decision-makers are increasingly willing to pay for storytelling that feels original and alive and can cut through algorithmic sameness. Spotify is doubling down on human curation, while Anthropoc has gone as far as hiring an in-house philosopher.

The signal is clear: in an age of infinite content, distinct perspectives are scarce, and therefore valuable.

This is Narrative Agency: storytelling that does more than communicate, it energises, connects and activates. It creates momentum which drives real change. As Professor Scott Galloway observes:

"The arc of evolution bends toward good storytellers. Communities with larger proportions of skilled storytellers experience greater levels of cooperation and procreation." ¹³

The new storyteller operates with conviction, rawness and high energy, simplifying complex ideas and galvanising the audience. In our oral and visual culture, these are the qualities which communicators need to cut through. They aim for emotional validation not just rational persuasion. They tell stories which are unscripted, personal and stance-driven, designed to move people from paralysis to action.

Says Galloway: "In a remote world swamped by a tsunami of digital information, the rare earth metal is humanity"

OLD RULES	NEW RULES
Scripted, corporate, coherent	Personal, raw, intuition, charisma, vulnerability
Top down, one way	Galvanising people and networks from paralysis to agency
Safe, unobtrusive, uncancellable	Conviction-driven, stance-taking, high energy

Hello Tomorrow crafts narratives that earn belief and put brands, leaders and ideas at the heart of culture and conversation - through bold, human stories that move people.



2. THE AGENCY OF NETWORKS & H2H COMMS

Agency isn't something an individual owns, it's something that emerges between people. It's relational. The belief that change is possible doesn't live in isolation; it moves through networks, it's carried in conversations and reinforced at the intersections of different industries.

Agency isn't static. It travels across silos, communities and boundaries. This is where real breakthroughs live: in the unexpected collisions between disciplines, in the serendipity of people who wouldn't normally meet. At its best, a network becomes an ecosystem of momentum.

When the right individuals connect across disciplines, hierarchies and perspectives they create a current of influence that amplifies narrative and allows agency to propagate.

It allows agency to spread organically, carried by people who shape, challenge and extend each other's thinking. This is the power of intersections: the ability to bridge disciplines, bond communities and create the conditions where progress accelerates.

Hello Tomorrow sits at that intersection - at the epicentre of culture, business, policy, entertainment, and media - where reputations are built, relationships are shaped and progress happens. By bringing together seasoned expertise, specialist partners and emerging technologies, it creates the connective tissue that turns individual insight into collective agency.

This approach is an alchemy of human judgement and our proprietary AI intelligence tools to create an electric spark of connection that actually changes minds and moves people to act.

3. THE AGENCY OF OPTIMISM AT A TIME OF PERMA-PESSIMISM

If pessimism is a tax on growth, optimism is a catalyst. Pessimism breeds passivity, but optimism unlocks agency.

There's a tendency to think of optimism as an output, the result of things going well, but is just as vital as an input, a catalyst for action. This is a belief put into practice by one of the world's most agentic leaders in the climate change movement Christiana Figueres, the Costa Rican diplomat who led negotiations for the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement. She says:

"Optimism is a well-informed, deeply in-touch choice that we make to transform the pain into conviction and agency. It is not the output of something that we have achieved - it is the input. It is making a choice, which for me is a daily choice, of acknowledging the challenges, acknowledging the painful feelings that we all share, and saying: Precisely because of that, I will pick myself up and turn up in the world with my full agency and my full commitment to this." Christiana Figueres¹⁴

Businesses can take advantage of the power of optimism too. At a time of perma-pessimism, there's a real premium in showing faith in the future, speaking in the future tense, telling hopeful stories of tomorrow rather than comforting ones of yesterday. Any leader, brand, or institution that can credibly articulate a better future cuts through noise instantly, attracts talent and capital, builds a momentum which acts as a currency of change.

Optimism drives innovation and risk-taking: studies show that an economically optimistic environment is an important contribution to a nation's entrepreneurial ecosystem - the so-called optimism effect.¹⁵

This optimism is codified into our business. We're called Hello Tomorrow. We are comms partners for change. We invest 20% of our time in learning to stay ahead of tomorrow. We are about belief in the future, about movement, about the possibility of change and growth.

Brands that speak in the future tense are restoring agency, innovating and thriving.

LEGO invests heavily in creativity, sustainability and children as the future innovators of tomorrow.

Rolls-Royce has repositioned around innovation and future engineering.

Octopus Energy has gone from challenger to market leader through its focus on transforming the industry to be greener and fairer through building better futures.

Oatly have been rewarded for their future-oriented agency and action on environmental issues by being recognised as the world's first 'Climate Solutions' food and beverage company¹⁶.



This trickles down to consumers. Consumer confidence indices consistently show a strong correlation between confidence and consumption. Trajectory's Optimism Index tracker shows that optimistic consumers are better consumers.

"Our analysis of The Optimism Index data over the last five years has shown us that the most optimistic consumers have greater levels of financial confidence, have greater trust in businesses and institutions, and most crucially, are likely to spend more" ¹⁷

There's a final point about legacy here too.

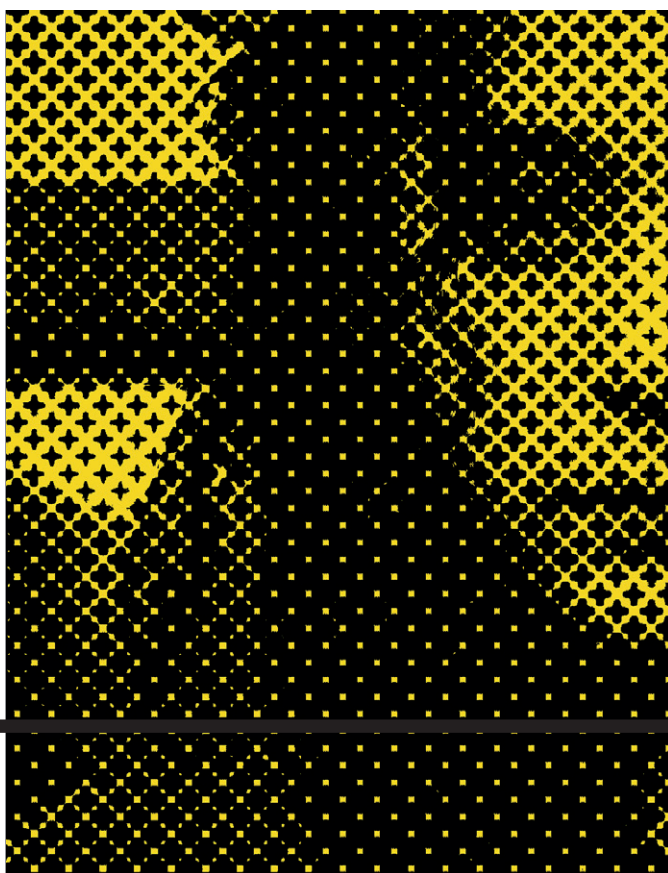
We're not just participants in the present. We're future ancestors. The stories we tell today will shape the world future generations will inherit tomorrow. This is a call to action to think not about what happens to us but about what happens because of us.

¹⁴[fairplanet.org](https://www.fairplanet.org)

¹⁵[sciencedirect.com](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

¹⁶[exponentialroadmap.org](https://www.exponentialroadmap.org)

¹⁷[trajectorypartnership.com](https://www.trajectorypartnership.com)



CONCLUSION:

Three things that restore agency: Narrative, Networks, Optimism. A dynamic, self-reinforcing loop - each feeds the others, creating momentum, influence and magic that spreads and compounds over time. Narrative sparks possibility, networks carry it far and wide, and optimism fuels what comes next. Stories inspire connection, connections fuel hope, hope generates action - a cycle of change and growth.

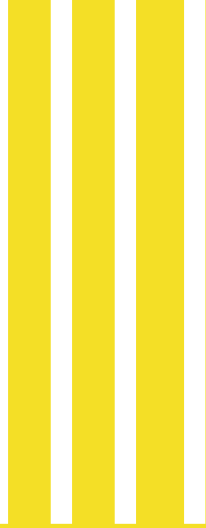
This is a human-to-human communications model that actually moves people. In a world saturated with AI-generated content and pacified by pessimism, a genuine human voice with a real point of view cuts through everything. Decision-makers and consumers behave the same way - they trust people, not institutions. They respond to emotion before logic, remember stories not statistics, and reward authenticity over polish.

The leaders and organisations that understand this are building reputation and driving growth in ways their competitors simply can't replicate.

THE HELLO TOMORROW APPROACH. NOT B2B. NOT B2C. H2H.

Hello Tomorrow is about belief in the future, about movement, about the possibility of change.

Agency, real agency, operates at the intersection of politics, business, culture and media - as do we.



HELLO TOMORROW

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Corporate Comms made human.
Reputation. Fame. Campaigning.

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