# Sample format for a strategic narrative workshop

This guidance provides best practice on how to run a workshop with your employees to help develop a strategic narrative for your business.

The role of the facilitator is important. The facilitator needs to build trust and draw out what participants really think and feel. Identify someone either internally or externally all employees feel they can share their views with in confidence.

## Preparation

* seek a broad cross-section of employees, within available timescales and resources
* seek eight-ten people for any workshop (no more than ten)
* make sure that no participant has their manager or direct reports in the same workshop
* ensure every individual's manager is contacted in advance to explain why the employee’s participation is important to the business
* send each participant a short brief in advance of the workshop, explaining the purpose and importance of the session
* agree the role of the facilitator

## Logistics

* The group should not last more than an hour (anything more is a disincentive for people to attend/participate)
* Timings for each section in the agenda are indicative (but, overall, you should stick to the hour)
* The facilitator will need one or two flipcharts to scribe the themes and feedback that emerge
* The room must be well-lit and well-aired to encourage attention and participation
* Make sure some refreshments are also available (eg tea, coffee, soft drinks.

## Content

Introduction and warm up (5 mins)

* introduce yourself as the facilitator and explain your role
* reiterate the importance of a strategic narrative
* summarise the role of the workshop
* summarise broad topics (“The kind of things we're going to be exploring are…”)
* ask participants to briefly introduce themselves and their role
* explain the brainstorm approach and that any ideas are welcome

Overview (10 mins)

* How would you describe the purpose of this business? What would you say that the business is in business to do?
* How do you describe the business to people outside it? What words do you use?
* What would you recommend about the business as a place to work? What might put you off recommending it?

The business' background and vision (20 mins)

* What words, symbols or stories sum up the business for you? Why? What do they say about the business?
* How would you sum up the business' vision for the future?
* What do you think the business will have achieved in, say, ten years' time? What do you think it would be like to work here then?
* What words, stories or symbols would you like to be able to use to describe the business in ten years' time? [test words/concepts from a draft framework if you have developed one with your senior managers]

The way you do business (20 mins)

* What's special about the business for you? What inspires you about the place? What annoys you or irritates you about it?
* What are the values or beliefs that guide the way the business does business (if any)?
* Does the business live up to these values in practice? What examples/activities can you point to?
* Are there areas in which the business is failing to deliver its values in practice? What examples/activities can you point to?
* What do customers get from this business that they can’t get from elsewhere? What makes this business different from the competition?
* Of all the words we have noted down, which describe the business most accurately in your view? Which words really work for you? [test words/concepts from a draft framework if you have developed one with your senior managers]

Conclusion (5 mins)

* Are there any other issues that have not been covered?
* Summary of key themes from the discussion.
* Explain what you will be doing with the feedback and what the next steps will be.
* Thank participants for attendance and involvement.