THE NAMING SENTENCE

One sentence. One person. One language change, finally said out loud.

FIVE STEPS · ABOUT FORTY MINUTES · YOU ONLY DO STEPS 1–3 ONCE

1 FIND THE OLD LANGUAGE

About fifteen minutes. Three free sources: the Wayback Machine at web.archive.org (put in your own homepage or about page, pick a date eighteen months back), your last two annual reports, and the boilerplate at the bottom of any press release from two or more years ago. Copy and paste. Don’t summarize — you want the words as written, not your memory of them.

2 BUILD TWO COLUMNS

Dates on both. No commentary. Resist the urge to editorialize — you will show this to someone who may disagree with you, and every adjective you give them is a handle to grab. Look for three to five changes where the meaning moved. If you find twenty, they are copy edits.

WHAT WE SAID OR SHOWED	WHAT WE SAY OR SHOW NOW	WHEN

3 PICK ONE

Not the most upsetting. The most noticeable. The test: would a person you serve notice this change? If a funder would notice but a client wouldn’t, that is a positioning change and it can wait. If the people you exist for would read it and conclude you stopped doing something — start there.

STUCK ON YOURS?

Bring the mission statement, the style guide, or the sentence you can’t stop thinking about.
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BOOK A SESSION

4 WRITE THE SENTENCE

Four parts, in this order, and it works best when it is boring. No ask. No recommendation. No “I think we should change it back.” No name, no department, nobody who did it.

We used to say — *the old wording, exactly*

We now say — *the new wording, exactly*

As far as I can tell, that changed around —

And I don’t think we ever actually discussed it.

WHY “AS FAR AS I CAN TELL” STAYS IN.

It is not hedging. It is the phrase that makes the sentence answerable, because it invites someone to correct you — and someone correcting you is a conversation.

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5 SAY IT TO ONE PERSON

One person, not a meeting. A standing one-to-one if you have one, your own manager if you don't. Not email — email makes it a document, and a document has to be responded to. Spoken, it is a thing you noticed.

Who, and when:

> **THEN THE HARDEST PART: SAY NOTHING ELSE.**
> Do not fill the silence. Do not soften it. Do not supply the counterargument on their behalf. You have put a fact on the table. Let it sit there.

THE THREE ANSWERS YOU WILL GET

THEY SAY	YOU SAY
"Yes, we decided that."	"Do you remember what we were responding to?" Now you are asking about conditions, and conditions change.
"Did we?"	"Would it be worth finding out who did?" Something is on the table that wasn't this morning.
"Now is not the time."	Accept instantly. Then: "Fair — what would need to be true to bring this back up?" Write down the answer. That is a condition, and the start of a calendar entry.

The one thing not to do: don't run it as a comparison with a peer organization. That turns a question about your own choices into a competition, and the room will talk about them instead of you.

BOOK A SESSION WITH SHANE LUKAS

You'll leave knowing what changed, who should decide, and what to say next.
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BOOK A SESSION

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