

HI. WELCOME TO

DEPARTMENT OF HERE

PLACES ARE PEOPLE, TOO



Lev Kushner, Civic and Economic Development

Lev has been forging urban partnerships for over 14 years. A veteran of the Bloomberg Administration in New York City and both the Newsom and Lee Administrations in San Francisco, Lev builds places through design, storytelling, and strategic partnerships. He is the founder of real estate consultancy Box Joint Advisors, where he navigates public and private projects through technical and political minefields. His past work includes rebuilding industrial campuses, creating new neighborhoods from former military bases, activating public spaces, and strengthening constituent relationships. His ideas have appeared in CityLab, The Economist, The San Francisco Chronicle, and The Boston Globe.



Josh Levine, Author and Brand Strategist

Josh is a best-selling author, brand strategist, and a highly sought-after speaker on a mission to help organizations design a culture advantage. For more than 15 years, Levine has helped build culture-driven brands for a wide range of organizations—including Silicon Valley heavy hitters, prominent nonprofits, and well-respected blue-chip corporations. He is best known as the co-founder of the nonprofit CULTURE LABx, and as an executive director helped it flourish into an international community. His new book, *Great Mondays: How To Design A Company Culture Employees Love* was recently listed on BookAuthority's list of the best culture books of all time.

places are changing

In today's rapidly changing urban environments, with contentious gentrification battles, a revolutionizing retail landscape, shared work- and living-spaces, and increasing social dislocation, places desperately need compelling, thoughtful brand stories to forge lasting connections with residents, visitors, and businesses.

It's hard to make friends if you're a city.

When people decide where to go on vacation, or where to relocate or expand their business, they only tally what places offer them. Where does what *they have to offer* enter the equation?

Real lasting friendships are two-way streets. And real friendships, when you're a city, mean visitors who come back year after year, companies that entrust you with their headquarters, and resilient civic pride.

Planetizen News Exclusives Jobs Training Schools Store

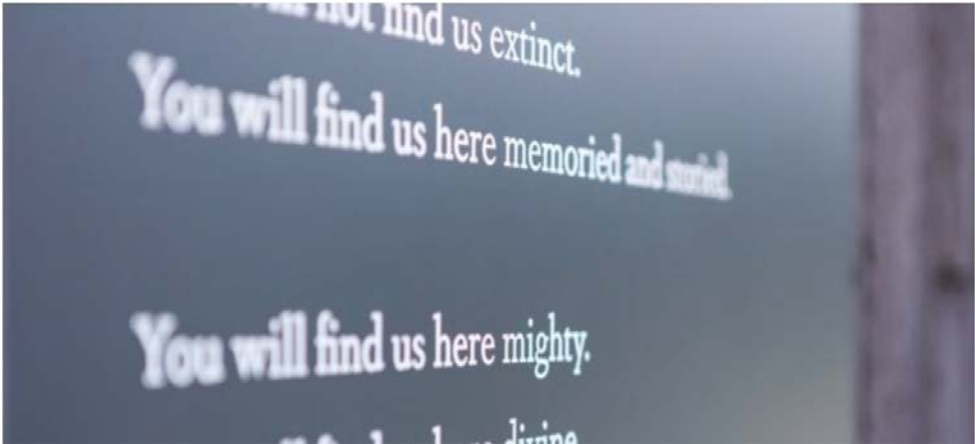
FEATURE

How To Build Place Loyalty

A good friendship is a two-way street. So how come our relationships with places only involve taking and no giving?

August 26, 2019, 5am PDT | [Lev Kushner](#) | [@levkushner](#)

[f Share](#) [Tweet](#) [in](#) [✉](#) [💬](#)



5

places give meaning

The places you inhabit give meaning to your day-to-day existence through your relationship with them.

Every place has a personality. We surface it.

WHAT IS BRAND STRATEGY, ANYHOW?

**brand
is
your
reputation**

**brand
strategy
is
the story that
creates it**



Place Branding

exists for these



real estate



destination



economic
and civic
development

Place Branding

but not for this



Place Brand Strategy

In reality, what others call ‘branding’ for these areas is actually just marketing—brochures and logos—and most of it happens too late to make a difference.

Department of Here works with clients to develop a brand strategy from the get-go that brings the personality of place to life so they can achieve their goals faster.

HOW HERE CAN GET YOU THERE

Research & Strategy

stakeholder workshops
community research
market positioning
project visioning

How You Look

brand identity systems
symbols and flags
video and animated storytelling
mobile apps
web platforms
urban design and placemaking

How You Talk

core stories
brand messaging
community brand guidebook
social media strategy

How You Act

event planning and production
policy strategy and implementation
vendors and partnerships

HOW WE DO IT: Our 6-ish steps

1 Identify the core value

Through interviews and workshops, we work with the client to determine the key issues and identify the core value of the organization.

2 Understand the market

Learn what we don't know about and report on competitors and economic environments. This is where you fit in.

3 Define what's different

Positioning is all about finding what is unique about who you are and do. We compare the values from 1, and identify which are most compelling.

4 Find your people

To help us and our clients understand the people we're trying to reach we talk to audience types and produce composites of 3-5 personas.

5 Write the story

We develop story directions to share with our client. This internal language defines the strategy and creates alignment.

6 Look, Talk, Act

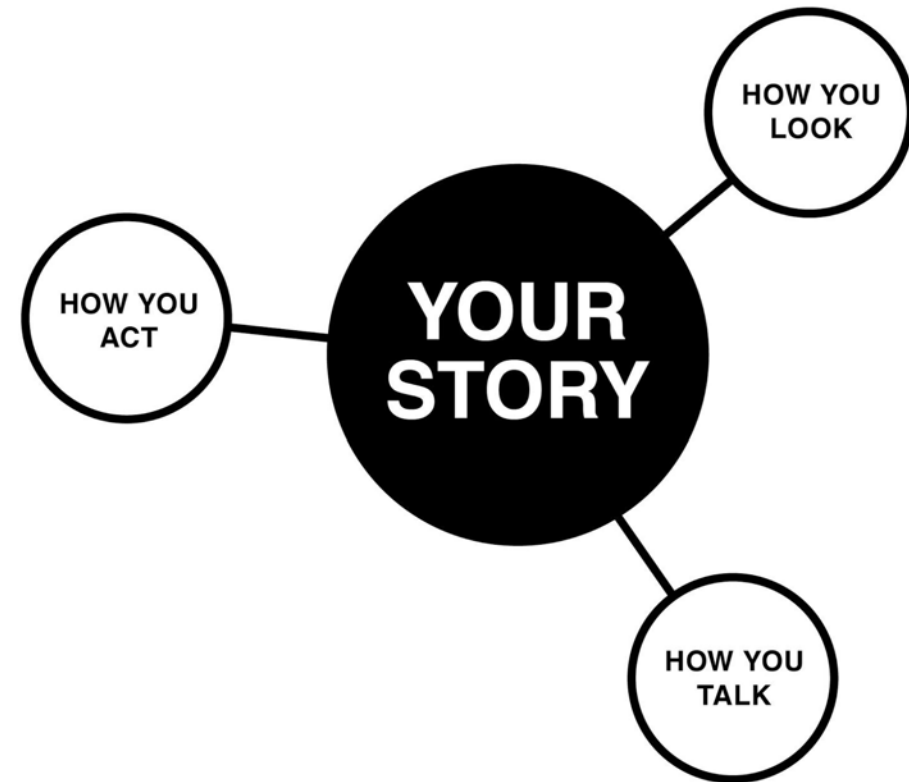
Now it's time to live the story. We develop targeted messaging and propose creative partnerships, policies, and events that strategically express your story's values.

In brand your story is communicated in three ways:

- 1 How you talk
- 2 How you look
- 3 How you act

When the *brand* is a *place*, these three channels become

- 1 brand messaging
- 2 visual and urban design
- 3 partnerships, policies, and events



OUR CLIENTS ARE

properties / neighborhoods /
cities / regions

Our projects typically fall into one of two types.

01
**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

02
**REAL ESTATE
DEVELOPMENT**

project type 01
**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

For clients who represent an existing place—an arts district, a downtown, a city or an entire region—and need to articulate its personality so they can better attract business, boost entrepreneurship, and bring people together around a shared civic vision.

Yes, businesses come to or stay in a city because it is economically viable, but they also want to be friends with it. They may not say it, but leaders of companies choose a city because they like its values and traditions and want them to rub off on their company.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE
be a yard goat (own your quirks)

2

The Connecticut Yard Goats are a minor league baseball team. The name might seem odd at first, but it's all about encapsulating their city's personality. When considering your city's story, own your quirks. The most effective stories are the ones that stand out. Don't try to be like someone else: be you.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE
tourism ≠ economic development

3

Repurposing your tourism brand to lure companies and boost civic pride is like using a duck call to hail a taxi. People choose where to visit based on what they want to do for a week. But what's fun in small doses is not necessarily ideal for the rest of your life (and it can sound corny to residents).

We applied these three principles when we helped the Greater Sacramento Economic Council develop their pitch for Amazon's second headquarters.

Through our research we realized Sacramento had to answer only one question.



A grayscale photograph of a large steel truss bridge over a river. In the background, a tall, multi-story building with a distinctive architectural style is visible. The text is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

How do you make a
historically staid
agricultural and
government town look
attractive to tech
companies?

The first strategic deliverable in all of our work is the **positioning statement**, a single statement that outlines the argument in four parts and drives the story that separates you from the competition.

COMPETITIVE FRAME

The lens through which you position yourself against other choices

TARGET MARKET

Narrows the focus to an audience, both existing and potential

BENEFIT

What you have that your target needs

REASON TO BELIEVE

Why we are the only one who can offer it

COMPETITIVE FRAME

The northern Central Valley is home to a community of people and businesses

TARGET MARKET

GSAC has always attracted leaders who know how to keep people working together; we combine California’s culture of innovation, the wide open lifestyle of the Great American West, and the tenacity of our agricultural roots.

Greater Sacramento is California’s home

where people and companies that prioritize results and relationships, innovation and stability

find a collaborative, fertile environment in which to grow

because we are tenacious, stable, and honest.

BENEFIT

Our people know their home is where they can stay to build a future. We have always defined success as working hard and getting creative—this is why we have a history of steady growth.

REASON TO BELIEVE

GSAC is good living distilled down to its roots: Sacramento’s favorite cafe was launched using an honor code pay system; West Sacramento’s architectural landmark is called The Barn; and our cherished annual event is everyone sitting down for dinner together on our landmark Tower Bridge. We are young and big-hearted.

Once our positioning is set, we developed messaging. Our deliverable includes 100, 50, and 10-word stories, but when we can we try to say it in even fewer words.



 *steady*

 *rising*

GREATER SACRAMENTO



And then we put those words into action.

PARTNERSHIPS AND POLICIES



PARTNERSHIP

The Family Dinner

Host an annual outdoor community feast.

[LEARN MORE](#)



PARTNERSHIP

Regional Showcase Challenge

Share a pint, build with legos, and explore local products.

[LEARN MORE](#)



POLICY

Here for the Long Haul

Incentivize companies to expand family-friendly benefits.

[LEARN MORE](#)



PARTNERSHIP

Dreamers Take Flight

Support your local entrepreneurs by supporting growth.

[LEARN MORE](#)

project type 02
**REAL ESTATE
DEVELOPMENT**

For the clients who own their property, have greater control over the birth and growth of their project, and want to shape how it is viewed and embraced by the community.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE
entitlement is sales

1

Real estate developers often hire marketing firms to inform their building designs and brand the product. That's two years too late. Entitlement is an exercise in communicating vision. To do that, you need to establish the outlines of the project and build trust with stakeholders by staying consistent.

Skeptical stakeholders will never be calmed by knowing a parking ratio or the number of units. Never forget that everything about a building revolves around people - they design it, they approve it, and they will live in it - and people are moved by stories.

Having a resonant narrative isn't enough; you have to back it up with actions that reflect the story. Do you have a vacant parcel? Fill it with events and temporary uses that grow out of your story. Want to transform your building from a space to a place? Enliven it with community rituals and activities.

Department of Here was asked by real estate developer Long Market Property Partners to help them tell a story that would flip negative associations with the city of Concord.



LONGMARKET
PROPERTY PARTNERS

The Shops at **Todos Santos**

The Shops at Todos Santos has all the amenities but is on the wrong side of the tracks. Brokers get nowhere. How can you make people take a second look?

TARGET MARKET

Young families and individuals who are moving from the inner Bay Area, professionals who work nearby, and existing Contra Costa residents.

COMPETITIVE FRAME

With transit and amenities befitting the largest city in Contra Costa County, paired with traditional West Coast Americana roots, Todos Santos is an accessible, uniquely activated urban plaza with a small town feel.

The Bay Area comes to Todos Santos

a quintessential town square in a classic early California city,

to find a place where life is good

in a neighborhood that is how it used to be, today.

BENEFIT

The good life is defined by stress reduction (affordability), an escape from cubicle life and the car-dominated strip malls (walkability), and meaningful interactions with people and places (authenticity).

REASON TO BELIEVE

Todos Santos ties together the roots and salt-of-the-earthiness of 20th Century hometown America with the amenities of 21st Century life.

Todos Santos

How life used to be, today.



LET'S TALK

Josh Levine | josh.levine@departmentofhere.com | 415-577-6667

Lev Kushner | lev.kushner@departmentofhere.com | 646-942-0011

FEATURED ON:

San Francisco Chronicle

CITYLAB

The Boston Globe

 MARKETPLACE