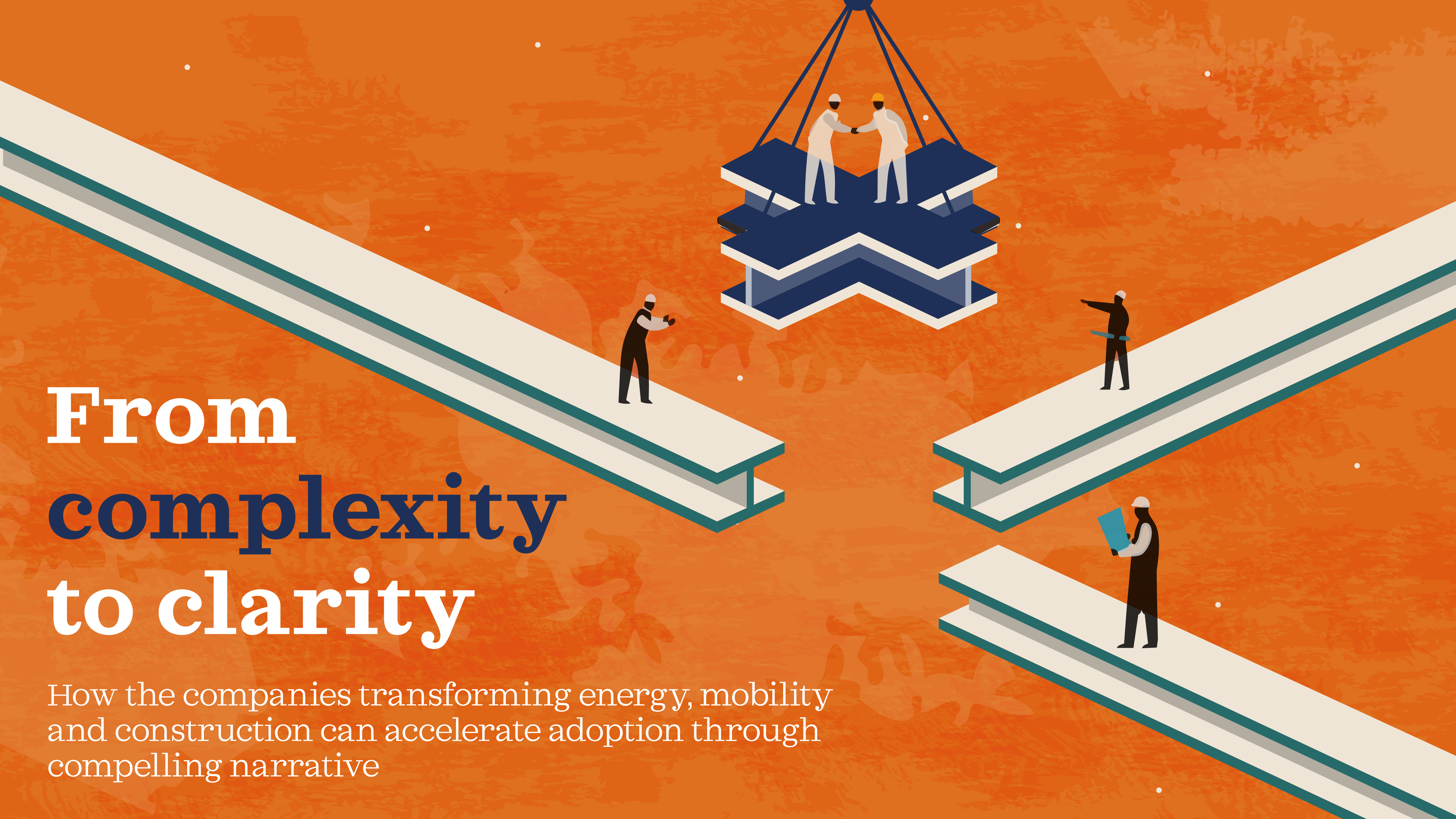




From complexity to clarity

How the companies transforming energy, mobility
and construction can accelerate adoption through
compelling narrative



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Why
consensus
matters...

...and
how to
build it





James is leading the redevelopment of a commercial office building. His brief: to reduce operational carbon, lower energy costs and future-proof the asset against tightening regulation.

But James is not making the decision alone.

Around him sit engineers, finance, procurement, sustainability, operations and senior leadership, each looking at the same investment through a different lens. Forrester estimates that the typical B2B buying decision can involve 13 internal stakeholders and nine external influencers.

Suppliers present heat pumps, smart building systems, solar generation, artificial intelligence platforms and digital twins. Every proposal is technically credible. The difficulty is creating agreement on what represents the best decision.

Engineering wants confidence in performance. Finance wants a credible return. Sustainability wants evidence of emissions reduction and compliance. Procurement needs value and comparability. The board is thinking about the long-term resilience and value of the asset.

These differences matter. Gartner found that 74% of

B2B buying teams experience unhealthy conflict during the decision-making process. Its research also suggests that the way suppliers communicate can either reduce or reinforce that conflict.

Content tailored to the buying group (helping people understand the perspectives and priorities of their colleagues) increased consensus by around 20%. By contrast, content tailored narrowly to an individual role reduced positive consensus by 59%.

Most suppliers begin with the technology, adapting their

pitch to whoever happens to be in the room. One, however, begins with the decision the group needs to make.

It explains how the technologies work together to create a more resilient, efficient and future-ready building, connecting technical performance, commercial return, operational impact and regulatory exposure into one coherent case.

Rather than giving each stakeholder a separate reason to buy, it helps the group understand how their priorities fit together, supporting the argument with evidence everyone can interrogate.

The technology is not fundamentally different, but the understanding is. By the final meeting, the question is no longer simply which product performs best. It is which solution the group can collectively understand, defend and trust.



An aerial photograph of a lush green maze, with the vibrant green grass forming the walls and the dark, shadowed paths creating a complex, winding pattern. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down into the maze.

**A complex,
interconnected
system**

The challenge facing James reflects a broader reality of the energy transition. Technologies that were once developed, evaluated and deployed largely in isolation are increasingly part of interconnected systems. At the same time, the decisions required to deploy them are being made by interconnected groups of people with different priorities, incentives and definitions of value.

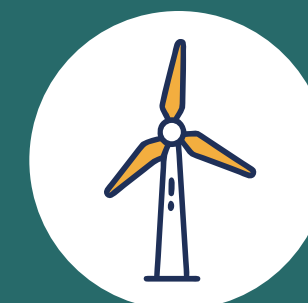
The communications challenge, therefore, is not simply to make complexity easier to understand. It is to create enough shared

understanding for people with different perspectives to make a decision together.

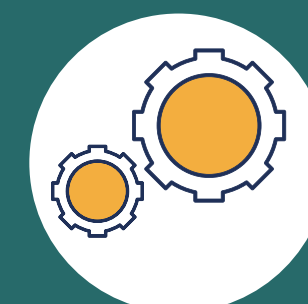
McKinsey Global Institute identified 25 interconnected physical challenges to be addressed for the energy transition to succeed.

Batteries depend on critical mineral supply chains. Electric vehicles depend on charging infrastructure and electricity grids. Renewable power depends on transmission networks, storage capacity and demand flexibility.

The industries **transforming** how we power, move and build



Clean energy: Transforming how energy is generated, stored, distributed and traded.



Advanced manufacturing: Decarbonising industrial production through new materials, automation and digital technologies.



Mobility: Reimagining how people and goods move through electrification, connectivity and intelligent transport.



Built environment: Redesigning buildings and infrastructure to improve efficiency, resilience and long-term sustainability.



Understanding is becoming part of the product

Progress depends on advancing individual technologies and coordinating the systems that connect them.

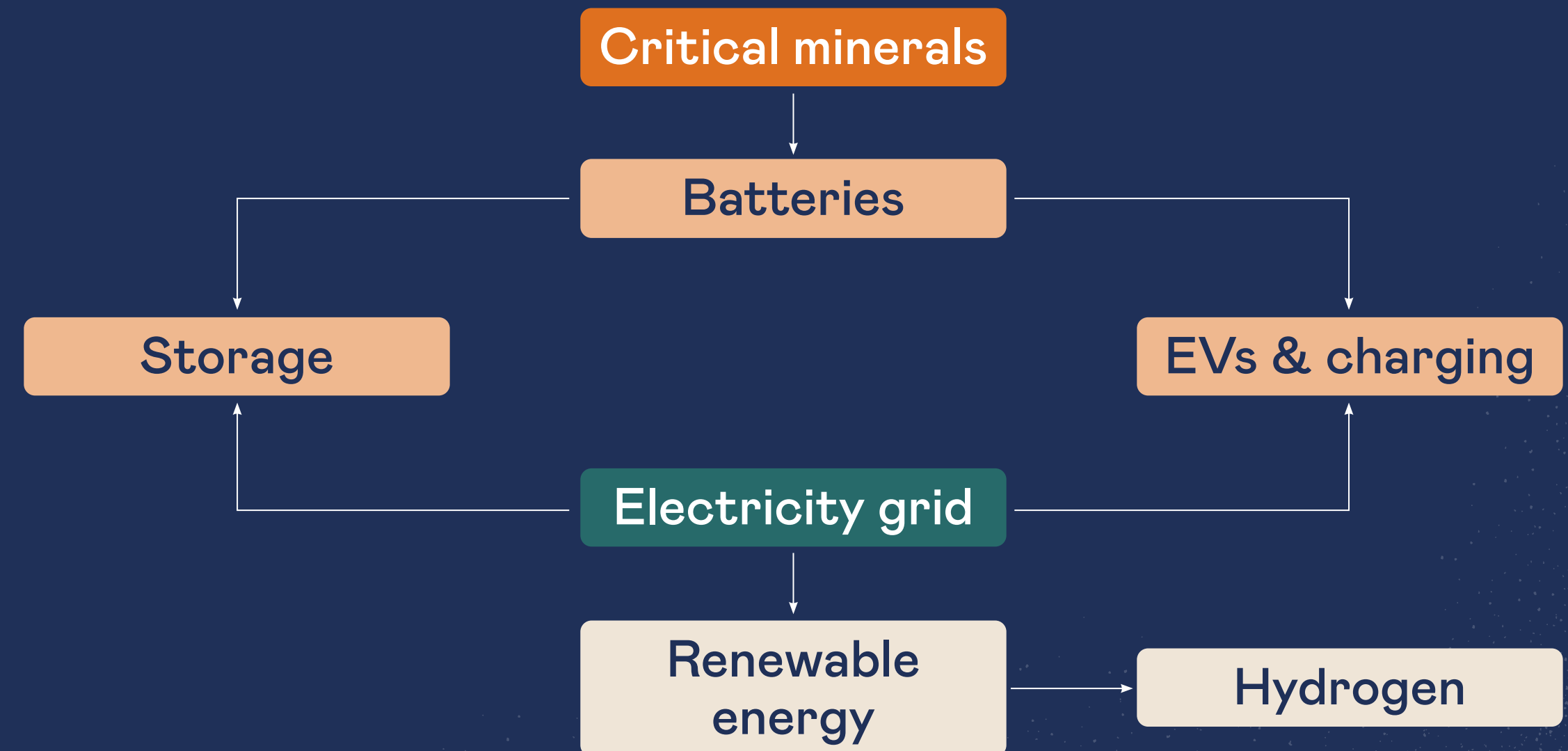
This interconnectedness is changing the nature of competition for organisations developing sustainable transition technologies. Buyers are evaluating integrated solutions rather than individual products. Investors are

assessing unfamiliar markets whose commercial success depends on wider ecosystem development. Policymakers are regulating complex value chains, while procurement decisions often involve multiple technical, commercial and operational stakeholders.

The challenge facing many organisations is communication. Technologies are more interconnected and harder to explain, making them more challenging to finance, regulate, procure and deploy. The ability to create shared understanding is an important capability alongside scientific and engineering expertise.

Organisations that can explain complexity clearly are often better positioned to build confidence among buyers, investors and policymakers, accelerating adoption in markets characterised by uncertainty and rapid change.

This guide examines why communication is a strategic capability for organisations operating within the energy transition and introduces four principles for communicating complex technologies in ways that build understanding, confidence and adoption.



Technologies create value as interconnected systems rather than standalone products.



Why understanding is competitive advantage

The importance of understanding reflects structural changes taking place across the economy that are altering how technical organisations compete.

Battery energy storage provides a useful example. A battery supplier may also provide optimisation software, electricity trading, forecasting algorithms, financing, long-term service agreements and participation in sophisticated energy markets. The battery remains the physical product, but much of its commercial value is created by capabilities that

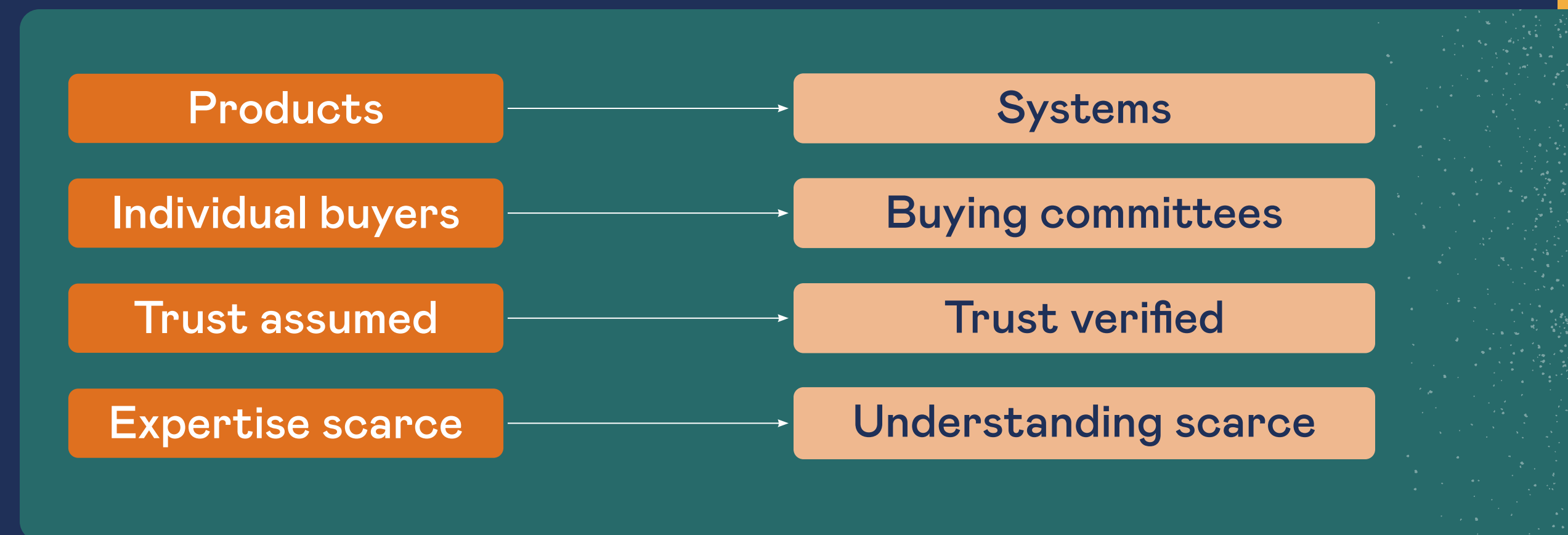
are less visible and significantly harder to explain.

The second change concerns the organisations buying these technologies. Technical specialists remain influential, but they are rarely the only decision-makers. Research by Edelman and LinkedIn shows that B2B purchasing involves finance, procurement, sustainability, operations and executive leadership, alongside engineers and technical experts

The same research also identifies the growing influence of "hidden buyers" – stakeholders who shape

purchasing decisions long before formal procurement begins. These audiences evaluate the same technology against different criteria, ranging from engineering performance and financial returns to strategic risk and regulatory compliance.

Buying groups are larger, meaning that organisations face a different communication challenge. Success depends less on producing more technical information than on creating a shared understanding among audiences with fundamentally different priorities.



A third change concerns trust. Many transition technologies require customers to adopt unfamiliar solutions, investors to commit capital over long time horizons and policymakers to support markets that are still evolving. At the same time, sustainability claims face scrutiny from regulators, investors and civil society.

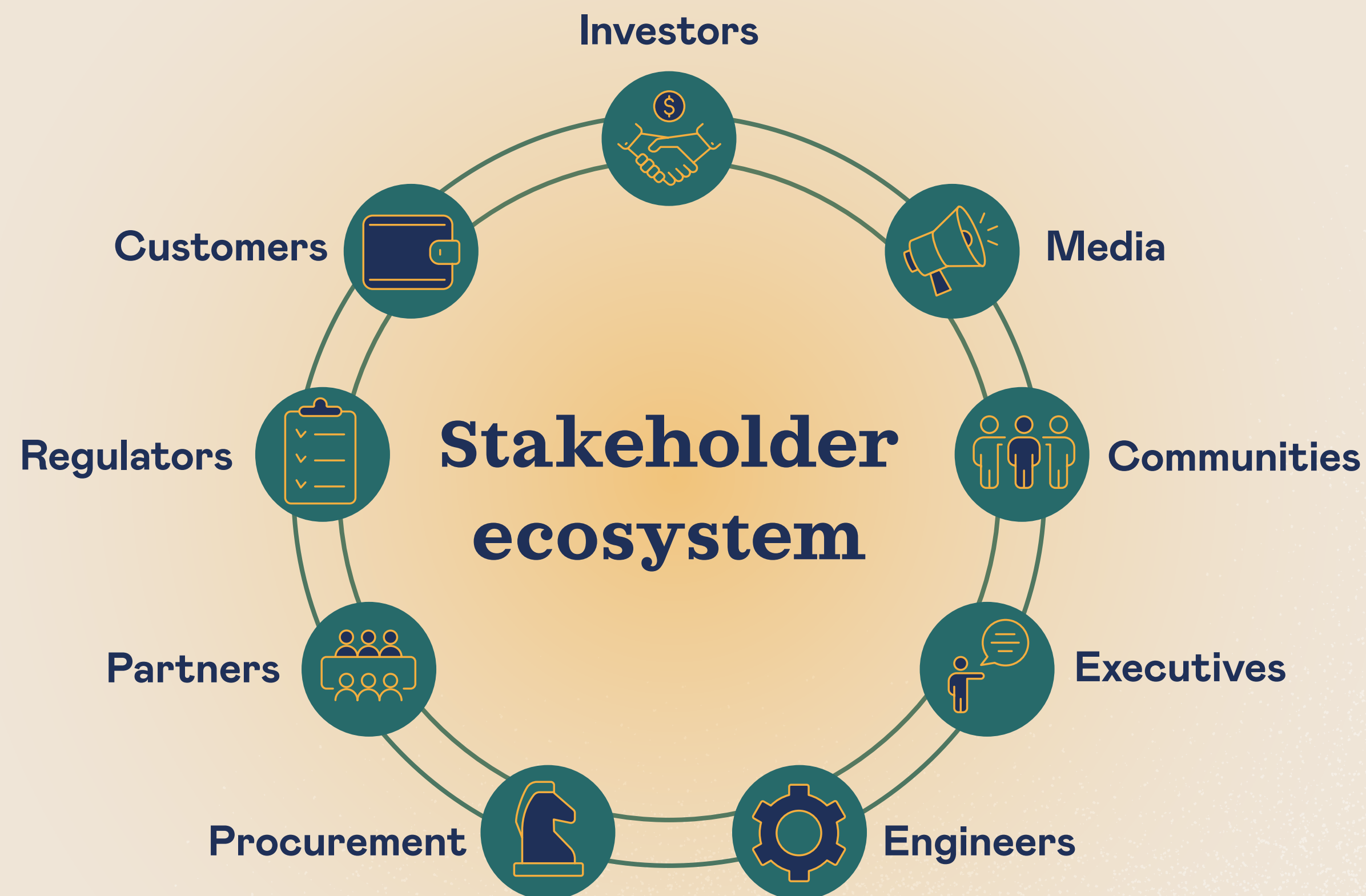
Taken together, these developments are changing where competitive advantage is created. Technical expertise remains essential, but it is the baseline for participation rather than the primary source of differentiation.

Expertise is more widely available and the organisations

best positioned to grow are often those that reduce uncertainty for buyers, investors and policymakers by helping them understand complex technologies, markets and systems.

Communication has largely been treated as the final stage of innovation – a means of describing products after they have been developed. However, understanding is a prerequisite for adoption,

and markets cannot adopt what markets do not understand. Companies operating in this space can boost this understanding, and therefore adoption, by crafting a compelling narrative for key audiences.



6-10
stakeholders

Typical B2B buying groups now involve multiple decision-makers across technical, financial and operational functions.

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The four elements of clarity

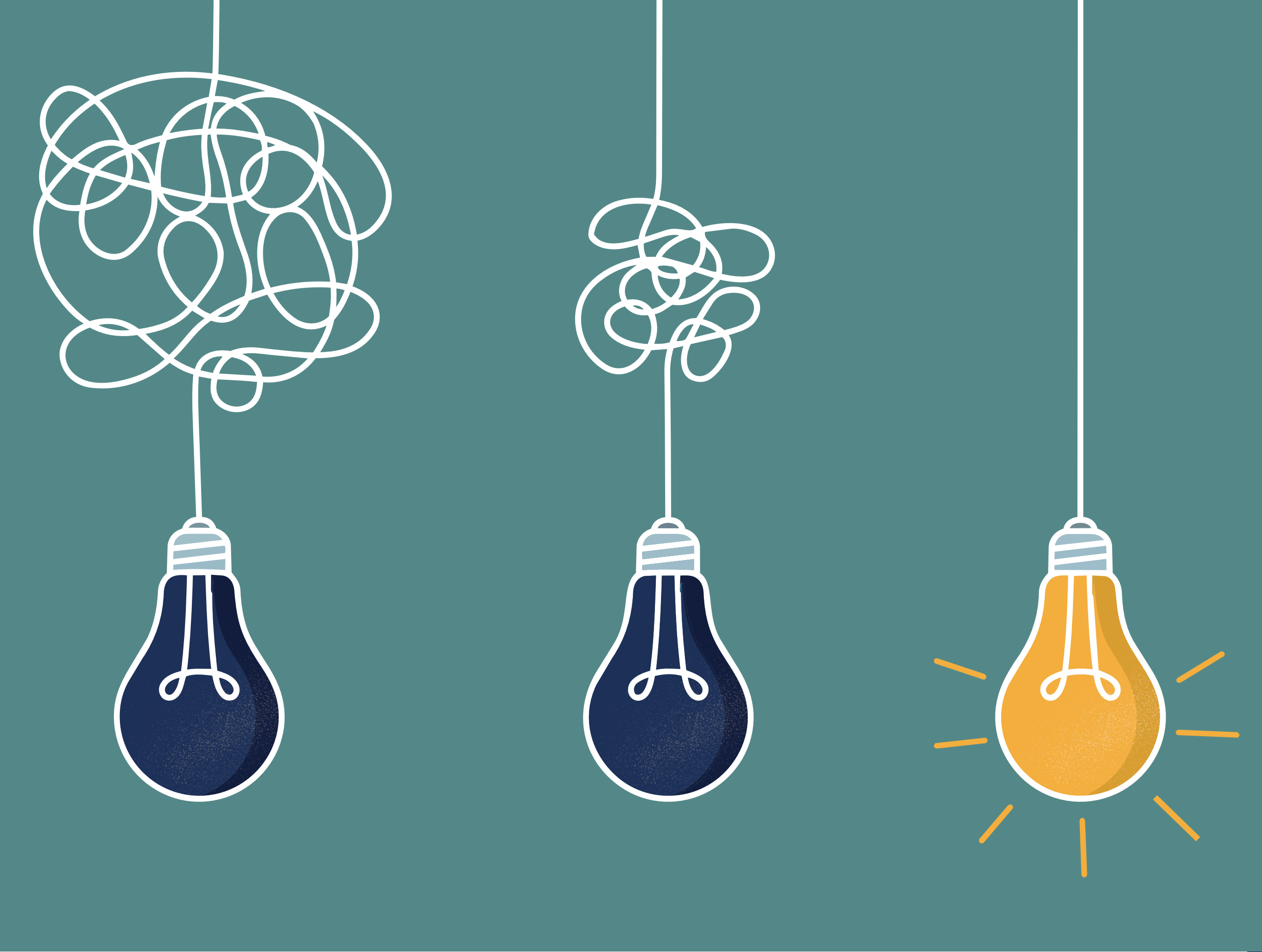
Research from behavioural psychology, decision science, strategic communication and organisational behaviour consistently shows that people do not evaluate complex information objectively.

Before they can support an idea, invest in it or adopt it, they first need to make sense of it. That understanding follows recognisable patterns.

The four elements presented in this paper bring those patterns together into a practical framework for technical organisations. They are not intended as a communications process or a messaging framework.

Rather, they describe four conditions that consistently shape how audiences understand complexity, assess value and build confidence in emerging technologies.

Taken together, they explain why some organisations consistently make complex technologies easier to understand, while others struggle to communicate equally impressive innovations.





Element 1

Context creates value

People do not understand technologies in isolation. They understand them through context. Before someone can determine whether a technology is valuable, they first need to understand why it matters.

Behavioural psychology has repeatedly shown that people rarely evaluate information objectively. Daniel Kahneman demonstrated that judgement is shaped by mental shortcuts, prior knowledge and surrounding cues rather than facts alone. The same information can therefore

produce very different conclusions depending on the context in which it is presented.

This has important implications for organisations operating in the transition economy.

A battery is not valuable simply because it stores electricity. Its value emerges when it is understood as a means of stabilising renewable energy, reducing exposure to volatile electricity prices or improving energy resilience. The technology remains unchanged, but its commercial

significance changes according to the context in which it is explained.

The importance of context increases as technologies become more interconnected. McKinsey describes the physical transition as a system of interconnected challenges rather than independent innovations.

Batteries depend on critical minerals and electricity markets. Renewable power depends on transmission networks, storage and demand flexibility. Hydrogen

depends on abundant low-cost renewable electricity. Explaining individual technologies is therefore no longer sufficient.

Solutions-providers need to explain how technologies, infrastructure and markets work together to create value.

Establishing this context early reduces uncertainty and provides the foundation on which every subsequent conversation depends. Context does not change the technology but how the technology is understood.



Element 2

Translation becomes more valuable than expertise

Engineers, scientists and software developers are solving complex problems, while advances in artificial intelligence, materials science and digital technologies continue to accelerate innovation. Expertise has never been more abundant.

Understanding, however, has not kept pace. Many organisations communicate at the level at which solutions are designed rather than the level at which decisions are made. The result is that

technically sophisticated companies often struggle to communicate their value beyond specialist audiences.

Alan Alda describes communication as a transfer of understanding rather than information. The distinction is important. Translation is not the process of simplifying complex ideas or removing technical detail. It is the ability to preserve technical accuracy while making that knowledge accessible

to audiences with different expertise, responsibilities and incentives.

The need for translation is more important as buying decisions become more distributed. Engineers, procurement specialists, investors, sustainability professionals and executive leaders often evaluate the same technology from different perspectives. Each requires a different explanation, but not a different truth.

Organisations that consistently perform well recognise that explanation is itself a strategic capability. Expertise creates innovation. Translation enables that innovation to be understood, trusted and ultimately adopted.

Really good communication doesn't occur because I have something perfect to say to you. It occurs when you internalise what I have to say so you make it your own.

Alan Alda, actor and communications expert

Element 3

People **buy** significance

Technical organisations often communicate what their products do. Buyers, investors and policymakers are typically trying to answer a different question: why does it matter?

This has been recognised across several disciplines.

Donald Miller argues that buyers are not looking for another hero; they are looking for solutions to their own challenges. Nancy Duarte similarly argues that effective communication creates a contrast between the present and a better future, helping

audiences understand why change is necessary.

The same principle applies across the transition economy. A battery manufacturer may describe improvements in energy density. A carbon management platform may focus on its methodology. While technically accurate, these explanations do not necessarily address the questions that influence decisions.

Significance connects technical capability with commercial value. It explains why a software platform improves resilience rather than simply automation, why a battery provides certainty

Expertise explains how. Significance explains why.

rather than storage or why industrial artificial intelligence increases confidence rather than efficiency. Expertise explains how something works while significance explains why it deserves attention.

Companies that communicate significance reduce uncertainty, strengthen commercial relevance and help stakeholders understand why innovation matters before asking them to act.

Compatibility > Significance

Technical capability	Audience significance
Battery storage	Energy security
AI optimisation	Operational certainty
Carbon accounting	Investment confidence
Heat pumps	Lower operating costs



Element 4

Trust is **earned** through specificity

The energy transition operates under conditions of uncertainty.

Companies ask buyers to adopt unfamiliar technologies, investors to commit capital over long time horizons and policymakers to support markets that continue to evolve. At the same time, sustainability claims are subject to greater scrutiny from regulators, shareholders and civil society.

Under these conditions, trust is more difficult to establish. General claims

provide reassurance, but they rarely provide confidence. Confidence depends on evidence that can be examined, verified and understood.

Harvard Business School professor Frances Frei argues that trust is built on logic, authenticity and empathy. Rachel Botsman of Oxford University describes trust as a confident relationship with the unknown. Both perspectives point towards the same conclusion: uncertainty is reduced

when organisations communicate with greater clarity and specificity.

Companies that consistently build trust are rarely those making the broadest claims. They explain methodologies, quantify outcomes, acknowledge limitations and provide evidence that others can interrogate. Rather than asking audiences to accept assertions, they enable them to reach their own conclusions.

As transition technologies become more complex

and scrutiny continues to increase, specificity emerges as more than a communication technique – it is a mechanism for reducing perceived risk. Organisations that reduce ambiguity make it easier for buyers, investors and policymakers to make decisions with confidence.

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The business case for compelling narrative



As transition technologies are more interconnected, buying decisions become more distributed and scrutiny is more intense, organisations are competing on their ability to create understanding alongside technical innovation.

This changes the role of communication within the business. Rather than describing products after they have been developed, communication contributes to how those products are financed, procured, regulated and adopted.

Investors need confidence in emerging markets. Buying committees need a shared understanding across technical and commercial stakeholders.

Policymakers require clear explanations of complex technologies and value chains.

In each case, the underlying challenge is the same: reducing uncertainty sufficiently for decisions to be made.

Compelling narrative provides a framework for addressing that challenge. It applies the

principles outlined in this paper to help organisations explain complex technologies, establish commercial relevance and build confidence among the audiences that determine growth.

Companies that reduce complexity shorten sales cycles, strengthen investor confidence, improve internal alignment and make it easier for customers,

partners and policymakers to understand the value they create. In complex markets, understanding is a source of competitive advantage in its own right.

The changing role of communication

Function	Traditional role	Compelling narrative
Sales	Present solution	Build buying consensus
Investor relations	Raise capital	Reduce uncertainty
Public affairs	Inform policy	Build confidence
Marketing	Generate awareness	Create understanding

Building confidence in ideas

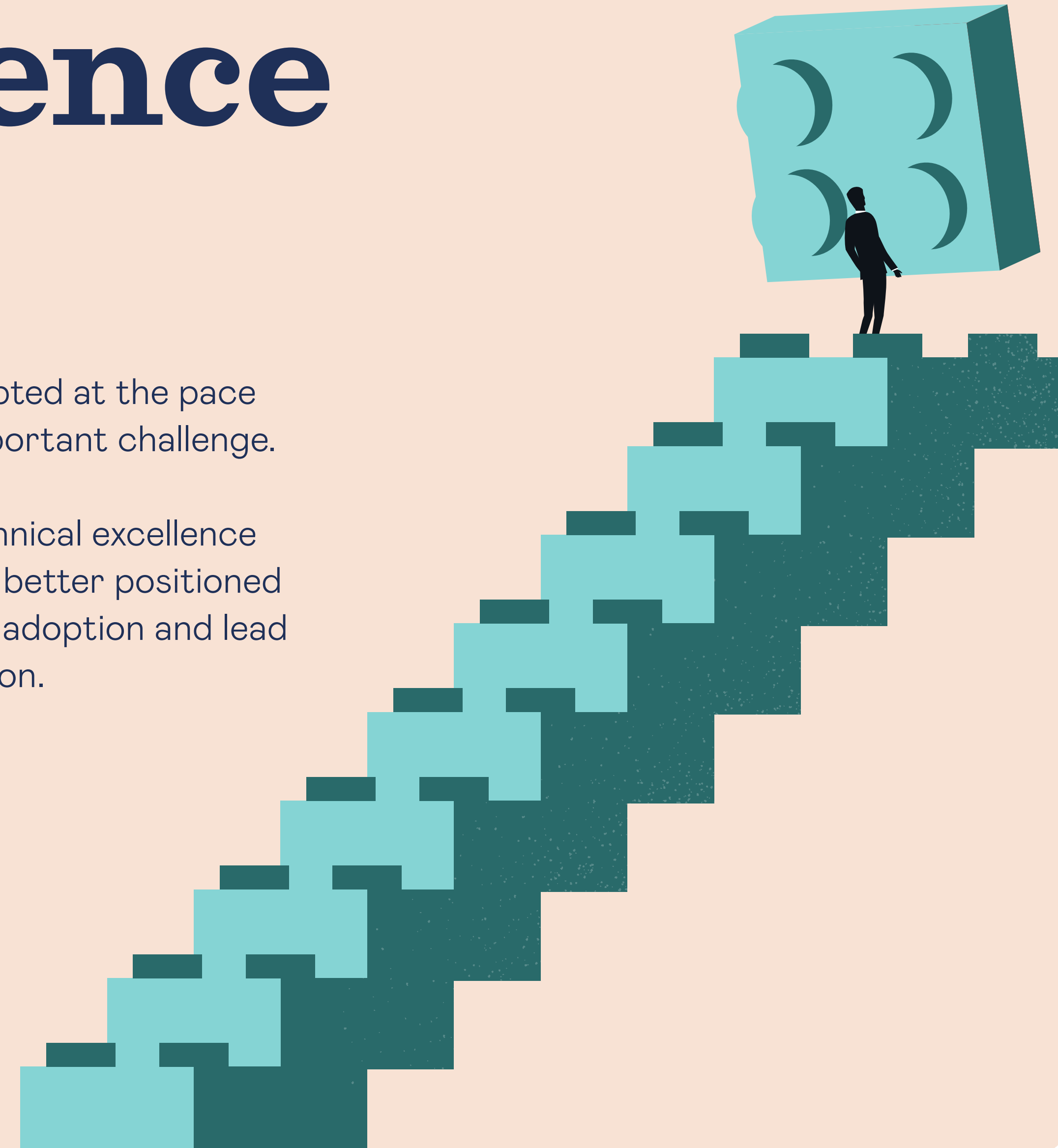
The four elements presented in this paper explain how audiences recognise value, make sense of complexity, connect technical capability with commercial relevance and build confidence in unfamiliar ideas.

Together, they offer a practical approach to communicating in markets where uncertainty is a defining characteristic.

The technologies needed to drive the energy transition already exist. Ensuring they are

understood, trusted and adopted at the pace required is now an equally important challenge.

Companies that combine technical excellence with compelling narrative are better positioned to shape markets, accelerate adoption and lead the next phase of the transition.





About Touchline Earth

From complexity to clarity.

Touchline Earth helps organisations leading the clean transition make complex ideas understandable and their value clear.

We combine strategic communications, journalistic rigour and evidence-led storytelling to build understanding, earn trust and support informed decisions for our international partners and clients.

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