Four answers, three pages.

The first answer is about someone else's storytelling. The other three come from my own work at Breakthrough Energy, where I built and led the creative team while the organization grew into something bigger.

01

Telling Stories That Stand Out

Few public figures have reimagined political storytelling as effectively as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Since she arrived in Congress in 2019, she's demonstrated that authenticity, vulnerability, and strategic communication aren't competing instincts. They can be extraordinarily powerful together.

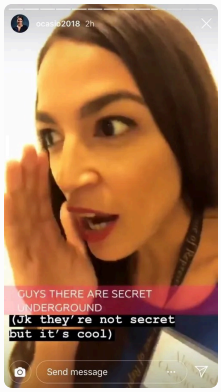
As a millennial Latina from a working-class background, she was entering an institution whose conventions were not designed with someone like her in mind. Rather than trying to assimilate into the traditional communications culture, she brought audiences into her world. Early Instagram Stories demystified everything from congressional orientation to the challenges of affording an apartment in DC. She answered policy questions while cooking dinner on Instagram Live. She played *Among Us* on Twitch with popular gamers, drawing more than 430,000 simultaneous viewers while encouraging young people to vote.

And more recently, she has documented the deeply personal experience of freezing her eggs, turning a vulnerable moment into an accessible conversation about reproductive health, autonomy, and the cost of care.

What distinguishes her isn't simply her willingness to share her life. It's how naturally she connects the personal to the political, making complicated institutions and policies understandable through experiences people recognize. She meets audiences where they are, speaks their language, and respects their intelligence. She isn't just making political messages sound authentic. She's built a communications approach in which being a real person is what makes the political messages work.

That requires creative courage. Foregoing the polish, control, and institutional distance that political communications traditionally offer is a real risk. It also requires excellent judgment about when to be funny, serious, vulnerable, or confrontational.

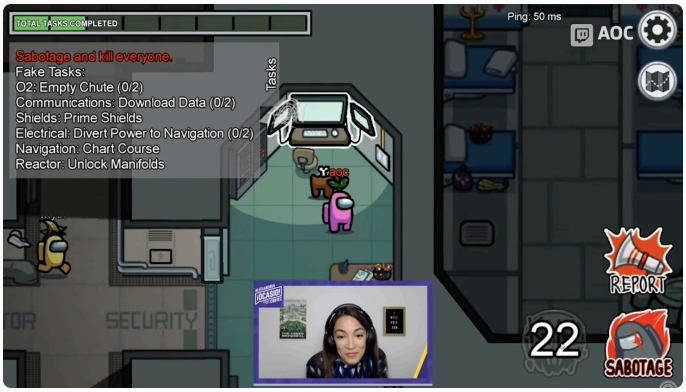
Her achievement is making political leadership feel more human without making it less consequential. She's not just "good at social media." She's helped redefine what authentic political communication can look like.



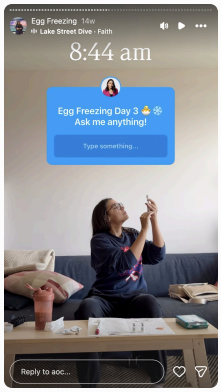
INSTAGRAM STORIES
Orientation week



INSTAGRAM LIVE
Policy Q&A over dinner



TWITCH
Among Us live stream: Get Out The Vote



INSTAGRAM STORIES
Egg Freezing AMA

02

Communicating Through Transformation

When I joined Breakthrough Energy, it was primarily known as Bill Gates's clean-tech investment organization. But as it grew to encompass policy, advocacy, communication, and a much broader mandate, we needed to establish Breakthrough as a thought leader capable of shaping the global conversation about climate solutions.

In 2023, our leadership proposed a State of the Transition report to showcase that expertise. The initial request was for a polished, comprehensive PDF. I saw an opportunity to do something more ambitious and more impactful.

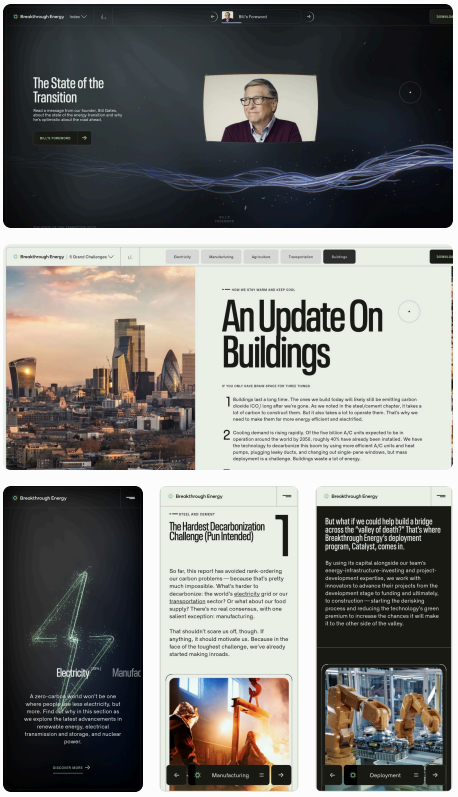
Rather than another dense institutional publication, I made the case for a rich, interactive digital experience that would be as innovative and compelling as the technologies we were championing. If Breakthrough was claiming to know how to solve the defining challenge of our time, the experience needed the sophistication and genuine utility to earn people's confidence and trust. It needed to demand attention—and feel like tomorrow.

I spearheaded the project from concept through execution, setting the creative direction, assembling our creative partners, and working with Breakthrough's subject-matter experts to turn their wide-ranging expertise into a cohesive and comprehensible story. We rejected the notion that technical authority requires dense, wonky communication. Instead, we combined vivid examples, compelling video profiles, mild humor, and cutting-edge digital storytelling with layered content that let readers scan the key takeaways or explore the research in depth.

The experience was designed so that everyone from policymakers, investors, and technical experts to curious newcomers could understand it. We didn't dumb down the science. We made sure its significance was impossible to miss.

In its first two months, the report generated nearly 58,000 web sessions and more than 2,800 downloads. It earned praise from our partners and was cited by congressional teams in meetings with our policy experts. It also earned recognition from the Webbys and other leading digital-design organizations.

The creative choice wasn't simply to make a better report. It was to make the work itself an expression of the organization we were becoming.



State of the Transition, 2023.

03

Leading Across Disciplines

Breakthrough Energy's greatest strength was its network: an extraordinary community of investors, innovators, scientists, policymakers, and global leaders working to accelerate the energy transition. But many of these groups had never met, let alone worked together. The same was true inside Breakthrough, where teams with complementary expertise often operated in silos. Breakthrough Energy's 2024 London Summit offered an opportunity to break down both sets of walls.

As creative lead, I partnered with our event lead, Kristen Liggett, to build an experience that would bring the network to life. We developed a cross-functional planning approach, identifying representatives from every internal team and bringing them to London six months before the event. Walking through the space together, imagining what it could become, and developing a shared vision transformed them from stakeholders reviewing plans into co-conspirators invested in—and accountable for—making the event succeed. They became advocates within their departments, bringing ideas and ownership back to their teams.

We worked closely with each team to understand what success meant for them—investment opportunities, policy conversations, new partnerships, or visibility for emerging technologies—and used those goals to shape the creative experience.

Working with our chief technology officer, Eric Toone, I helped translate his technical expertise into a TED Talk–style presentation, pairing his insights with striking visuals and short films to make complex technologies compelling and accessible without sacrificing rigor. The collaboration was so successful that Eric chose to work with me on subsequent keynotes, which became an anchor of our annual gatherings.

And rather than a conventional exhibition hall, we created an Innovation Showcase of visually immersive, sector-themed environments, each with its own personality, where innovators, investors, and policymakers could connect and have meaningful conversations. Throughout the Summit, we designed spaces around what our teams told us they wanted to accomplish, not simply what would look impressive.

The Summit brought together 1,600 leaders from 48 countries. Among surveyed attendees, 88% reported initiating partnerships, and the event catalyzed more than $700 million in aligned climate investments. But one of my favorite measures of success came the following year, when colleagues organizing another major event immediately assembled a cross-functional planning group and brought them to their venue to develop a shared vision. I was glad to see the lesson stuck.








Breakthrough Energy Summit, London, 2024.

04

Putting Equity Into Practice

My approach to storytelling was solidified on the Obama campaign in 2008, where "Respect, Empower, Include" was more than a slogan. It was the organizing philosophy that informed how we engaged communities, whose stories were told, and who got to tell them. Those principles have guided me throughout my career, but I've also learned that representation and inclusion aren't the same as genuine empowerment.

At Breakthrough Energy, I was proud of the diverse, talented creative team I'd built. I believed I was giving my team members meaningful opportunities to lead. But one day, a designer I'd hired gave me difficult and important feedback: while I talked about his leadership on the team, I often retained more control over creative decisions than I realized. He had responsibility for projects without always having clear authority to make the decisions that shaped them. If I genuinely trusted him as a creative leader, he challenged me to give him something he could truly own—and to support his leadership rather than direct it.

It was tough to hear, in part because I recognized he was right. My intentions were good, but I hadn't fully considered the difference between giving someone a seat at the table and letting them cook.

We changed how we worked together, becoming much more explicit about ownership, authority, and the support he wanted from me. One important test came with the redesign of our newsroom, the engine of Breakthrough's content machine. I gave him ownership of the creative process—from identifying potential partners, evaluating proposals, and recommending the agency to defining the scope and directing the work. My role was to provide guidance and support when needed, not to steer every decision.

The result was distinctive, successful, and different from what I would have created myself. The work was stronger because I listened, stepped back, and created space for a team member to step up and truly lead.

I still believe representation matters enormously. But this experience taught me that building a diverse team is only the starting point. Going forward, I'll approach projects with greater clarity about authority, expectations, and the support each person needs. That lesson has made me a better manager, strengthened my team, and produced better creative work.