



Mike Wittenstein

Keynotes and workshops on AI, strategy, governance, and getting a leadership team pointed the same way

For audiences being asked to do something nobody there has done before.

Owners, CEOs, boards, and the people who carry the work, at companies doing something nobody there has done before.

They leave with at least one idea they can act on, and the words to talk about it with the people around them.

Six talks. One premise.

Strategy often fails in the gap between understanding and commitment. Story is one way a big new idea gets across, so people can understand it, feel it, and walk inside it. When they do, resistance drops, and their desire to build something appears. All six talks are built to do exactly that.

Keynotes start at \$15,000. One fee covers the talk, the preparation, and US travel; full economics on page 13.

1 New Motor, Old Pulleys

Why AI is everywhere except your numbers.

When factories replaced steam engines with electric motors, they bolted the new motor where the old engine had been and kept every belt and pulley exactly where it was. Productivity stayed flat for forty years. The gains only came when someone rearranged the factory around what the motor made possible. Most AI spending today is a motor bolted onto old pulleys.

People leave able to look at any AI project in their own organization and say which of the two it is: a faster version of work they already do, or a change in the work itself. They get the three questions that tell them apart, and a plain way to raise it with a boss or a board without sounding like the person who is against everything.

Especially good for the leader who has approved a year of AI spending and cannot yet point to what changed.

Audiences: AI adoption summits, executive retreats, boards. **Formats:** keynote, 45 to 60 minutes; workshop, 90 minutes to a half day.

2 Change the Frame

Strategy: when to stop improving the answer and change the question.

Every company runs on a picture of what business it is in. That picture decides what its people can see and what they can't, and almost nobody has said it out loud. Improving the answer inside the picture is what most planning is. Changing the picture is what makes genuinely new things possible. Six real companies, six moments the picture changed, and what happened next.

People leave able to say out loud what frame their own company is running on, most of them for the first time, and to tell the difference between a problem that needs a better answer and a problem that needs a different question. Every attendee takes home the companion field guide, *Change the Frame*.

Especially good for the owner who has been told the plan is sound and cannot say why it still feels wrong, or the executive who keeps improving a number that will not move.

Audiences: Leadership summits, strategy offsites, annual conferences. **Formats:** keynote, 45 to 60 minutes; workshop, 90 minutes to a half day.

Talks three and four

3 Busier, Not Better

Why faster people don't add up to a faster company, and what to fix first.

If everyone in your company got twice as fast tomorrow, would you get twice as far, or just twice as busy? Individual speed does not add up on its own. Fifty people accelerating can point in fifty directions, and the company ends up busier, more tired, and no further along. The fix isn't more speed. It's agreeing on the direction before you buy any.

People leave with one question to put to their own leadership team — where are we going? — and everyone writes down the answer; the spread starts the more valuable conversation that aligns it. They also leave with an understanding of alternate currencies, the sources of untapped abundance a company already has. It runs in a staff meeting, in about an hour.

Especially good for the manager whose team is faster than ever and somehow further behind.

Audiences: Leadership teams a year into AI spending; management conferences; company-wide meetings. **Formats:** keynote, 45 to 60 minutes; workshop, 90 minutes to a half day.

4 From Oversight to Foresight

For boards: three questions to ask before the options close.

A board's job has always been to protect what the company has built, and that still matters. But the decisions that shape the next ten years are made long before they reach a board packet, and by the time they arrive the options have narrowed and the costs have hardened. Oversight protects what exists. Foresight protects what comes next.

Directors leave with three questions they can ask at the next meeting, early enough to keep choices open and worded so they read as good governance rather than second-guessing management. They also leave with three ways to encourage boards to lean forward, stories of big shifts in thinking, and ways to tap the board's wisdom for future-state design while keeping their fingers out of operations.

Especially good for the director who reads every board paper and still senses the real decisions were made somewhere else.

Audiences: Board retreats, governance conferences, Private Directors Association events, boards of privately held and private-equity-owned companies, family-business forums. **Formats:** keynote, 45 to 60 minutes; workshop, 90 minutes to a half day.



Talks five and six

5 Strap Them In and Push Go

A future you can experience beats the spreadsheet you read.

Don't tell somebody what a roller coaster is. Strap them in and push go. Plans work the same way. Described a future, people argue about whether it is realistic. Put inside one, they argue about how to make it work, which is the argument worth having and the one that never happens in a planning meeting.

People leave knowing how to make a future concrete enough for their own team to walk through, poke at, and improve, before anyone commits money to it: pick a future scenario to develop, ask friendlies, and keep it under wraps until the friendlies have walked it. They leave with the confidence to become an architect, and knowing how to earn their team's support. It costs a morning, not a quarter.

Especially good for the leader whose plan keeps getting approved and never quite starts.

Audiences: Planning-season audiences, strategy offsites, innovation conferences. **Formats:** keynote, 45 to 60 minutes; workshop, 90 minutes to a half day.

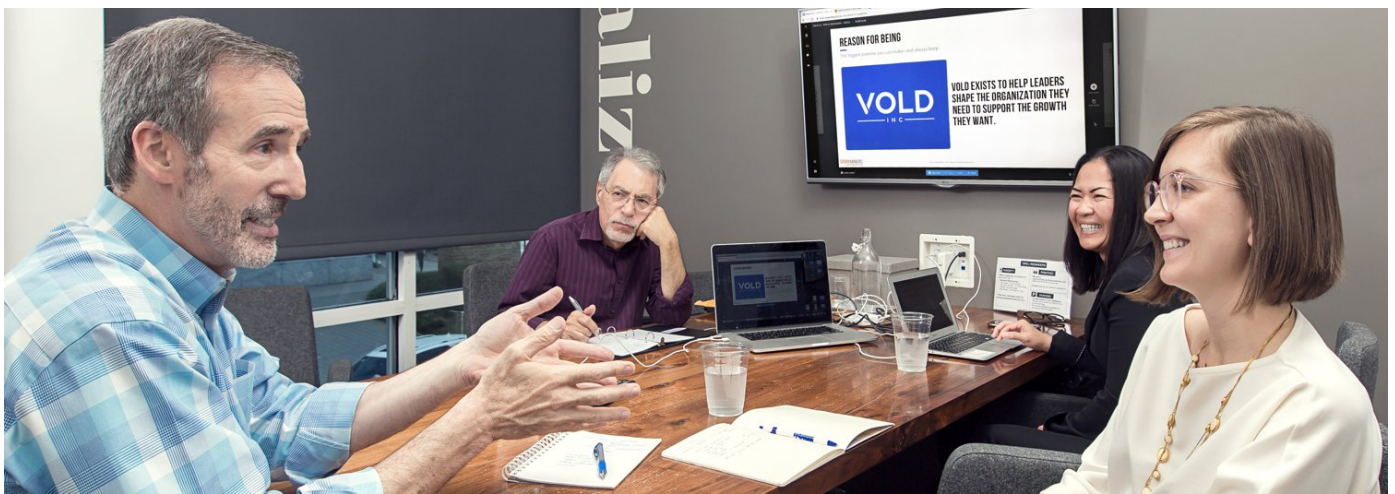
6 The One Thing You Can't Download

Judgment, taste, reframing: what AI extends but can't supply.

The tools equalized overnight. Same models, same prompts, same access, whether a person has thirty years of experience or three. What did not equalize: knowing which question matters, knowing which answer is right, and noticing when the frame itself is the problem. This is where human judgment now earns its keep, and it is the one thing nobody can download.

People leave able to name where their own experience is now worth more than it ever was, and where it is worth less than it used to be, which is the harder half and the more useful one. For anyone in the room quietly wondering whether they are being replaced, and for the leaders deciding where to put their most experienced people.

Audiences: Professional-services firms, expertise-based businesses, all-hands meetings. **Formats:** keynote, 45 to 60 minutes; workshop, 90 minutes to a half day.



Let's get to know each other

I'm not a motivational speaker. I'm not a professor. How I talk with you across a table is how I'll come across in front of your audience, whether that is a ballroom, a theater, a conference room, or a workshop space.

I'm Mike Wittenstein, founder of Storyminers, a one-person strategy practice in Atlanta that works globally. **Speaking, presenting, facilitating, problem-solving, coaching.** These are the things I do. They are also what I love doing. Thirty years in, I still look forward to the person who says the thing nobody else will, the argument that turns productive, and the moment somebody sees their own company differently.

In person I'm conversational. I ask questions I actually want answered, and I give your audience something concrete enough to argue with, because people take away what they have handled, not what they have heard.

Why now. Covid emptied the stages in 2020, and I used those years to rebuild this practice from the inside: its positioning, its operations, and learning AI by building with it rather than reading about it. That work is done, speaking fits the business again, and I am looking forward to being back in front of audiences more than I have in a long time. What I am bringing back is not what I took off the road in 2019.

What I believe. People can't get behind a future they can't see. So I make the future tangible enough to walk into and poke at. Once your people have done that, they have new words for what they want. And new words are not just something to say. People who leave with them build more, try more, describe futures they could not describe a week ago, and work differently.



The photographs in this kit were taken over twenty years, so I don't look the same in all of them. What the work is built on — curiosity, plain language, and respect for the people in front of me — has not changed.

AT A GLANCE

500+

keynotes, workshops, and conference sessions

24

countries, 100+ cities

LANGUAGES

Whole talks in English and Portuguese.
Questions and discussion in English,
Portuguese, or Spanish.

Before, during, and after

The hour on stage is the middle of the work, not the whole of it.

BEFORE

The homework is Mike's, and the homework runs the same way every time. A planning call: your theme, your audience, what the event needs the keynote to do. Then the reading: what your industry is talking about, and what has already been said from your stage. Then three to five interviews with your people, which your team helps arrange. By the time Mike walks on stage, he has their language, their industry, their situations, and what they are up against.

DURING

Every talk is built as a story: a situation the audience recognizes, a turn they did not see coming, and a way forward they can picture themselves taking. What usually happens is an epiphany. A person learns something, decides it is right for them, and decides to act on it, all in the same moment. Producing that moment is the point of the hour. Your audience leaves with that moment, and your organization is the one that gave it to them.

AFTER

After an open session, every attendee gets a web page: the full transcript, longer answers to the questions there wasn't time to finish on the day, and the exercises tied to what you wanted your people to learn. Closed board and leadership sessions are never transcribed or posted. You get a post-event summary as well: what landed, what your audience asked, and what the answers mean for your organization. For an example, see the page Mike built after speaking to the AI Collective's Atlanta chapter on July 2026: storyminers.com/talks/make-your-story-stick



Some of the planning ends up on the wall. A graphic facilitator, an artist who draws the session's thinking on the wall while it happens, gives everyone something to point at instead of something to remember. It is an add-on, priced on page 13.

The point of all three: a person should be able to carry at least one new idea into their day-to-day thinking and still be using that idea a month later.

WHAT EVERYONE KEEPS

The session page for your audience, and the summary for you. Both are in the keynote fee. A workshop, where your team turns the ideas into finished work of their own, is a separate add-on and is priced on page 13.

One engagement, start to finish

One real case: the audience, the session, and what stayed with them.

WHO WAS THERE

February 2017, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Thirty people from Armstrong Flooring's marketing team, half of them residential, half commercial, in a half-day session booked through the Association of National Advertisers.

WHAT THEY WERE UP AGAINST

The team needed a sharper picture of where the business was going, and a way to describe it that held together across two very different markets.

THE SESSION

Mike spoke about how experience design and storyboards let a team draw a tighter, more detailed picture of the future, built around what a customer would actually go through. Then the team built future-state journey maps of their own, one residential and one commercial. The questions were where people connected the ideas to the work already on their desks.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER

Armstrong's commercial marketing director wrote to Mike a few days later. Her note is quoted on this page. Years later, in a follow-on conversation, Deb Lechner told Mike the approach had been folded into how Armstrong Flooring ran innovation.

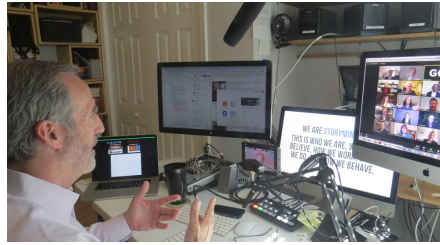
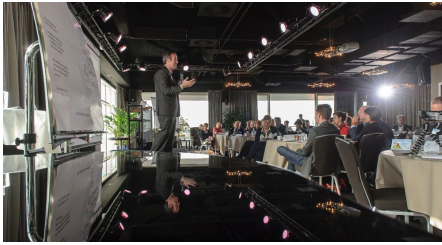


"They felt you understood our business and were able to apply the customer experience and journey mapping knowledge to the opportunities we face. Everyone found the training valuable and fun. You receive especially high marks on engagement and relatability."

Deb Lechner, Commercial Marketing Director, Armstrong Flooring, February 2017

Beyond the keynote

When Mike flies in for a keynote, the keynote is one hour of a day that can hold a great deal more.



The photographs on this page show a dinner session, a webinar from Mike's studio, and questions from the audience.

The keynote. 45 to 60 minutes, custom-built for your theme, your audience, and your industry. People should recognize themselves in the first five minutes, be surprised somewhere in the middle, and leave feeling capable.

The workshop. 90 minutes to a half day. Senior teams apply the ideas from the keynote to their own strategic challenges and leave with completed work, not sticky notes and promises. They should leave having made something.

The board or leadership session. Eight to twenty people, a door that closes, and a real decision on the table. Everyone already holds a view, and nobody has said their view out loud. Mike gets the views out, makes the future concrete enough to argue about, and everyone leaves with the decision clearer than before and able to say why. The feeling to aim for is relief that it was finally said.

Q&A and panels. The moment an audience finds out whether the speaker was real. Mike answers the question that was asked, not the one he prepared for, and says "I don't know" when that is the truth. On a panel, he makes the other panelists better and asks the question the moderator didn't.

Lunch-and-learns and dinners. Thirty minutes or less, stitched into an hour with announcements, conversation, and food. The smaller setting is where people feel safe enough to ask the question they would never ask from a seat in a big audience.

Press and media. Interviews around the event, on your themes, in your reporters' language. The aim is that a reporter leaves with a line they can actually use.

Breakouts and hallway time. Mike stays. The hallway is where the real question finally gets asked, and where somebody says the thing they were not going to say from a microphone.

Webinars. From Mike's own studio, not a laptop on a stack of books: broadcast microphone, lighting, multiple screens, and a producer's setup. The picture and sound hold up on a large screen in a full room.

Interactive discussions and roundtables. Unscripted. Mike carries his share when the conversation gets real, which is the point of booking a discussion instead of a talk.

Virtual and hybrid. Same preparation, and built so that people joining by microphone and screen contribute, and finish the hour knowing they were in it.

One keynote or a full day, the trip costs Mike the same. On the planning call, let's explore what else the day could hold.

Finding the fit

A planning call comes first, and most of it is about your goals and your constraints. Everything else follows from those two.



What the call decides. Which stories fit your people. What the single thread running through it should be, and how the talk should build. Which mix of services the day needs, and whether a graphic facilitator earns a place in the budget. And how the session should feel: exploratory, or a politically safe way to put a new idea in front of the organization, or hands-on and experimental. What your audience needs, and how everyone's effort gets coordinated to supply it.

More than a speaker. Mike is a strategist, an experience designer, and a business operator who has run companies and served on boards, including five years on the board of the nonprofit he co-founded. He has been where your audience is: GALILEO, one of the world's first digital agencies, which he co-founded and ran through the 1990s, building Holiday Inn's first online reservations in 1995; three years at IBM Global Services; and, since, advising owners and CEOs of \$20 million to \$2 billion companies. He has faced the situations they're facing.

What he has practiced most is seeing those situations from a different angle — the angle where you can aim what you've been doing for years in a new direction and get radically better results.

Custom is not a word swap. Changing "manufacturing" to "distribution" to "healthcare" to "retail" is not customization. Mike brings stories built for your audience, and adapts approaches, methods, and techniques to what your audience is actually up against. Being willing to spend the time is what makes a talk connect. Your audience will notice.

What a good hour actually does. Big change is coming at your people, and most of them don't yet have words for the change. Not because they're afraid, and not because they can't handle the change — because nobody has named the change plainly yet. An hour that gives them the awareness, the confidence, and the vocabulary makes every conversation after the hour better: in the hallway, in the next meeting, in the budget review three weeks out.

Blockers and breakthroughs. Big change works the same way every time. You push, and push, and push, and nothing happens. Then one day the change happens. The pushing was not wasted. The pushing is what the breakthrough is made of. People push harder, and longer, when they have seen where the push leads, which is what every one of these talks is built to show them.

The record

More than 500 engagements across thirty years.



Named one of the Top 50 Customer Service Experts of the Decade by Nextiva, a US business-communications company, in 2020.

MOST RECENT

The AI Collective, Atlanta chapter, July 2026. The recap page, the deck, and the takeaways are at storyminers.com/talks/make-your-story-stick

COMPANIES

Clorox, Teleflora, PNC, Subway, Publix, Intcomex, TELUS, LeasePlan, Armstrong Flooring.

CONFERENCES AND ASSOCIATIONS

Chain Store Age, the Customer Experience Professionals Association, Meeting Professionals International, the Retail Design Institute, Vistage, the National Speakers Association, the European Customer Experience World (London), the Mystery Shopping Providers Association (Cancún), CX Talks, and AECOC, the Spanish retail and manufacturing association (Madrid).

UNIVERSITIES AND EXECUTIVE PROGRAMS

Georgia Tech, Emory, ADEN International Business School in Latin America, and the Kettering Executive Network, a peer group for senior executives.

REGIONS

Across the United States and Canada, and for leading brands in South and Central America and Europe. The work has also taken Mike to Asia: introducing IBM's innovation centers in South Korea, and returning to Seoul on an architect's team pitching a museum at SK Telecom's headquarters.

IN THEIR WORDS

"He fully customized his program to focus on what they wanted to learn. He arrived early to get to know them better and, during his program, walked around the floor to connect with everyone. He was exactly what I wanted."

Katherine Boccaccio, Executive Director of Events, Chain Store Age, 2016

"I wish all our Vistage speakers could deliver as much value as Mike has in 90 minutes or less."

Austen Jackson, Chair, Vistage International, the CEO peer-group organization, 2011

Where to see Mike

Two places to watch before you book, and they do different jobs.

The Future Story

vimeo.com/411048748

Three and a half minutes. Not stage footage: this is a strategy written as a story people can react to, which is the thing Mike builds for a client and then puts on stage.

Keynote highlights, around the world

vimeo.com/showcase/3333024

A showcase of eight clips: *The Future of Customer Experience* (ADEN International Business School, delivered virtually in 2020) · *Breaking Big Things* (CX Talks, 2019) · a highlights reel · *Your Future Story Is Your NextGen Experience* · BNP Bulgaria · *Anticipation* (AECOC, Madrid) · Jim Ellis, the Atlanta auto group · *Best Experiences in the World*. The clips run from 2010 to 2020, and they show the range. Why there is nothing newer is on page 5. The current work is on the page from July 2026: storyminers.com/talks/make-your-story-stick

PUT THIS KIT THROUGH YOUR AI

This kit is longer than most, because the people choosing a speaker increasingly read with a model open beside them. Paste the whole thing in and ask it what you actually need to know. Would this land with a manufacturing audience? Which of the six talks fits the theme we have already set? What would Mike need from us to make the day work? A one-page kit cannot answer any of that. This one can, which means the fit is clear before anyone picks up the phone.

WHERE TO READ HIM

storyminers.com/speaking — the six talks, the reel, the record, and how a booking comes together.

storyminers.com/change-the-frame — *Change the Frame*, the free field guide: how leaders open futures others can't yet see. Six real stories, about thirty minutes, no email needed. Attendees of that talk take the guide home.

storyminers.com/ideas — what Mike is thinking about now.

storyminers.com/worldview — what Storyminers stands for, written down.

linkedin.com/in/mikewittenstein — the current writing.

Why I'm useful

After more than five hundred audiences and many thousands of people, I've developed a sense for what a group needs to learn — and whether they will get there through a story, a demonstration, or something they try themselves.



The faster I can share what I've learned, the better. The more your audience members know and can do, the better they will do at work, and the better they will feel.

We're all just sharing what we know to help each other out. So I hold nothing back, and I build every talk so your audience can keep using what they learned long after I've gone home.

My background is mostly first-of-a-kind projects. Lots of change, tremendous amounts of uncertainty, confusion, and a lot of the scary human emotions that go with all of that. Which is why I can contribute in the situations where new things are expected of people who haven't done them before.

What I do is not just telling people things. I give people new ways to do things: new ways to see the patterns they are already standing in, new ways to decide, and words for those things they have been struggling to name.

CREDENTIALS

Current.

Private Company Governance Certificate, Private Directors Association (2026)
Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM), a lifetime designation

Earned, and since lapsed.

Certified Speaking Professional (CSP)
Certified Customer Experience Professional (CCXP)
Certified Management Consultant (CMC)

The study hours go somewhere new each year — lately into AI, governance, and how people and machines work side by side.

EDUCATION

MBA, International Business
Thunderbird School of Global Management

B.A. Foreign Languages and Cultures
University of Florida

Check a date

Let's have a short call about your event: the date, the audience, the theme. That call is where the day gets designed, and your date stays open while we work it out.



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Travels from Atlanta (ATL)

storyminers.com/speaking

Email, call, or text. Mike reads every note himself and replies within a day.

Bring three things to that call: the date, who will be in the audience, and what the event is supposed to accomplish. From those, the call settles which of the six talks serves your people, what the story arc should be, and what else the day should hold. Your date is held the moment you say the word.

Booking through a bureau? Ask them for Mike Wittenstein and the date you have in mind, and they will set up the same call.

THE ECONOMICS

Keynotes start at \$15,000 for dates in 2026 and 2027. Your number is set on the planning call and does not move after that, and when the booking comes through a bureau the fee includes the bureau's commission. It covers the talk, the preparation, the interviews, the customization, flights and ground travel inside the United States, and your post-event summary. For open sessions it also covers the session page for your audience.

Workshops. Added to a keynote, a 90-minute session or a half day typically runs \$8,000 to \$15,000, depending on length and how much is built for you. A workshop booked on its own is quoted after the planning call.

Graphic facilitation. Quoted on request, and arranged on the planning call.

What you provide. A hotel room from your event's block, and help arranging the three to five interviews. Everything else inside the United States is in the fee. For events outside the United States, travel is quoted separately.