

# DISCOVER YOUR STORYBRAND

**12 STORY-BASED STYLES**  
TO SHAPE YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY  
AND LET THE WORLD KNOW

*Who you really are*

## INTRODUCTION

# How I found the real me in my work

I met Dr. Carol S. Pearson eight years ago, at a talk she gave titled “Can marketing be spiritual?” It wasn’t a question I had ever thought about. I had no insights to offer in response. But as soon as I saw that question, I needed to know the answer. And when I got it, it changed my life.

At the time, I was 20+ years into a communications career that had allowed me to work with some wonderful organizations and marketers, help launch a number of great brands, and run a business with a close friend and like-minded partner. Despite these successes, I was deeply conflicted about my path in life. I wondered if the work I did really mattered in the world, and if my gifts were being used in a meaningful way. On a number of levels, I wasn’t sure who I was, or who I wanted to be, or how to regain the sense of aliveness I’d felt throughout most of my career. The notion that my work could be spiritual in some way captured my imagination with a visceral jolt.

Spirituality isn’t a word that comes up much in business, probably because most people think it has religious connotations. But Dr. Pearson’s lecture wasn’t about religion at all. It was about finding the inherent meaning that lives inside a person, a product, an organization or a cause—

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the spirit that can bring it alive and shape a brand identity that's engaging, involving and true to a core purpose. For me, her talk was also about redefining a brand as the dictionary defines spirit—as an “animating essence” that's deeply authentic, and whose meaning can be expressed and felt in the world.

Dr. Pearson shared much more than a theory about marketing and branding that evening. She shared her system for defining a brand's spirit or essence, a framework based on 12 universal or archetypal storylines that each capture a different aspect of human motivation and meaning. By exploring these stories, and understanding which one an individual or organization is most moved to live in the world, Dr. Pearson suggested that a brand's true spirit or essence could be found.

After that lecture, I completely rethought much of my work and my life. I immediately knew that I wanted to understand my own story at a much deeper level. I wanted to help other professionals and organizations understand theirs, too. Using Dr. Pearson's framework and tools, I began a discovery process to explore the source of my own deepest motivation and define myself through that lens. I studied with Dr. Pearson for a year at Georgetown University, learning more about the ways in which archetypal stories could be used to define personal purpose and organizational culture. I developed “Storybranding,” a process for helping individuals and organizations establish identities based on what was best and most distinctive about them. During this time, I had the great privilege of bringing my new work to a number of mission-driven private, public and non-profit organizations; and to professionals and entrepreneurs pursuing a wide variety of dreams and passions.

Most important to me on a personal level was the process of discovering and telling my own story, of defining my own brand. In working with Dr. Pearson's 12 storylines (called story types in the book), I found early on that the character of the Creator is most closely aligned with my real strengths and values, my true power and purpose. When I build my work life around my Creator gifts and talents, I'm at my most productive and my most fulfilled. When I'm acting on the Creator mission I developed—to help individuals and organizations understand and express who they are in the world—I'm doing my very best and most satisfying work. Helping others

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define and bring the most powerful and purposeful parts of themselves into their professional lives has become an important part of the Creator mission for me. Certainly, it's the impetus for this book.

While this is a book about personal branding, my definition of that term is different than what's often used in the category. Storybranding—my version of personal branding—isn't about “packaging up” an image that will lure others into an association with you. It's not about positioning yourself or finding a niche or even defining a value proposition that others will find appealing or motivating (although those are all important components of traditional branding).

Storybranding comes from a different perspective. It's about the pure, unmitigated joy of knowing and being who you are; expressing that with boundless enthusiasm; and saying to the world “come and get it.” It's about understanding your own real identity, and building a work life around it that's deeply satisfying and richly meaningful to you. It's about defining the unique and personal way that you can best contribute to and participate in the world. With the foundation of your real story and identity to guide you, you'll next discover that you've created an authentic attraction field for all your endeavors—from finding the right job to getting new customers to advancing in your field to maybe, just maybe, actually enjoying your professional life.

### **How to read and use this book**

The main purpose of this book is to help readers understand and apply a “storybrand” in their own lives. It opens with a chapter that introduces the concept of authentic personal branding in more detail and how it can shape workplace creativity, success and fulfillment. After that, it offers an overview of Dr. Pearson's 12-archetype model for workplace meaning and motivation, followed by detailed chapters defining the individual characteristics of each archetype or “story type.” These chapters are the heart of the book, and are designed to help readers understand how well their own values, strengths, gifts and passions align with each of the storylines.

While this book is written to an individual perspective, the processes and tools described in it were originally developed over several years of consulting with organizations and entrepreneurs

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running their own businesses. Readers who are interested in creating an authentic storybrand for an organization or business—or who want to understand a team or the people on it in a more meaningful way--can also use this book. Just think about your organization, group or team as a person, and think about how seeing it through a story-based lens could help you understand it, brand or position it, or develop the people in it more effectively.

Readers who want to explore their story-based natures before starting the book should consider taking the Professional Values & Story Index (PVSI), a typological instrument that assesses and provides a numerical score based on how much a respondent's answers reflect each of the story types (visit [www.storybranding.com](http://www.storybranding.com) for a free sample). Those who don't take the PVSI first should read all the chapters, self assessing and using the exercises to match themselves up with the most relevant story types.

By the end of chapter 14, you should know your own story type and how to create a storybrand based on it. The last three chapters will help you activate it in the world, see how well it aligns with the storyline at play inside your organization, and recognize and work with storybrands in others.

Here are the 12 story types you'll meet in the book:

- Creator
- Caregiver
- Ruler
- Hero
- Revolutionary
- Magician
- Jester
- Everyperson
- Lover
- Innocent
- Explorer
- Sage

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You may have an immediate reaction to some of the characters already. Pay special attention to any strong positive or negative responses. Sometimes, we put a way of being on a pedestal or reject it entirely because someone else has influenced our thinking (a parent; a teacher; maybe even society at large). This book is about finding out who you know yourself to be—not what someone else wants or doesn't want for you. So keep an open and exploratory mind, and be prepared to embrace what emerges. It's the real you.

## CHAPTER ONE

# What's a Storybrand?

While there are many definitions of branding, most professionals in the field would agree that at some level branding is about defining what you want to stand for in the world. That's part of what storybranding is all about, too, but it goes a little further. Storybranding defines who you want to get out of bed in the morning to be.

Throughout our young lives, we repeatedly encounter the same question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” But that question can almost never be taken at face value. What people almost always mean by it is: “What do you want to do for a living?” They're expecting to hear that you want to be a firefighter, or a doctor, or a dancer or an accountant. They'd be a little startled to hear that your real goal is to live a life shaped by purpose and mission, or that you want to find a way to be kind and compassionate in all that you do, or that you see yourself as a change agent who could work in many fields.

When you get right down to it, I don't get out of bed in the morning to be a branding consultant (although that's certainly what I'm doing right now, and it's work that I love). What I get out of bed in the morning to be is a Creator. Working as a branding consultant happens to be the way I'm manifesting my story right now. It's the story that's the point, though, and doing work that leads to my own personal “happy ending”—when I've helped someone understand and express

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who they are in the world. What I'm really passionate about is working with individuals and organizations to help them define and unleash their voices. Branding is a great vehicle for that, but I could potentially fulfill that passion through career counseling, social advocacy, leadership development, teaching, vocal coaching, interior design or any number of other occupations.

So storybranding is about defining your own happy ending, exploring the strengths and values that shape your unique gifts, and discovering the story you're moved to tell in the world. With that insight, you can later decide to apply this self understanding by going in to a specific field, launching a business, re-inventing yourself in your current work, or making a career transition. Knowing who you are needs to come before deciding what to do next.

### **Defining a story that's most worth living to us**

Why is this so important? On a very pragmatic front, the dynamics in today's working world make it a near certainty that most of us will change jobs and probably careers many times during our work lives. Deciding there's only one thing we really want to do is limiting at best. Having a purposeful storyline to guide us means we can evaluate opportunities and options from a wider angle, consider what will make us happy from a broader vantage point, and recognize our chances of making a meaningful contribution in a work setting as we encounter inevitable change.

On that more spiritual level I talked about in the introduction, knowing and living your story is one sure path for feeling truly alive in the world. If your spirit is actually your animating essence, then exploring who you are and discovering that essence is the key to unleashing your enthusiasm, your zeal, your ardor and your fire (all of which are synonyms for spirit).

What do stories and the universally known characters in them have to do with this? Story is an access point to the unconscious material that shapes who we really are. We listen to certain stories over and over again—and have since the dawn of time—because they feature characters who are able to get fundamental human needs fulfilled. These stories reassure us that we can be successful as well, and that life has inherent meaning. Carl Jung believed that the human psyche



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is literally hard wired to recognize these archetypal stories and characters—and that these narratives represent the essence of what motivates us and gives life meaning.

Of course, we all relate to stories differently. We find certain characters more fascinating, more admirable—more like us or not like us—than others. The characters we relate to most give us significant clues about our own strengths and values, the passion and purpose that stirs us deeply, and the great meaning we'd like to find in our own lives. We can answer the question of who we want to be by identifying a story that seems most worth living to us.

This kind of knowledge has many implications for our lives, and Dr. Pearson and other collaborators have written extensively about various personal development and workplace applications of archetypal exploration. This book is about using story to shape a personal brand in the workplace. It's about being and communicating and demonstrating who you are professionally in a way that others recognize, appreciate and value. It's about becoming known for what matters most to you.

Ultimately, storybranding is a conscious process for getting at and then expressing what lies inside you.

### **How personal meaning shapes workplace motivation and effectiveness**

Most of us would agree that we do our best work when we're the most motivated. Often, though, we look outside ourselves for the source of that motivation. Money, promotions, praise or validation from others, power and control—all of these things can serve as external drivers that motivate and keep moving us along. It's also true that these things can start to ring hollow after awhile, especially if we're being rewarded and acknowledged for things that in the end don't mean very much to us.

When we really get in touch with what has personal meaning for us, we begin to be motivated by internal rewards as well as external acknowledgement. That kind of motivation in turn activates the part of us that can be most effective, productive and participatory in the workplace. We care

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about what we're doing in a much deeper way, and so our performance improves. Ironically, as the internal rewards increase, so often do the external payoffs.

A storybrand is a specific articulation of a workplace identity, shaped by what's most meaningful to us professionally and the nature of the contributions we want to make. It enhances our workplace performance in four significant ways:

- **It brings focus to our words and actions**, and aligns them around what's best and most distinctive about us
- **It energizes and activates** us by shining a light on what will keep us most engaged and involved in the workplace
- **It empowers us** to live from a place of passion and purpose
- **It creates an attraction field** for all of our efforts, ideas and initiatives

The concept of an attraction field is an especially important one in thinking about a personal brand or a storybrand. This kind of branding does not rely on the typical marketing battlefield parlance (which is all about targeting a market, maneuvering around the competition and deploying tactical resources). Instead, it's based on a physics model, and the idea that you can authentically attract the people around you rather than manipulating them into believing in you. The main attractors in a storybrand are purpose and passion, which together represent an actual power source that's fully available to you.

There's one critical key to activating your power source, though. You have to give yourself permission to be who you really are--not necessarily an easy proposition. After all, how many of us have been told that we need to be different if we really want to succeed, that we aren't quite enough as we actually are, that there's always something more we should aspire to be or someone else we should try to be more like? We tend to set goals around being more of something else, not more of what we already are. As wonderful as our capacity for aspiration can be, it can also shut us down to our essential selves. If you want your life to be a source of authentic meaning and core purpose, decide right now that your surest path to success is in developing the story you were born to tell.

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### **So, who needs a storybrand?**

Traditionally, people who've developed a personal brand for themselves feel they have something important to say in the world or dream of unleashing a big idea or want to launch a successful business. They usually believe that image and reputation are important and directly related to achieving their goals. Sometimes they just want to be noticed or have the kind of charisma that can't be ignored—think Oprah Winfrey, Donald Trump, Princess Di.

Storybranding, though, is much different. It's for anyone who wants to align the way they show up in the workplace with what matters most to them. Of course, this tends to be more important to people in some specific circumstances compared to others, especially:

- **Working professionals** who want to be more meaningfully engaged in, contribute more purposefully to and get more satisfaction out of the work they do (like me in 2002!)
- **Leaders** who want to make the most positive and inspiring impact on their people, or develop a distinctive leadership voice and message
- **People in career transitions** who want to base a next move on what's most motivating and important to them
- **Entrepreneurs, consultants and small-business owners** who want their enterprises to represent an authentic expression of who they are
- **Job seekers** who want to find positions that are truly the right fit for them

If this sounds like a lot of people having a mid-life crises, it probably is! A search for meaning in life tends to accelerate as we hit middle age. But the real common denominator among these groups is that they want something more out of their work lives, a desire that can hit at any age. What they want isn't all about them, though. People who want to live out their stories have a strong desire to participate in a different kind of way--one that provides rewards for them certainly, but also represents a meaningful contribution.

In thinking about contribution, some people think it has to be lofty or idealistic to really count, or directly related in some tangible way to saving the world to be important. But that's simply not

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the case. Helping someone else see the bright side in life, bringing some momentary calm into a chaotic world, making something work better than it ever has before—all of these things, and many more like them, matter a great deal in the world. A personal storybrand defines the unique and special way you participate, and the way your values and strengths add up to the impact you can make for others and for yourself.

My own personal storybrand is built around the Creator storyline, and my mission to help others understand and express who they are in the world. Am I saving the world with this mission? Well, that probably depends on your perspective. I believe that people who are able to live their stories and share their real gifts in the world will make a much more significant and lasting contribution to it. Could that lead to world peace? I don't know. But I do know it's the best thing I have to offer.

### **What does a “storybrand” look like?**

A personal storybrand is far more than an idea, a concept or a construct. It's part credo, part action plan, part messaging strategy. It's a platform from which you can operate in the world, and a guidance system for how you'll show up. Some of my clients create a very formal personal branding plan with all of those components. Others take a more intuitive approach, integrating what they learn in a personal branding exploration process into their ongoing sense of self. This book includes the process and concrete steps readers will need to take a personal branding process as far along the development path as they wish. Much of that process is the journey of self expression that's needed to set the stage.

When it comes to personal branding, one thing is for certain: if you don't know who you are, no one else is going to either. Since a personal brand is all about understanding and expressing the best, most powerful, most passionate part of yourself, any work designed to help you live and tell your story has to start with an exploration of your essential self.

So how do you answer the question of “who am I?” in a useful, understandable and cohesive way? It's easy enough to make a list of your qualities and talents; itemize your passions and

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beliefs; record your accomplishments and dreams. But then comes the hard part—what does all of that add up to that you can act on and express?

The storyline discovery and identification part of a storybranding process (the part I call “story typing”) pulls those pieces together into a holistic view of personal identity, meaning and motivation. An individual’s story type defines their motivation in terms of a plotline that they’re moved to live out; paints a vivid picture of what they’re like through the specific strengths and values of the main character in the story; and captures the deepest source of meaning in their lives through the “happy ending” that the character seeks.

Through story typing, anyone can identify which one of 12 main types—and 60 subtypes—they relate to most. With that kind of dynamic self understanding in hand, they can also build an authentic and compelling personal brand. Once a story type is defined, personal branding becomes a process of articulating what that character would do or say and be—and then doing, saying and being those things.

What does that look like? Let’s think about Oprah Winfrey, Donald Trump and Princess Di again for a minute. One reason those people are or were so compelling is because their story types are so clear. Despite her considerable wealth and power, Oprah Winfrey always comes across as the Everyperson we all can relate to. She talks about the common struggles of American women everywhere, and has created a community that people feel they belong to through her TV show, magazine and radio channel. Like him or not, Donald Trump always plays the Hero—seeking out challenges to be overcome and taking on anyone who stands in his way. And while Princess Di could have used her status to separate herself from others, her deep natural compassion always broke through the veneer of privilege and positioned her as a Caregiver who wanted to nurture and support all types of people.

In addition to the compelling nature of their personal storylines, what these three people have in common is the remarkable consistency with which they lived their lives. Consciously or not, their words and their deeds reinforce a persona we all recognize. There’s an authenticity about

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the way they show up in the world—and it's that authenticity that brings their storylines to powerful life and makes the persona believable.

When it comes to storybranding, authenticity is at its very heart and soul. After all, most of us can sniff out a fake. And if we're faking it ourselves, we feel the stress everyday of suppressing who we really are and trying to live up to someone else's idea of how we should be. A personal storybrand allows you to sort out what's true and what's not true about yourself, and use that information to show up differently in your work life.

The great news is that you don't have to be rich, famous (or infamous!) to have a personal brand. You only have to make a commitment to finding that best part of your self and using that understanding to shape your intentions, your words and your actions.

### **What can you do with a storybrand?**

It's true that most of us will never be well-known figures with our words and deeds playing out on a very public stage for all the world to see. But we all have stages on which we are seen, and many choices about how to show up there. For us, our brands are shaped not by how we're portrayed on television or written about in the news, but by how we're perceived in our workplaces. Where we focus our energy and attention, the perspective we share and the questions we ask in meetings, our reactions to challenges and opportunities, the assignments we volunteer for, the stances we take—all of these, and many other things we say and do, create a persona that others can see and define.

When we're deliberate about shaping our words and actions based on what's truly meaningful and motivating to us, we begin to form an authentic brand identity that shows others who we really are (and creates great satisfaction for us). When we don't, others get to form their own conclusions about us—developing opinions and frequently making decisions that will affect the course of our professional lives.

It's also absolutely possible to develop an inauthentic personal brand for ourselves. That's when we decide to shape our personas based on what we think other people want from us, what we

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think will get us ahead, what we think is popular or in vogue. There are couple of problems with this approach, of course: 1) insincerity is tough to maintain and often seen through by others; 2) it's tough and exhausting to keep up a façade; and 3) it gets in the way of the core power and passion that will truly make us both successful and satisfied with our lives.

The poet David Whyte talks about the effort it takes to maintain a false identity in his book *What to Remember When Waking*, noting that many of us have an approach to life “where we are constantly striving to be some version of ourselves that takes tremendous willpower and tremendous effort and a kind of exhaustive extorting of internal resources.” Whyte believes that instead of this approach, we're all meant to have a unique and particular kind of conversation with the world—one that isn't going to be without its difficulties but that allows us to step into the identity that truly fits us.

When we have that authentic conversation—and when we live out the story that we're meant to live—we can harness our energy more easily, more powerfully and in ways that matter most to us. Then, we're able to enjoy the benefits on a wide variety of fronts, such as:

- Finding the work that's most meaningful to us in the places that are the best fit
- Participating in and contributing to the workplaces we're already in from a more purposeful and passionate place
- Standing for something that matters to us and makes a difference for others
- Bringing the best and most distinctive parts of ourselves to work every day
- Getting the assignments, projects and promotions that align best with our real strengths and values
- Attracting the kind of people and partnerships we really want in our lives
- Sharing our thoughts and ideas more openly
- Developing a professional voice and message that inspires others
- Becoming more visible

Many of us stumble on that last item. We may want more power, passion and purpose in our lives—but we don't necessarily want to become more visible. It's a scary proposition for some,

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an arrogant idea for others. We may even have some disdain for people we label as attention seekers.

But becoming more visible isn't about grabbing the spotlight for ourselves. It's about having the courage to be seen as who we really are. According to David Whyte, it's actually about becoming human. When he says that "becoming human is becoming visible," I think he means that we are most truly human when we are most able to show up and most able to claim an identity that can be seen and felt as us. We don't have to shout or jockey for position or step on other people to do that. In fact, we're far less likely to do any of those things when we're truly comfortable with who we are.

Claiming that identity is, of course, the challenge. We have to look at ourselves, be willing to accept what we find, and define how we want to live from that place of authenticity. Doing that in the workplace, the plane on which our struggles for survival and success play out most often in the modern world, may appear to be a high risk-reward proposition. For me, it's simply high reward as we see the possibilities and potential for our professional lives unfold in new and fascinating ways.

### **Creating your personal storybrand**

So, how do you create a personal storybrand without an advertising campaign, a television show or a national speaking tour? First, keep in mind that the content used in those kinds of initiatives doesn't spontaneously appear. There's a framework and a significant amount of strategic planning done to shape any campaign or communication vehicle—a framework that's available to you as well.

I developed the process and framework I'm sharing in this book through many years of organizational consulting experience. While it was originally designed to capture the brand essence of organizations, products and services, it works just as well with individuals.

A complete personal storybranding development process consists of three basic steps that are directly tied to the three critical questions that create your brand:



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- **Step One: exploration (who are you?)**

Activities: Storyline discovery and identification, strengths and values assessment

Outcomes/deliverable: Story type

- **Step Two: essence (what does that look like?)**

Activities: Mission/vision creation, story-based brand position/promise

Outcomes/deliverable: Personal branding credo, storybranding platform

- **Step Three: expression (how will you manifest it in the world?)**

Activities: Messaging ladder exercise, strategic brand planning

Outcomes/deliverable: Key messages, intention setting, action plan

You don't have to complete all three steps of this process to get value from defining your story type. For those of you whose focus is solely self exploration, you may want to concentrate on that section of the book and the specifics of story typing. Those of you who want to use this insight to shape a concrete approach to your professional life, and/or create a leadership voice and message, will want to complete all three steps. The process is described below, with samples of a complete storybranding plan included at the end of the chapter.

While this book is focused specifically on personal storybranding, this process is exactly the same approach I use for organizational branding and culture assessment work. So, you can walk through this entire process and apply your work to a group, organization or cause as well. If you'd like to quantify your story typing assessment, Dr. Pearson has also published an assessment tool that can be administered to an entire group. Originally called the Organizational & Team Culture (now the Kenexa Cultural Insight survey), it provides a story-based assessment of group culture, character and capacity.

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### **Step One: exploration (who are you?)**

Because answering that question is the most critical part of any storybranding process, much of this book is devoted to describing the 12 story types (and 60 subtypes) that most often shape modern meaning and motivation. Through understanding the narrative arc of your professional life, you'll see which character you're most like and what that means in terms of a "plotline" that shapes your beliefs and behavior. You'll be able to think about your strengths and values in an entirely new way, and see how they come together in creating a professional "power core" that's always available to you. You'll also come to terms with who you aren't, and whether or not you've been living out someone else's story in your work life.

At the end of this step, you'll have defined the story type that's most representative of your authentic identity. You'll also understand how a "supporting cast" of story types helps you accomplish the many tasks required to be successful in any workplace—making things work, relating to others, adapting and growing, and getting results.

With this understanding in hand, you can begin the process of bringing your storybrand to life.

### **Step Two: essence (what does that look like?)**

In step two, you'll move from understanding who you are to defining the purpose that fuels a uniquely personal version of your story type. To do that, you'll need to develop a mission and vision that you're passionate about; create a storyline/brand position that articulates who you are in the world; and define a brand promise that you'll work toward keeping throughout your professional life. While each of these components is important in developing your storybrand, none are more critical than vision and mission.

My corporate and organizational clients often separate mission and vision development from their branding processes. They're typically puzzled when I focus on vision and mission as the foundation of branding. Without them, though, a brand is left floundering around for a purpose—and purpose is the very heart of any authentic brand, be it organizational or individual in nature.

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Vision is the aspirational component of your brand. It defines what you want the world to be like as a result of your work. Mission articulates what you'll do to achieve that mission. Without those guiding principles, there's really no context for your brand—no definition of where it's going or what it means to do.

With a mission and vision in place, you have a context for developing the other two essence components of your personal brand: a storyline/positioning statement and a brand promise that can unfold in your working life. Through your storyline/positioning statement, you lay claim to the character whose story you're moved to tell, and define what it is you live to do from that place. Your brand promise describes the specific outcomes others can expect from you; the promise you'll always be willing to keep.

Those four components—mission, vision, storyline/positioning statement and brand promise—add up to a storybranding platform that you can use to shape your workplace identity and define how you want to show up there. You may also want to create a personal branding credo, which is an inspirational statement about who you are and how you want to be in the world.

### **Step Three: expression (how will you manifest it in the world?)**

A platform is little more than words on a sheet of paper until it's seen and felt outside your own head and heart. The final step in developing a personal storybrand, then, is to create a strategic plan that turns a branding framework into concrete action. The strategic planning you'll complete during this step includes exercises that will help you create a story-based voice and define the key messages that you want to convey in your professional life. It also includes intention setting—a form of goal setting that's a reflection of your authentic commitment—and an action plan that captures specific things you plan to do in realizing those intentions.

It's important to remember that a personal storybrand is both fixed and fluid. Ultimately, its essence and expression will include elements that are both “global” and “local”—universal to your professional life wherever it plays out and specific to a particular workplace or business that you're in right now.

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Your story type and its essence shouldn't change from workplace to workplace—although you may find it easier to live out in some places than others, and you may find that its style and tone can be varied to work best in your current surroundings. Expression is even more fluid, though. While your leadership or professional voice will always reflect your brand essence, the messages you use to convey it might be customized or tailored for a specific setting. Similarly, your intentions and the actions you take to fulfill them should be designed for your current situation.

The abilities to remain true to who we are, and facile in expressing that truth, are critical skills for shaping our creativity, our success and our fulfillment. Many of us think that changing our circumstances is the key to happiness. Often, though, changing how we show up in those circumstances can be just as effective—and a lot less complicated and disruptive for our lives. We may move from job to job or organization to organization; start multiple businesses; or retire altogether without looking for ways to be more of who we are where we are right now. Staying put isn't always the answer, of course. But it's something we probably should do until we've really explored the opportunities for our authentic selves to participate and contribute in our current environments.

### **A special note to organizational leaders**

Entrepreneurs, consultants and business owners who want their endeavors to express who they are in a compelling way will get a lot out of this book. It also offers insight to job hunters and people in transition who want their next moves to be really right for them.

Most people who read this book, though, will be working professionals and leaders inside organizations. They'll be invited to take a look at who they are through a new kind of lens, understand their strengths and values in a different light, and take responsibility for showing up at work in ways that really matter to them. They'll be guided through the process of developing a professional mission and vision for themselves that transcends any given organization that they might work for right now. And by looking at who they are outside the circumstances of a current job, they'll be able to discover ways of improving their performance and their participation in a specific position as well.

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Organizations with the courage to support their people in developing a meaningful professional identity will reap the rewards of more motivated people who know how to bring the best part of themselves to work. They'll also create a more innovative and effective workforce, with more diversity of energy and ideas for moving forward in a rapidly changing economic, social and political climate.

### **Personal storybranding in a nutshell**

A personal storybrand is a unique identity that any professional can develop.

- It answers the question: “Who do you get out of the bed in morning to be?”
- It connects you with the strengths and values that personify your best self and add up to your professional “happy ending”
- It summarizes the main “quest” or core motivator that fuels your most meaningful workplace contributions
- It shapes what you should say *and* what you should do to create more professional success, meaning and fulfillment

### **Five principles for activating a personal storybrand**

As you use this book to explore your story type and translate it into an identity that can be expressed, remember the five core principles that a successful “storybrander” needs to embrace:

**#1: Build on your strengths.** Storybranding isn't a personal improvement program. It's an approach for leveraging what's already great about you and making that the main focus of your professional development.

**#2: Live your values.** The characters in great stories rely on a combination of strengths (what they're good at) and values (what they care about) to accomplish their missions. Strengths are critical, but they're not as memorable as values. At the end of the day, you'll be defined by the value system that others associate with you.

**#3: Remember that purpose and passion trump charisma.** Only a tiny percentage of people are born with the kind of personal magnetism or charisma that really captivates others. For the

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rest of us, our purpose and passion are the fuel that lights our fire in the world—and allows others to really see us.

**#4: Have the courage to stand up and stand out.** Knowing your real story and acting on it means that you're putting a stake in the ground when it comes to who you are and how you're going to show up. And while there's nowhere to hide once you've done that, the rewards of answering your call far outweigh the risks.

**#5: Get to the “happy ending.”** With an authentic storyline comes an equally authentic happy ending that you're working toward in life. Knowing what it is—and shaping your actions to reach it—bring your storybrand to life. And isn't that why we all love a good story, anyway?