

STRENGTH + PASSION = PURPOSE: HOW TO CRAFT YOUR NARRATIVE
October 11, 2018

At the center of any effort to advance your career, or establish relationships by networking, or preparing an elevator pitch or a bio for publicity, is your narrative: who you are and how you show up to others.

Describing yourself, though, can be daunting, especially considering that many feel that self-promotion is an unworthy endeavor for the stalwart professional that should be unnecessary in the face of a proven track record of performance.

But we all know that life is not a meritocracy: and that goes double for life in the world of business. Any advantage that distinguishes you from the field crowded with others with excellent skills is worth pursuing.

The question becomes: where to start? Start with your strengths. Shift your perspective on the issue of self-promotion. Rather than wracking your brain for a list of your finest attributes, think instead of what clients, colleagues, managers, and direct reports love about you. If you think about the feedback you've received over time, you'll probably arrive at some common themes: those themes show your strengths.

Your strengths could be expressed in many ways. You could say something like "I drive consensus" or "I demystify the complex" or "I always offer a fresh perspective," or "I engage in creative collaboration." Answer the question: what do I do that sets me apart?

After identifying your strengths, ask yourself why you do those things people love about you. What core values are you expressing when you show up to others the way you do? Peel back the layers to your first, instinctive answer to reach the heart of your motivation.

For example, your passion to drive consensus may be that you crave harmony, or your ability to demystify the complex may be based on your love of understanding how things work – or maybe you love to help others.

You may phrase these passions in several ways, such as “I enjoy helping people understand new concepts because I love to solve problems,” or “I enjoy advocating for my clients because I love to protect others,” or “I enjoy building consensus because I love to let others know their voices are heard,” or “I enjoy helping people navigate a complex process because I empathize with the discomfort created by confusion and uncertainty.”

Finally, once you identify your strengths, and you understand your passions behind those strengths, you can then describe your purpose. Answer the question: how do you use these traits and to what end. This is where you connect the dots between what you do, why you do it, and what it looks like.

This is the place for your aspirations. Your purpose explains how you pull it all together to do what it is you do (or want to do) with your strengths. “I use my passion to create order from chaos in order to devise high level strategy and guide my business clients through complex healthcare regulations.”

Create your narrative by describing what you do, why you do it and what it looks like. Use your narrative to revise your company or firm bio, use it in your elevator pitch, and use it to explore the many ways you can provide excellent service to your clients. Create more than one narrative and tailor it to your many talents. Remember: Strength + Passion = Purpose.