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Professional Narrative Worksheet

What do we mean by a “Professional Narrative”?

We’re talking about the kind of narrative that can answer the question, “So, what do you do?” in a confident, unique, and compelling way, both in written and verbal form.

The goal of creating a professional narrative is to give you a quick, easy, and powerful way to talk about yourself and your work. A great narrative clearly and dynamically conveys who you are as a professional (beyond your job title), expresses your authentic style and personality, and why your work matters to you.

During this program, you will be creating two professional narratives:

1. A written version that you could use on your LinkedIn profile summary, as an alternative bio, or anytime you need a written description of you and your work.
2. A verbal version that is intended to be spoken out loud (like an elevator pitch) and given in one minute or less. **It is a requirement of this program to present this version of your professional narrative at graduation.**

The Framework

There are three simple elements that make up your professional narrative -- **What, How, and Why.**

Start with creating your written version first. You will blend the three elements together to form a 5-6 sentence narrative. It should be written in the first person and sound like you...not a “professional” robot. Infuse your personality!

Then, imagine talking informally with someone you’ve just met for the first time at a work event or social gathering. Beginning with your written version as a foundation, try cultivating your spoken version that feels natural and authentic.

Use the worksheet below to tease out each element.

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1. **WHAT** = What you do (position & institution) and the impact you make.

- Think of a way to describe what you do that has people curious to learn more.
- It's less about the job title and more about what impact you create. Focus in on the impact that is most important to you.

What do I do?

What difference do I make as a result of being in my job?

2. **HOW** = Your unique combination of skills and talents that make you great at what you do.

It's equally important to express your skills/knowledge AND your natural talents. Take inventory of both and weave them together.

Jot down the top 2-3 skills that you've acquired that make you really good at your job. You can also include experience and knowledge you've gained that has brought you to this point. (Hint: skills are learned. E.g., statistical analysis, project management, curriculum development, etc.)

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For your gifts and talents, complete each statement (as many times as you can):

What comes naturally for me is...

People often tell me I'm really good at...

Or, people often tell me they like _____ about me.

What metaphors or images would you use to describe your talents? (Eg. conductor of a symphony, an ER doctor, a compass that points toward true north, etc.)

3. WHY = What gets you out of bed to do this work...the passion, joy, mission of your work. The last part of your narrative should speak to the difference you want to make or already making, what you're passionate about, and how your work connects with your values.

What's important to me about the work I do?

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What legacy do I want to leave behind?

Finish the rest of the sentences:

- I'm committed to...
- My mission is to...
- I'm passionate about...
- I'm not satisfied until...
- What gets me out of bed in the morning is...

Now, craft a sentence or two that gives others a sense of why you do this work and where you want to continue to take it. You can also share what's next for you in your career...your bigger vision and dream.