

Core Purpose Stories Worksheet

As you move through your career, you can maintain a state of readiness for purposeful change by paying attention to the story you're living. Where have you been? Where are you going? And, most importantly, what is your unique contribution? Illuminated by this awareness, your individual achievements can be seen as representative of your larger core purpose narrative. A clear sense of purpose makes you more resilient by giving you a center of gravity when you are stressed or uncertain. When a conversation with your boss or a hiring manager is grounded in your sense of purpose, you project an attractive energy of engagement and possibility. Use this step-by-step worksheet to record stories from your life that illustrate your core purpose in action.

This worksheet will walk you through the following steps:

- I. Identify themes that are consistently present in your intentions and contributions.
- II. From your capture of consistent themes, choose a **metaphor*** that describes your core purpose; the unique way that you create value in the world.
- III. List 3 to 5 attributes of this metaphorical image that you associate with value creation.
- IV. For each of these attributes, tell a success story from your (work) life that demonstrates how you this attribute allowed you to create value for your employer or client.

- I. Using the following visualizations, identify themes that are consistently present in your intentions and contributions.

A. **FIRST VISUALIZATION: 100th Birthday**

Imagine that you are sitting on a porch on a pleasant evening. It is your 100th birthday. You are surrounded by friends, family, colleagues; people who you have been connected to throughout your life. (Even if they have passed away, they can be magically present to you on the porch for purposes of this exercise.) One by one, they are thanking you for the difference you have made for them. They are acknowledging the value of your contribution to the world both through your way of being and the things you have done. Notice who is there and what they're saying. When you have a clear picture of that moment, record some of the things you're hearing them say.

Example:

Thank you for...making me laugh, staying sane, being real, caring about me, loving me unconditionally, sharing your voice, taking it seriously, not taking it too seriously, seeing me whole, being creative, being reliable, telling it like it is, being my friend, believing in me, believing in us.

B. SECOND VISUALIZATION: *Here's What Matters*

You're standing on the stage of a big Broadway theater. You have been given a rare opportunity to share an important message with the crowd of 1,500 people who are gathered there. You have less than 30 seconds to share one salient thought, something you know to be true, something you wish they could understand. When you have a clear picture of that moment, write down the message you want to share with them. What do they need to know?

Example:

I'm trying to model something here. By learning about myself, I'm teaching you to learn about yourself; to come to understand yourself. It's not just for you that you're learning. It's for all of us. That's our job. To learn about ourselves. To discover the divine in ourselves so we can see it in others. To discover the divine in others so we can see it in ourselves.

C. THIRD VISUALIZATION: *A Brush with the Genie*

You are walking along a beautiful secluded beach. The sand is warm under your feet. You are aware of soft breezes and bird calls, the rhythmic roll of the surf, and you are at peace, the stresses of everyday life set aside for a time. Then you see something jutting out of the sand a few feet ahead of you. As you approach it, you realize it's a magical lamp. You pull it from the sand and brush it off. Can this be true? Why not? You give it a rub and a genie emerges from the lamp and says you can have two wishes; one for yourself and one for everyone else. Reflect for a minute on the power you have to make these wishes. When you are clear on the possibilities, write down what you wish for.

Example:

For Myself: That my purpose blossoms, and my professional life starts to flow with opportunities to assist others with self-awareness in a way that brings all of us economic sufficiency and fulfillment.

For Everyone Else: People start actively sharing examples of Trust trumping Fear, so that we, as a human race, start to get clearer and clearer in our understanding that our commonalities outweigh our differences, and we treat each other accordingly.

D. From these three reflections, what themes of intention and contribution do you notice that are important and authentic to you?

Example:

Speaking up. Togetherness. Humor. Insight. Authenticity. Self-awareness. Creativity and expression. Humility. Language. Articulation. Interpretation. Perception.

- II. From your capture of consistent themes, choose a **metaphor*** that describes your core purpose; your unique way of creating value in the world. Craft a metaphorical core purpose statement that follows this formula: I am the _____ who/that _____. See examples.

Example:

I am the Performer who Celebrates the We in You.

Other examples:

I am the Sherpa who leads the expedition

I am the Detective who leaves no clue unexamined in finding the solution

I am the Oyster who grinds gritty data into pearls of wisdom

***A metaphor, in this case, is a visual image that represents the qualities characteristic of your purpose.**

- III. List 3 to 5 attributes of this metaphorical image that you associate with value creation.

Example:

Performer value-creation attributes:

Emotional presence

Humor

Articulateness/Clarity

Courage/Risk Taking

High Energy

- IV. For each attribute, tell a story that demonstrates how this attribute allowed you to create value for an employer or a client. Limit your story to 250 words or fewer. Make sure your story starts with a need, moves through the action you took in response to the need, and ends with the successful outcome that resulted from your action.

Example:

Attribute: Articulateness/Clarity

I worked for a small, third-party employee benefits administration company, where the staff of six would get backlogged every month because they had to spend so much time responding to questions on the phone that they couldn't get to the nitty gritty of reviewing and processing the claims that had been submitted. I could see that the plan booklets we were sending out were written in a way that was confusing to plan participants who were totally unfamiliar with the kind of technical jargon that was being used to describe their benefit eligibility. I rewrote three of the most common booklets, one at a time, translating the technical details into language that almost anyone could understand. Within a matter of four months, the number of phone calls the adjusters were getting was cut in half and we had eliminated the backlog problem. Additionally, office stress levels were lower and when a call did come in, staff members were able to handle it with a smile instead of being annoyed by the unwitting interruption posed by the claimant on the other end of the line.