

Story Strategy Map

From *Winning the Story Wars* by Jonah Sachs

Brand hero: *1. Create a character sketch of a person who stands as a quintessential member of your target audience. Picture this person as concretely as possible. What is his/her name? Describe her external persona and her inner sense of self. Write this in the first person. 2. Write a letter from your brand hero to a loved one. Reveal the broken world, her search for ways to make sense of it. Describe the whisper that she hears that something more is possible. 3. Write the name of your brand hero and a short description to remind you of who she is.*

I am Emily, a college junior. I'm doing pretty well in my college career. I have some good friends and I'm getting decent grades. Now, as a junior, the pressure is on to declare a major and to prepare for life after college – either work or more study. The options I see out there for a person with my skills are not interesting to me. For example, research seems too remote. Graduate study – no, I'll be happy to stop studying for a while. The jobs I see advertised don't seem to have appeal. If I think about choosing one of those options, it feels like my heart is closing down. I'm truly concerned about the direction the world is going in. I'm impressed with those who say we have the technology and knowledge to create a flourishing future for creation and civilization. But I don't know how to board that train. I need to hear tales of real people who have the same yearnings I do and who figured out a life's work that is really making a difference and is personally fulfilling.

Brand Mentor: *Our brand is the brand mentor. Our collection of stories is the mentor. What kind of mentor do our stories embody? 1. Create a sketch of your brand mentor. Choose an archetype that represents the first elements of the personality that audiences will learn about and connect with. 2. Introduce your mentor to your hero. Imagine an encounter between them. Create a dialogue between them: What does the mentor say to the hero to call her to adventure? What does she say to refuse? How does the mentor bolster the hero's courage?*

Mentor Sketch: **Our mentor is a pioneer/sleuth, willing to dive into the deepest unknown. These Global Vermonters will not give up until they find a solution to a thorny world problem that they can put their life behind. They want to create the new - new social forms, new technology, new processes, new collaborations that will represent breakthroughs even in situations where most people are mired in breakdown, can't- do thinking.**

Mentor Dialogue:

Megan Camp: Emily, I know you're interested in global health but feel bogged down now. Why?

Emily: The subject seems so big and broad. I can't get a foothold. It seems that courses are loading me down with information that is valuable but somehow not quite on target.

Megan: I felt that way too in college. My hunch told me that the way we educate our kids will be crucial for how well equipped they'll be to create a really positive future. That was just a hunch. Fortunately, a teacher suggested focusing on that in my senior project.

I started with a question: How can education prepare kids to live sustainably on our small planet? Then I collected every answer I could find from reading and talking with people. My paper was in the form of a proposal, a map of what this might look like.

Emily: But in the short time you had, how did you know that what you suggested would work?

Megan: I didn't. I just put down on paper what I thought would work. And I listed the unanswered questions that needed to be addressed if this were ever to get off the ground.

Emily: So what happened?

Megan: After graduation, I put one foot in front the other. I took the kinds of jobs I could get. And I never let go of my dream. Gradually, I became better positioned to do something about it.

Brand Gift: *Picture your mentor approaching your hero. What does she hand to her. What does she show her? What gift does Megan give Emily that makes her feel that she can do something significant in global health.*

- The gift of story, of presence, of being a mentor to guide, and a role model to aspire to.
- The gift of encouragement to believe that because she has a passionate interest in global health, she can find a way to contribute that is hers to do.

The Moral of the Story: *1. Write a letter from the hero to her mentor after ten years have gone by, a letter of gratitude to her mentor. Recall the hero's moment of success. Make clear what knowledge, idea, or object she was trying to bring back to her world. What vision is she trying to realize. This will serve as your **brand boon**. What*

trials did the hero survive? What individuals or internal forces opposed her? 2. Then find the moral of the story. What does this narrative tell us about how the world works? Express the core lesson in a sentence and write it down as if the hero finally has wisdom of her own to share with the mentor. This is the unspoken central message that can be observed through a long-term body of consistent communication.

Dear Megan: Do you remember that we talked when I was a college junior and you told me about writing your senior paper? This encouraged me to think of my senior paper as a vehicle for exploring my deepest yearnings and hopes for working in global health. Of course, my first task was to narrow my subject.

I did this in several ways. I focused on gender – women’s health. Then I chose to write about one overseas women’s health project that seemed successful. I learned all about it through correspondence and eventually through visiting the project. My paper included the vision for the project, the most effective things they were doing, and the obstacles that stood in their way. I loved this grass roots focus.

The only job I could get after college was at Fletcher Allen Hospital as an aide. I did enjoy the hands-on work in health but wanted to become qualified for a more challenging job. Eventually, after graduate training, I became a nurse practitioner. I didn’t want to spend the time or money to become a fully trained doctor, and I didn’t think that level of training was needed for what I was beginning to think of doing.

That was to work overseas in some sort of health project like the one I researched for my senior paper. During graduate study, I volunteered for a number of such projects for two-week periods. This gave me an idea of the kind of project I wanted to work in and the kind of country I wanted to serve.

It also gave me a leg up in getting a real job. I applied to each project I had volunteered in and chose the most enticing opportunity.

That was in South Africa where I am now living in Winterveldt. At first, the folks there urged me to take charge of the project because I am the most medically trained person there. But as I’ve gotten more experience, I realize how much I like working with people, not being the head of something. So I convinced folks there to let me help train a co-director. Now Mmule Tsoai, who was born in Winterveldt, and I work side by side as co-directors. Mmule doesn’t have the level of technical training I have but she has much more savvy than I do, of course, with language, culture, and knowing the community. We make a good team.

So Megan, I want to thank you for sharing your story with me at UVM. I took your idea of using my senior paper to articulate what I really wanted to do. When I started it, I was very vague. But gradually, things got sharper.

You gave me a crucial gift – the encouragement to go with what I knew in my gut and do something practical with it. Now I’m giving back. I love encouraging women to help other women to follow good health practices, and I love working side by side with them, lifting up their native knowledge and good sense.

There were some bumps along the way. After supporting me in college, my folks took a dim view of my first job as an aide – low paying and low on the totem pole. In graduate school, several professors put pressure on me to go for the whole M.D. program even though I said I didn’t want that. Then my boy friend was upset when I told him I was going to live and work in South Africa.

It hasn’t been easy. But it’s definitely worth it. I know who I am, what I have to offer, and am having a blast doing that.

Moral of the Story: One person with consistent commitment and skill strengthening can find great ways to work to make the world a better place.

Values: Review the list of “Values You Want to Live”. Choose those that describe where you want to go. Put each value into one of these categories:

- Values built into our **founding story**
- Values expressed by our **product or service**
- Values held by our **leadership**
- Values we believe will resonate deeply with our **audiences**

Choose one to three values that align across all four categories if possible.

Values our collection of stories will embody:

- Wholeness – the need to be connected to others as part of something larger
- Justice – to create a world that works for all
- Truth – to foster what is truly meaningful, valuable, and achievable

Our founding story embodies these values – each of us wanted to make the world a better place.

Our story collection describes real-life people who have done this.

Our leadership – the VGE members and coordinators – are living these values.

The audiences we want to appeal to are yearning for ways to do this more effectively.