

BRANDING FOR WRITERS

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"why" and passions
as a writer

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The goals of product branding

Build name recognition.*

Create loyalty with consumers.

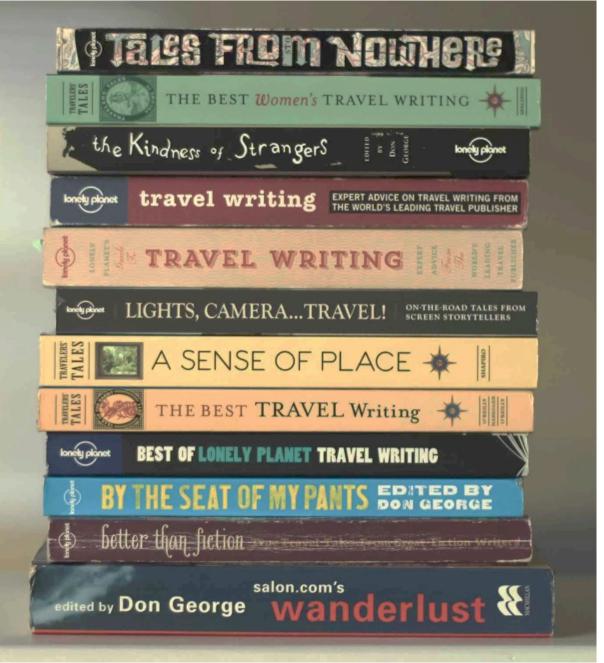
Sell more products.

The goals of personal branding

• Build name recognition – with peers, editors, and readers.

Create loyalty – our consumers are our readers.

• Sell more stories – be it in the form of a book, magazine article, or blog post.



In a way, then, our end goals as writers are not necessarily all that different from the world of corporate and product branding:

It is not about you - and it is all about you

"We are the CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for

the brand called you."

TOM PETERS

In the hopes of helping you create a greater emotional connection with your readers, this is my humble take on how to define your brand as a writer, comprised of three parts—or what I feel are intrinsically linked building blocks:



Vision



Poice



Value

Case studies

We'll also be looking at three people who have built compelling brands around their writing:



DON GEORGE

Renowned travel writer and editor with a portfolio vocation

www.don-george.com



JODI ETTENBERG

Travel writer, speaker, and founder of top blog

Legal Nomads

www.legalnomads.com

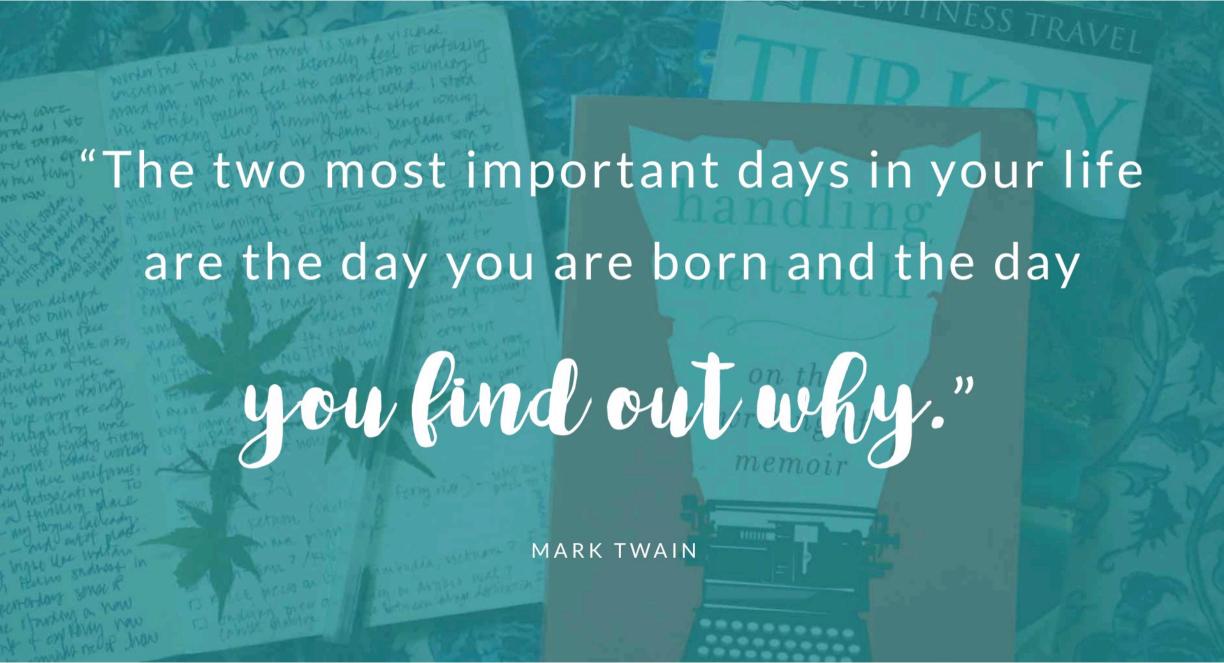


ELIZABETH GILBERT

Best-selling author and speaker with an engaged community

www.elizabethgilbert.com

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Vision: It is about your passion

Your vision is the foundation stone upon which your brand is built, and your vision is your 'why'—but it's a deeper 'why' than simply why you write. Why do you love what you love? Why are you passionate about your passions? Readers will connect with what you love, so start there.

Vision: It is about your beliefs

As Ellen Miller has written, guiding questions could include*:

- What keeps you up at night?
- What would the world look like if you had a magic wand?
- What belief do you want to share with the world?

Vision: It is about your message

Your vision is ultimately the message you repeat across multiple platforms, share in talks and interviews, and is at the heart of every piece you write—even if not explicitly. It isn't that we're being repetitive by sharing the same message; we are <u>reinforcing</u> our vision with the world.



Case study: DON GEORGE

Don's stories often end with an epiphany or revelation relating his physical journey to a greater life theme—whether it's serendipity, the kindness of strangers, or even love.

His why:

Using travel as a vehicle for deeper life lessons

At some point during the course of my journey, I came to think of myself as a travel evangelist, and compiling this collection has reinforced that notion. I was profoundly influenced by a Protestant pastor who eloquently preached the gospel of love when I was a youth, and by the precepts and practices of Buddhism that I first encountered when I lived in Japan, but in many ways, travel is my religion.

As I have learned over and over, travel teaches us about the vast and varied differences that enrich the global mosaic, in land-scape, creation, custom, and belief, and about the importance of each and every piece in that mosaic. Travel teaches us to embrace our vulnerability and to have faith that whatever energy we put into the world will come back to us a hundredfold. Travel teaches us to approach unfamiliar cultures and peoples with curiosity and respect, and to realize that the great majority of people around the world, whatever their differences in background and belief, care for their fellow human beings. And in all these ways, travel paves the pathway to global understanding, evolution, and peace.

Ultimately, I have come to think, travel teaches us about love. It teaches us that the very best we can do with our lives is to embrace the peoples, places, and cultures we meet with all our mind, heart, and soul, to live as fully as possible in every moment, every day. And it teaches us that this embrace is simultaneously a way of becoming whole and letting go.

Excerpt from The Way of Wanderlust, 2015



Case study: JODI ETTENBERG

Jodi's passion for food expresses itself in many ways—blog posts, articles, and even illustrated maps and T-shirts—but is ultimately rooted in a deeper passion for storytelling and connection.

Her why:

Connecting to others through the universality of food



Jodi <u>reuniting with Mrs. Pa</u>, a Thai smoothie cart owner



Case study: ELIZABETH GILBERT

Throughout her career—first as a magazine writer, and then as an author—Elizabeth has demonstrated the importance of taking creative risks and honoring your craft.

Her why:

Embracing creativity and choosing curiosity over fear

- MS. TIPPETT: I'm Krista Tippett, and this is On Being. Today, I'm talking with the author Elizabeth Gilbert about the nature of creativity. In life as in art, she says, it has less to do with passion than with choosing curiosity over fear.
- MS. TIPPETT: There's also kind of a noble guilt that one can have in this culture. And those of us who are fortunate to be able to buy and read books like yours, talking about bringing forth the treasures within us, and I was just talking a minute ago about how we also tend to be very focused, and kind of the messaging that's coming towards us is very focused on the ruthless furnace of the world. How do you respond to the question of this creativity you're talking about, is this a luxury for privileged people?
- MS. GILBERT: No. This is a shared human inheritance because the evidence of that is again, let us look to our ancestors. And I ask you and me right now to think back to our great-grandparents. And they were farmers and workers, and yet, they made beauty. They made it because it brought them joy. They made it as a currency in the communities in which they lived. They made it because of the pleasure of doing something that's better than it has to be.

So my grandmother, who made beautiful rag rugs and quilts — they're more beautiful than they need to be. And your history is filled with those people as well. And I would argue that most of the most beautiful and interesting things in the world that have ever been made were made by people who didn't have enough time, didn't have enough resources, didn't have probably any education.

This is something that belongs to human beings who are behaving in the way that human beings are designed to behave. Using your senses and your curiosity and your materials and whatever's at hand to alter your environment and make something more beautiful than it needs to be. That's who we are.

Elizabeth with Krista Tippett on the podcast "On Being"

"If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed.

The vision pulls you."

STEVE JOBS

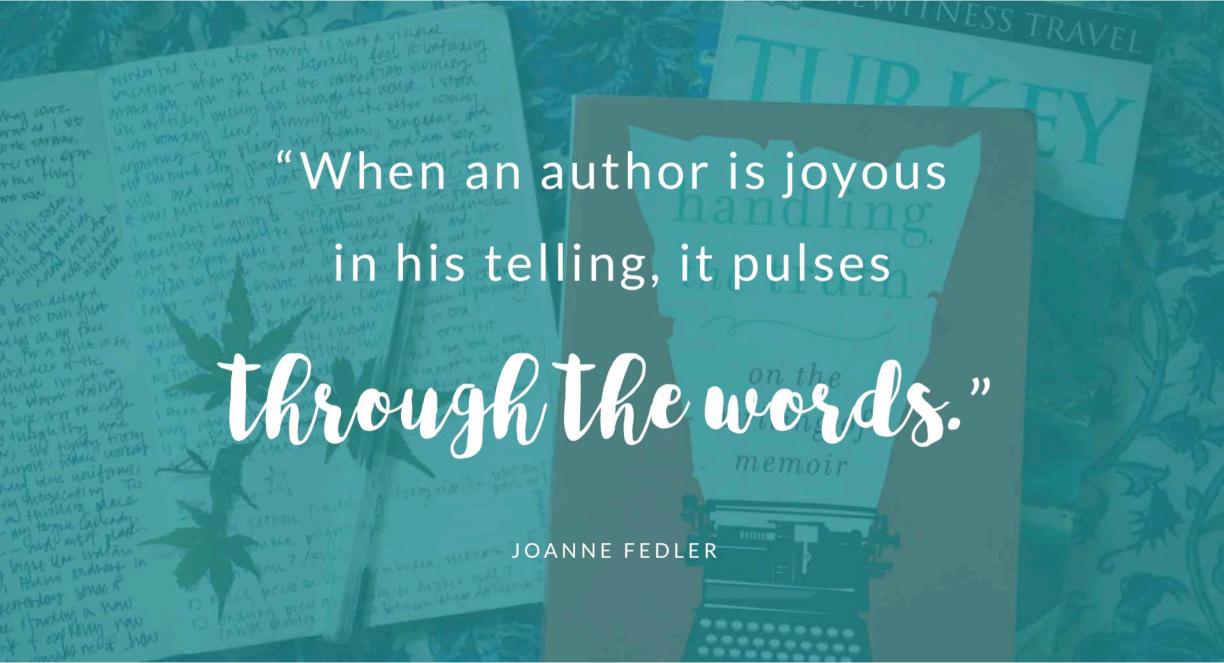
EXERCISE #1

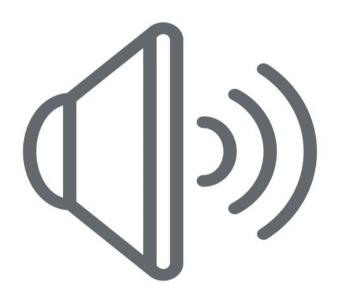
Urite your vision statement

Tips on writing your vision statement*:

- Try beginning your statement with "I believe..."
- Keep it short and sweet—no more than a line or two, or about 15 words.
- This is a statement of your greater vision, not what you do.

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Your voice is the expression of your vision

When you clarify and strenghten your vision, you clarify and strengthen your voice. Alternatively, when you look to others to define your voice, it can soften or even mute your unique vision of the world.

Here are three key issues that can mute your voice:

1 × Expectations

One of the major restrictions writers can face is the issue of expectations—"This is what a travel article *should* focus on" or "*should* sound like." Even as you seek to meet a publication's requirements, think about how you can incorporate your own authentic passions and voice.

1× Comparison

Another issue to be aware of is comparison. It can be all too easy to look to our fellow writers and shape our voice to mirror theirs—especially if they're having success in placing stories. Your voice is one of your most valuable commodities as a writer, so continue to honor and hone it.

1× Rejection

Whether it's from an editor or literary agent, receiving a rejection letter can be a tough blow to work through—and can even lead to a lack of confidence and loss of faith. It's important to stay true to our vision and not immediately alter our voice as a direct response to the rejection.





Case study: DON GEORGE

CRYSTAL SO CRUISES

"Every time I go to Bali, some kind of magic happens. On a recent visit to Ubud, I was walking down the main street, feeling assaulted by the whoosh of cars, whine of motorbikes and plumes of exhaust fumes, lamenting how Bali had changed in the three decades I'd known it, and wondering in despair if the tranquil Ubud I'd once fallen in love with could still be found anywhere. Suddenly a motorbike veered to a stop in front of me. The driver, a middle-aged man wearing a sarong and turban, parked his bike and walked toward me, then smilingly beckoned for me to follow him. 'Come! Come! I'll show you something special!' he said. I've learned to trust the hand of serendipity when it's extended on the road, so I followed him."

From "Crystal Moment: A Moment of Magic in Ubud, Bali," January 2016



Case study: JODI ETTENBERG

theguardian

"Awareness of celiac disease is on the rise, but many places have never heard of it, and might feel less moved by food allergies generally. As with my experience in Greece, patience is required – both in explaining the issue and handling the occasional mistakes. Overall, this disease has forced me to rethink my relationship with food in a more positive way. When I hear from newly diagnosed celiacs, I implore them to treat the disease as a springboard to learn more about food, and to please keep traveling."





Case study: ELIZABETH GILBERT



"I want to live in a society filled with people who are curious and concerned about each other rather than afraid of each other. I want to live in a world full of brave people who are willing to risk not only adventure but emotional intimacy. I want to live in a world full of explorers and generous souls rather than people who have voluntarily become prisoners of their own fortresses...For that to happen, we must all be travelers—in the world, in our own communities, and even in our imaginations. We must risk that journey to the other side of the island, we must keep knocking on each other's doors, and we must keep letting each other in."



And one last example from my own experience:



"I realized that sketching does more than help us remember places—it opens doors and creates connections. I could write all day in my journal and no one would stop to watch or ask me what I was doing. It's different when I have my sketchbook. There's just something about art that encourages people to approach you, to peer over your shoulder, to look up at the subject you're sketching and then back at your drawing to compare likenesses... These serendipitous encounters—and the global connections they engender—are now the reason I travel. I may set out on each trip alone, but thanks to my sketchbook and watercolors, I'm never on my own for long."

From <u>"Travel Sketching: A Manifesto,"</u> May 2014

EXERCISE #2

Ushen did you feel most alive?

To more deeply express your vision through your voice as a writer, write one paragraph about when you felt most alive on the road:

- Use vivid imagery and sensory details to bring the moment to life.
- Go beyond the immediate moment and think about its deeper meaning.
- This could even be the seed of a larger story or essay.

EXERCISE #3

Set three vision-casting goals

This is an exercise in reverse-engineering, thinking of the following questions:

- What do you want to be known for?
- What kind of stories do you want to be an editor's go-to person for?
- Where do you want to be this time next year?

Set three tangible goals that will help you express your vision with the world.

11 October 2013 - Restoran Knez. is not enough. 27 "I'm going fishing. His my holys to relax." well, a later-much later-start than planned 60 hoped - 11 am. niko. But here we me, m! Stogodina - 900 years ant begindge that sketching is a funing thing -66 in thinking about what man said that when vant writt it to over become a chose - trut I in touthe we to you only "theers". rundent LOSE THE JOY. Water t being white get more - in PART THREE menn - but not true I down ane you training offune all today. I'm also f ming unfolded in mostay. Ralue intentry, myk the fact the averywhere? you metury to we with it seems need to remember a comple. "Ither was an extrave. That e ere by wan averyle and is resome. Int we arrived in musit in being so borrow in ing chost, and I know 9012 I be now to tell when it clean up ive just decided will go to vell 12 - if my ful the whole to met Horry wine - 1stria wine? Johnson Hone - trut I envent see more war Rowing - i'm still working in my sketch when knizh como upitaurs va yeur at me fur keing lat de right 65 it may 12. I think it also forty remoterned about next - about how i fail I don't

"A career is a portfolio of projects that teach you new skills, gain you new expertise, develop new capabilities, grow your colleague set, and constantly

reinvent you as a brand."

TOM PETERS

Value

Your value as a writer is the ultimate expression of your vision—your voice has echoes, and will reverberate in the lives of your readers. Value is defined as the "importance, worth, or usefulness of something." How are you adding value to your readers' lives? What good is it doing? The following points are ways of offering value to the world.

















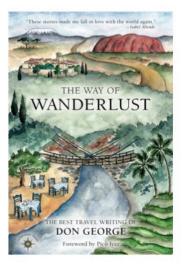
Website/Blog

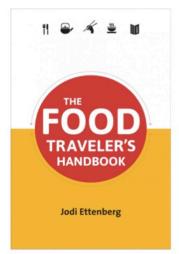
Whether you choose to have a static site or a more regularly updated blog, this will be your 'home base' in the virtual world.

Social Media

There is no shortage of social media platforms to choose from today—focus on those that make sense for you and give you the best vehicle to provide value through.









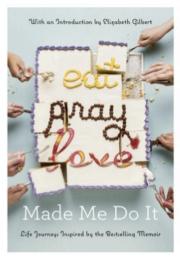
Newsletter

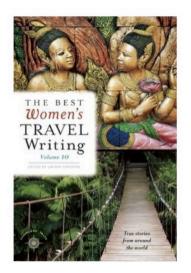
While it's easy to focus on social media, experts such as Tim Grahl have shown that newsletters are a far more effective way to reach readers and sell books or products.

Books/eBooks

Books not only offer value in their own right, but can also open the door to other opportunities; eBooks can be an effective lead magnet or source of income.











Essays

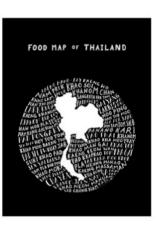
Whether you submit a piece to an anthology or edit your own collection of writing from different writers, essays can help expand your reach to a new audience.

Articles

Freelance writing is a similar way of offering value to readers, as well as establishing credibility—for print and the web.









Products

Creating branded products is a great way to provide readers and followers with the tangible opportunity to support your unique vision of the world.

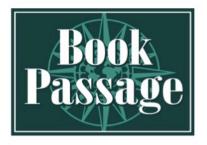
Podcasts

Podcasts are now a mainstream means of creating content—and an interesting way to diversify how your message is shared.











Food walks for food lovers.

Workshops

Workshops are a fundamental means of offering value to your followers and creating deeper connections with them.

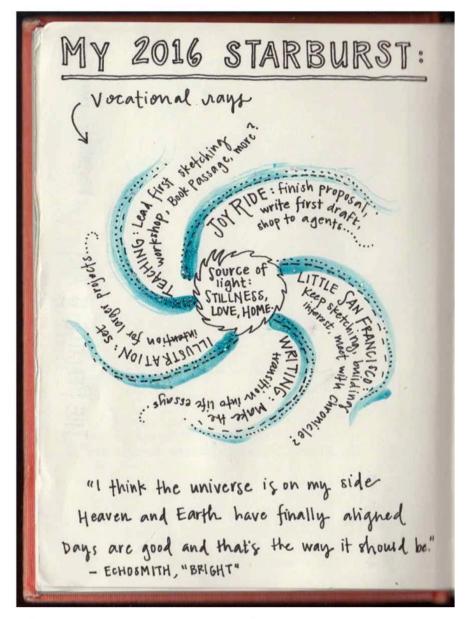
Tours

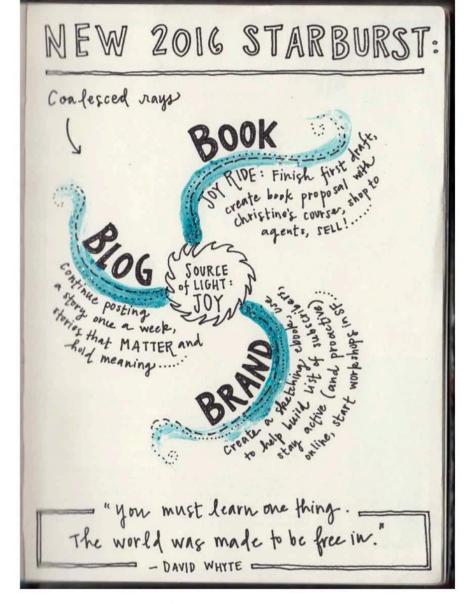
Likewise, given the travel element to your writing and brand, there might be the possibility of offering either day trips or longer tours to your readers.

The Starburst Model

A starburst is a "pattern of lines or rays radiating from a central object or source of light." The shape is also a useful way of picturing the various expressions of our vision and voice: Every means of offering value to our readers radiates from our central vision.







My first two starburst models—each starburst is an evolution and work-in-progress.



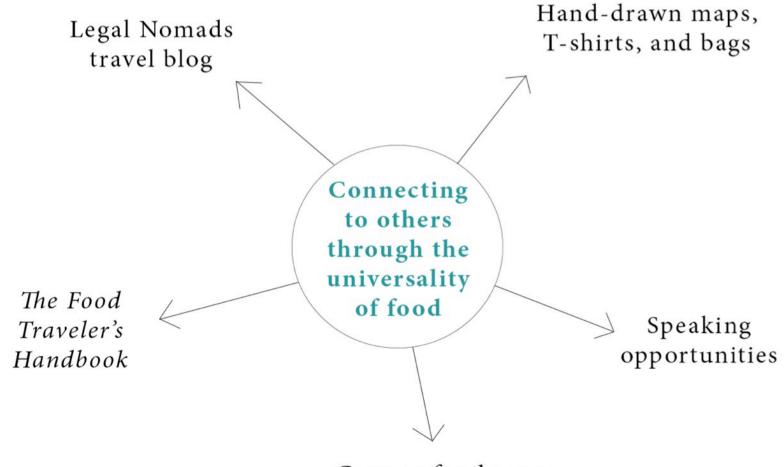
Case study: DON GEORGE

Tour leader for The Way of Wanderlust: Geographic Expeditions The Best of Don George and National Geographic Expeditions in Japan Using travel as a vehicle for deep life Literary lessons anthologies for Conferences, workshops, and Lonely Planet speaking appearances

Editing positions



Case study:
JODI ETTENBERG



Custom food tours



Case study: ELIZABETH GILBERT

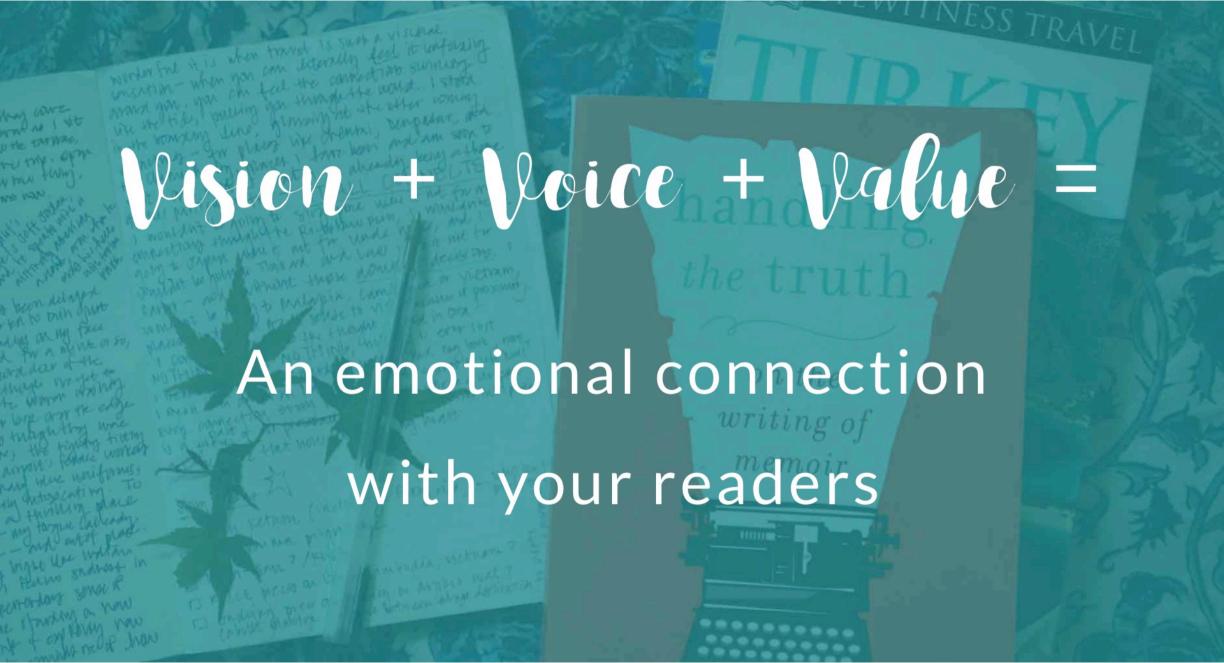
Books: Novels, short Social media story collections, community memoirs... **Embracing** creativity and choosing curiosity Eat Pray Love over fear Made Me Do It: Life Workshops and speaking opportunities Journeys Inspired by the (TED, Oprah, etc.) Bestselling Memoir

Magic Lessons podcast

Envision your starburst

Our final exercise helps everything coalesce into sharper focus:

- Draw a circle in the center of your page, writing your vision inside it.
- Then draw as many rays radiating from the circle as you need, labeling each ray with the different ways you will create value for your readers.
- Your rays can be as simple as starting a blog or setting up an Instagram account.



Acknowledgements



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About the Author

Candace Rose Rardon is a writer, sketch artist, and illustrator with a passion for connecting with the world through art.

Her stories and sketches have been published on sites such as *BBC Travel*, *World Hum*, and National Geographic's *Intelligent Travel* blog, and she has been featured in *The New York Times* as a sketch artist and niche travel blogger.

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