



## **THE POWER-PUNCH OF YOUR PERSONAL STORY:**

**5 Fast Ways to Identify, Design and  
Share Your Signature Story For More  
Emotional Engagement, More  
Entertainment – and More Money**

By Rachel [Resnick](#)

So you're an expert? Congratulations!

**Here's the good news...**

You now have the foundation for building your own business. Anything is possible.

**Here's the bad news...**

**Being an expert is no longer enough.**

The uniqueness of the information age is over. Everybody is swimming in white noise, and if you don't stand out from the other so-called, self-proclaimed "experts," no one will hear you, no one will know about you, no one will hire you – and you will never have the opportunity to give your gifts and live the happy life of an independent, wealthy entrepreneur.

What is the key?

What is the ONE THING that will make you stand out from everyone else – and guide paying clients effortlessly into your world?



Standing out from the crowd! Family portrait, Dia de los Muertos.  
Hollywood Forever Cemetery, November, 2103.  
Los Angeles, California.

It's this...

You must – **must** – **emotionally engage AND entertain** your current and prospective clients.

How do you do that?

There is only one way...

**And that is by waking them up with your gut-gripping, pulse-pounding, or heart-wrenching, unique personal story.**

And if you don't tell it **the right way** – as I'm going to show you here – your prospective clients will just click away and spend their money elsewhere.

By personal story, I mean a true story. One that you actually lived.

A story based in facts – **but that is not enough!**

Here is the secret – and the key to your new level of success – you must tell a story based in fact but told *using very specific fictional techniques.*

In fact, the exact techniques I'm about to show you...

Nobody wants your journal entry.

Nobody wants your confession.

Nobody wants your juicy gossip you share with your best friend or spouse.

**What your prospective clients CRAVE is your carefully crafted, vividly expressed story...**

**That is UNFORGETTABLE.**

**That is EMOTIONAL.**

That is **RELATABLE** to their inner reality...

There has got to be a beginning, middle and end.

And it has to hit them in the **heart.**

Or in the **gut.**

***Not their brain.***

Let's face it...

Most people aren't honest. With themselves, or others.

We do a lot of hiding. A lot of pretending.

And a whole lot of numbing our feelings.

**If you want to build a business, you have to WAKE PEOPLE UP TO WHAT'S POSSIBLE...**

Because they will immediately understand that YOU are the one who will lead them into the Promised Land.

Why?

**Because, through the skillful telling of your story, you will show them that if you have done it, they can do it.**

**You will make them believe.**

And this is the best definition of being a leader.

And it is the doorway to your wealth and influence and impact as an entrepreneur.

### **This is Where You Craft Your Signature Story**

Your signature story is as unique as your fingerprints.

As distinctive as your DNA.

And it captures your one-of-a-kind, compelling, essential truth.

In short, it makes people **care about you.**

**You - in the naked vulnerability of your storytelling - are unforgettable and human - and here's the key...**



Naked Man at Temple of Whollyness burn.  
Burning Man 2013, Black Rock, Nevada.

Your prospective clients stop thinking about you as a business person who wants their money and instead as a FRIEND who will help them for a justified fee.

Listen: Customers leave. Friends stay loyal.

When you connect to your clients through the **heart** and through the **gut**, you'll be blown away by the results.

Your struggles with copy and bios and blogs will melt away.

Your frustrations with lackluster presentations online or at live events will disappear.

Your awkwardness and resistance to enrollment conversations will vaporize.

**And your lack of clients will end forever.**

But only...

*If* you do the work.

*If* you read read read, write write write, and dig deep with fearlessness and vulnerability.

*If* you do all that on the page and stage, on the phone and in person, you will see powerful concrete results – both in personal growth and profit.

Let me get you started right now – and walk you through some simple techniques to help get you going on this path.



## STEP ONE: DEFINING MOMENTS

Make a list of **ten defining moments in your personal life.**

Now, make a list of **ten defining moments in your business life.**

Sometimes, there is an overlap.

Look at this list. Sit with this list. Study it.

Then...

**Circle the one moment that calls to you most powerfully from *each* list.**

Sometimes, you'll get clear right away.

Sometimes, you'll need time to percolate.

Sometimes, you'll want to take a nap! And presto – the answer will appear.

This report is partly about helping you learn your own creative process. And honor it.

So.

If you haven't figured out which are the two top defining moments...

Take that list outside into the sunshine. Meditate on it. Mark it up with a neon highlighter.

Tuck it away for an hour, a day, whatever you need – then, pull it out again.



Working in sunshine. View from my outdoor office/deck.  
Topanga Canyon, California.

Let me backtrack here, for those who are interested.

### **What *is* a defining moment?**

**A defining moment is an instant that stands out from your personal or business timeline.** It shines brighter. It comes to mind faster. You remember more details.

**A defining moment transforms things.** When it happens, something shifts. You gain a pivotal insight, or you make a decision that has irreversible consequences, or you experience something that changes you on a cellular level.

You know what I mean. You *feel* what I mean, even if you don't know it.

Think about it like this:

If you imagine your life as a timeline, there are certain events that pop. That sear. When I suggest identifying and listing *moments*, what I mean is – there is a possibility that a *moment* stood out. Versus a more obvious *event*.



First catch! Rachel with two bluefish, and John Wilde.  
Circa 1971. Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

For example, obvious standout events in your timeline might be things like – first kiss, first job, starring in a school play, scoring a winning goal on a sports team, catching your first fish, losing your virginity, graduating, getting married, having a child, smashing a car, serving in the army, knocking someone out in a bar, starting a

business, making your first 10K month, breaking six figures – losing someone you love.

Less obvious standouts might be – the *moment* you decide to experience your first kiss with a loser kid at school because you feel sorry for him (or maybe with the most popular girl even though you can't believe she likes you!...) Or, the way a ruby-throated hummingbird zooms right up in your face and triggers the insight that you hate living in a concrete jungle so you pick up and move to the country, or leave your corporate job of decades. Or, as a kid, when you give your mother a drawing you created and she says, "This is good, dear. But you can do better." Or after you strike out at baseball and get upset, and your father says, "Buck up. Be a man!" Or when that grade school teacher says, "Excellent work!" and you realize for the first time, you can do anything.

You get the picture. Sometimes the pivotal moment – the moment that enchants a reader or listener *because* it enchants you – is the one that's less obvious. Or, it's quietly tucked into the midst of the obvious event.

For now, just make the list. A simple list. A few words to one sentence for each Defining Moment.

In our next four quick steps, we'll talk about how to take that list – and turn it into a compelling story that pairs perfectly with your business.





## STEP TWO: MAKE A MINI-MOVIE

**Bravo! You chose two defining moments.**

Now pick one, and let's write.

Wait.

Stop.

**Don't write. Not yet.**

**Instead, take a breath and picture that moment.** Better yet, turn off that cell phone. Cut the music. Shut the door. Now close your eyes and let the moment unspool in your mind's eye, as if it were a movie.

When I say movie, I'm not kidding.

You want to write a compelling story?

**You must create a mini-movie.**

You must be director, actor, cinematographer, set designer, prop master, best boy, art dog, continuity – all! That means, you get to create your own world. Telling a story that compels means offering up an experience.

Think of your opening line as a portal into another dimension. Like the breath-taking opening shot of a movie.

Grab me by the jugular. Don't let go.

A strong opening line is a parachute dropping us right into the middle of another world. Forget set up.

Drop.

Me.

In.

**Locate me in space and time.** Where are we? When is it? What age are people?

**Evoke the senses.** What does it taste like, feel like, sound like, smell like, look like? I have a friend who can't even begin writing a scene until she sees everything in such detail, she sees the grout in between the kitchen tile!



Artichoke, St. Tropez open air market on Writers On Fire writing retreat.  
Circa May, 2011. St. Tropez, France.

You also need suspense, like in a movie. Don't ramble. Hook us. Keep escalating the tension. Inspire us to ask the simplest question: **What happens next?**

**And, write a scene.** If you pay close attention to movies, you'll see there's one scene. Then cut to the next. Scenes are like mini-stories. Movies within movies.

Let's take an example from the previous step. We'll choose a random incident from the list.

### **Invented Example #1:**

"When I was in high school, I got in a car wreck and it changed my life. I've never been so scared. Ever since, life tastes sweeter."

How can we improve this? Do you see a movie in the example above? Or is it too general?

The above example is more narrative summary than gripping scene. It covers a sweep of time. It uses emotional abstractions like "scared" rather than giving us the experience of being scared.

What If we *opened* more specifically. With more immediacy, and danger.



Dia de los Muertos. Hollywood Forever Cemetery, November 2013.  
Los Angeles, California.

### **Invented Example #2:**

“I didn’t see the deer until it was too late. All I remember is a sick thud, the way the Impala wrenched sideways across the slick country road, the sound of a tree cracking into metal. Blood in my mouth. And the Beastie Boys singing ‘Intergalactic’ on the radio.”

These aren’t great writing! They’re simple, off-the-cuff examples that demonstrate how you can heighten your story by slowing down. By visualizing. By dropping us in the middle.

Also by creating suspense. Evoking the senses. And adding a dash of humor.

That’s a little taster of what I mean by scene.

Make sense?

**If you’re interested in exploring this further, go watch a movie.** Or an hour-long television drama. Or read a novel. Or find your favorite business book which actually uses story. And **when you come upon a scene that moves you, take it apart.**

How? Retype it if it’s on the page. You’ll learn a lot by typing what someone else wrote. You’ll be surprised at how much they did to make a scene come to life.

If it’s a visual medium like film or TV, break down the components. How did it work through image? What happened that was memorable in the scene? What changed?

Maybe it was a gesture someone made that stuck in your head, or the dialogue banter. Or the contrast between a serious actor and a silly resort setting. Or the uncomfortable close-ups.

What did that author or director do to make the scene effective? Apprentice yourself to the greats. Let yourself be inspired by other media.

And **put it all into practice**. Fall in love with the process. Play with the material of your memory as if it were clay. Or strobe lights. Or Swiss cheese with lots of holes for you to fill with your imagination. And have fun!

Of course, it helps to know who is the star...



## STEP THREE: THE CHARACTER OF YOU

**You are! You're the star of your story.**

You're the hero, or heroine. The protagonist.

It's your show. It's you.

**Only, here's the kicker – it's *not* you.**

What do I mean?

Let's say you're writing about when you were in high school. Unless you're seventeen, that's a you from the past. Are you the same person? I didn't think so!

Think of it this way:

You're going to write about your Defining Moment from age seventeen, using your memory. And you're going to see that moment unfold from the point of view – from the camera angle and unique perspective – of your own mind. Through your eyes.

So, who is writing the story and who is starring in the story?

**You-Now are writing the story.**

**And You-Then are starring in the story.**

Got it?



Rachel refracted in Matt Elson's Delta of Venus installation,  
the Infinity Boxes. L.A. Decompression, October 2013.  
Downtown Los Angeles, California.

Remember I used the metaphor of Swiss cheese? Sometimes our memories are like that. We only remember bits and pieces. There are lots of holes. No problem! That's where imagination comes in. As long as we stick to the truth of the moment – we can use our imagination to help fill in the gaps, bring the moment to life, so others can enter into our mini-movie.

If we don't do that extra work, and we leave the moment abstract and unadorned, nobody else will see it well enough to enter in.

**You've got to paint the picture.**

Here's a paradox.

The more detail you write, the more specific you are, the *more* other people – will see their own lives! Will feel their own emotions! Will connect with you!

The other cool thing about You-Not You starring in your personal story is – you don't have to be so self conscious. Why be ashamed, when you aren't that person anymore? You can access that shame. You need to dig deep enough so you feel that feeling. Why? Because here's how it works:

**If you want to move others, you have to move yourself first.**



Actor/writer/comedienne Lauren Weedman, laid flat after performing the Audible.com version of my last book, *Love Junkie: A Memoir*. Why?

Because she was so moved.

POP Sound Studio, January 2013.

Santa Monica, California.

So writing a personal story is easy. You have a goldmine right there in your memory!

It's also challenging. Because you have to "go there" – you have to go toward the discomfort. You have to feel the joy, feel the shame, feel the pain.

This is voice.

**Voice is vertical.**

You have to re-imagine the moment, and craft it so a reader or listener is leaning in to find out what happens next.

This is story.

**Story is horizontal.**

Story pulls you along and entertains, while voice activates emotion and makes the story memorable.

**You need both. And, you need the Character of You to star.**

What's all this got to do with business, you ask? Let's talk about how story connects to business in our next step.



## STEP FOUR: STORY IS CONTEXT FOR A MESSAGE

Here's the beauty of it.

**Once you've identified your signature story, once you've mastered the art of storytelling and unleashed your voice, you can stock up those tales.**

And use them all the time.

Over and over.

Evergreen.



Gorgeous from every angle.  
"Truth Is Beauty" sculpture by Marco Cochrane on the Playa.  
Burning Man, August 2013.  
Black Rock City, Nevada.

Because here's the deal:

Each story is a sculpture. Different from every angle.

Each one can anchor a message. Your message.

Because in business, story is context for a message.

That car wreck could be a moment you use to talk about Resilience in Business, or about Carelessness and how we must be Mindful, or any number of things,



depending on how the rest of the story plays out and what message or teaching or tip you want to share.

Do you get the idea?

This is what I do in my Raw + Real ezine articles. I **let a story, or moment, or image** that's vivid for me when I sit down to write, **anchor the opening**. Then, I think about what I want to share, or teach, or say – and I **look for the connections**.

I went to Burning Man this past summer for the first time. Now I have so much fresh material – I can write about Burning Man and relate it to business all year long.

For example, I open one blog post by describing my chaotic late-night arrival at Burning Man with my Beverly Hillbillys-overloaded truck. I was completely lost and epically freaked out. Then a dust-covered man wearing only a tutu and goggles came up to kindly direct me off the main drag.

What was the message? How important it is to do things out of your comfort zone. How critical it is to be self reliant. How refreshing and inspiring that challenge can be and how tied in it is to self expression. And how good it is for your business to have that energy. The energy of innovation.



Couple passing the time at one of the long stops during Exodus.  
Burning Man, August 2013.  
Black Rock City, Nevada.

**So if you look at your signature story – and all the other stories orbiting around – you will realize that you now have a completely distinct way to share your message.** You are way ahead of the game.

The only thing missing is...



## STEP FIVE: THE SECRET OF YOUR SIGNATURE STORY

**Here comes the twist.**

NOW...

**Take the story you wrote.**

**And throw it out.**

Crumple it up, make it into a paper airplane and toss it in your neighbor's yard, burn it. I don't care. Just get rid of it.

It sucked.

Why?

Because you lied.

You know you did.

You told the story you've told before. You told the story that was easy. You told the story you thought people wanted to hear.

Or, maybe you thought you told it – and you left out the most important part.

Whatever you did, you stopped short. You lied.



Willow tree in sun and shadow. June 2013. Savannah, Georgia.

Admit it. You skimmed the surface. Or, you skipped to the sunny, positive part because you want to inspire people.

Mistake.

Wimp-out.

And, the biggest sin of all –

Boring.

Take myself, for example. My defining moment wasn't catching two bluefish my first time ever fishing – it was the loss of my mother to suicide when I was fourteen. I've been writing about it ever since. It shaped me. Maybe you have a defining moment like that. One that points the way to your signature story.

You must remove layers. Get to the beating heart of things. So others can feel your heart and connect with you – and themselves – on the deepest level.

You've got to remember that story is drama.

Story is conflict.

Give us black versus white. Good versus evil. Man versus Nature.

Better yet, show us your journey. The real one. The Before and After.

Start with a lowpoint. When you broke into a million little pieces. When you didn't think you could go on. And how you did anyway.

We'll love you for it. We'll bond with you. We'll see you as one of us and you will make us care.

Ready?

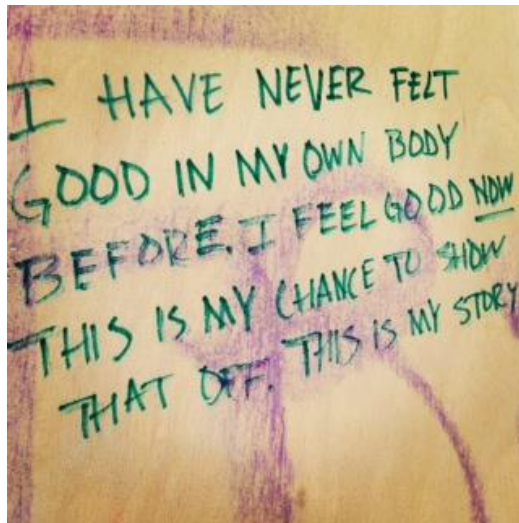
**Now, tell the story you don't want to tell.**

Tell the story you are afraid to tell.

The one that embarrasses you. The one that shames you in a way that reddens your face, flushes your whole body with hot, prickly horror. The one that cracks you in two.

If you don't, people will sense it. And they will distrust you, and click away.

**It's time for the Untold Story.**



Anonymous. Temple of Whollyness, Burning Man 2013.  
Black Rock City, Nevada.

Does this make you uncomfortable? Good. Go toward the discomfort.

That's the ticket.

That's where the goldmine is.

You see, here's a secret: **Your story is not enough.** Just like your expertise is not enough.

**Story alone – without doing it right, without using these powerful fictional techniques I'm sharing with you – is as skull-crushingly, mind-numbingly boring as plain old content.**

So don't bore us, or you will fail. Fail to inspire. Fail to connect. Fail to enroll.

What's the key?

Voice.

**You must tap into your authentic voice to bring your story to life.**

And what's your voice again?

Voice is vertical. Voice is vulnerability. Voice is value.

Voice is what you find when you dig deep. When you find the words and language that resonate for you, that are unmistakably yours. When you explore the story you do not want to tell. When you move toward – and through – discomfort. And get to the other side.

The land of emotion.

If you do that?

We will be moved. We will join your crusade.

We will buy.

Because how it works? People buy from emotion.

**Emotion enrolls.**

Forget a long drawn-out campaign of Know, Like, Trust.

**If you tell a true personal story?** One that's shaped and crafted? You share a Signature Story from the powerful place of vulnerability?

**We are yours.**

This is what I wish and see for all of you. That you take this simple report to heart, and do the deep-digging, the shaping and the sharing that the modern world requires of a leader.

Of a doer.

Of a winner.

Like you.

You now have the basics for writing your game-changing Signature Story. You know that you've got to get raw and real, and use these specific fictional techniques I've shared with you in a brief way.

**Remember: Being an expert is no longer enough.**

**You must emotionally engage AND entertain your current and prospective clients.**

If you do this, you will stand out from all the white noise that threatens to drown us daily. You will emerge from the swamp of sameness. You will avoid the trap of cold content, or of chirpy fake stories that turn us off. And you will electrify.

You have the key in your hands.

What will you do with it?

**Are you ready to share a Signature Story that is UNFORGETTABLE?**

**That is EMOTIONAL?**

That is **RELATABLE** to their inner reality?

That hits people in the **heart**, or in the **gut**.

*Not their brain?*

Remember this: **If you want to build a business, you have to WAKE PEOPLE UP TO WHAT'S POSSIBLE...**

You have to be the leader.

You have to make them believe.

This is your doorway to your wealth and influence and impact as an entrepreneur.

**If you are ready to find out the ONE THING keeping you from nailing your Signature Story so you can stand out and lead, I invite you to get in touch.**

**I'd love to offer a complimentary 20-minute "Ignite Your Signature Story" call with me.**

That's how much I believe in you, and in what I shared in this report.

Just go to [www.writersonfire.com/ignite](http://www.writersonfire.com/ignite) to schedule your session.



Sandi "Sass" Schulz and the Believe installation by  
Laura Kimpton and Jeff Schomberg.  
Burning Man 2013. Black Rock City, Nevada.

**Do you understand the world is waiting for your signature story?**

Every day you stay small, hide out, lie about your story – you deny us your gifts.

Show us truth.

Shake us to our core.

Wake us.

We need you.

Now it's up to you.





## ABOUT RACHEL



Photo credit: Darcy Hemley

Are you ready to be seen, to be heard, to be wildly successful?

Enter Rachel to the rescue.

Rachel Resnick, Los Angeles Times best-selling author, Literary Alchemist and Message/Book Wrangler, creator of Writers On Fire, is the straight-talking, undisputed Signature Story Sleuth. Since 1995, she's worked with hundreds of writers and entrepreneurs to help them access their unique voices, tap into their signature stories, and become more visible and influential.

Having gone from brokeass writer to surpassing the six-figure mark herself in just over two years, she now helps coaches, consultants, and entrepreneurs to turn their stories into more clients and more money.

To learn more about Rachel, visit [www.writersonfire.com](http://www.writersonfire.com).

