

# Part I

The story of  
you – now



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# read me first

**BEFORE YOU WRITE  
THE NEXT CHAPTER  
IN THE STORY OF YOU**

Thought-provokers, coaching questions, strategies and life's must-haves

***To have a better life we must keep  
choosing how we are living.***

**Albert Einstein**

**G**osh, Einstein was clever! But guess what? You are too! Why? Because you've picked up this book and are going to do more than read it; you're going to take action. You recognise that knowing isn't doing, don't you?

You've decided that you want to take action to change something in your life. Great. Then it's time to pay attention and it's time to be responsible for you. I promise you will never regret taking time to work on you.

Think of this book as a personal coaching session, for within these pages you'll find all the 'hot topics' that I've repeatedly expounded as a success coach for over two decades.

*If you are totally happy with every aspect of who you are and what you do, congratulations; you can put this back on the shelf. Be off with you!*

If you're ready to write the next chapter in the book of you, let's go.

## Chapter 1

# Where are you now?

You are a unique, complex, ever-evolving human with your own journey, your own story, your own next chapter. To know, and more consciously plan for, where you want to go you need first to get clarity around where you've been and where you are 'at' now. I promise, this is a necessary step. So, please, be patient and do this bit first.

A great way to explore your current state of being, and to raise your self-awareness, is to make yourself write down a description or a statement about you. This needs to encompass the key experiences that have shaped you, what matters most to you and the people you care about. In part I of this book we are laying down the foundation thinking. If you work your way through each page in sequential order, you will see why starting with the story of you matters. When you reach the conclusion of this book, you will clearly see why I am starting here. Let me direct your thinking to the current story of who you have been and who you are now.

I call this an 'I am...' statement.

### **What is an 'I am...' statement?**

For many years I (and my talented team) have been working with individuals (and organisations) around the world on the art of telling their story, of describing their 'self', their journey, their aspirations, their brand. The structure and methodology

of an ‘I am...’ statement has proven to be a great way to support clients to write their story. Over and over, people tell us how the process of pulling together such a statement, of exploring themselves more deeply and honestly, leads to a profound desire to take action. From that foundation, people are in a much better position to start mapping out what’s next.

So here we go...

The ‘I am...’ statement exercise provides an opportunity to step back and look at yourself to see who you really are. Trust me on this: to be able to share the story of you has real value for both you and those around you. Call it charisma or simply good communication, but being able to share your story helps others to honour what matters to you. (At the end of Chapter 2 I’ll give you plenty of tips on how to share your story effectively.)

An ‘I am...’ statement gives you a structured and effective way to step out of the ‘busy’ and do the work on you. It’s also sometimes referred to as a ‘unique positioning’ statement – ‘unique’ because no one else’s statement will be the same as yours. Sure, there will be similarities and common experiences, but the skill is in how you interpret, write and then communicate your personal insights about what makes you uniquely you. So take a moment to be thoughtful about who you are and how you show up.

***We don’t see things as they are.***

***We see things as we are.***

**Anaïs Nin**

Your statement may be for you alone, to clarify your future direction and actions. Or it may have broader applications. If you are looking for a change in career or a promotion, this is an influential journey of self-discovery into the 'brand' of you. You'll discover what you are offering, where you are placed in your industry, and what your strengths and passions are. It's powerful to understand what your personality and behavioural traits are, and what the high-performing you looks like.

### **The 'I am...' statement exercise**

In formulating your statement, you will explore your so-called blind spots, some skewed or limiting beliefs you've picked up, skill deficits, values you think you hold but that you don't live and work by, things you wish for but don't work for, how different people in your life influence you and barriers to your greater success, happiness or empowerment.

This is a very personal, individual and reflective exercise. It's very much about letting go of your old worldview and seeing yourself with new eyes by really pondering the question, 'Who am I?' The process may require a new vulnerability; writing your story requires personal accountability for how you've been living your life.

The following activity, therefore, requires honesty and a genuine desire to work on you. As always, you will get out of it what you put into it. Be brave. Persevere through the uncomfortable bits. Keep remembering why you bought this book. Keep reading and start writing now!



## Activity

### Step 1 – Ask others how they view you

It can be surprising to discover how the various people in our lives describe us, for each will see us differently as a result of diverse experiences they have had with us. A lot of what others think is unknown to us; it may be quite surprising, shocking or exciting to reveal this.

Talking with people from all aspects of your life, and giving them permission to tell you their truth, can be disconcerting but it is super powerful. Listen actively and without judgment. Don't be defensive. Hear them out. Take notes and reflect later, when you're alone. Their honesty is your gift. I have seen people complete this process in so many creative ways. You could interview your children or set up a free online and anonymous survey. Remember you are an adult with your big girl or big boy pants on. You get to decide what you do with the feedback you receive.

Many people come up with a list of specific questions that they use to interview others, or they distribute the questions in written form. Examples of targeted questions include:

- Can you please describe me in five words?
- When is it hard to be around me?
- What value do you think I add to your life?
- What is your favourite memory of us?
- How do you feel when you think about our relationship?
- What do you trust about me?
- What do you think I need to pay attention to in my life?
- When are you most proud of me?

## Step 2 – Next, ask these questions of yourself

You will notice that these questions are about you as a whole person. They are not specific to your career or work history, because your identity is about so much more than the job you do. I'll talk more about that later.

- Who am I? (Write your answer in five sentences.)
- What do I most remember about my childhood?
- Which one person has most influenced me – how and why?
- What do I really want from life?
- How do I want to spend the rest of my life?
- What's it like being around me – at home, at work?
- What is important to me?
- What are my values and priorities?
- What makes me happy?
- What makes my heart hurt?
- What am I most proud of?
- What do I most want others to understand about me?
- What am I curious and thoughtful about?
- When I think about my future, what do I want the most?

### tip

**Do not answer these questions from a work perspective; rather, consider all aspects of your life.**

### **Step 3 – Now spend time exploring the uniqueness of you**

I can't tell you how often I talk about this with clients. Your uniqueness is your currency and greatest asset. It is essential that each and every one of us understands what we bring to the room. If you aren't clear about this, others won't be either. If you look around at your family, friends and peers at work, there is no other single person in the world who has got where they are because of the exact same experiences as you.

Sure, there are similarities and common moments we share with others, but being able to write and articulate the story of you requires that you can describe your originality. Why would a future employer choose you if you are the same as the person who was interviewed before you? This can be challenging to think about, but being able to answer these questions will potentially get you the next job, make your next date more meaningful, increase your self-awareness and undoubtedly contribute to success. If you can't answer the following questions now, come back to them after you have read through all the thought-provokers later in the book.

- How do I think differently to others?
- Can I describe my top three best attributes and how they add value to relationships?
- What makes me stand out from the crowd?
- What can I do brilliantly that people around me can't?
- What single life experience most changed me?
- What do others most appreciate about who I am?
- What evidence do I have to support my uniqueness?
- What do people consistently tell me I am amazing at?

#### **Step 4 – Think about your legacy**

Legacies are not for old people! Every chapter of your life leaves a mark on the world. In this fourth step in thinking about your 'I am...' statement, we are going to explore what you want to be known and remembered for. Over the years, I have seen hundreds of 'I am...' statements. Years later I run into people and I don't necessarily remember their name, but I remember significant parts of their story and how I felt listening to them. Recently a man stopped me in the Sydney international airport. It had been six years since I watched him deliver his statement to his peers. I immediately asked him a question that related to his family and he responded with a teary smile.

People don't always remember who you work for or your job title, but they are likely to remember what you stand for and what matters to you. Read over what you've written in the first three steps and then answer the questions below. As you do, think of these questions as an accountability system. For example, if I want to be known as someone who is a 'trusted adviser', what did I do today to show people I can be trusted? Ask yourself:

- What do I want to be famous for?
- What do I want my family and friends to be most proud of me for?
- When I think about my funeral, what is it I want to be remembered for?

On page 181 you will bring the work you have done here, together with questions on writing and planning your next chapter.

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