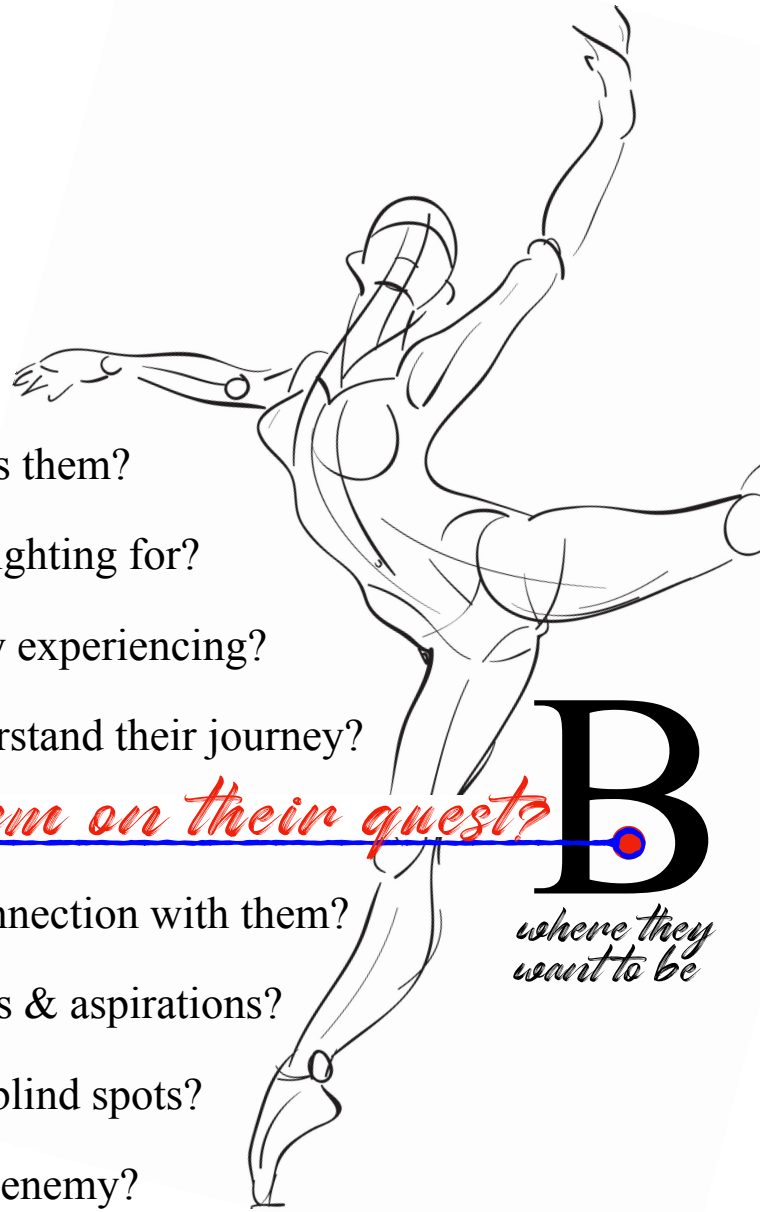
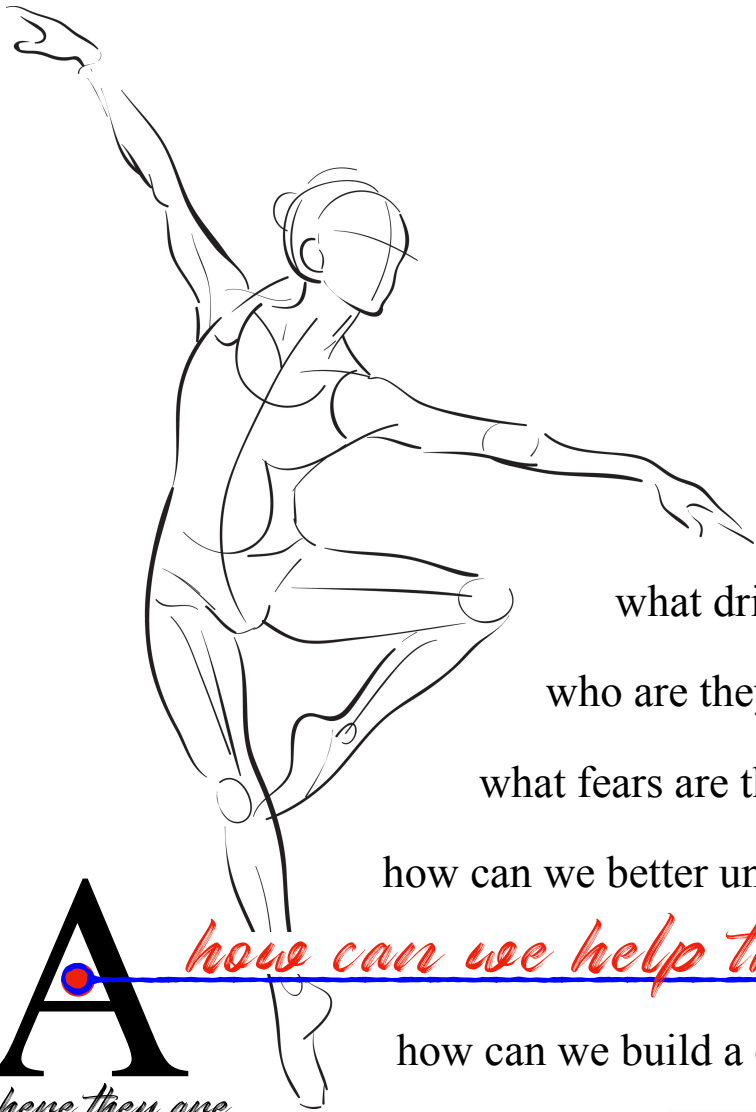


# the Unlikely Hero

Learn Why *Understanding Your Audiences Journey* is So Important to Creating Novel Marketing Experiences that *Connect & Convert*



*you are not the hero*  
*your customer is*



what drives them?

who are they fighting for?

what fears are they experiencing?

how can we better understand their journey?

*how can we help them on their quest?*

how can we build a connection with them?

what are their hopes & aspirations?

what are their blind spots?

what is the enemy?

*where they are*

*where they want to be*



# Audience's the hero's journey

**You are not the hero, your audience is.** You are the guide, the counsellor, the mentor destined to assist them on their journey. To point out the traps on the path, to help them learn from their failures. Yes, **to give context to the opportunities that await them.** To guide them through the mysteries, tragedies, triumphs that come with the journey.

What is this journey? Why are we their guide and how can we best assist them? How does understanding their journey vastly improve our marketing & connection with our audience? These questions and more we'll answer within the context of the "The Hero's Journey" framework developed by Joseph Campbell. **By the end of this section you'll have everything you need to craft a message that connects and builds unshakable trust with your audience.** Apply this structure to your writing will not only strengthen the bond between you and your audience, but will also serve as the foundation that connects every piece of your marketing.



## The Hero With a Thousand Faces

## Hero's Journey Origins

The 12(ish) stages of The Hero's Journey is a structure for exploring common narratives coined in Joseph Campbell's book *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* in 1949. Beyond just a tool for exploring story structure it has been applied to everything from religion to depth-psychology.

It is one of the frameworks used in Jonah Sachs book "Story Wars" to explore the world of branding, marketing, and audience connection. In Christopher Vogler's classic "The Writer's Journey", he leverages the framework to explore specific applications of the Hero's Journey to fictional story and character development. *(I reference these books and more several times in this section and I highly recommend them.)* Even the revered depth psychologist Carl Jung references the Hero's Journey in his writings and uses it to help metaphorically explore the subconscious. This is all to say that this framework and ones like it is a powerful way to explore many different subjects and disciplines, and this holds true in our world of copywriting and marketing.

The first way we can harness the power of The Hero's Journey in our writing is **in the research department.** By considering each step of the journey in the context of our target audience we will better understand their desires, fears, and wants. Each phase comes with its own unique challenges, and learning how we can give guidance in each is critical.

Secondly it also gives us **useful prompts and inspiration for an array of engaging marketing campaigns.** There are 12 phases of the hero's journey with different parts of your audience traveling through different phases of the journey at different times. To best serve each segment's needs *(and increase your conversion rates)* it pays to identify where they are specifically on their journey and modify your message accordingly. As we continue on *our* journey through the 12 phases I'll share with you how to do just that.



*what we sell will become part of their life journey.*

The most powerful part of unlocking the structure of the hero's journey in the context of copy is that it transforms you and your product/services/brand into almost an almost "mythical being" with vast amounts of influence... *One sent to help guide your audience through their often perilous journey.*

“ The mentor represents the bond between parent and child, teacher and student, doctor and patient, god and man... *entrepreneur & customer.*”

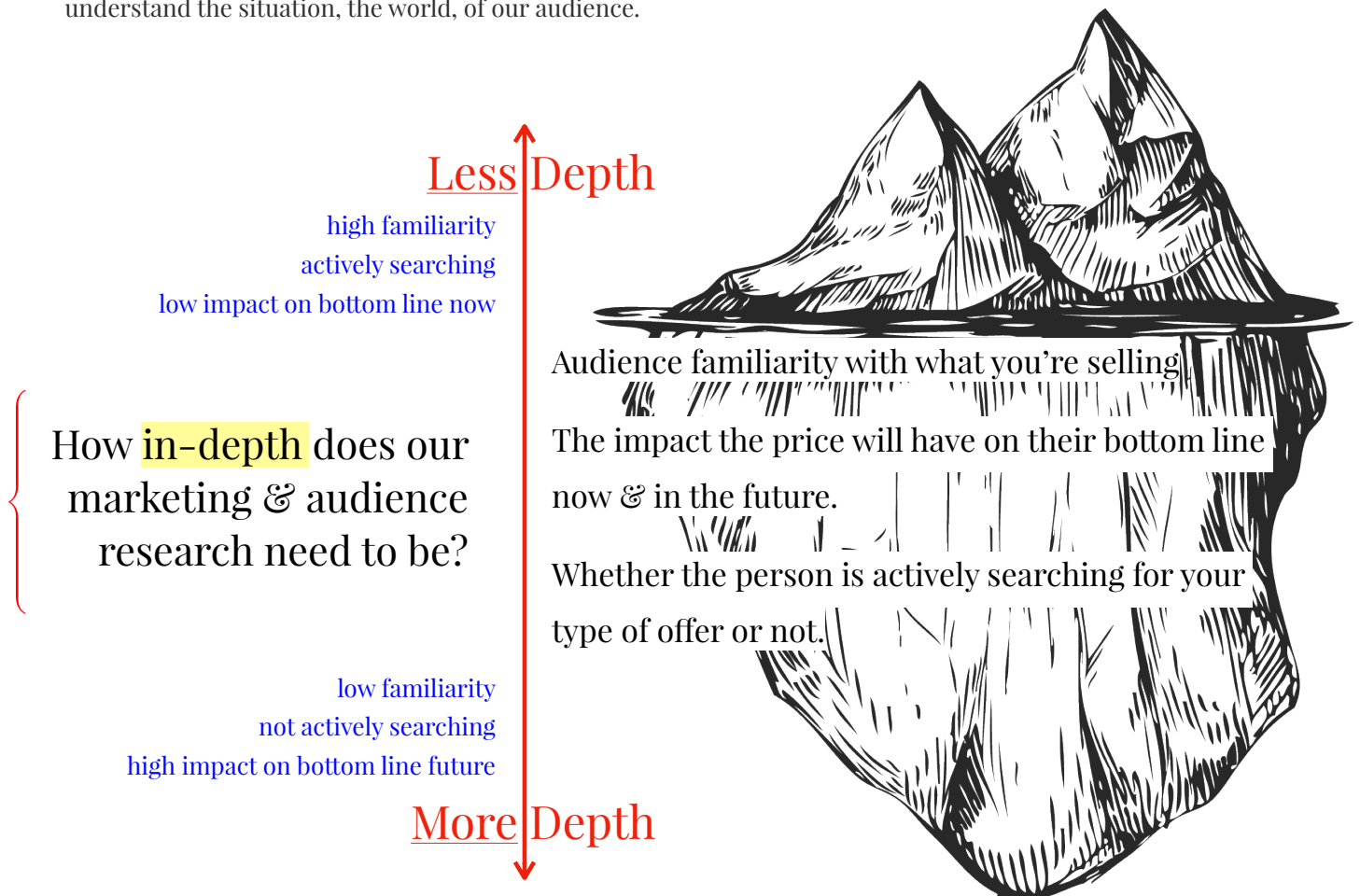
- Deb Peterson

## A Tool For Research & Understanding

The importance of understanding our audience and "their world" cannot be understated. If it's not clear to them that you understand their problems, their hopes and dreams, and their goals not only will your message not connect, you'll be seen as an outsider; *someone not to be trusted.*

**There are three main variables that determine how deep into our audience's world we need to venture to create an authentic connection with them.** First, the complexity and price of our offer. *A \$12 coffee thermos isn't going to need as much marketing "world building" to sell successfully as a \$20,000 coaching program.* Likewise, the familiarity of our audience with our particular offer matters. If someone is actively searching for the solution we're selling we wouldn't need to "oversell" it... but, if they're completely unaware of its potential impact we will need to build more context into our marketing.

Put another way, if you're targeting a broad audience with a high price point there's a lot more nurturing/persuasion that will need to be done to make the sale. To scale up our persuasion we need to ensure we fully understand the situation, the world, of our audience.





## Our hero's life is often out of balance, as most lives are. They may be aware of this imbalance, *or have no idea.*

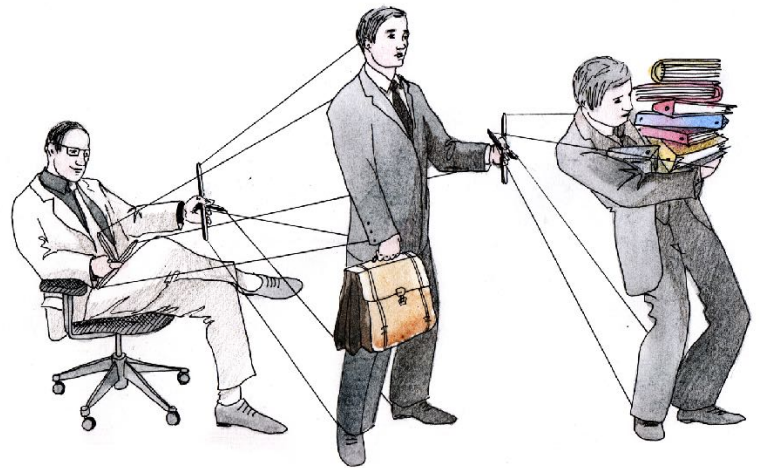
All good stories explore a character's backstory, likewise, **we want to define our own heroes.** As Pulitzer Prize screenwriter David Mamet puts it "A backstory is a comprehensive overview of a character's history that extends beyond the story in which the character appears. Devising backstories is a crucial part of character creation since a character's background will inform the action of the main narrative."

(source: <https://link.sean.co/dm-backstory>)

Likewise, in the story that is our marketing we will want to have our audience's backstory influence our own "narrative". On an emotional level, it's safe to assume members of our audience are at a similar starting point. They are an unlikely hero, a hero that doesn't yet understand their full potential, think Frodo, Luke Skywalker, Michael Scott, Dorothy etc).

Our audience may see themselves as small, unqualified, untrained, unworthy or simply may not know which direction to go to reach their goal. In fact, some may not even be aware of what goal they should be seeking! To best position ourselves as a trusted resource we can use our understanding of both the light and the dark emotions of our hero - what deep down shapes their perception of reality.

Again our goal in all of this abstract marketing prep work is to not just better understand our audience, but it is to maximize our messages impact and inspire action. The goal is to reflect back to them a detailed image of their inner self with our message. **This "mirror" needs to be clear enough to deliver insights to our reader, changing their perspective in a positive way.**



**Consider:** How are you going to help them recover from that failure, and *what tool are going to give them to win the next fight?*

**Remember:** Your hero may have attempted to change their world and *failed miserably.*

## What Motivates Our Hero?

An important part of our audience's "backstory" is the values that define and motivate them. *It's what they care about.* Values are the bits of our character that push us towards or away from certain actions or beliefs. If you highly value "integrity" then you'll desire to be honest and be associated with people and movements you perceive as having integrity. If you value "wisdom" you will invest in learning and improving your perspectives, you'll do your best to define and avoid "misinformation".

All this is to say: to better understand what drives our audiences motives we need to clearly define the values of our 'hero'. Then we use that understanding to emphasize how our offer aligns with those values in our copy. *We'll look at an exercise in the next section to help accomplish this.*

**IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE!  
TAKE THIS.**



# What Motivates Our Hero?

*values based marketing*

The common factor in all heroes, regardless of where they are on their journey, is their deep (*often unrealized*) pursuit of higher-level values.

The “higher level values” of our audience that our message can tap into may relate directly to your product/service/brand or may simply be common hopes and aspirations shared by humanity in general.

We all desire to be more creative, be more intelligent, to better connect with those around us, and to expand the influence of our inner-self and outer world; these desires and others like them are nearly universal and center around core values that most can relate to.



For a detailed look at how values influence both our brand and our audience see the “Attack Their Enemies” section in “The A’s of Influence” section of this guide.



## Values that Define Our Hero

Accountability | Beauty | Boldness | Calmness | Compassion | Confidence | Cooperation | Courage | Creativity | Dependability | Discipline | Diversity | Education (Learning) | Excellence | Experience | Focus | Flexibility | Freedom | Growth | Happiness | Health | Honesty | Humility | Humor | Integrity | Intimacy | Leadership | Love | Loyalty | Mindfulness | Openness | Optimism | Originality | Passion | Professionalism | Reason (or Logic) | Respect | Sacrifice | Security | Sensitivity | Sensuality | Simplicity | Significance | Stability | Strength | Success | Support | Timeliness | Trust | Uniqueness | Vision | Warmth | Wisdom

For the full list visit: “The Ultimate List of Core Values” at <https://link.sean.co/100-values>







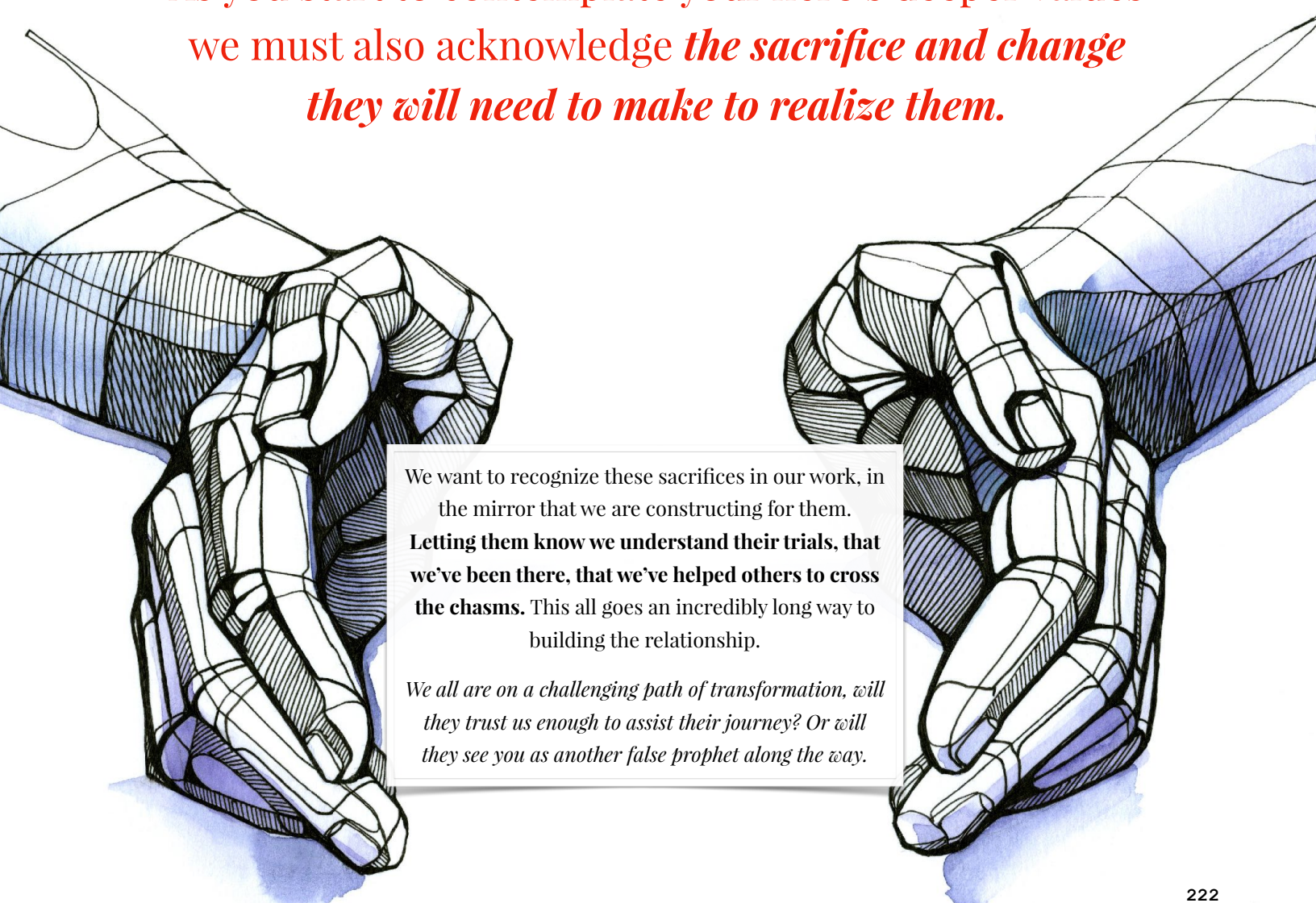
*“If the path before you is clear,  
you’re probably on someone else’s.”*

— Joseph Campbell

**Important Note:** Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey is an effective way to explore storytelling and a vital way to explore our audience... However we shouldn’t get so caught up in the framework that we lose sight of our end goal. Every sales page or blog post doesn’t need all of the elements of the journey, and **its usefulness shouldn’t overshadow our goal of completing an effective marketing piece.** I find it’s best not to literally write a story (*every time*) but weave the attributes of my hero, product, and brand into any piece I am writing.

At the very least we want to keep our hero’s background and situation in our mind as we create, it will always serve us well to come from a place of empathy and understanding that comes with this kind of research, and not the assumptions that most make about their audience.

**As you start to contemplate your hero’s deeper values  
we must also acknowledge *the sacrifice and change  
they will need to make to realize them.***



We want to recognize these sacrifices in our work, in the mirror that we are constructing for them. **Letting them know we understand their trials, that we’ve been there, that we’ve helped others to cross the chasms.** This all goes an incredibly long way to building the relationship.

*We all are on a challenging path of transformation, will they trust us enough to assist their journey? Or will they see you as another false prophet along the way.*

Not only is a hero often unaware of how to articulate their true deeper fears, but they often are actively working against their own interests. **People routinely structured their lives in a way that enables them to avoid or neglect the need to change**, avoiding any call to improve. *Change is scary*. They have a choice, and our hero again very often finds themselves choosing avoidance over transcendence. If they haven't found a resolution they still need our help. (*Realistically they are not our target market if they have.*)

Can a hero be happy in this state of avoidance? Happy yes, satisfied; no. *It's worth exploring this fact*. We don't want to accuse them of apathy but draw out the deeper desire that we both know is there.

In fact, and this is crucial, it's often the case that we do not want to force change upon them at all (change is scary remember) ~ **often the best thing we can do is present them with an entirely new journey; one they didn't consider...** CHANGE requires much more effort than simply doing something completely new. For example, asking someone to change their diet is much more challenging than presenting them with an option of keeping a similar diet but simply adding to their diet to experience the results they desire; more on this concept later.

# change. is. ~~scary.~~ *terrifying*

*avoid asking for too much change early in the marketing process.*

Recognizing that our audience has free will in our marketing is a strategy that bucks against traditional approaches. Most marketing is the kind that blows up with hype and then evaporates, it's the kind that makes the brand the hero, not the audience. Inspire your reader to wear the cape and your brand/product/service will always win in the long term. **It comes with the responsibility of creating a far more compelling path for our reader than our competitors.**

Your audience is ready to take action when two forces collide, an inner calling for advancement and the external desire for relief from the "change of pain" itself. However, they will often refuse the first call, requesting us to explore again the unflinching attribute of humanity, **resistance to change**. Many times our reader may justify inaction by categorizing our call to action as a fantasy that's not fit for them; if this is the case we need to reexamine our core argument.

*Pause for a second and listen (well read) closely. This lesson you are learning here is what created the first trillion dollar brand (Apple)...*

It's the foundation of the highest ideals of humankind, from forms of government *and the revolutions that destroyed them*. Everyone who harnesses its power can build an empire, and those who ignore it are after the ones who are stuck wondering what they are doing wrong... If you are worried this hero stuff might be fluff trust me, it's where the magic of real influence and persuasion begins. *Earning true, deserved, trust is what it takes to truly turn a skeptic into a buyer.*

Let's now examine the 12 phases of our audience's journey **and see how we can use them to better understand both our audience and the marketing we need to craft for them.**





# change is ~~scary~~. *terrifying* but *hope* strong.

We can use each phase of the Hero's Journey to better understand our audience, our brand, and how to use it to plan out marketing campaigns.

There's one critical point I want you to keep in mind during each phase of this journey, and it's the one thing you can always point to as a guiding star for your audience...

That crucial point is this, **hope is a powerful motivator...**

## **Hope drives change and action.**

Sometimes it can be tempting to solely rely on fear as a motivator. While fear is indeed effective, the main difference between fear and hope is that hope; well hope is a much better way to build a lasting connection.

And let's admit it, both drive change, but *hope; hope is what we want to win isn't it?*

## *Q: What does it take to turn a stranger into a customer? A: trust.*

If you can build and keep trust with your audience they'll follow you to the ends of the earth. Trust is built in several ways, many discussed already in this guide, but one key way is to give someone a truth; duh, you might say... but so many of us are so hell-bent on knocking our reader over the head with "why our product is so awesome" that we forget that they, our readers, don't care. What they want to know is what that "awesomeness" has to do with them.

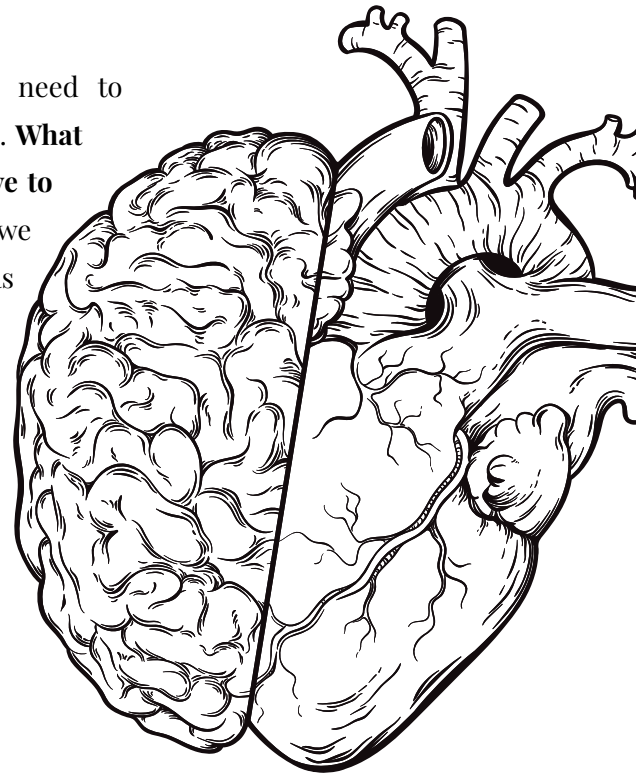
To understand how our product affects them personally we need to understand what is going on in their lives, beyond the superficial. **What emotional experiences (positive and negative) do our heroes have to deal with related to our product/service/industry?** How have we helped others fix problems, reach beyond what they thought was possible, and attain a goal they may have never thought was "for them"?

Sharing these 'truths' with our audience is what builds trust... but first we need to learn to listen.

*People make decisions based on logic and support them with emotion. An emotional connection is made when people feel heard.*

## *in short...*

To get someone to invite you along their journey you need to connect with both their heart and their mind. To win a heart, you need emotion, to win a mind, you need logic, to win both you need both.



- Margaret Mead -

# "Children must be taught how to think, not what to think."



Our job as “the mentor” in the hero’s journey is not just to guide them along the path to success (as it relates to our product/service) it also requires us to guide them through the many emotions they will experience along the way.

It’s a lot like raising a child, parent or not; it is an easy metaphor to understand. The best parents don’t just tell their child to do something, they give them context with the instruction, help them understand the emotions they may be feeling for the first time.

Each phase of the our hero’s journey leads our reader to a higher stage of awareness related to both our product/service and their own relationship with the world around it. We need to be with them each step of the way, **building up that all important trust.**

In a movie or book the mentor (*you*) is selling the hero (*your audience*) growth, fulfilling their destiny, reaching a new plane of existence -- and you may think you’re just selling a ‘widget’, why should I worry about my lead “fulfilling their destiny”; and I understand the hesitation, it may seem like overkill. But ask yourself, **is Dove just selling a bar of soap?** Or, as their home page puts it “... *We believe beauty should be a source of confidence, and not anxiety. That’s why we are here to help women everywhere develop a positive relationship with the way they look, helping them raise their self-esteem and realize their full potential.*”

## Yes, *it's just soap*, but it can mean so much more...

“Dove, launched as a bar soap brand in 1955 known for its moisturizing quality, was in a box doing a respectable \$200 million dollars in sales in the early 1990s... **Sales were over three billion in 2011**, the last year that sales were reported, and are much more now. This growth was earned in an intensively competitive arena with large, smart, established competitors... **An important ingredient to Dove’s successful growth was its “Campaign for Real Beauty”, originated in Brazil by Ogilvy & Mather in 2004.**



The campaign set out to make women aware that they have real beauty, not based on a standard of a young, model-thin body with excessive make-up. **The goal was to change the way that women are perceived and to improve their self-esteem.** The Real Beauty Campaign expanded the brand and its relationship to customers by connecting with an issue of deep concern: the appearance and self-confidence of themselves and their daughters. It also provided energy and visibility that enhanced all the Dove products.”

- David Aaker - Vice Chairman

Source: <https://www.prophet.com/2017/06/doves-brand-portfolio-growth/>



# the journey begins

In each of the following phases of the Hero's Journey we'll explore the following 4 items:

1. How we can better understand our audience's internally and external world.
2. How we can fulfill our role as their guide.
3. What emotions are they likely to experience in the phase, and how can we work to encourage the positive ones and mitigate the negative ones.
4. What tactical items can we create in our marketing for each phase, and how to introduce the pieces to the audience in our marketing funnels.

