It is helpful to actually write out a one paragraph description that will serve as a script for your introductions and a guiding document—mission statement of sorts—for your work.

This draft should serve to present a 1) coherent narrative about your work; 2) be true and an authentic expression of your values and goals; 3) distinguish you from your peers.

Try the steps below to do this.

1. Determine your unique value proposition

Spend some time thinking about what makes you different from your peers (and predecessors) – your strengths, passions, personal history, and your goals. What do you bring to the table that no one else does?

Any of these brainstorming exercises might help:

A. List all the work you have done (and perhaps want to do). What do these projects all have in common?

Describe 3 most central commonalities.

B. Describe 1-2 theoretical stances your work.

C. List the 3-5 established professionals you want to work with (dream scenarios welcome).

D. Describe unique elements of your personal history.

E. Areas of Strength

What are your strengths, independent of the area of application? You could also try examining your areas for growth in the same vein. What are your areas of insecurity and feeling an “outsider”? Might these actually be a sign of your unique contribution?

F. Find out how others see you

Ask trusted peers, professors, committee members for four or five adjectives they would use to describe you and your work. In which areas do they view you as unique or irreplaceable? You can also use the comments of external reviewers and blind reviewers for publications to help with this.

G. Identify your goals

What kind of professional do you want to be? What conversations do you want to be a part of? What kind of change--in your field or the academy--do you want to make happen?

H. Identify your target audience

Who will care about your work? Who should care about your work? How will you reach them?

Why should anyone care about your work? Why is it relevant? What is it relevant to/for?

2. Reorganize your priorities

Create a through-line for your work and activities. Consider positions, funding, institutions, conferences, societies, projects accordingly.

3. Strengthen your social network around these interests and goals.

Attend appropriate conferences, create/publish in appropriate places, reach out to people you don’t know, but who are the next steps for you. Consider social media as a way to do this. (See template for introductory email in The Hidden Curriculum p. 298).

4. Review regularly and update as you grow and change.

See also:

“10 Golden Rules of Personal Branding” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/goldiechan/2018/11/08/10-golden-rules-personal-branding/?sh=6a24451c58a7>

“How to Brand Yourself” from <https://www.salary.com/passages/sell-yourself-14-steps-to-creating-a-powerful-personal-brand/3/>