

STORYTELLING IN BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

*Your Story, Your Ideas,
and the Emotion That Grows
Your Business*

2

EmpowerHER Rural Business

Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in
Rural Areas



An Erasmus+ Project | Co-funded by the European Union

EmpowerHER Rural Business

Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in
Rural Areas



2

STORYTELLING IN BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

*Your Story, Your Ideas, and the Emotion That
Grows Your Business*

2

Practical Guide. Module II

STORYTELLING IN BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

Your Story, Your Ideas, and the Emotion That Grows Your Business

EmpowerHER Rural Business

Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in Rural Areas



Co-funded by the European Union

EmpowerHER Rural Business

Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in Rural Areas

About the EmpowerHER Project

EmpowerHER Rural Business is a European project that supports women entrepreneurs and those with business ideas in rural areas to develop their entrepreneurial skills, digital visibility, and personal resilience.

Through practical training and tools for well-being, storytelling, and digital skills, the project supports the development of sustainable businesses and increases women's participation in local and European entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The project supports at least 25 women entrepreneurs in rural Transylvania (with a focus on Alba County), Romania, through:

- practical entrepreneurial development workshops
- digital skills for branding and promotion
- well-being and stress management tools
- access to a support and mentoring community, access to the rural coworking space VIE HUB—a space for working on well-being, storytelling, and digital visibility—and working meetings with specialists in related entrepreneurial fields.
- participation in a regional trade fair in Austria to increase the visibility of local businesses and to experience/learn other promotional methods practiced in the EU.

The project integrates entrepreneurial development with personal growth and storytelling, while offering tools that may support resilience, stress awareness, and sustainable business development for women in rural areas.

An Erasmus+ project

Action: Small-scale Partnerships in Adult Education

Project code: KA210-ADU-000362384

Co-funded by the European Union



STORYTELLING IN BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY
Your Story, Your Ideas, and the Emotion That Grows Your Business

Materials and resources available at www.viehub.ro/resurse

THE AUTHORS OF THE GUIDE

Nicoleta Pfeffer-Barbela

Facilitator, Certified Mindfulness Meditation Trainer & Rural Development Consultant

Nico Pfeffer-Barbela works at the intersection of wellness education and entrepreneurship education. She is the founder of citySTILLE – Mindfulness Center Vienna (now STILLNESS – THE SPACE), a certified adult education trainer with a background in economics, and, since 2014, a certified meditation and mindfulness facilitator (Austria).

For over ten years, she has been working with leaders, the academic community, and international organizations in Austria and Romania in the areas of mindfulness, stress prevention, and developing a balance between personal and entrepreneurial life.

Drawing on her previous experience in microfinance and her work with rural communities in Transylvania, she supports local entrepreneurs in developing business ideas and building entrepreneurial confidence rooted in resilience.

Her facilitation style relies on practical, personalized tools that help participants turn ideas into concrete actions and develop sustainable businesses grounded in balance and well-being.

www.citystille.com www.viehub.ro

Petra Christine Bernklau

Business Trainer, Certified Adult Educator & Business Laughter Yoga Facilitator

Petra Christine Bernklau is a business trainer and certified adult educator with a focus on economic orientation, Business Laughter Yoga and learning methods based on Positive Psychology. She supports women, entrepreneurs and organisations in developing greater clarity for economic decisions and in looking at entrepreneurial topics in a clear, practical and everyday-oriented way.

Her approach is structured, resource-oriented and close to practice. She provides clear impulses on economic development, entrepreneurial thinking and the foundations of a conscious approach to numbers – helpful both for aspiring entrepreneurs and for people who are already entrepreneurially active.

Petra designs workshops and programmes that combine economic orientation, Positive Psychology and experiential learning. Within the EmpowerHER Rural Business project, Petra contributes impulses on economic clarity, resource-oriented thinking, and digital tools for business development. In this way, she supports trust, resilience and collaboration in entrepreneurial communities.

www.smile2work.at www.viehub.ro

STORYTELLING IN BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

Your Story, Your Ideas, and the Emotion That Grows Your Business

This practical guide supports rural women entrepreneurs to transform their personal experience, skills, and ideas into clear business direction, greater visibility, and meaningful development.

The guide combines personal reflection, practical exercises, entrepreneurial thinking, and community inspiration. It is designed to help participants recognize the value they already carry within them and express it in a way that others can understand, appreciate, and support.

Storytelling in Business and Community

Inside this guide you will find the topics:



1. Introduction. Your Story as a Business Resource

How personal experience, values, resilience and life lessons can become the foundation for business ideas and authentic communication.

2. Storytelling in the Community

What storytelling means in practice and how authentic stories create trust, emotional connection, visibility and interest.

3. From Inner Clarity to Outer Direction: Visibility and Communication

Clarity of direction supports better decisions and next steps taken with confidence: you communicate more clearly and become visible in an authentic, real way.

4. Real Life Business Ideas (inspired by Romania, Austria or Europe).

How many valuable ideas start from practical skills, passions, observed needs, local resources, or the desire to help.

5. Entrepreneurial Needs and the Story That Sustains You

Trust, structure, pricing, communication, time, digital visibility and support. A clear story can adapt to market needs.

6. The Customer Profile and the Right People for Your Story

How to reach the right people with your product or service. Learn how to address them clearly and directly.

7. The Emotion Behind What You Offer. Write Your Story!

The joy, passion, care and meaning that give value to your work and make it memorable!

8. Presentation, Strategy and Digital Storytelling

How you present yourself through your story in conversations, fairs, recommendations, social media, and community presence.

9. Community as a Space for Growth and Visibility

How collaborations, local networks and mutual support can support business development at the local, regional and European level.

10. Exercises and Reflection Pages from the Guide

Questions, notes, ideas and next steps for your business and for the circles or communities you are part of or will create.

Other Sources of Inspiration from Outside Europe: Ikigai (Japan) & The Golden Circle (United States)



Your story is not separate from your business. It can become one of its greatest strengths.



1. INTRODUCTION

Your Story. The Advantage of Letting Yourself Be Seen as You Are

In the first module, you explored wellbeing, inner balance, and simple mindfulness presence exercises that support clarity, calm, and more conscious decisions. Through short moments of attention and breath awareness, you began to create more inner space in a life with many responsibilities.

This foundation is important. When there is clarity inside, it becomes easier to see what truly matters and in which direction you wish to go.

Your Story in Business

In this module, we turn our attention outward. We begin with your experience, your values, your motivation, and your ideas, and explore how they can become the foundation of an authentic and sustainable business.

Many beautiful businesses begin from real things: a practical skill, a passion, a need noticed in the community, or the sincere desire to offer something valuable to other people.

It is worth asking yourself:

- What emotion is behind what you do?
- What brings you joy when you create or help?
- What desire inspires you to begin or continue?
- What part of your experience can become valuable to others?

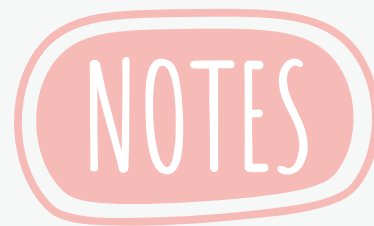


Storytelling is the way through which you express your story, your motivation, and your value in a clear and memorable way. It does not mean perfection, but sincerity. It means allowing people to see who you are and why what you do matters.

Through storytelling, a product gains an identity, and a service gains meaning and a human connection. People often choose to buy not just for utility, but also for the trust and authenticity they feel behind what you offer.

REFLECTION & NOTES PAGE

Space for Your Ideas



General Reflection Questions

1. What idea, thought, or feeling is present for me right now?

.....

2. What caught my attention the most in this chapter?

.....

3. How does this topic relate to my life / my business?

.....

4. What resource do I already have that I can use more?

.....

5. What recurring challenge do I notice?

.....

6. What could be a small and realistic next step?

.....

IDEAS, INSPIRATION, SKETCHES

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

AFFIRMATION!

What I carry within me deserves to take shape in this world.

Step by step, I am building something valuable and unique.

2. YOUR STORY IN COMMUNITY

Your story can create valuable connections within the communities you belong to or in the place where you live. When people get to know you for who you are, with your values, skills, and sincere intentions, authentic relationships can blossom.

From this closeness can come support, recommendations, collaborations, and trust. People are more likely to support someone they understand and resonate with. Sometimes, the first step toward growth doesn't start far away, but right close to you: in your village, in your circle of friends, in the community that sees you and can support you.

Your story is not a detail.
It can become the beginning of your
contribution to your community and beyond.

*The value you bring can make a
meaningful contribution to
your community.*



REFLECTION & NOTES PAGE

Space for Your Ideas



General Reflection Questions

1. What idea, thought, or feeling is present for me right now?

.....

2. What caught my attention the most in this chapter?

.....

3. How does this topic relate to my life / my business?

.....

4. What resource do I already have that I can use more?

.....

5. What recurring challenge do I notice?

.....

6. What could be a small and realistic next step?

.....

IDEAS, INSPIRATION, SKETCHES

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

AFFIRMATION!

What I carry within me deserves to take shape in this world.

Step by step, I am building something valuable and unique.

3. FROM INNER CLARITY TO OUTER DIRECTION: VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION

A good product or a valuable service also needs visibility. If people do not know who you are, what you offer, or how you can help them, it is more difficult for trust and interest to arise.

Effective communication does not mean complicated messages. Very often, the strongest forms of promotion are simple, clear, and authentic.

Visibility can be built step by step, through consistent presence and through the way you speak about what you do.

Simple examples of visibility:

- a clear presentation when someone asks you what you do
- real photos of your products or work process
- recommendations received from satisfied customers
- attending fairs, local events or community meetings
- a regularly updated social media page
- sharing your story and your values



Ask yourself:

- Do people quickly understand what I offer?
- Do I communicate in a clear and friendly manner?
- Does my story feel authentic?
- Am I visible enough for those who might need me?

You do not need to be everywhere. It is enough to be present in the right places, with a sincere and consistent message.

Visibility does not begin with perfect promotion. It begins when your authenticity becomes visible, when the community starts to know you and appreciate what you offer.

Your authentic presence helps the right people recognise your value. What you offer does not need to be for everyone, but for those who resonate with you.

REFLECTION & NOTES PAGE

Space for Your Ideas



General Reflection Questions

1. What idea, thought, or feeling is present for me right now?

.....

2. What caught my attention the most in this chapter?

.....

3. How does this topic relate to my life / my business?

.....

4. What resource do I already have that I can use more?

.....

5. What recurring challenge do I notice?

.....

6. What could be a small and realistic next step?

.....

IDEAS, INSPIRATION, SKETCHES

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

AFFIRMATION!

What I carry within me deserves to take shape in this world.

Step by step, I am building something valuable and unique.

EmpowerHER Rural Business

Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in Rural Areas

4. REAL-LIFE BUSINESS IDEAS

Many valuable business ideas don't start with complicated plans, but from everyday life. They often arise from what you already know how to do, from things you enjoy, from needs you observe around you, or from a sincere desire to help.

- A practical skill can become a service — or even a new professional path.
- A passion can become a product.
- A need you notice can become an opportunity that others may not have seen yet.
- A local resource can become an advantage — because it is already there.

Very often, what seems ordinary to you can be something truly valuable to someone else.



Simple business ideas from Romania, Austria and Europe:

Food: rural weekend brunch, gourmet baskets with local products, artisan jams and syrups, biscuits for cafés, picnic baskets.

Textiles: reimagined aprons, handmade bags, natural linens, embroidered accessories, personalised products.

Crafts: scented candles, rustic-modern ceramics, engraved wooden objects, seasonal decorations, local gifts.

Natural Products: lavender, premium teas, botanical soaps, aromatic pillows, relaxation blends.

Garden: weekly vegetable boxes, organic seedlings, seasonal flowers, potted herbs.



Family Services: a pot of healthy countryside food delivered weekly, home organisation, local shopping.

Children's Services: creative workshops in nature, rural holiday club, small-group afterschool activities.

Senior Services: delivered warm meals, companionship, shopping, digital help.

Events: rustic celebrations, elegant picnics, local floral décor, themed evenings.

Rural Tourism: slow living rooms, phone-free weekends, brunch at the farm, simple retreats.

Local Experiences: local tastings, bread-making workshop, lavender harvesting day, guided walks.

Digital: product photography,
social media pages.

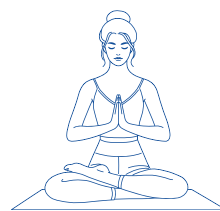


garden reels, Canva workshops,

Administrative: online bookings, document organisation, customer support, rural virtual assistant.

Gifts: local baskets, corporate packages, wellbeing sets – collaboration from the village!

Wellbeing: rural tea ceremony, mindfulness in nature, gentle yoga, women's circles.



Mobile Offers: beauty at home, massage at home, mobile consulting, small repairs.

Sometimes the best idea isn't something new, but something local, authentic, memorably presented, and most importantly, something that fits you naturally!

There's no need to invent something completely new. Sometimes it's enough to take a closer look at what already exists and give it a useful, attractive, and well-presented form.

ASK YOURSELF:

- What do I know how to do well?
- What do I enjoy doing?
- What are people already asking me for?
- What is missing in my area?
- What local resources can I make use of?

*Many good ideas
already exist within
you and in your hands.
They may be ready to
become real, step by
step.*

5. Entrepreneurial Needs and the Story That Sustains You

In many villages and communities in Transylvania, Romania, or the European Union, women carry several roles every day at the same time: family, household, workplace, caring for others, and the desire to build something of their own. For this reason, starting a business can bring both enthusiasm and natural challenges or questions.

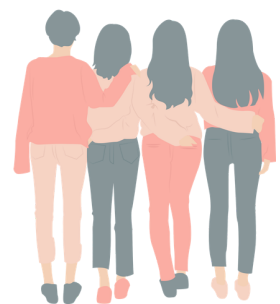
*How do I begin? How do I organize myself? How do I find time?
How do I set prices? How do I become known?*

These questions are normal and often appear in the early stages of rural entrepreneurship.

Within the questionnaires carried out through the ongoing project, the strongest needs expressed by participants are connected to community and real support. Many women wish not to walk this path alone anymore, but to have access to a space where they can learn, ask questions, collaborate, and grow together.

The following needs were repeatedly highlighted:

- belonging to an active and positive community
- real support, encouragement, and exchange of experience
- clarity for the next business steps
- promotion and greater visibility
- digital support and the use of social media
- new ideas, business adjustment or repositioning, and practical inspiration
- courage to begin or expand their activity
- local and regional collaborations
- balance between work, family, and personal time – wellbeing



Within the workshop and guide **Storytelling, Business & Community – Your Story, Your Ideas, and the Emotion That Grows Your Business**, the personal story is not only a promotional tool.

It can become the bridge between your experience, market needs, and the people who are looking for exactly what you can offer.

Even your needs can be transformed into a story. Whether you are at the idea stage, at the beginning of your journey, or already experienced in business, the challenges, steps taken, and lessons learned can inspire trust and closeness.

Everyday life and our real story, shared with people we resonate with, are often the source of strength that helps us continue and grow.

Ask yourself:

- What kind of support do I need right now?
- Who are the people with whom I can (or cannot) grow together?
- What part of my story can inspire other women? How do I tell it?
- How can I transform my experience into a useful story around my offer?

Your needs today, when you become aware of them, can become the direction, strength, and story that sustain you tomorrow.



6. Customer Profile and the Right People for Your Story

How to address the right people through your product or service. Address them clearly and directly.

Many small businesses try to talk to everyone at first. In practice, general messages are harder to remember and create less connection. Communication becomes more effective when you know clearly who you are addressing.

Customer profiling means understanding who needs what you offer the most, who appreciates your value, and who is more open to your working style.

Marketing and consumer behaviour approaches often show that people respond more easily to messages they recognise themselves in. When someone feels like you're speaking exactly to their needs, interest and trust grow faster.



SIMPLE EXAMPLES

- a busy mother looking for healthy ready-made food
- a person searching for local and authentic gifts
- a tourist interested in real rural experiences
- a woman looking for wellbeing, circle, and support
- a family needing practical and trustworthy help

ASK YOURSELF:

- Who needs most what I offer?
- Who appreciates my style and values?
- What concrete problem do I solve?
- Where can I meet these people?
- How can I speak to them more simply and directly?



Short Exercise – The Ideal Customer:

I help

(e.g. busy mothers, tourists, families, women entrepreneurs)

Who need

(e.g. time, relaxation, clean products, support)

Through

(e.g. my product, my service)

And they feel

(e.g. supported, understood, inspired, relieved)

You do not need to convince everyone.

It is enough to reach the right people — those who understand, value, and genuinely need what you offer.



7. The Emotion Behind What You Offer. Write Your Story!

The joy, passion, care, and meaning that give value to your work and make it memorable.

Many people believe they choose only products or services. In reality, people often choose the way they feel in connection with the product or service you offer.

A product can be useful.

A service can be correct.

But authentic emotion is often what remains in memory and can influence the desire to buy.



When there is joy, passion, care, or meaning behind your work, these are subtly transmitted through your voice, energy, presentation, details, and relationship with people. Details speak.

This is why two similar businesses can have different results. One sells only a product. The other conveys a feeling, a story, and an experience.

Consumer psychology suggests that many purchasing decisions are influenced by emotion as well as practical needs. People often choose what inspires trust, what they like, what attracts them, or what makes them feel good.

PEOPLE REMEMBER:

- how you made them feel
- whether they felt care and authenticity
- whether they perceived real value
- whether your story was sincere
- whether they resonated with your energy



In rural entrepreneurship, this can be a major advantage. Products and services created with care, patience, and local identity communicate something that cannot easily be copied.

People sometimes forget what you said.

But they will always remember the emotion they felt in connection with you and what you offer.

Discover the Emotion and Gift in What You Offer

1. What ability has existed in me for as long as I can remember?

Sometimes, good ideas do not appear as something new, but as the rediscovery of something that has always been present within you.

Ask yourself:

- What was I good at from my youth or for as long as I can remember?
- What came naturally to me, without much effort?
- What did people appreciate me for or ask my help with?
- What do I do well even when I do not notice it?



Complete:

My natural talent may be:

People often come to me for:

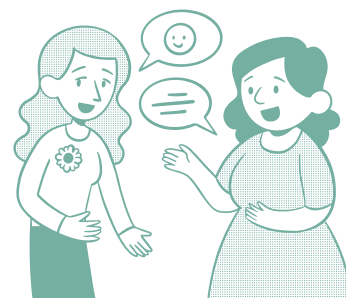
2. What could I not keep only for myself? What do I need to share?

Some things ask to be expressed. When we do not live them, we feel that something is missing. Do you know that feeling?

Ask yourself:

- What do I feel I need to offer further?
- What can I not keep “closed” inside me?
- What makes me feel alive when I do it?

If I did not express this, what would I miss?



Complete:

I cannot live fully without expressing:

When I do this, I feel:

3. Why do people choose to be close to me?

People often choose not only a product or service, but also the feeling and trust they associate with it.

Ask yourself:

- How do people feel in my presence?
- Why do they enjoy spending time with me?
- What would they easily buy from me, and why?
- What energy, quality, or atmosphere do I naturally offer?



Complete::

People feel around me:

They would easily buy from me:

Because I transmit:



Now write your story:

Example of a short story

I have always loved cooking and caring for people through simple things. I noticed that many busy people, managers, or families living a very fast-paced life no longer have time for home-cooked meals. Or meals cooked like those made by their mother or grandmother in the countryside. Today, twice a week, I prepare a pot of good and tasty food, which I deliver directly to them. Twice a week, they remember the mother they miss, and their children feel closer to the familiar taste and warmth of their grandparents' home.

*Your story can become the bridge between who you are
and what you offer to the world.*

REFLECTION & NOTES PAGE

Space for Your Ideas



General Reflection Questions

1. What idea, thought, or feeling is present for me right now?

.....

2. What caught my attention the most in this chapter?

.....

3. How does this topic relate to my life / my business?

.....

4. What resource do I already have that I can use more?

.....

5. What recurring challenge do I notice?

.....

6. What could be a small and realistic next step?

.....

IDEAS, INSPIRATION, SKETCHES

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

AFFIRMATION!

What I carry within me deserves to take shape in this world.

Step by step, I am building something valuable and unique.

EmpowerHER Rural Business

Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in Rural Areas

8. Presentation, Strategy, and Digital Storytelling

How you present yourself through your story in conversations, fairs, recommendations, social media, and your presence in the community.

Many rural businesses already have something extremely valuable: simple products, services created with soul, real skills, patience, tradition and, very importantly, a connection with nature. Sometimes what is missing is not the value, but the way it is presented and communicated digitally.

In a modern and fast-paced world, people are increasingly looking for authentic and simple things. Stories told online can become a bridge between the village and the city, between tradition and the present. **When you go to the urban audience with what you created in the village, you don't come with "less", but you bring something rare and valuable: roots, simplicity, real taste, which can almost be felt through your story.**

A product with rural roots can be perceived as premium when it is presented beautifully. A local service can become more attractive when it is clearly explained, including online. An authentic story can become memorable when told with sincerity.

Strategy isn't just about complicated marketing. Sometimes it's about showing people, including digitally, who you are, what you offer, and why what you do matters.

Sometimes it means enthusiastically expressing who you are, what you offer, and why it matters.

Where you can tell your story:

- in direct conversations
- at fairs and events
- through word-of-mouth recommendations
- on Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp
- through natural photographs not overloaded with emojis
- through short videos from real life
- through your calm and active presence in the community



What many people appreciate today:

- authenticity
- real products
- trustworthy people
- simple and beautiful aesthetics
- sincere story
- consistent quality
- clear values



Do not try to appear as someone else. The modern world is already full of perfect images. What is often missing is exactly what you have: reality, roots, and a little imperfection.

Ask yourself:

- What do I have that is valuable and perhaps I do not see enough? Ask others too!
- How can I present more beautifully what I already offer?
- What simple story can I tell about my product?
- How can I bring my village to the city in an elegant way?

*When you present your roots with confidence,
they can become a meaningful part of what sets
you apart.*



9. Community as a Space for Development and Visibility

How collaborations, local networks, and mutual support can support business development at local, regional, and European level.

Many small businesses believe growth comes only through money, advertising, or major investments. In reality, growth often begins much closer to home: through people, relationships, and trust.

In rural communities, people know each other better, notice who works seriously, and recommend good things more quickly. For this reason, community can become one of the most valuable spaces for starting out, receiving support, and gaining visibility — from the village to the region and beyond.

Sometimes, one single person speaking well about you can bring more than an expensive advertisement. A local collaboration can open new doors. An invitation to a fair or event can bring clients, ideas, and valuable contacts.

Community does not only mean the place where you live.

It can include:

- your village or municipality
- the nearby town or city
- other women entrepreneurs
- returning clients who recommend you further; people travel for something special
- online groups with shared interests
- local or regional partners
- European networks and international projects



When you support other people as well, the community begins to support you in return. Trust is built through presence, reliability, and the way you contribute.

In an increasingly digital world, people are once again looking for real connections — connections with roots. That is why businesses that preserve the human element may have an important advantage.



Ask yourself:

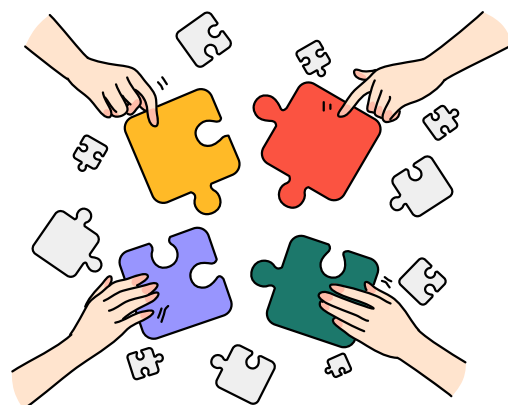
- Who are the people around me who can support me?
- Whom can I support in return?
- Where can I be more present in the community?
- What simple collaboration could I begin?
- Who might recommend me if I do good work?

You don't have to do everything on your own.

Sometimes, a meaningful path to development begins with genuine connections, mutual support, and kind thoughts shared with others. The right conversation, a recommendation, or a collaboration can open up new opportunities.

For example, a neighbor recommends a friend's products from town, someone invites you to a local fair, and another female entrepreneur shows you how to promote yourself online. Real opportunities can arise from simple gestures. With those around you, with your community, the journey can become easier.

*The next step for
your business is
not always far
away.*



10. Exercises and Reflection Pages of this Guide

Questions, notes, ideas, and clarifying the next steps for your business and for the circles or communities you are part of or will create.

In many parts of the world, people look for direction not only through strict plans, but also through understanding their own story, personal values, and the way they can contribute to the world. From Japan to the United States and Europe, internationally recognised models show that when a person feels grounded, understands who they are, what they can offer, and why their work matters, greater clarity, confidence, and steadier steps begin to emerge.

These tools do not offer perfect formulas. They offer meaningful questions that help you discover the right answers for yourself.

Throughout this guide, you will also find special pages for reflection and notes. Use them whenever you feel an idea, an emotion, a moment of clarity, or an important next step arise that you do not want to lose. Sometimes, the most valuable answers appear spontaneously, in a simple moment of stillness or inspiration.

The previous Mindfulness Guide may also support this process through its exercises for wellbeing and clarity. You can find it on the website: www.viehub.ro/resurse.

The reflection pages can help you spontaneously note:

- a new business idea
- a good message for promotion
- something you discovered about yourself
- a possible collaboration
- a suitable client who came to mind
- a concrete step for next week
- an important question for the future

You can return to these pages many times. When you write, thoughts become clearer and direction begins to take shape more easily.

As you can see in the attached note pages, sometimes it is enough to answer a few simple questions honestly: what you feel now, what caught your attention, what resources you already have, or what the next realistic step might be. These small answers can open the door to meaningful next steps.

Other Sources of Inspiration from Outside Europe: Ikigai (Japan) & The Golden Circle (USA)

The **Ikigai model**, rooted in Japanese culture, helps you discover an authentic path at the intersection of the answers to four simple questions:

- what you love to do,
- what you're good at,
- what your community may need, and
- what people would pay for.



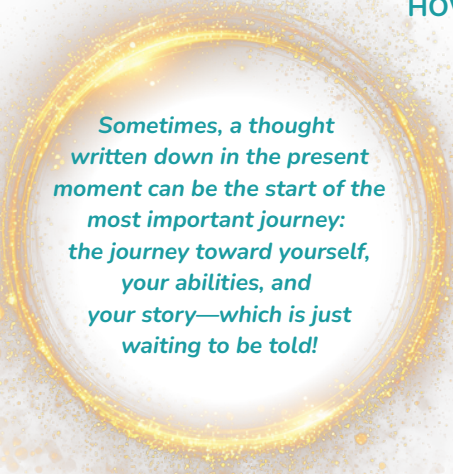
When it comes to storytelling, Ikigai helps you talk not just about the product, but about the meaning behind it. Your story becomes clearer when it stems from passion, talent, and the value you offer to others.

The **Golden Circle model**, created by Simon Sinek, shows that people often connect with the purpose behind a business. It has three levels: WHY—why you do what you do (the most important level), HOW—how you work or deliver, and WHAT—what you actually offer.

For storytelling, this model helps you go beyond the product and communicate the meaning, values, and emotion behind your work. This way, people don't just hear your offer; they understand why it matters—first and foremost to you!

When people genuinely understand why you do something, trust can grow, and people may become more open to the product or service.

WHY – Why? / Why do I do what I do?
HOW – How? / How do I offer this in a unique and authentic way?
WHAT – What? / What exactly do I offer people?



*Sometimes, a thought
written down in the present
moment can be the start of the
most important journey:
the journey toward yourself,
your abilities, and
your story—which is just
waiting to be told!*



Write when you feel inspired.



TOPICS COVERED IN THIS GUIDE

Storytelling and Authentic Communication
Rural Entrepreneurship and Idea Development
Community Development and Local Collaboration
Discovering Your Calling and Direction, and Leveraging Your Skills & Practical Tools

USEFUL RESOURCES AND REFERENCES TO HELP YOU CONTINUE YOUR STORY

This guide was created to provide practical support on topics such as personal stories, inner clarity, community storytelling, business ideas, customer profiles, the emotion behind what you offer, and authentic visibility—including in the digital space.

1. Simon Sinek – Start With Why / The Golden Circle: Useful for clarifying the purpose of a business: why you do what you do, how you work, and what you actually offer.
2. Donald Miller – Building a StoryBrand / StoryBrand Framework: Supports clear communication by helping entrepreneurs structure their message around purpose, value, and the people they want to reach.
3. Canva Design School & Platform: A practical resource for digital materials, visual storytelling, and online presentations.
4. Héctor García & Francesc Miralles – Ikigai: A source of reflection on meaning, direction, and the value you can offer to others.
5. Exercises in this Guide: Developed based on specialist input, author observations, and identified needs within the EmpowerHER group, supporting clarity, direction, and authentic business expression.
6. Community Feedback, Questionnaires and Validation: Feedback from the EmpowerHER community, questionnaires, real conversations, and audience responses supported the process of identifying needs, refining ideas, and validating them in practice.

Together, these resources complement the exercises in this guide and may support the development of a clearer, more authentic, and relevant business story.

AUTHORS' DISCLAIMER

The content of this guide reflects the professional experience, research and perspective of the authors in the fields of adult education, wellbeing, entrepreneurial development, storytelling, authentic communication and community-based business development. The material is intended for educational purposes and offers reflection tools, examples and practices that may support personal and professional development. The exercises and concepts presented in this guide do not replace psychological, medical, legal, financial or other specialised professional support. Participants are encouraged to adapt the proposed practices to their own needs and personal or professional contexts. Each user is responsible for how they apply the information, examples and exercises in this material.

EU DISCLAIMER

The European Union, through the Erasmus+ programme, is not responsible for the production of this publication. The content reflects the views of the authors only. The European Union and the National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained in this material.

The images and graphic elements used in this guide were created by the authors or come from image libraries licensed for free educational and non-commercial use.

Authors: Nicoleta Maria PFEFFER-BARBELA & Petra Christine BERNKLAU

EmpowerHER Rural Business – Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in Rural Areas
Project co-funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Adult Education programme, Small-scale Partnerships.



REFLECTION & NOTES PAGE

Space for Your Ideas



General Reflection Questions

1. What idea, thought, or feeling is present for me right now?

.....

2. What caught my attention the most in this chapter?

.....

3. How does this topic relate to my life / my business?

.....

4. What resource do I already have that I can use more?

.....

5. What recurring challenge do I notice?

.....

6. What could be a small and realistic next step?

.....

IDEAS, INSPIRATION, SKETCHES

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

AFFIRMATION!

What I carry within me deserves to take shape in this world.

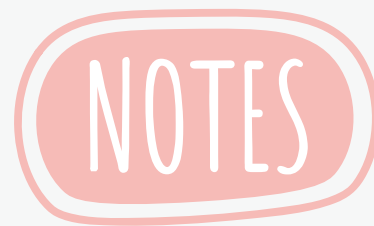
Step by step, I am building something valuable and unique.

EmpowerHER Rural Business

Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in Rural Areas

REFLECTION & NOTES PAGE

Space for Your Ideas



General Reflection Questions

1. What idea, thought, or feeling is present for me right now?

.....

2. What caught my attention the most in this chapter?

.....

3. How does this topic relate to my life / my business?

.....

4. What resource do I already have that I can use more?

.....

5. What recurring challenge do I notice?

.....

6. What could be a small and realistic next step?

.....

IDEAS, INSPIRATION, SKETCHES

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

AFFIRMATION!

What I carry within me deserves to take shape in this world.

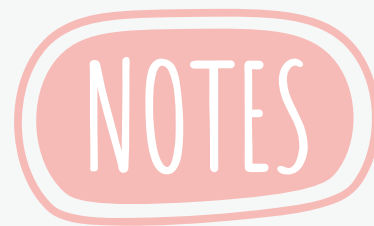
Step by step, I am building something valuable and unique.

EmpowerHER Rural Business

Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in Rural Areas

REFLECTION & NOTES PAGE

Space for Your Ideas



General Reflection Questions

1. What idea, thought, or feeling is present for me right now?

.....

2. What caught my attention the most in this chapter?

.....

3. How does this topic relate to my life / my business?

.....

4. What resource do I already have that I can use more?

.....

5. What recurring challenge do I notice?

.....

6. What could be a small and realistic next step?

.....

IDEAS, INSPIRATION, SKETCHES

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

AFFIRMATION!

What I carry within me deserves to take shape in this world.

Step by step, I am building something valuable and unique.

EmpowerHER Rural Business

Sustainable and Mindful Business Growth for Women in Rural Areas

EmpowerHER Rural Business

EmpowerHER Rural Business – Sustainable and Mindful
Business Growth for Women in Rural Areas



PRACTICAL GUIDE STORYTELLING IN BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

Your Story, Your Ideas, and the Emotion That Grows Your Business

This learning tool is dedicated to women in rural areas who want to develop their business or business idea in a sustainable way, with a focus on inner balance, clarity and confidence-building.

This guide is part of a series of three complementary guides:

- **Wellbeing, Mindfulness & Resilience in Business**
- **Storytelling: The Story of Your Business, Ideas, Development and Community**
- **Digital Skills for Business Development, Canva & Online Tools**

Together, they offer an integrated approach: from inner balance to strategic clarity and practical digital tools.

**Nicoleta Pfeffer-Barbela
Petra Christine Bernklau**

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme
Romania–Austria Partnership

