

WHO IS YOUR BRAND?



**UNDERSTANDING BRAND ARCHETYPES AND
THE PERSONALITY OF YOUR BRAND...**



BRAND ARCHETYPES

An archetype ([/ˈɑːrkiːtaɪp/](#)) is a universally understood symbol, term,^[1] or pattern of behavior, a prototype upon which others are copied, patterned, or emulated. Archetypes are often used in [myths](#) and [storytelling](#) across different cultures.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archetype>

IN THE BEGINNING...

Brand archetypes aren't new. In fact, they're as old as Gilgamesh and other ancient stories. These narratives began to shape the myths and legends that have been passed on, translated, shared and re-imagined for centuries. They have helped inspire new stories, built on the foundations of rich story and character archetypes that transcend time, borders and cultures.



Photo thanks to <http://healiganworld2010.blogspot.com.au/>

PSYCHOLOGY 101

These stories, told over the centuries, tap deep into our “*collective unconscious*” as Carl Jung described.

It’s only when we watch Titanic, read a nursery rhyme or share last night’s dreams that we can identify with these age-old myths and characters.



Carl Jung finger puppet can be purchased here
<http://www.philosophersguild.com/>

THE FIRST STEP

It's no surprise then that brand archetypes are a useful tool for businesses when they are trying to articulate – or differentiate - their brand's personality.

They have been an incredibly potent weapon for many of the world's leading brands as we will see.

The first step is to understand the character of each of the 12 main archetypes... and then identify which archetype best suits your brand.



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TYPES OF ARCHE...TYPES

Typically, there are 12 character archetypes that make up a brand archetype canvas.

From the wise old Sage, to the Hero, the Explorer, the Lover and the Creator - each of these brand archetypes has an ability to shape a brand's story and provide an unfair advantage in the marketplace.

Not all brands fit neatly inside one archetype, which is why some brands choose a primary and secondary archetype.



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1. THE HERO



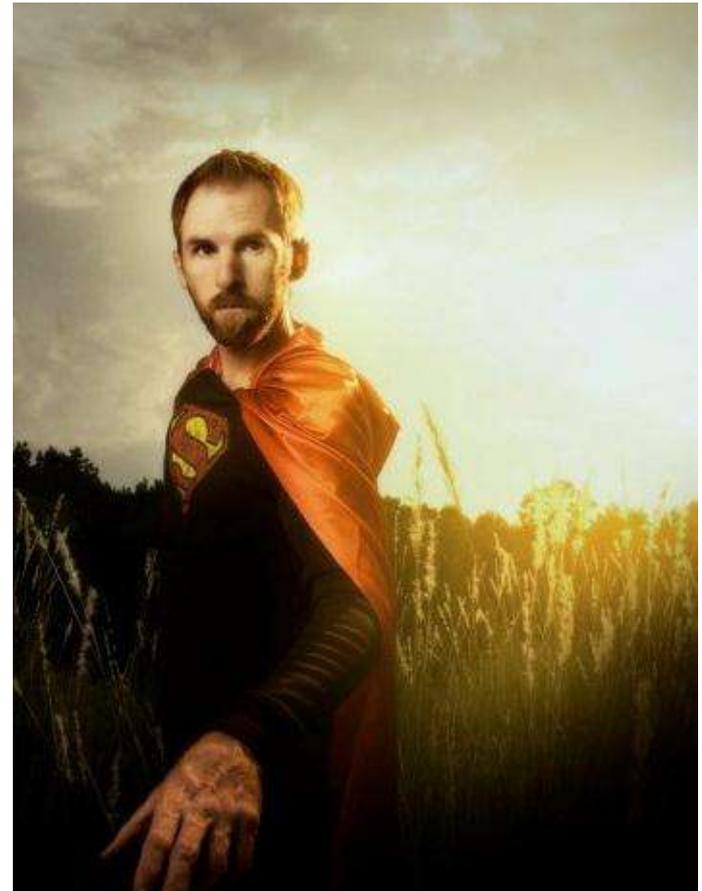
The hero archetype is perhaps the best known of all archetypes. He or she is impossible to miss, usually because they're the main character. It's Batman, Indiana Jones, Wonder Woman, Rocky, Lara Croft.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Typically, brands that assume the Hero archetype are in the business of helping people, of championing a cause or providing unexpected solutions. They are fearless in the pursuit of their goals.

These brands focus on consumer segments that have a need they can't satisfy themselves, or who want to join a good cause under another banner.

Like any Hero, these brands are fallible. Beware the Hero whose words are louder than actions!



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2. THE CREATOR



SONY



The Creator is powerful and innovative. They are the champion of their domain, always focused on their task. Their goal is to create something new, and usually something that adds value to others.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Creator brands are often found in the disruptive technology and innovation space. They are the pioneers of new stuff, typically having the wherewithal to make a few mistakes but at the same time, able to forge ahead as leaders in their industry. The changes they create aren't just 2.0 upgrades – they're breakthrough ideas that usually provide unfair advantage.

The people who follow these brands are considered the early adopters: willing to trial, change, upgrade and advocate the latest products and services.



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3. THE OUTLAW



The Outlaw doesn't make the rules. He breaks 'em! Often inspired by revenge or by revolution, the Outlaw sits at the fringe of society, despised by many, but loved by a loyal few. Their purpose is to achieve a better or fairer outcome. Just like Robin Hood, they're prepared to break the law as long as they stay true to their moral compass.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Brands that imbue the Outlaw archetype usually appeal to a part of society that feel disenfranchised or mistreated. These brands lead the charge on behalf of this community, creating opportunities that the average person would not be able to achieve alone.

There is no room for elitism here. The Outlaw brand is about balancing the scorecard, and as long as they play fair, their followers will stay true.



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4. THE MAGICIAN



The Magician, also known as the Wizard, can sometimes be confused as a Sage. The difference is that the Magician's knowledge is focused on a particular interest whereas the Sage knows all. In other words, the Magician knows the *How* but not necessarily the *Why*.

Magicians have a unique ability to transform one thing into another. This power creates mystery and surprise.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Brands that take on the magician archetype are able to surprise and delight their consumers with experiences that provide a sense of escape or empowerment. Their products and services have the power to transform habits, preferences and loyalties.

Magician brands should always focus on creating magical customer experiences, not using their power to simply transform their bottom line!



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5. EVERYDAY GUY



Most of us mere mortals would feel most at home with the Everyday Guy/Girl archetype. This character is as reliable as they come. Whilst they may not stand out from the crowd, they are the ones who keep the wheels turning. Positive, attentive and predictable, the Everyday Guy/Girl understands their modest but important role in the world and is happy to pursue it.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

The Everyday brand is often a quiet achiever, always delivering consistent quality day after day. They may not have a high profile brand, but their customers rely on them to be there for them without fuss or fanfare.

Everyday brands need to be careful that they don't become complacent or lose their sense of purpose.



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6. THE INNOCENT



Forrest Gump. Those two words sum up the Innocent archetype perfectly. There is a simplicity and innocence that is endearing and enduring with the Innocent. Sometimes accused of seeing the world through rose coloured glasses, the Innocent actually has a strong moral code that they adhere to without fail. They naturally trust others because they believe in the goodness of people, even though this can be easily manipulated.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

There is a strong attraction to Innocent brand archetypes for those who believe in the goodness of others. These brands can be very alluring because they reinforce the goodness of 'humanity'. There is also a sense of romance about brands who see the world as a happy place.



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7. THE JESTER

Also known as the Joker or Fool, the Jester is quick-witted and irreverent. But the fool should never be underestimated! The jester's power is his ability to question others without confrontation. Their role is to question habits, traditions and status quo – the things that most people either take for granted or accept without question. Essentially they are change agents who go about their work under the radar.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Jester brands appeal to consumers who like to challenge convention – or have their own conventions challenged. They work well in issue-rich territories where they can highlight problems without being confrontational or aggressive. They can be very effective at affecting change in a positive way.



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8. THE LOVER

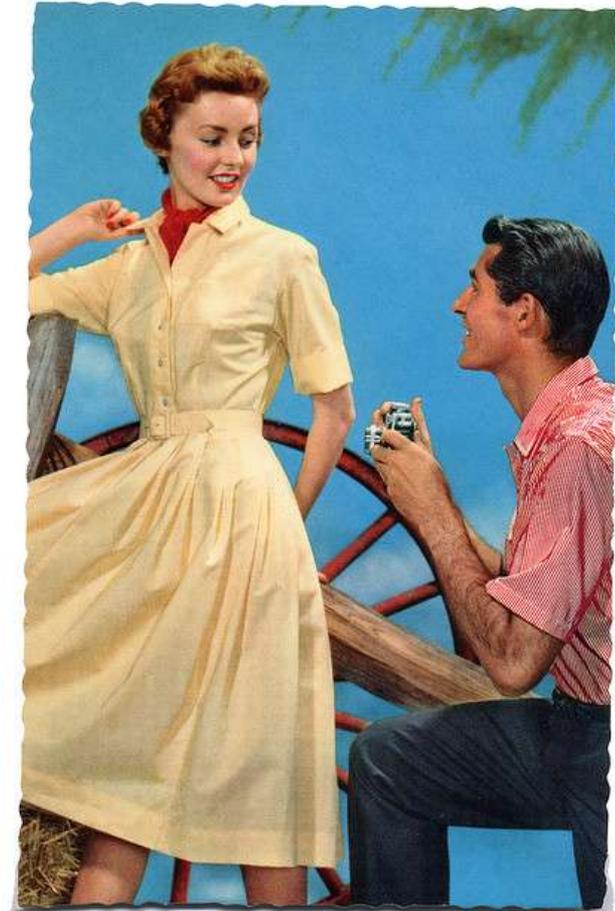
It's like falling in love all over again!

The Lover is high on passion and romance but understands little – or cares little – about the rational, logical things in life.

There is a deep commitment to relationships and a high level of intimacy that the Lover seeks. Left alone, the Lover will wilt and die, unable to bear the loneliness and silence.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Brands that assume the Lover archetype are in the business of relationships. They are often service-led businesses that aim to bring people together in a fun and mutually-beneficial way. Lover brands focus on emotional benefits rather than functional benefits.



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9. THE RULER



If you had an appointment with the Godfather, you would know the power and fear that the Ruler possesses. The shaking in your boots would give it away! The Ruler seeks power and control. Their mission is to create happiness but their means of achieving it can be ruthless.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Ruler brands sit at the top of the food chain. They usually possess a lot of heritage in their category and have risen to the top with conviction and purpose. These brands usually own a high-status product or service, and being the leader of the pack, these brands offer a great sense of security and stability.

Sometimes their power can also be their undoing, losing the ability to react quickly to change and being overthrown by younger innovative brands.



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10. THE SAGE



Oh Wise one... tell me what I should do?
The all-knowing Sage can see things most ordinary people can't. As they say, wisdom is not just about knowing things, it's about understanding them and this is the Sage's skill. Always willing to offer advice and mentor those who seek knowledge, the Sage is empowered by giving – not hiding his wisdom.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Any brand that helps consumers understand or gain knowledge about particular subjects fits into the Sage archetype. Research institutes, news services, education facilities and legal services are often using the Sage archetype to define their brand.



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11. THE EXPLORER



The Explorer is never idle. To find meaning in the world, they know they must go in search of it. Unlike Adventurers, Explorers want to understand the meaning of their purpose rather than just seek high thrills.

Learning and knowledge are the two main pursuits of Explorers, and for most, finding the answer is just the start of the next journey.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Explorer brands aren't content to just 'be'. They are constantly seeking more understanding of the world they live in, and they often challenge their customers as well. This restless pursuit is like honey to a bee for many consumers who like to take a challenge head-on.

Boredom is worse than death for Explorer brands which is why many of these brands break through with new products, services and technology.



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12. THE CAREGIVER



Putting the needs of others before their own is a very typical trait of Caregivers. Their role in life is to protect and care for others, tapping into their deep wells of compassion and generosity. Any parent will understand the almost automatic role of the Caregiver, placing their child's needs first and only attending to their own once the child is happy again.

BRAND ARCHETYPE

Brands that offer a sense of nurturance and care will do well adopting the Caregiver archetype. Not-For-Profits and community focused organisations are obvious examples of Caregiver brands, however certain consumer brands such as baby care and financial services for the elderly can also assume this brand archetype.



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BRAND ARCHETYPES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CONTENT

One of the benefits of employing brand archotyping is not just in delivering a clear and easy-to-understand brand identity, but it also helps to shape a brand's content strategy.

When your brand claims to be the Robin Hood of the industry, it makes it incredibly easy for customers to identify with the story of your brand and what you stand for... or in Robin's case, what you won't stand for!



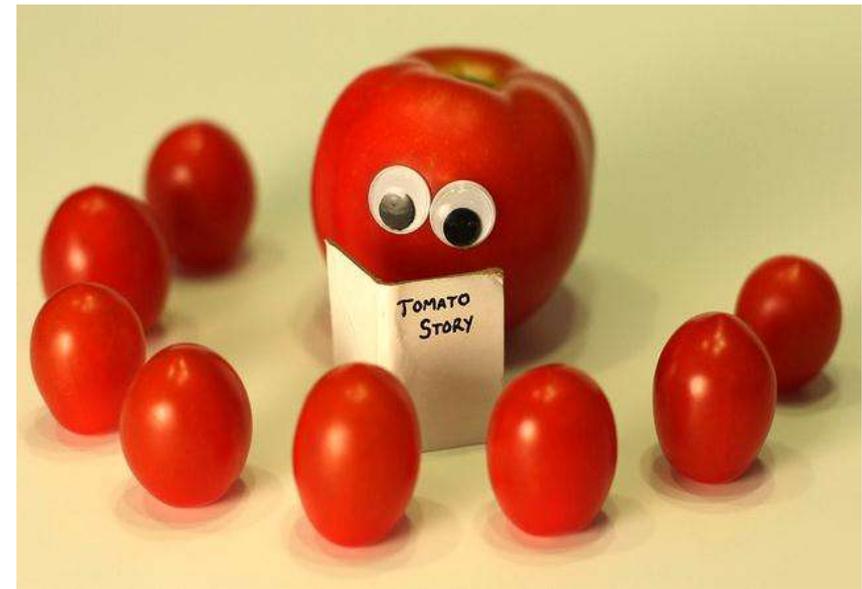
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BRAND ARCHETYPES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CONTENT

Applying this brand archetype to your content strategy gives your business a ready-to-roll platform from which you can deliver fresh and compelling stories that truly resonate with your audience.

Why?

Because framing your brand and your marketing efforts around the construct of an archetype creates a believable, meaningful brand story that determines not only what your business says, but what it does, from the CEO down to the delivery guy.



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BRAND ARCHETYPES AND THE PERSONAL BRAND

Richard Branson (Virgin) has built an empire playing the role of Robin Hood – breaking all the rules and reinventing the way business is done.

Steve Jobs (Apple) was convincing as the Magician, turning technology into a sexy word and delivering the business out of debt to become the world's biggest company.

In these instances, their personal brand has been the living essence of the brand itself.

Interestingly, each one of these brands lives up to its brand identity every day, in every way.



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BRAND ARCHETYPES

KEEPING IT REAL

But as we know, talk is cheap. If your brand doesn't deliver on its promise, if it cannot live up to what it claims to be and what it stands for, it won't take long at all for your customers to drop your brand for one that is authentic.

Many good brands with good intentions have been swept up and tossed into the dustbin of irrelevance. Intent is only worthwhile when it is acted upon.

Remember, creating a brand archetype is the process of identifying human characteristics that fit your brand's disposition in the marketplace. Choose an archetype that is true to your brand's heritage and worthy of following into the future.



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BRAND ARCHETYPES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

For the swarms of brands entering or championing the digital space, brand archotyping can have a profound impact on the user journey and experience.

The revelation of your brand story along the various digital and traditional touch points of your business can create an unfair advantage in your industry.

A compelling brand archetype enables the brand story to be delivered consistently and compellingly. Coke has re-engineered its entire digital presence to deliver the story of Happiness. This isn't just talk. This is happening!



Coke sees a sale as a “transfer of enthusiasm”
<http://advertising-age.blogspot.com.au>

BRAND ARCHETYPES

DISCOVER YOUR DNA

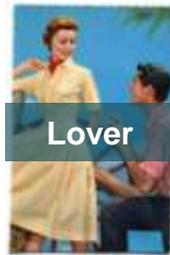
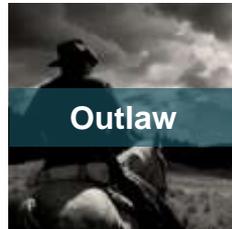
Businesses should take care in choosing the right brand archetype, particularly if the brand is firmly established. It has implications down the line if the brand wants to reposition or refresh. Most brands will feel a pull towards the archetypes that reflect their current values and positioning, and that makes it easier to select the primary and secondary (yes you can have two) archetypes to pursue.

If your brand is in the midst of a revitalisation process, then it would be worthwhile spending time acquainting yourselves with all the archetypes to find which ones resonate most with your brand vision.



BRAND ARCHETYPES

WHO IS YOUR BRAND?



So, are you ready? Can your business build a story around a brand archetype that you can live and breathe on a daily basis?

If you think that there's a Hero inside, or you're ready to break all the rules and ride off with your posse to take on the world like the Outlaw you truly are, it might be time to explore your brand archetype!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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