

THE 12 BRAND ARCHETYPES
WHICH IS YOURS?

What identity does your brand assume?

We all want a loyal following.

We're constantly looking for that magical marketing plan that will connect us to our audience and make our product or service irreplaceable in the eyes of our customers.

What we often fail to realize is connections are just relationships. If you aren't clear about who you are, no one is going to be interested in you. It's critical you understand your brand, and how you should start a relationship with your customers.

Here are the 12 basic identities, or archetypes, a brand can assume:

1. THE MAGICIAN MAKES DREAMS COME TRUE

Magician brands don't build you a better toothbrush or help you keep your house clean; they bring your wildest dreams to life. Disney is an example of a magical brand. Though it is fundamentally a media company, the company offers a transformative experience. The organization sits in a category of its own because of its vision. Imagine another brand that could build the Magic Kingdom or a Disney World.

2. THE SAGE IS ALWAYS SEEKING THE TRUTH

To a sage, wisdom is the key to success. Everything else is secondary to the pursuit of knowledge. Though this brand might give you the warm and fuzzies, and they don't enrapture you in a fantasy world like Disney, a sage commands respect by illustrating brilliance.

Harvard University is a sage. The academic environment is one of the most revered in the world, boasting an alumni list that includes eight U.S. presidents, 21 Nobel laureates and Mark Zuckerberg (sort of).

3. THE INNOCENT JUST WANTS TO BE HAPPY

Everything is free, virtuous and content in an innocent's world. An innocent brand will never guilt you try to convince you excessively. Instead, an innocent brand will charm you with something more powerful: Nostalgia.

Orville Redenbacher is the prototypical innocent. The company tries to sell you a childhood treat and the mascot is a patriarchal figure.

4. THE OUTLAW SEEKS REVOLUTION

The outlaw isn't afraid. Where the innocent touches the part of you that loved snack time in kindergarten, the outlaw archetype appeals to the part of you that cut classes in high school.

Building a cult following like Apple is the ultimate goal of an outlaw brand. Remember those old iPod commercials where monochromatic figures had the times of their lives dancing? That ad doesn't tell you to stand in a crowd or passively attend a concert. It tells you to be yourself, to dance whenever you like, and to do it with Apple. If you think Apple doesn't have a cult following, consider this: Did people wait in line for hours when the Galaxy S7 was released?

5. THE JESTER LIVES IN THE MOMENT

Humor, silliness, and nonsense are all in a jester's toolkit. The goal of a jester brand is to make you smile with light-hearted fun.

The Old Spice Man is an all-time favorite ad campaign and the perfect example of a jester archetype. Some male consumers react well to hyper-masculine branding, while others don't. By making a joke out of these super manly brands, Old Spice appeal to both sides.

6. THE LOVER MAKES YOU THEIRS

Passion, pleasure, and sensuality are keys to the lover's heart. A lover brand wants you to associate them with the intimate moments in your life. What do you buy to celebrate? How do you indulge your significant other? Chances are, you're buying from a lover brand.

Think of Godiva Chocolate ads. Do they ever make you think about your health, your finances or your future? No. Godiva seduces you. It shows off its richness and creaminess.

7. THE EXPLORER BREAK FREE

Freedom is the top priority for an explorer. Where other brands might try to help you build a home, these brands want to get you out of it.

Subaru is the classic fit for this archetype. The company doesn't sell cars based on luxury or comfort – instead, freedom is the focus. Blizzard? No problem. Subaru lets you decide where you're going, no matter the circumstance –You're free.

8. THE RULER WANTS ABSOLUTE POWER

Luxury and exclusivity – A ruler brand is a gatekeeper. Perception as high-quality and expensive is critical, so product categories that fall under this umbrella include jewelry and high-end vehicles.

Do you buy a Mercedes-Benz because of its crash-test rating? No. That quietly understood value is what a ruler brand sells.

9. THE CAREGIVER NURTURES YOU

The caregiver is benevolent and just wants to be there for you. Caregiver brands build trust. It's rare to see a caregiver brand run an ad that takes a shot at their competition. They are the opposite of confrontational.

Johnson & Johnson's tagline line is "Johnson & Johnson: A Family Company." This is bread-and-butter for the caregiver archetype.

10. THE HERO WANTS TO PROVE HIMSELF

The hero makes the world better by being the best. A hero brand isn't concerned with nurturing, it's there to challenge you. If you want to rise to the occasion, you're going to need a hero's help.

The U.S. Army is the ultimate example of a hero archetype. Think of the recruitment commercials you've seen with troops jumping out of helicopters, running through training courses and protecting the country. Does any of that resemble your day-to-day? Of course not. It's not supposed to. It's designed to compel you to "answer the call."

11. THE REGULAR GUY/GIRL WANTS TO BELONG

This archetype is focused on providing something so far removed from pretentiousness that it can appeal to everyone. It is the most challenging archetype to pull off because you have to have a product that actually appeals across demographics.

Everyone drinks coffee. Not every human being, but every major demographic with the exception of small children. That's what makes Folgers a great brand for everyone. Folgers doesn't market to a hip crowd. They don't brag about their high quality, all-organic coffee. They keep it simple: "The best part of waking up is Folgers in your cup." Everyone wakes up, so everyone drinks Folgers.

12. THE CREATOR CRAVES PERFECTION

A creator isn't worried about the cost of production or making things at scale. While the magician stresses vision and imagination, creators are different – they strive to create a product you can't live without.

Lego is a great example of a creator archetype. In one of ad, Lego recreated in stunning detail the most famous sights of the world. They didn't create some new technology. Lego used the simplest technology possible: blocks. They took this simplicity and pushed it to its most perfect extreme.

So, what archetype is your brand?

From decades of experience, I can tell you every company comes to the table assuming they are every guy/girl, but in 99 percent of cases, they aren't. Drilling down into what makes your brand special and how your customers best connect with your products isn't easy, but it's the most important thing you can do to understand what archetype you should be using.

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