

Defining your company's archetype



We speak human.

An introduction to archetypes

Brands are a lot like people, so we can use some of the same techniques we use for defining ourselves to define our companies. Throughout history, many of the same characters appear in literature, religion, folklore, mythology, etc. Over time, companies began to take on the qualities of these characters, which makes it easier for customers to quickly discern what they're all about.

For example, Nike takes on the Achiever archetype to communicate that their goal is to help customers achieve amazing physical acts and become better athletes. On the other hand, Victoria's Secret takes on the Sensualist archetype to make their customers feel pure enjoyment through physical experiences. Both of these companies have used archetypes to define their brand, help customers understand them, and build experiences that connect with them.

Forty uses archetypes in a similar way. Instead of just creating a brand out of thin air, we use archetypes to develop visuals, messaging, and experiences that evoke certain feelings for the customer.

You can use the following exercise to determine your company's archetype.

How to complete the archetype exercise:

1. Think about the “roots” or foundations of your brand. Why did you get into this business instead of another one? What are the values that drive your company? What is your brand's personality or style like? What makes you different?
2. With those roots in mind, flip through the archetypes one by one, and eliminate any that don't seem to match your company. For example, if your brand is warm and welcoming, the Villain archetype probably isn't a good fit, so you would eliminate that one. Note: Pay the most attention to the “Goal or Method” of each archetype.
3. Now, go through the list a second time, and pick out the archetypes that feel the most similar to your brand and the experience you want to provide for your customers. Remember to think about the company's personality, not your own.
4. Repeat this exercise until you have narrowed the cards down to the top one or two archetypes that best match your brand. Sometimes, you'll find that you pick two archetypes that seem very different, but when used together, they complement each other and perfectly describe your company's character.



Helpful hint

Try cutting the different archetypes out on the dashed lines. It makes it easy to see one at a time, eliminate the ones that don't fit, and select.



EXPLORER

Seeker, Wanderer

Goal or Method:

To learn what's constant in life by always changing your environment.

Brands:

North Face,
Pier One, Jeep,
Greyhound,
Subaru, Starbucks

People:

Christopher
Columbus, Jacques
Cousteau, Steve
Irwin



DEFENDER

Knight, Superhero, Warrior

Goal or Method:

To protect others from harm through bravery and service.

Brands:

U.S. Army,
Greenpeace,
Marlboro, Dial,
Band Aid

People:

Batman, George
S. Patton, John
Wayne



THRILL-SEEKER

Gambler, Swashbuckler, Adventurer

Goal or Method:

To achieve great rewards through great risks.

Brands:

X Games, Mountain
Dew, Chrysler
Crossfire, Carnival
Cruise Ships,
New Zealand,
Camelback

People:

Richard Branson,
Ben Saunders,
Errol Flynn



ACHIEVER

Athlete, Hot Shot, Strongman

Goal or Method:

To prove yourself through amazing physical acts.

Brands:

Nike, Ford, Home
Depot, Adidas,
Under Armor

People:

Lance Armstrong,
Michael Jordan,
Tiger Woods



TRADITIONALIST

Conservative, Old School, Miser

Goal or Method:

To restore the world through a return to old-fashioned values.

Brands:

Old Spice, Wendy's, Procter & Gamble, Wells Fargo, Folger's, GAP

People:

Norman Rockwell, Ronald Reagan



NURTURER

Mom, Mother Earth, Healer

Goal or Method:

To help others feel loved by providing for their needs and wants.

Brands:

Campbell's, Pampers, Volvo, Johnson & Johnson, L'Oréal, Allstate

People:

June Cleaver, Paula Deen



CONNECTOR

Networker, Politician, Talker

Goal or Method:

To make things happen by knowing the right people.

Brands:

AT&T, Verizon, Facebook, LinkedIn

People:

Oprah, Donald Trump



ARTIST

Creative, Creator, Craftsman

Goal or Method:

To create something of enduring beauty and value.

Brands:

hp, Adobe, Lego, Home Depot, Michael's, Black and Decker, HGTV

People:

Beethoven, Salvador Dali, William Shakespeare, Bob Villa



PHILOSOPHER

Sage, Prophet, Guru

Goal or Method:

To help people understand the world by seeing things from a different perspective.

Brands:

Scientology, Calvin Klein, Nikon

People:

Plato, Deepak Chopra, Paulo Coelho



DREAMER

Magician, Sorcerer, Wizard

Goal or Method:

To help people achieve supernatural experiences by promoting faith and wonder (transformation).

Brands:

Disney, Axe, Rock Band

People:

Tim Burton, Carlos Castaneda, Steven Spielberg, Harry Potter



MOTIVATOR

Mentor, Preacher, Promoter

Goal or Method:

To achieve amazing goals by getting people excited about a cause.

Brands:

Truth, (RED), Electronic Frontier Foundation, MoveOn.org

People:

Tony Robbins, Barack Obama, Richard Simmons



RULER

King, Leader, Father

Goal or Method:

To lead people to a common destination through confidence, determination, and influence.

Brands:

Microsoft, Rolex, Gillette, The New York Times, Jack Daniel's

People:

Steve Jobs, Franklin Roosevelt, Moses



MAVERICK

Rebel, Outlaw, Rogue

Goal or Method:

To achieve freedom from the establishment through defiance, disobedience, and nonconformity.

Brands:

Harley Davidson, Virgin, MTV, Rimmel, Steve Madden, Urban Outfitters, Orbit

People:

Henry David Thoreau, Sid Vicious, George Washington



EVERYMAN

Good Old Boy, Girl Next Door, Average Joe

Goal or Method:

To bond with others by being humble, hard-working, and friendly.

Brands:

Miller High Life, Sonic, Walmart, Lowe's, Walgreens, Southwest, Visa, Covergirl, Hollister

People:

Jack Black, Homer Simpson, Tom Hanks, Princess Diana



INNOCENT

Saint, Goody-Two-Shoes, Angel

Goal or Method:

To achieve a simple, pure life by always doing the right thing.

Brands:

IKEA, Google, Apple, Dove, Lysol, Master Card, Aveda

People:

Mr. Rogers, Gandhi, Boy Scouts, Oprah



ENTERTAINER

Clown, Jester, Performer

Goal or Method:

To make friends (and avoid making enemies) through humor and fun.

Brands:

Budweiser, Fanta, Jack in the Box, Hulu, Woot.com, Taco Bell, Doritos

People:

Robin Williams, Bob Hope, Jeff Foxworthy



VILLAIN

Bad Guy, Monster, Vampire

Goal or Method:

To satisfy internal drives or passions through whatever means necessary.

Brands:

Megadeth, Hot Topic, LA Ink

People:

Marilyn Manson, Darth Vader, Dr. Horrible



INTELLECTUAL

Sage, Genius, Expert

Goal or Method:

To find the truth through research, objectivity, and diligence.

Brands:

Ask.com, CNN, Gallup, MIT, Harvard, CIA, Bloomberg

People:

Stephen Hawking, Marie Curie, Ken Jennings



SENSUALIST

Hedonist, Pleasure Seeker

Goal or Method:

To pursue perfect enjoyment through physical experiences.

Brands:

Victoria's Secret, BMW, Godiva, Versace, Food Network,

People:

Madonna, Jane Austen, Dracula



SERVANT

Martyr, Helper, Monk

Goal or Method:

To lose yourself through service to others.

Brands:

Red Cross, Amnesty International, Peace Corps, Humane Society, Police Department

People:

Mother Theresa, Pat Tillman