WBA

WORKSHOP TOOLS – BRAND ARCHETYPES

Exploring your Brand’s Archetype is very much a Red Quadrant exercise as is involves feeling and intuition more than it does rational analysis. I say ‘more than’ with the caveat that Blue Quadrant thinkers will always bring a measure of reason and evaluation to any subject under their scrutiny.

So, what is a Brand Archetype?

To understand that we need to do a quick review of Karl Jung’s original concept.

(Insert picture of Karl Jung)

Jung was an eminent Swiss Psychiatrist, a contemporary and personal friend of Freud, who during the 1920s introduced the concept of archetypes as part of his theory of the ‘Collective Unconscious’.

Jung believed that all humans share an unconscious awareness of a set of symbolic characters that shape how we perceive and respond to the world.

He connected these characters to our four basic human needs – our desire for love, safety, happiness and achievement.

(Insert intersecting x & y axis with labelling the four human needs.)

We have developed strategies for satisfying these needs.

For Love, we search for people and belonging.

For Safety, we establish stability and control.

For Happiness, we strive for self-actualisation, the need to be our true selves as opposed to self others would like us to be.

And for Achievement, we take risks or establish mastery of knowledge and skills.

With these four needs and strategic approaches in mind, Jung attached Archetypal characters who promised fulfilment of these desires.

(Insert names of Archetypes alongside the core desires)

So, he proposed that for Love we look to the Jester, The Regular Guy and the Lover.

We’ll take a closer look at the characteristics of these archetypes later, but for the moment let’s just establish which one is attached to which need and desire.

For Safety we look to the Caregiver, the Creator and the Ruler.

For Achievement, we look to the Hero, the Outlaw and the Magician.

And lastly, for Happiness we look to the Innocent, the Explorer and the Sage.

Essentially, what Jung was saying is that, on a subconscious level, we immediately recognise these characters and, because they represent fundamental needs and desires, we are deeply attached to them.

So, if we could connect a brand to one or more of these Archetypes, we’d be attaching that Brand to a very profound personal need, one that is operating beneath the level of reason and conscious evaluation.

In other words, a Brand that is closely identified with an Archetype promises the fulfilment of a basic desire and human emotion.

That’s a very powerful connection.

So, how do we achieve that?

The Brand Archetypes process in a workshop environment is surprisingly quick and easy. It’s always revealing and usually a lot of fun.

Here’s how we do it?

Breaking the participants down into small groups of three or four, we give each team 12 separate sheets, one for each of the Archetypes. Each sheet follows a format that makes it easy to recognise the compare their different characters, attributes and philosophies.

Let me take you through one and you’ll see how it works.

(Insert Caregiver Archetype page)

This is the Caregiver Archetype.

Like all the other sheets, it gives us six points of recognition. These are:

Motto. This is the Archetype’s philosophy. Its reason for being.

Core Desire: This is what its dedicated to doing

Goal. What it’s trying to achieve

Fear. As well as goals and desires, these Archetypes have fears of what might hinder them in their mission.

Strategy. How they pursue their goal.

Gift. Archetypes are born with innate qualities that help them achieve their goals.

And then, to bring the Archetype into the real world, we cite some films that capture the values of this particular Archetype.

And also, some famous names we might attach to the archetype.

And finally, to bring it all back to our intent, we cite some Brands that embody the Archetype.

So, in this case, we see the Caregiver’s motto is to Love your neighbour as yourself, the core desire is to protect people from harm, his or her goal is to protect others by pursuing a strategy of doing things for others. Caregivers are born with the gift of compassion and generosity.

Life is beautiful, a film set in a concentration camp that features a man protecting a young boy and is a very moving example of the Caregiver Archetype, as is the recently released criminal who becomes the carer of a disabled man in the oscar-winning French film, Intouchable.

Mother Theresa and Florence Nightingale are good examples of this Archetype, but it is by no means exclusively female.

Finally, three Brands that have consciously or unconsciously used these Archetypal values to bond with their audience – Cambells Soup, famous for its depiction of a Grandfather and young boy enjoying soup on a cold day, or Volvo with its safety strategy or the Salvation Army which is dedicated to helping those in need.

(Insert sheet for Jester Archetype)

By way of comparison, let’s look briefly at the Jester Archetype.

Very different.

Let’s danse in the ashes of the revolution!! Live in the moment with joy. Have a great time, lighten up the world.

Billy Connolly, a far cry from Mother Teresa.

As you can immediately see, there is little or no overlap. While the Caregiver appeals to our desire for safety, the Jester appeals to our desire for love, connection, community.

You’ll find all of these Archetypes have distinctly different characters, philosophies, desires and gifts.

So, how do we make use of them?

We ask the respondents to sift through the 12 sheets and discount those that are obviously inappropriate. It’s a very easy, intuitive task. Because we are attuned to these Archetypes at a subconscious level, we don’t need to think to deeply to recognise those that fit and those that don’t.

Usually, we find each group selects a favourite Archetype, one that really seems to fit the Brand, but also wants to discuss maybe one or two others that have relevant attributes.

We white board these findings and, when all the participants have shared their selection, we review as a group and identify the common themes.

These observations always provide insight and material that deepens our understanding of the relationship between the brand and the consumer and that’s why I say it’s a very Red Quadrant exercise.

But as with all workshop exercises, the conversation will reveal many other ideas and perspectives about the brand, some of which will fit more comfortably in other quadrants.

In the Downloads folder for this course, you’ll find all 12 Archetype sheets which you can print and use in your sessions.

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