

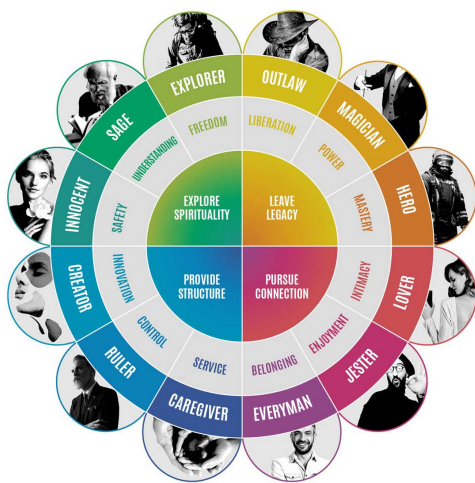
# BRAND ARCHETYPES

## A Reliable Compass in Turbulent Times

There's nothing quite like the challenge of communicating in times of crisis to test a brand's understanding of, and commitment to, its voice. It's easy to get swept up in the frantic scramble to manage input and take action nearly in real-time...and even easier to stray from the foundational elements of your brand's voice. So while it may be possible to execute an adequate short-term communications plan, it shouldn't come at the expense of your long-term brand strategy. In a situation like this, having an established and well-developed brand archetype can be a marketer's greatest asset.

If you're not familiar with brand archetypes, here's a quick, admittedly oversimplified primer:

### Brand Archetypes:



<p><i>The Caregiver</i></p> <p>♥ SERVICE</p> <p>“ Love Your Neighbour As Yourself ”</p>	<p><b>THE EXPLORER</b></p> <p>♥ FREEDOM</p> <p>“ Don't Fence Me In ”</p>
<p><i>The Creator</i></p> <p>♥ INNOVATION</p> <p>“ If It Can Be Imagined It Can Be Created ”</p>	<p><b>The Hero</b></p> <p>♥ MASTERY</p> <p>“ Where there's a will there's a way ”</p>
<p><i>The Everyman</i></p> <p>♥ BELONGING</p> <p>“ You're Just Like Me And I'm Just Like You ”</p>	<p><i>The Innocent</i></p> <p>♥ SAFETY</p> <p>“ Life Is Simple And Simplicity Is Elegant ”</p>

Source: Stephen Houraghan, Iconic Fox. "Brand Archetypes: The Definitive Guide" (<https://iconicfox.com.au/brand-archetypes>)

When we work with clients on their branding, we develop and agree upon one of 12 archetypes. These are characters and genres that give brands a more human feel and anchor that perception in something already embedded in consumer consciousness. That's a science-y way to describe something inherently human, but you get the idea. Archetypes are rooted in a keen understanding of your "brand why" and how your brand fits into your customers' individual stories. Each archetype informs a brand's communications through elements like language, imagery, and color palettes, to name a few. It influences our work and provides us with a great measuring stick when we develop and review creative with our clients. It also significantly reduces the time it can take to make critical, often subjective, decisions.

It's important to understand that your brand archetype is not a reflection of how you see yourselves—it's an aspirational reflection of how your customers see themselves and, more importantly, how your brand can reflect that point of view back to them. If your brand is a Magician brand, like Apple or Disney, your customers see themselves as visionaries and world-changers who make innovation appear, well, magical.

It's up to you to make sure that you're mirroring those aspirational behaviors and offering a point of entry to indulge them. When chaos ensues and normal communications practices are quarantined, as is happening right now, your brand archetype is more important than ever. It's uniquely suited to serve as a guide for your brand to make decisions about what to say and do. Staying true to those principles will ensure that the choices you make in the short-term will still serve you in the long-term.

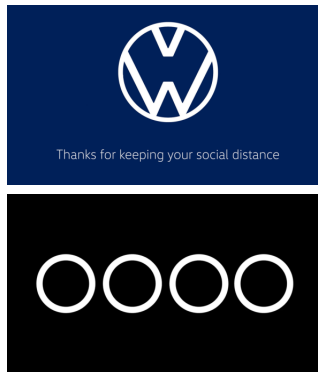
**When you're faced with maintaining brand communications in the midst of a crisis, ask yourself these questions before you do anything:**

- Right here, right now—what's the biggest tension your customers are facing?
- What brand archetype do they (and you) represent?
- What would the archetype do?
- How would they do it?

Let's use a few real-world examples to illustrate the point. By now, you've probably seen one or more brands go through the exercise of redesigning their logos to amplify the importance of social distancing.



Image: McDonalds



Top Image: Volkswagen  
Bottom Image: Audi



Image: Coca-Cola

Nothing wrong with that, but have these brands really done anything to exemplify their archetypes and deepen their relationships with their customers? And what do they expect to gain? At this point, it seems like an increasing number of brands are spacing their logos out simply because everyone else is.

Nike, on the other hand, took a different approach. As a Hero brand, some of its core archetype elements are bravery, selflessness, and a willingness to stand up for the underdogs. Hero brands have to make tough decisions and think on their feet, and they will overcome great odds to facilitate transformation. Let's also remember that Nike is an athletic and sportswear company with decades of experience inspiring consumers to get up and do more than they might have thought possible. To lend their voice to the social distancing communications push, they ran this post:

**IF YOU EVER DREAMED OF PLAYING  
FOR MILLIONS AROUND THE WORLD,  
NOW IS YOUR CHANCE.**

Play inside, play for the world.



*Image: Nike*

While telling people to do the exact opposite of what they normally say, Nike remains true to both their brand and the Hero archetype. They still advocate the ideas of play, exercise, and activity, but they do it in a way that champions the cause of the people most likely to be impacted by COVID-19. In so doing, they remind Nike consumers that their actions can inspire, affect, and even transform the world we're currently living in. That's a powerful message, and precisely what archetypes can enable. This one piece of work will be remembered much longer than an assortment of spaced-out logos. Those brands may get short-term visibility for doing something, but Nike will get greater, enduring credit for doing something both meaningful and resolutely on-brand.

So remember—although the world seems unrecognizable right now, your communications strategies shouldn't make you unrecognizable to your customers. It's possible to show an awareness of the times without sacrificing your connections to your most loyal advocates. Stay true to the things that genuinely define your brand, and your customers will stay true to you.

[Stay healthy and stay safe. #btdoingourpart](#)