

White Paper Series

# Brand Archetypes

A Powerful Tool for Defining Your Brand's Value



**LePoidevin**  
MARKETING



## Executive Summary

### Dean LePoidevin

President/Strategic Director

The driving force behind LePoidevin Marketing, Dean listens to each client, pinpoints the critical needs and identifies a strategy that bears the best results. With a background in television broadcasting, audio and video production, and creative copywriting, to several years in sales, sales management, marketing management and account supervision, Dean has amassed a broad portfolio of practical, hands-on experience, which gives him the innate ability to see the big picture. Dean surrounds himself with a dedicated team of seasoned professionals who are able to provide immediate impact on any project.

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**Sophisticated business consumers know that hype is meaningless. The days of simply stating your products features and benefits are long gone. Even pinning your marketing strategy to a differentiator like “faster and cheaper” or “new and improved” means it’s only a matter of time until your competitor catches up. Today, the companies that succeed are the ones that resonate with their customers.**

To find this resonance, more and more companies are turning to brand archetypes. Despite being a core concept in B2C marketing for decades, B2B marketers have been resistant to acknowledge the effectiveness of brand archetypes in business-to-business marketing. B2B marketing deals in ‘facts’, not intangible new-age jargon like ‘resonance’ and ‘meaning’, right?

Here’s the thing. Those businesses you’re marketing to? They’re made up of people. And most of them are selling to people. If your brand and theirs connect on the deeper level represented by archetypes, the boost that gives to their own brand is valuable to them. So smart B2B companies are looking for ways to use brand archetypes to their advantage.

“Okay, great,” you’re thinking.  
“But what’s an archetype?”

### Archetypes: The Basics

Archetypes are those reoccurring characters in literature, art and mythology throughout history that embody some essential element of universal human experience: Hero. Lover. Sage. Jester. Innocent. Plato called them “elemental forms”; the aboriginal tribes of Australia call them “eternal ones of the dream”. The term “archetype” itself was coined around 1919 by pioneering psychotherapist Carl Jung. Branding experts Margaret Mark and Carol S. Pearson updated the concept for the 21st century in their book, *The Hero and the Outlaw*, describing archetypes as the “software of the psyche.”

Archetypes simultaneously tap into core human emotions while being a shorthand for conveying information. That’s because, on a subconscious level, they already exist in our minds. It’s why the phrase “reluctant hero” is almost redundant; heroes aren’t born, they’re made, and often not without struggle. An outlaw doesn’t just break

the rules—they flout them (think cat burglar versus Bonnie and Clyde).

Triggering archetypes create deeply rooted sense of connection and identification in anyone experiencing them. We identify with Luke Skywalker’s desire to be more than a small-town farmer, and believe that we, too, can take on the Hero’s journey.

Archetypes are not stereotypes—they are much more universal, and connected to stages of human development and deeper meaning. Robin Hood and Al Capone both embody the Outlaw; Richard Branson’s Virgin Group and Harley Davidson both use the Outlaw archetype, though you’d be hard-pressed to find much overlap between their target markets. FedEx and Nike, just like Rocky Balboa and Harry Potter, are two iconic, but very different, Heroes.

### Branding Archetypes

In stories (whether they’re told via TV, film, video games, books or paintings), character archetypes are the device that connects people in the real world to the characters. A strong branding archetype is one of the most powerful tools in a marketer’s toolbox, helping break down consumer’s natural resistance to being sold just another product by transmitting a large amount of knowledge that people are already familiar with—instantly telling the product’s story without wasting time.

Brand archetypes combine traditional character archetypes with motivational theory, specifically the human drives for risk and mastery, security and control, independence and fulfillment, and belonging and engagement. When your brand and your audience share these human drives and motivations, it strengthens the bond between them, resulting in increased recognition, brand loyalty and interaction.

That is true of your internal organization as well. A consistent, unified brand breeds trust in customers and buy-in from employees. A brand archetype can provide a measuring stick with which to evaluate marketing strategies, business moves or organizational restructuring and keep your team focused on the core business. Ideally, both your brand and your organization will embody the same archetype: successful Jester products rarely come from Ruler corporate cultures and vice versa.

But for many B2B marketers, the most valuable thing archetypes can provide for a brand is differentiation, especially in highly regulated industries where the breadth of claims is tightly constricted by regulations. David Chapin of Forma Life Science Marketing points out that, “In order to exert any sort of pricing power, you have to be seen as unique; otherwise you’re nothing but a commodity, and commodities—by definition—can be replaced easily by a wide selection of readily available substitutes.” If your customers perceive you as different, you are different. And different = value.

Over several years of studying 50 well-known and highly regarded brands, Mark and Pearson found that both the market value and profit margin for brands with a strong archetypal identity rose considerably higher and faster than those without: “Brands, be they candidates, superstars, products, or companies—achieve deep and enduring differentiation and relevance by embodying timeless archetypal meaning.” In other words, brand archetypes drive profitability and success in a real, sustainable way.

## How LePoidevin Adapts Archetypes to B2B Branding

Uncovering and unleashing the power of brand archetypes for B2B companies can be a tricky balance. Your brand’s archetypes are already there: for the past two decades, our job here at LePoidevin Marketing has been to help you find them and use them strategically.

By taking a deep dive into the different aspects of common B2C archetypes, we’ve been able to adjust the model to the complexities and limitations of B2B marketing. As a result, we’ve been able to build B2B archetypal branding strategies that don’t just convey our clients’ messages, but create meaning—resonance—with their audiences as well.

This often requires a deeper dive into less prominent aspects of common archetypes. While the Outlaw and Jester archetypes may be fertile ground for consumer lifestyle brands, very few B2B companies want to be known for breaking the rules or clowning around. Where consumer brands emphasize the magical aspects of transformation, B2B brands more often emphasize the scientific aspect, but both are playing on the same archetype, that of the Magician/Scientist.

**“Archetypes are a foundation to build a brand upon and give it a voice. Once connected, a dialogue between the brand and the audience links them together—as long as the brand doesn’t deviate from their archetypal messaging, their audience will remain connected, giving them preferential attention because of familiarity, trust and reliability.”**

— Gregg Kerttula, Creative Director, LePoidevin Marketing.

Most companies have a primary archetype as well as one or two secondary archetypes. It’s a matter of fine tuning the balance and figuring out what aspects of each to focus on depending on a client’s marketing needs. For example, in an industry that itself embodies the Caregiver, such as animal health, we looked beneath the surface and found our client’s focus on continuing education gave them a way to differentiate themselves as a Sage.

## 12 COMMON ARCHETYPES

-  CREATOR
-  CAREGIVER
-  RULER
-  JESTER
-  CITIZEN
-  LOVER
-  HERO
-  OUTLAW
-  MAGICIAN
-  INNOCENT
-  EXPLORER
-  SAGE



## A Powerful Tool for Advancing Your Position

Mark and Pearson argue that brands are today's most vibrant expression of archetypes and the meaning they represent. People want meaning; they will find it somewhere, so why not in your brand? If you can provide both a product and meaning, you'll be ahead of the competition. You may not know what defines you yet, but we know how to find it. Partner with us to determine what the best brand match is for you and for your market.

## 7 Things Brand Archetypes Are — and Are Not:

### 1. An archetype is a brand asset.

Managing a brand's meaning means selling that meaning with integrity, and that requires buy-in from everyone involved. VW built up a huge amount of brand equity with their Innocent archetype persona—and virtually all of it was wiped out by its emissions scandal.

### 2. Archetypes are innate.

Just as an individual has personality traits, so does a brand. Archetypes make obvious values and aspects that are already there; if your brand has caregiver qualities, you can't force it to be a ruler.

### 3. Archetypes are not stereotypes or clichés.

They have different facets that can be emphasized depending on the product, situation, audience or even cultural trends. "Frazzled housewife" is not an archetype. "Everyman/woman" is.

### 4. Archetypes aren't without dark sides.

A Hero can turn obsessive in their need to win; a Sage risks becoming disconnected from reality by staying sequestered in an ivory tower.

### 5. An archetype is not a mascot.

Ronald McDonald embodies the Jester spirit of McDonalds, but for most brands, it won't be that explicit. For example, Intel is able to evoke the Sage with just the tagline "Intel Inside."

### 6. An archetype is not a campaign.

Once you have an understanding of what archetypes your company embodies, that shouldn't change; what will change is how you introduce those archetypes to new audiences.

### 7. Archetypes aren't a substitute for quality.

Customers want meaning, but that doesn't mean they're uninformed. Meaning boosts quality products; it doesn't replace them. Apple has a lot of brand equity, but without a unique product, it would have much less.



**Advancing your position.**

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**Establishing trust. Building value. Delivering on a promise.** It's that unique brand experience LePoidevin Marketing creates for every client we serve. Based on years of marketing expertise and direct industry experience, our team delivers sound strategic planning, insightful recommendations and smart creative concepts that cut through the clutter, develop more meaningful brands and advance your position.