



What a Character: Bringing your Brand to Life with Character Creation

by Nancy Pekala

What is your brand's character? A Hero? Lover? Explorer? In order to differentiate your brand in today's competitive marketplace, understanding who you are, what you stand for and expressing that character consistently is critical.

Ruth Moss, Executive Vice President of [Added Value](#), a brand development and marketing insight consultancy, spoke with [Marketing Matters](#) about utilizing the process of Character Creation to build upon Jung's model of Archetypes in order to better define a brand's character. The company has recently developed an online application based on Archetypes that help guide its clients through the beginning of the process.

● **Marketing Matters:** *Marketers are generally familiar with the concept of archetypes when developing brand campaigns. How does character creation build on and differ from this concept?*

Ruth Moss: Character creation hugely builds on the concept of archetypes. Many brands just stop at identifying what their archetype is, but that is where character creation begins. For example, let's say Virgin Airways identifies itself as an outlaw brand. There are hundreds of different ways to be an outlaw. Richard Branson is an outlaw who is more like Robin Hood than Jesse James. He's more of an outlaw hero. Angelina Jolie is for sure an outlaw but she also has a very strong lover archetype. She's more of a sexy outlaw.

If you think about brands as all playing in the same place, we work with primary and secondary archetypes. It is those secondary archetypes that can really help you distinguish yourself from other brands in the same place. They can also define finer points of archetypes.

● **Marketing Matters:** How can a brand utilize the process of Character Creation to help differentiate itself?

Moss: There are hundreds of examples of strategic models for brands today. Many do a good job of differentiating from their competition and identifying their benefits. However, many do a poor job of putting a fine point on who they are as a brand. Categories become more general.

Too often, brands leave the execution of their strategy to their agency. They want their brand to evoke a personality that is “approachable, optimistic and youthful.” But only those agency creatives who put those three words on a page really know what that means.

Character creation focuses on the expression of a brand’s archetype. What is its narrative? What language does the brand use that no other brand uses? How would the brand behave? It’s about understanding the brand holistically.

●**Marketing Matters:** *In what specific scenarios is character creation beneficial to marketers?*

Moss: Any brand can benefit from going through the process of character creation but brands in white bread categories, in particular, might find it valuable in order to differentiate themselves from others in the space. Energy brands, auto brands and luxury brands all would be good candidates for this process.

●**Marketing Matters:** *What is the general process for applying the concept of character creation?*

Moss: The first step is for a brand to create a strategy, a well-defined positioning. Trying to develop a character when you don’t know your strategy won’t work. The next step is to understand the space its competitors are playing in. The brand needs to identify where it is right now in this space and where it wants to be. The brand needs to plan the journey. If the brand discovers where they are is significantly different than where they want to be, they need to plot the journey by using those archetypes and characters.

●**Marketing Matters:** *Does a brand’s character change depending on the market it is targeting?*

Moss: No. You need to come across consistently. There may be certain elements you tweak but you don’t want to come across as inconsistent characters. Your brand’s character should always look and sound the same.

For example, Apple does a good job of always maintaining its character consistently through its language, color, layouts. Target is another example of a brand that expresses its character in a consistent way.

For more information about the process of Character Creation, visit [Added Value](#).