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RPG style
brand building

You wake up… chained to the ground. The room is dark yet you see familiar faces off in the corner of the room.

BLEURGH… How much more generic can we get with an opening?!

WELCOME!

Thank you for downloading this guide! It means a lot to me that you have taken interest in the content I am creating.

So as a thanks, I'm going to make this not only FUN but also VALUABLE. I want this guide to give you the start to a brand that all your competitors envy.

In this guide I am going to take you through an innovative and fun way of creating your brand, so you can get this same effectiveness in communication as influencers.

WHAT IS A BRAND?

I'll start by telling you what it isn't:
- **A logo**
- **A colour palette**
- **An image style**

And you probably know that already, if you follow any other branding experts you will have heard them say it a lot.

So what is a brand then Steve?!

It's a style of communication.

That's right, you heard it here first! A brand is actually a style of communication, while the visual elements like a logo and colour palette reinforce your communications, it isn't everything.

Logos are actually a very small part of the overall experience. Look at personal brands for instance.

Their brand is based purely on themselves, they don't need or even have a logo in-sight, but you know from a mile away when they post and what they are about.

LET'S DEFINE COMMUNICATION STYLE

I like to think of a brand as a person, imagine you are at a networking event with your brand and you don't know who they are.

- What do they sound like?
- How do they hold themselves?
- What do they do?

These are the questions you can start to ask about your brand, and the answers start building your brand strategy, or communication style.

Did you notice how none of those questions related to how this 'persona' looked?

That's because it isn't all that important. If they dressed similar everytime you'd be able to spot them in a crowd, but it isn't the reason you go over and talk to them.

Really you go over because they are interesting, and importantly, someone you trust.

BUILDING TRUST

Because of your great work at communicating your value you start building trust, people know what to expect of you and that gives them comfort.

No-one likes not knowing, no person nor animal.

It comes down to our survive or thrive lizard brain (which is a whole other topic). Basically, the unknown is scary, so how do we solve this? Our brain kicks in and tells us that to 'survive' we need to go with the option we know about, the option we trust.

Are you starting to see how a brand can really help your business yet?

If not. Follow me on LinkedIn, I'll convince you one day. If yes - continue on my friend!

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RPG Brand building

LET'S ROLE INITIATIVE

LET'S GET STARTED!

Now we know the benefits of doing this let's get going finally into building our amazing brand character.

If you already didn't know, RPG stands for role-playing game.

I know what you're thinking now. How does that relate to building a brand?

Well if you've read the last page you will get an idea. A brand is basically a personality, and in RPG games, you role-play a personality.

This is a great way to start building your brand because you are building it as a person, not you, not someone you know, but who it should be. You can then easily get into your brands 'mindspace' to start creating consistent content.

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RPG Brand building
LET'S ROLE INITIATIVE

FIRST, A BACKSTORY

No character is complete without a backstory. Without one you just end up with an empty shell of stats with nothing to offer the experience.

So what should go into our brands backstory? There are two main sections.

1. **Your actual backstory of how the company came about**

2. **Your narrative**

Each of these sections is important to creating a rounded personality but they have different uses which we will go over...

... in the next page! Continue on my friend.

WHAT GOES IN MY BACKSTORY?

As mentioned you need two main sections, so let's break down those sections, what goes in them and what their purpose is.

1. COMPANY STORY

This section is all about the company on a fact based level. So we aren't looking for any spin, jargon or fancy words. Imagine you were looking at a company and wanted to know exactly what they did and their experience, you wouldn't want something like:

> **Leverage agile frameworks to provide a robust synopsis for high level overviews.**

Right?

So in your story simply tell the viewer about your past and how you came to be, and be prepared, it isn't going to be your next marketing slogan, it is going to be boring (maybe). Try answering these questions:

- **When did the company start?**
- **Who started the company?**
- **WHY did they start it?**
- **What was the challenge they were overcoming with this company?**
- **What does the company actually do (in real terms)?**
- **How does the company do this?**

2. COMPANY NARRATIVE

The company narrative sounds like a similar section to your story, but it's not. It has a few key differences that make it more user friendly let's say.

So what are these differences I hear you cry?

Well where a company story tells your history, a company or BRAND narrative tells the more idealistic views of what you do and where you have been.

This is why we do the company story FIRST. Because it gives you all the ammo you need to build out your narrative.

In the narrative it's all about the why, why are you interesting and why do people care about your history.

A tasty example would be:

> **Peri-Peri is the heart and soul of Nando's. It's story is our story. For centuries people of Southeast Africa have used Peri-Peri to bring fire to their food. It is in Mozambique's rich soil and blistering sunshine that the African Bird's Eye Chilli grows into it's fiery best. When Portuguese explorers arrived there, they were enchanted by its flavour. They added a squeeze of lemon and a kick of garlic and turned Peri-Peri into a well travelled spice. Which is how, many years later, it ended up in Rosettenville, Johannesburg.**

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LET'S ROLE INITIATIVE

WE'RE ROLLING NOW

Get what I did there? RPG, dice... rolling?

Oookayyyyy... moving on.

We now have our backstory, our brand is getting a little bit of flavour going for it now. You are starting to communicate effectively to your party who you are and what you're about.

But that's the beginning of this journey to bigger, better brand.

LET'S LOOK AT YOUR ALIGNMENT

In an RPG this is typically a guide for how you act in various situations, which works really well in helping you really act as your character.

The problem with this when it comes to branding is that you have everything from lawful good, to unlawful evil. I don't know about you, but I've never seen a brand that is both unlawful and evil. I mean, some come close, but I don't think that's how they want to be perceived.

SO. Instead of that, we will be doing something that will still give you a guide, but they are all good, it just helps you to think about how your brand character would talk and act.

These wonderful things are, archetypes. I've spoken about them a lot on LinkedIn and they are very powerful tools to align everyone in your business on how your brand sounds. They are easy to pick up and roll with, so let's go choose!
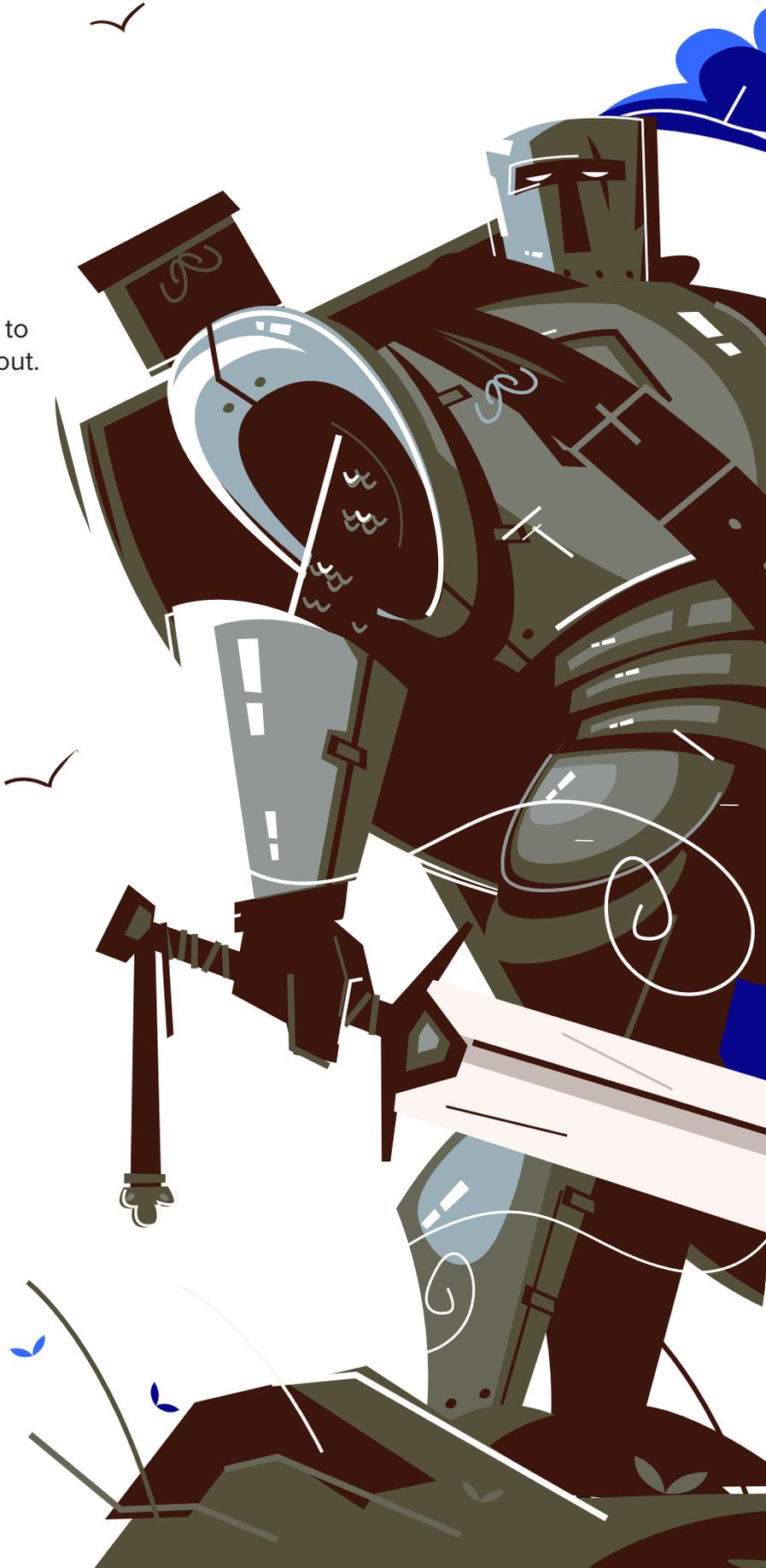
RPG Brand building

LET'S ROLE INITIATIVE

CHOOSE YOUR ARCHETYPE

Here is your list of 12 archetypes young champion. Each of these have their own ways of viewing the world, speaking and engaging with others.

So when choosing one of these think about how you want to be perceived, what is at the core of everything you do and what really matters to you.

Magician
Bringing your wildest dreams to life.

Example:
Disney

Sage
Wisdom is the key to success.

Example:
Oxford University

Innocent
Naturally idealistic, optimistic and hopeful.

Example:
Ben & Jerry's

Outlaw
Shaking things up unconventionally.

Example:
Virgin

Jester
Bringing laughter, fun and joy to the world.

Example:
Skittles

Lover
Having loving and committed relationships.

Example:
Chanel

Explorer
Enjoying an exciting and fulfilling life.

Example:
Northface

Ruler
Creating a prosperous and successful family.

Example:
Rolex

Caregiver
Caring, protecting and nurturing others.

Example:
Johnson & Johnson

Everyman
Your trusty and dependable friend.

Example:
PG Tips

Hero
Determined to improve the world.

Example:
Nike

Creator
Turning creative ideas into reality.

Example:
Lego

FLESHING YOUR BRAND OUT

Now you've really completed the basic outline of your brand character. But at the moment they are really just a silhouette, a shell of brand.

They know enough to have formed into a shape, but not enough to have recognisable features.

That's where we start rolling for our attributes.

BECOMING ATTRIBUTABLE

These attributes really start to bring the brand character to life, taking them from silhouetted and probably smouldering character, into the ranger from the north we all know and love.

Now with these I pretty much use one or a combination of two variants - depends what's meta right now.

The first is a word chart where you list all the words you can think of that fit into the defined 6 brackets. This is my preferred way to do it, but the issue is that you can get stuck easily on this. So I normally only use this if I'm there to help prompt and poke to get all the answers out.

The second way which we are going through now is a series of pre-defined sliders. This will build your brands voice and feel in a slightly less free way, but it works really well none the less. Some brand strategists ONLY do this, so it's gotta be ok.
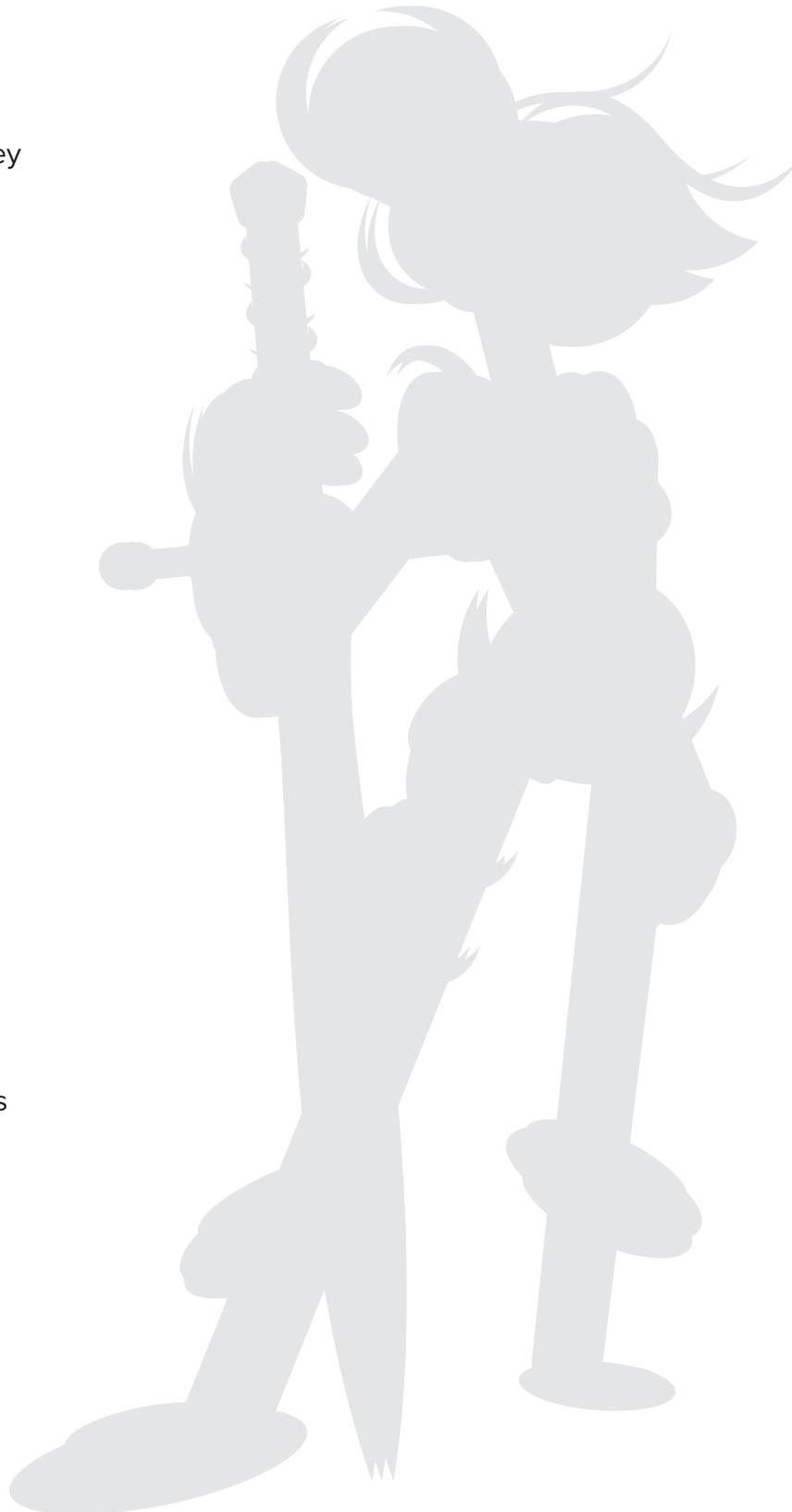
LET THE BATTLE COMMENCE!

All of these sliders can take on any meaning you decide to put to them. So being mass-appeal isn't a bad thing if you are running a company like Aldi for instance. You want that down-to-earth appeal over being elite and premium like M&S food.

So let's have a look at the match-ups we've got here:

MASS-APPEAL   **VS**   **ELITE**

PLAYFUL   **VS**   **SERIOUS**

REBEL   **VS**   **CONVENTIONAL**

FRIEND   **VS**   **AUTHORITY**

YOUNG   **VS**   **MATURE**

Now when you think about these, it isn't a set one or the other. They are on a scale, so you can be somewhere between playful and serious. I think that's where I sit, I'm not cracking constant jokes, but I am not a data robot either.

Just keep in mind that the more definition you set for yourself, the easier it will be to use for you and your team.

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LET'S ROLE INITIATIVE

NOW THE COOL STUFF

Oh. You thought all of that was the cool stuff?!

You're WRONG! Now we get to choose our GEAR!

The gear you take on an adventure can make or break your quest for infinte glory and fame. Which is why you need to think about it carefully, and select each piece to take based on it's uses.

And no. You can't take everything. DM rules.

WHAT IS THE GEAR?

What would you consider a brands gear? It might sound like I am making looser and looser connections to RPGs as we go through this, but in fact they are getting stronger if anything.

When I think about the gear of any brand, there are two lines of thinking. First your armour, your logo, the colours and typography you use. Second I think about the tools they use on their adventures, like an axe. So social media, email, stores, websites. Can you see where this is going?

You can't take everything because it's not possible to carry all that gear, but carefully considering and selecting gear for EACH adventure makes sense.

What I mean by this is, if you are going to do social media, don't do every platform. Do two or three and nail them, make the best content for those two platforms, engage with as many people on them as possible and just be present.

This is going to focus your marketing and help you in the long-run. But you need to make sure you are selecting the right ones for your brand and for your audience.

So in this section right down all the ways you are going to reach your audience.

STEVEN.DIGITAL

BRAND STRATEGY

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LET'S ROLE INITIATIVE

WHO IS COMING ON THIS JOURNEY WITH YOU?

An adventure should never be made alone, and in this adventure of business and branding you will have many people in your party.

But with a big party, you need to make sure your communication is on point, you need to make sure you are letting every individual know what they should be doing, when and why.

Communication is key otherwise it will be madness and that lawless evil dragon you're going to slay will get a nice meal. If you get my drift...

While we already know by now how our brand personality will walk and talk, we need to know more about our party. How they will respond and react to what you need to tell them.

If you've not guessed by now, our party is our customers and audience.

They will be accompaniying us on this journey to a better brand and a better business. They might join you at the beginning, they might join you half way through. But knowing who they are and what their quests are is important to know, it helps you talk to them in the most effective way possible.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR PARTY

You wake up... chained to the ground. The room is dark yet you see familiar faces off in the corner of the room.

Wait... haven't we already done this?

Anyway, knowing your party is an important to developing your communication and brand strategy. It's probably one of the most important parts actually. And there are two ways you can face this challenge.

1. **Demographics**
2. **Psychographics**

Let's dig deeper into each of these, then work out which will work best for you.

Continue on my friend.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics is basically a list of everything you know about a particular customer segment. It is an approximation of a collection of customers, or your ideal customer.

So think about who is your ideal customer, who engages the most with you, who spends the most or who is the biggest advocate.

Now write down everything you know about them into these sections:

Basics
Give them a name, say what their age is, what their job is, gender, location and income. All of the basic information that would make an ideal customer for you.

Story
Similar to our backstory, give them a short paragraph on what they are doing right now and why that might qualify them to be a customer of yours. Maybe it's a life-changing shift, maybe career, maybe seasonal.

Needs
Now bullet point what they need, what are they looking for in a solution to their challenges. This doesn't need to be linked to your product exactly, just list without bias.

Where
Finally, where are these people hanging out? Is it on Instagram or LinkedIn, maybe email is better for them. Also note down time zones, if you want to reach a specific market, when are they most active. It's also good to think outside the box here, even for B2B.

PSYCHOGRAPHICS

Psychographics compliment demographics really well. If the demographics talk about the WHAT for each persona, the psychographics talk about the WHY.

These are however a lot harder to get. It's not something you can just guess at, you need to get out there are talk to your customers and potential customers. Really start to understand them and what matters to them.

There isn't set sections for psychographics either, it is based a lot on your industry and the customers you are trying to get.

But what you are really looking for is to understand their interests, values and feelings.

Interests
What interests do they have? How does your product fit into that?

Values
What do they value from a product or brand? Does that fit with what you're promoting?

Feelings
How do they feel about the industry or a certain type of product. Sliding scales work great for this.

With these questions you need to keep them open, but don't be too vague. For instance asking someone why they like shoes is going to be answered equally as vaguely. But asking what the reason was for their last shoe purchase will give you a deeper insight into what they are thinking.

LEVEL UP

Nice work, you're starting to level up your brand now. You're taking on the monster of branding and you know what...

You're winning!

This might seem like a lot of work to get something as intangible as a 'brand'. But this is how companies exceed their own expectations and explode growth.

You don't need to look far to see this:

- **Gymshark**
- **Apple**
- **Your favourite influencer**

All of these have incredible brands built that makes it EASY for people to engage with.

They are targeted and consistent.

BRAND NAME

ARCHETYPE

MASS APPEAL   **ELITE**

○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○

PLAYFUL   **SERIOUS**

○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○

REBEL   **CONVENTIONAL**

○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○

FRIEND   **AUTHORITY**

○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○

YOUNG   **MATURE**

○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○──────○

BACKSTORY   **GEAR**

NARRATIVE

PERSONA NAME

ARCHETYPE

BASICS

STORY

NEEDS

WHERE

INTERESTS

VALUES AND FEELINGS