

Technique Tip 8: Using Archetypes in Groups

Here is a technique for using archetypes to get under the skin of brands, products or services.

If I am working with a deep technique or something beyond preferences and opinions, I ensure that my participants get insights of real value from the exercise for themselves. This seems to me fair exchange: I get something from them, I want them to have something from the process for themselves.

I use a deck of Archetype and Shadow cards, Chuck Spezzano's deck to be specific. You can get this deck here:

<http://www.psychologyofvision.com/shop/card-decks/archetypes-and-shadows-card-deck-by-chuck-spezzano/>

This deck has the advantage of putting archetypes and shadows on different cards. Other decks tend to put them on the same card. It's quite essential in my view to gain some clarity and separation between light and dark sides working with people new to Archetypes.

I try to create a light atmosphere in the group, we are playing a game together.

Then I pass the archetype deck to the person at one end of the group and the shadow deck to a person at the other. I give them this instruction:

“Jung believed that much of our younger lives are spent in presenting a persona to the world, a false self if you like, an image that we would like others to see us as. We adopt this self as we grow up and our identity is forming. As you shuffle through the deck, pick out a card that stands out for you as representative of this public self of yours. Also Jung believed that as we matured a ‘true’ self emerged – featuring aspects of ourselves that were more true to our real nature. Pick a second archetype card that speaks to you of this version of yourself.”

So, you will have two cards, the first is the image you have sought to present to the world so far, the second is the ‘real’ you that will emerge.

‘For the Shadow cards, riffle through the deck until you find a card that speaks to you as ‘the part of yourself that you would hope to hide from others, yet you fear may show through’.

By the end of the pass you will have three cards, two aspects of presentations of yourself and one, more hidden, shadow. If you feel comfortable, I'd like to you share these cards back to the group; if it feels too revealing, then share them with one other person. [If they adopt the paired approach I invite each pair to summarise their discoveries to the group.]

Now, let's take the brand at the centre of our inquiry. Working as a group, I want you to choose

one or two archetype cards for the image it is trying to present – it's public self - and one or two for the true self that might emerge if it matured in the best way possible. Also, choose one or two shadow cards – hidden aspects of the brand, or things you have noticed or suspect which are not virtues, but vices. Take for example the world's most famous brand Coca Cola: if you Google 'Coca Cola harmful effects' you'll find a whole range of opinion and speculation about the shadow side of Coke. I want to make clear hear that everything and everyone one has both light and dark aspects. There are no Saints; just ordinary people who achieve remarkable things which make them worthy of veneration.

Here are a few tips to help you get the best out of this exercise:

1. Do it with a well-formed group that has spent some time working at the personal, not just professional level.
2. Go first and do it yourself to illustrate the technique - and do not choose safe options - otherwise everyone else will!
3. Let people know before the session - at the time you invite them - that you will be doing something on archetypes and they are welcome to Google them.
4. Let anyone who is too frightened or cynical to participate do an administrative task to help the group, like shuffle the cards or note down the characters that come up.
5. Institute a confidentiality agreement just before you start: I usually say, "Let's agree to keep what we discover here confidential. You are welcome to tell those outside the group what you found out about yourself, but not to talk about anything that came up about others. Do you agree to that?" I wait until there is universal out-loud agreement in the group.

Those of you who have done my Ideas From Psychotherapy course will have seen how Innocent Smoothies have utilised Archetypes to re-position their product, Here is another commercial example, the wholesale embrace of the Explorer Archetype by the clothing brand, North Face:



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