

Brand: Storytelling

Deciding the brand before you draw it.

SESSION 10
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Workhorse Collective

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Meets Mon + Wed
Today Session 10 · 09.28.2026

Where the Brief Stands.

PAGE ONE · THE SITUATION			PAGE TWO · THE ANSWER			PAGE THREE · WHAT GETS BUILT		
1	Overview	✓ Your pitch	7	Message	✓ Your pitch, sharpened	15	Requirements	✓ Your pitch's features
2	Problem	✓ Your problem statement	8	Position	Wednesday	16	Site map and main steps	Before Wednesday
3	Goals	✓ Your pitch	9	Character	Today, exercise 3	17	Content	Before Wednesday
4	Audience	✓ Your audience hand-in	10	Tone	Today, your "nevers"	18	Technology	Before Wednesday
5	Insight	Today, exercise 1	11	Channels	Wednesday	19	Out of scope	Before Wednesday
6	Competition	✓ Your research, plus their character today	12	Action and measure	✓ Your pitch			
			13	Principles and mandatories	Today, exercise 2			
			14	Open questions	Every question mark			

✓ You already have it, from a hand-in or your pitch You write it today Wednesday, or before

Today's argument

The brand can be decided before anyone draws it.

Discovery gave you facts. Definition turns them into decisions, on paper.

What a Brand Is.

1

Not a logo.

2

Not an identity.

3

Not a product.

"A brand is a person's gut feeling about a product, service, or organization."

"It's not what you say it is. It's what they say it is."

Bridging the Gap Between Business Strategy and Design.

STRATEGIC THINKERS	CREATIVE THINKERS
Analytical	Intuitive
Logical	Emotional
Linear	Spatial
Numerical	Visual
Verbal	Physical

Today: Insight, Direction, Character, Paths.



The insight

What is true about your audience that nobody has used yet.

From

Davis, ch. 8

Fills

Section 5



The direction

The rules the design must follow, and the one idea it is built around.

From

Brown, ch. 3

Fills

Section 13 and the one line



The character

The role the brand plays in the audience's life.

From

Mark and Pearson, ch. 1

Fills

Sections 9 and 10



The paths

Two or three complete ways the brand could go, so the choice is real.

From

Brown, ch. 3

Fills

Next week's moodboard

Fact vs. Insight.

A FACT	NOT AN INSIGHT YET	AN INSIGHT
Most of our users are 25 to 34.	A demographic. It describes them without explaining them.	They are the first in their family to do this, and nobody around them can tell them how.
People abandon the sign-up form.	"They need a simpler form." That is a feature.	They are embarrassed by how little they know, and the form makes them say it.
Owners buy the food the vet recommends.	"Vets matter." True, and a competitor already owns it.	Owners treat the dog like a child, and a parent wants the best.

Three Strategic Questions.

1

What do they really believe or do?

"What are the real underlying beliefs or behaviors of our target audience and how can we connect with those beliefs and behaviors?"

Purina Pro Plan, 2011

Owners saw their dogs as children, so the brand became a support network for new dog parents.

2

Where do we reach them?

"What is the best way to actually reach our target audience?"

Drugfree.org, 2013

Teens shared the family computer and were leaving Facebook. The phone was private, so the anti-drug game went mobile and never asked them to share.

3

How does it become real?

"How does this strategy become real and concrete?"

Renaissance Hotels, 2011

The brand promise was split into four themes, and every touchpoint was built on them.

Purina: Finding the Insight.

FACT	Owners buy what the vet recommends, and a competitor had a deal with the vets.
GUESS	Who is a dog in its owner's life? A best friend, a wacky cousin, a child?
CHECK	Purina's focus group videos, across the region.
INSIGHT	The dog is like a child, and a parent wants the best for a child.

So Pro Plan borrowed from Gerber and Pampers and became a "**network of support**" for new dog parents.

FROM THE READING

"I started writing down my initial thoughts based on my experience or knowledge of dog owners. However, I didn't stop there."

"People who fell into our target audience demographics across all the various Latin American countries were referring to their dogs as their children."

Judy Abel, in Davis, ch. 8, "Finding the Right Insight."

Renaissance Hotels: Making the Promise Real.

"No matter where or why you travel, there's always something wonderfully new to be found."

WHERE
Destination

WHY
Occasion

SOMETHING
Differentiation

TO BE FOUND
Discovery and exploration

Find your insight.

1. Fact. Go back through your discovery notes. Write down three specific things your audience does or says.

2. Guess. Circle the one you would not have predicted. Write your guess at why they do it.

3. Check. Write the evidence and where it came from. None yet? Write the question that would find it, with a question mark.

4. Insight. One sentence about the person, not the product.

YOU LEAVE WITH One sentence for brief section 5.

PURINA Fact: owners buy what the vet recommends. Insight: the dog is like a child, and a parent wants the best for a child.

DRUGFREE.ORG Fact: teens were leaving Facebook. Insight: they shared the family computer, and the phone was the one private place they had.

Three Kinds of Decision.

P

Principles

"Principles define what the design should or shouldn't do. These statements are grounded in research."

Today

Rules you can test every design against.

C

A concept

"Concepts establish an overall approach for the product, expressed as a central theme or idea."

Today

The one idea the brand is built around.

M

Models

"Models describe the product in an abstract way, showing the underlying architecture, structure, flow, or approach."

Page three

Your site map and main steps.

Good Principles vs. Weak Ones.

COULD BE ANYONE'S

ONLY THIS PRODUCT'S

Do more with less (Microsoft)

Time matters, so build for people on the go (Windows)

Design for the customer and instill confidence (Intuit)

More than boxes on a screen (Google Calendar)

Easy to use

Always display the user's context within the system, so they know where they are and what they're working on.

FROM THE READING

"'Easy to use' isn't a meaningful principle, because it could apply to anything."

"Done right, principles should make you squirm a little."

Dan Brown, ch. 3. The last principle is his own, from a risk-management product whose users kept losing their place.

From Discovery to Principle.

"We learned that users often lose their place in the system . The implication is that the UI should prioritize clarifying context ."

We learned

A finding from your discovery. Your audience, your interviews, your research.

The implication

What the design has to do because of it. Brown calls this answering "So what?"

Keep a table

Brown keeps three columns: the project's questions, the answers research found, and the implications.



The Concept.

Kodak called its slide tray "the Wheel." The *Mad Men* pitch called it **the Carousel**.

How it feels: a childhood ride, going around and coming back to where you were happy.

How it works: the tray spins, and the slides come back around.

It does not have to be a metaphor. One of Brown's teams used "Power with flexibility": the app should make you feel you can do anything.

FROM THE READING

"By establishing a central concept, a team (whether in advertising or web design) has a singular source of inspiration, a template for considering ideas. And while principles can serve as guideposts, only a concept can establish a vision."

Dan Brown, ch. 3, "Concepts and Big Ideas."

Set your direction.

1. Two principles: "We learned _____. The implication is that the design should _____."

2. Could either one apply to any product? Rewrite it until it could not.

3. One concept: a phrase that says how your product feels, how it works, or both.

YOU LEAVE WITH Two principles for brief section 13, and one concept for the brief's one line.

PRINCIPLE "We learned that users often lose their place in the system. The implication is that the UI should prioritize clarifying context." Dan Brown, ch. 3.

CONCEPT Purina: a network of support for new dog parents. Kodak: the Carousel. One of Brown's teams: "Power with flexibility."

What a Direction Looks Like.

PURINA PRO PLAN, WRITTEN AS A DIRECTION

Insight	Owners treat the dog like a child, and a parent wants the best for a child.
Principle	We learned owners call their dogs their children. The implication is that the brand should talk to them as new parents, not as people buying pet food.
Principle	We learned a competitor already owns the vet's recommendation. The implication is that the brand should earn trust by staying with owners over time, not by one endorsement.
Concept	A network of support for new dog parents.
Rules out	"Vet recommended" ads. A bag of kibble as the hero shot. Talking about the food before the dog.

Archetypes: One Character, for Years.

The strongest brands play one character, the same one, for years.

Nike is always the Hero. Harley-Davidson is always the Outlaw. These characters are **archetypes**: figures people recognize from stories everywhere, without being taught.

Drift costs you. Levi's went **Explorer** to Outlaw to Hero, back to Explorer, then Regular Guy/Gal, then Jester. Its market share fell with each change.

FROM THE READING

"Businesses found that they had only two broad strategic routes to go: reduce their prices or imbue their products with meaning."

"The meaning of a brand is its most precious and irreplaceable asset."

Margaret Mark and Carol Pearson, *The Hero and the Outlaw*, ch. 1. Mark came up at Young & Rubicam; Pearson spent 30 years building the framework from Jung.

Twelve Characters.

STABILITY AND CONTROL
HELPS PEOPLE FEEL SAFE

Creator

Craft something new · Williams-Sonoma
Now: LEGO, Adobe

Caregiver

Care for others · AT&T (Ma Bell) · Purina
Now: Dove, Johnson & Johnson

Ruler

Exert control · American Express
Now: Rolex, Mercedes-Benz

BELONGING AND ENJOYMENT
HELPS PEOPLE FIND LOVE, COMMUNITY

Jester

Have a good time · Miller Lite
Now: Old Spice, GEICO

Regular Guy/Gal

Be OK just as they are · Wendy's
Now: IKEA, Target

Lover

Find and give love · Hallmark
Now: Chanel, Victoria's Secret

RISK AND MASTERY
HELPS PEOPLE ACHIEVE

Hero

Act courageously · Nike
Now: Nike, Gatorade

Outlaw

Break the rules · Harley-Davidson
Now: Harley-Davidson, Liquid Death

Magician

Affect transformation · Calgon
Now: Disney, Apple

INDEPENDENCE AND FULFILLMENT
HELPS PEOPLE FIND HAPPINESS

Innocent

Retain or renew faith · Ivory
Now: Coca-Cola, Aveeno

Explorer

Maintain independence · Levi's
Now: Patagonia, Jeep

Sage

Understand their world · Oprah's Book Club
Now: Google, TED

Choose from your insight, not from what sounds good. The dog owners are parents, so the brand that supports them is a Caregiver. Groups across from each other pull apart (safety against risk, belonging against independence), so one brand cannot play both.

Four Things People Want.

ONE PULL		PULLS AGAINST
Belonging and enjoyment. To be liked, to belong to a group.	versus	Independence and fulfillment. To be an individual and go your own way.
Stability and control. Security, routine, the tried and true.	versus	Risk and mastery. Ambition, accomplishment, leaving a mark.

"BOTH OF THESE DESIRES ARE DEEP AND PROFOUND HUMAN URGES, YET THEY PULL US IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS." EVERY CHARACTER SERVES ONE OF THE FOUR. A BRAND THAT TRIES TO SERVE BOTH ENDS OF A PULL CONFUSES PEOPLE.

Stability and control.

"Most people have a deep need for security and stability. Such desires are fulfilled by routine, comfort, and staying with the tried and true."

In life. We buy insurance, stay in a job for the pension plan, or religiously take our vitamins.

Helps people. Feel safe.

Fears. Financial ruin, chaos.

Pulls against. Risk and mastery.

Characters. Creator, Caregiver and Ruler.

The Creator.

"If it can be imagined, it can be created."

Helps people	craft something new
Desire	create something of enduring value
Goal	give form to a vision
Fear	having a mediocre vision or execution
Strategy	develop artistic control and skill
Trap	perfectionism, miscreation
Gift	creativity and imagination

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW



In the book (2001): Williams-Sonoma

The Caregiver.

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

Helps people	care for others
Desire	protect people from harm
Goal	to help others
Fear	selfishness, ingratitude
Strategy	do things for others
Trap	martyrdom of self, entrapment of others
Gift	compassion, generosity

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW



In the book (2001): AT&T (Ma Bell)

Stability and control

The Ruler.

"Power isn't everything. It's the only thing."

Helps people	exert control
Desire	control
Goal	create a prosperous, successful family, company, or community
Fear	chaos, being overthrown
Strategy	exert leadership
Trap	being bossy, authoritarian
Gift	responsibility, leadership

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW

ROLEX



In the book (2001): American Express

Belonging and enjoyment.

"Most of us want very much to be liked and to belong to a group. The desire to belong makes us want to please others and conform, at least to some degree."

Helps people. Find love and community.

Fears. Exile, abandonment.

Pulls against. Independence and fulfillment.

Characters. Jester, Regular Guy/Gal and Lover.

The Jester.

"If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."

Helps people	have a good time
Desire	to live in the moment with full enjoyment
Goal	to have a great time and lighten up the world
Fear	boredom or being boring
Strategy	play, make jokes, be funny
Trap	frittering away one's life
Gift	joy

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW

Old Spice

GEICO®

In the book (2001): Miller Lite

The Regular Guy/Gal.

"All men and women are created equal."

Helps people	be OK just as they are
Desire	connection with others
Goal	to belong, fit in
Fears	standing out, seeming to put on airs, and being exiled or rejected as a result
Strategy	develop ordinary solid virtues, the common touch, blend in
Trap	give up self to blend in, in exchange for only a superficial connection
Gift	realism, empathy, lack of pretense

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW



In the book (2001): Wendy's

Belonging and enjoyment

The Lover.

"I only have eyes for you."

Helps people	find and give love
Desire	attain intimacy and experience sensual pleasure
Goal	being in a relationship with the people, the work, the experiences, the surroundings they love
Fear	being alone, a wallflower, unwanted, un-loved
Strategy	become more and more attractive, physically, emotionally, and in every other way
Trap	doing anything and everything to attract and please others, losing identity
Gifts	passion, gratitude, appreciation, commitment

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW

CHANEL

VICTORIA’S SECRET

In the book (2001): Hallmark

Risk and mastery.

"However much people want safety, most also are energized by their ambition and the desire to exert mastery. If we want the exhilaration of accomplishment, we must take risks."

In life. We take a controversial stand, start a business, or try other new and risky ventures.

Helps people. Achieve.

Fears. Powerlessness.

Pulls against. Stability and control.

Characters. Hero, Outlaw and Magician.

The Hero.

"Where there's a will, there's a way."

Helps people	act courageously
Desire	prove one's worth through courageous and difficult action
Goal	exert mastery in a way that improves the world
Fear	weakness, vulnerability, "wimping out"
Strategy	become as strong, competent, and powerful as you are capable of being
Trap	arrogance, developing a need for there always to be an enemy
Gifts	competence and courage

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW



In the book (2001): Nike

The Outlaw.

"Rules are meant to be broken."

Helps people	break the rules
Desire	revenge or revolution
Goal	to destroy what is not working (for the Outlaw or the society)
Fear	being powerless, trivialized, inconsequential
Strategy	disrupt, destroy, or shock
Trap	to go over to the dark side, criminality
Gift	outrageousness, radical freedom

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW



In the book (2001): Harley-Davidson

The Magician.

"It can happen!"

Helps people	affect transformation
Desire	knowledge of the fundamental laws of how the world or universe works
Goal	make dreams come true
Fear	unanticipated negative consequences
Strategy	develop vision and live it
Trap	becoming manipulative
Gift	finding win-win outcomes

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW



In the book (2001): Calgon

Independence and fulfillment.

"We also want to be individuals and go our own way. The desire to individuate causes us to spend time alone and make decisions or act in ways that those close to us may not understand."

Helps people. Find happiness.

Fears. Entrapment, emptiness.

Pulls against. Belonging and enjoyment.

Characters. Innocent, Explorer and Sage.

The Innocent.

"Free to be you and me."

Helps people	retain or renew faith
Desire	to experience paradise
Goal	to be happy
Fear	doing something wrong or bad that will provoke punishment
Strategy	do things right
Gift	faith and optimism

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW



In the book (2001): Ivory

The Explorer.

"Don't fence me in."

Helps people	maintain independence
Desire	the freedom to find out who you are through exploring the world
Goal	to experience a better, more authentic, more fulfilling life
Fear	getting trapped, conforming, inner emptiness, nonbeing
Strategy	journey, seek out and experience new things, escape from entrapment and boredom
Trap	aimless wandering, becoming a misfit
Gift	autonomy, ambition, ability to be true to one's own soul

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW

patagonia®

Jeep®

In the book (2001): Levi's

The Sage.

"The truth will set you free."

Helps people	understand their world
Desire	the discovery of truth
Goal	to use intelligence and analysis to understand the world
Fear	being duped, misled; ignorance
Strategy	seek out information and knowledge; become self-reflective and understand thinking processes
Trap	can study issues forever and never act
Gift	wisdom, intelligence

BRANDS THAT PLAY IT NOW

G

TED

In the book (2001): Oprah's Book Club

Who Plays Them Now.

STABILITY AND CONTROL

Creator



Caregiver



Ruler



BELONGING AND ENJOYMENT

Jester



Regular Guy/Gal



Lover



RISK AND MASTERY

Hero



Outlaw



Magician



INDEPENDENCE AND FULFILLMENT

Innocent



Explorer



Sage



What It Would Never Do.

CHARACTER	IT WOULD	IT WOULD NEVER
Caregiver	Reassure, explain, remember you	Make you feel stupid. Rush you.
Jester	Joke, surprise, poke at the category	Lecture. Take itself seriously.
Sage	Cite, compare, show its work	Hype. Say "revolutionary."
Outlaw	Break a rule the audience hates	Ask permission. Sound like a bank.

Two or Three Paths.

A path is the same insight, taken a different way.

Each one has its own concept, its own character and its own "nevers," and each one has to fit the brief. A weak option added to make the favorite look good is not a path.

Why on paper first: three written paths take an hour. Three drawn identities take three weeks. Decide which one is worth drawing.

FROM THE READING

"Presenting just one approach asks stakeholders to say yes or no, and they'll invariably say 'no.' By presenting options, you encourage stakeholders to talk about which approach they believe comes closer to the project's goals."

Dan Brown, ch. 3, "Focus on a Solution."

Write two paths for your brand.

1. Your insight from Exercise 1 at the top.

2. For each path: a concept, a character from the twelve, and three things it would never do.

3. Name your closest competitor's character. If a path matches it, change the path.

4. Trade with a neighbor. From the "nevers" alone, they guess each character.

YOU LEAVE WITH Two paths on one page. Your character and "nevers" fill brief sections 9 and 10.

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✓ You already have it, from a hand-in or your pitch You write it today Wednesday, or before

Close

Decide it on paper. Then draw it.

"There is no one right answer, just your right answer and why you think it's right." Douglas Davis, ch. 8.