

A SHORT GUIDE

Hero Personas & Elder Archetypes

*A short guide to what the assessments
are measuring.*

Clarity gets you considered.
Transformation gets you *chosen*.

Every brand is telling a story.

People are wired for story. It's how we make sense of almost everything. So when a brand tries to win someone over with a list of features, most people tune out. But when a brand tells a story the person recognizes — a story about where they are stuck and where they want to go — *the person leans in.*

That's the whole idea behind this work. Before you can tell that story, you have to know two things: **who the story is about**, and **who is telling it**.

That's what these two assessments find. One finds your **Hero Persona**. The other finds your **Elder Archetype**.

A quick note before we start. Narrative Messaging is a big paradigm with a lot of moving parts. The Hero Persona and the Elder Archetype are only two small pieces of it. But they are the two pieces people skip most often — and skipping them is exactly why so much marketing falls flat. Get these two right and everything built on top of them gets easier. That's why we start here.

The pit and the ladder.

Here's the simplest way to picture it. Imagine your customer is stuck at the bottom of a pit. They can see the top. They want out. But they can't climb out on their own — something keeps stopping them. They feel tired, frustrated, maybe a little embarrassed that they haven't figured it out yet.

Then someone arrives at the edge of the pit. Not to jump in and carry them out. To drop a ladder, point to the right rungs, and stay there while they climb.



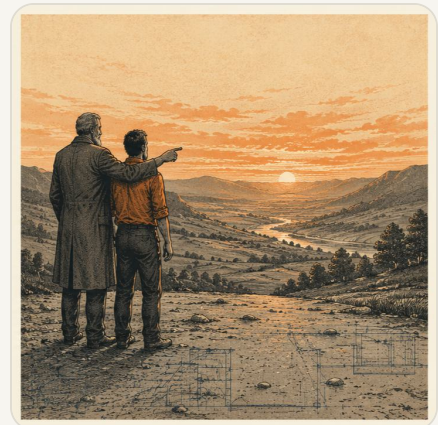
ACT ONE — THE WOUND

The Hero is stuck at the bottom, unable to climb out alone.



ACT TWO — THE LADDER

The Elder arrives and drops a ladder, pointing to the right rungs.



ACT THREE — THE DESTINATION

Out of the pit at last, with the destination finally in view.

The customer in the pit is the *Hero*. The person who drops the ladder is the *Elder*. Your brand is never the Hero — your brand is the Elder. The story is about the customer, not about you. You are the trusted guide who shows up with the ladder.

What a Hero Persona is.

A Hero Persona is a clear picture of the customer you serve — but not the usual picture made of age, job title, and income. Those are just labels. A Hero Persona describes something deeper: **where the person is stuck and who they are trying to become.**

Every persona has two parts.

WOUND The specific thing that has them stuck. (A founder who works incredibly hard but the business only runs when they're in the room.)

DESTINATION The future they're climbing toward. (A business that keeps running even when they step back.)

When you know the wound and the destination, you know exactly what your story has to do. You're no longer guessing. You're speaking to a real person about a real problem they recognize instantly.

There are **eight** Hero Personas. Most brands serve one main persona, sometimes with a second close behind. The assessment helps you find which one fits your best customers.

What an Elder Archetype is.

An Elder Archetype is the **character your brand plays when it's at its best** — its true voice and personality.

Think about people you trust for advice. They don't all sound the same. One is blunt and tells you the hard truth. One is warm and makes you feel safe. One is calm and asks the question you hadn't thought of. Each earns trust in a different way, and each fits a different kind of person who needs help.

Brands work the same way. Your archetype is how you naturally show up: the words you reach for, the tone you take, the things you'd never say. *It isn't something you put on.* It's already there in how you talk about your work when you're not trying to sound impressive.

There are **twelve** Elder Archetypes. You usually have one main archetype and a second one underneath it that adds flavor.

The language of transformation.

Here's where these two pieces become powerful: **you don't use them one at a time. You use them together.**

When you understand the *wound of the Hero* and the *voice of the Elder*, you have the language of transformation. That language is a dialogue — one person speaking honestly to another. The Hero's wound tells you what needs to be said. The Elder's voice tells you how to say it.

And the two have to match. A blunt, challenging voice (the Outlaw) can be exactly right for a customer ready to be pushed — and exactly wrong for a customer whose wound is feeling unseen and alone. That person needs warmth, not a challenge. Same advice, wrong delivery, and the message bounces right off.

When the right Elder speaks to the right Hero, the message feels like it was written *just for that person.*

How to use the assessments.

A mismatch isn't a failure — it's one of the most useful things we can learn early, because it tells us exactly what to adjust. That's why both assessments matter, and why we look at them together.

Each assessment asks you to rank words and short phrases in order of how well they fit. There are no right or wrong answers. You're not picking what sounds best — you're picking what's most *true* about you and your customers.

THE HERO PERSONA ASSESSMENT

Points you to the customer you're built to serve.

THE ELDER ARCHETYPE ASSESSMENT

Points you to the voice you're built to speak in.

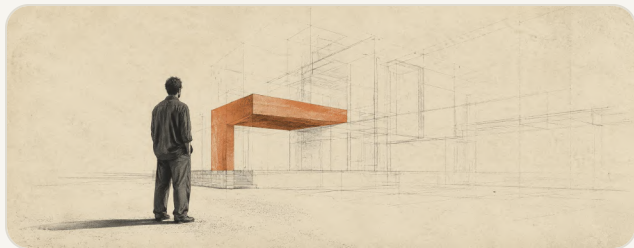
Answer honestly and quickly. *Your first instinct is usually the most accurate.* The results aren't a box you have to live in — they're a starting point for a real conversation about your brand's story.

THE CUSTOMER IN THE PIT

The Eight Hero Personas

Each one is defined by a wound — what keeps them stuck — and a destination, where they're headed.





01 Visionary

WOUND

Sees something others don't, and feels alone with it.

DESTINATION

Wants to build that vision into something real and shared.



02 Champion

WOUND

Works harder than the results show. Has hit a ceiling.

DESTINATION

Wants to compete at their true level and win what actually matters.



03 Companion

WOUND

Gives a lot and gets little back. Feels unseen.

DESTINATION

Wants to give from a full cup and receive as freely as they give.



04 Advocate

WOUND

Fighting for a good cause but running out of steam.

DESTINATION

Wants the cause to move forward without burning out.



05 Builder

WOUND

Built something through sheer effort and is now the bottleneck.

DESTINATION

Wants a business that lasts without needing them in every seat.



06 Steward

WOUND

Responsible for something precious and unsure they're protecting it well.

DESTINATION

Wants to care for it with confidence, keeping it safe while it grows.



07 Seeker

WOUND

Always searching, never quite arriving. Lots of breadth, not enough depth.

DESTINATION

Wants wisdom with roots — a search that finally lands somewhere.



08 Luminary

WOUND

Has real substance but stays invisible, and the wrong people keep finding them.

DESTINATION

Wants to be known for what they truly are, by the right audience.

THE VOICE THAT DROPS THE LADDER

The Twelve Elder Archetypes

Each one earns trust in its own way — a different voice for a different person who needs help.





01 Outlaw

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Calls out what's broken in the industry and refuses to play along.

ITS VOICE

Bold, short, direct sentences.



02 Magician

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Opens up what becomes possible. Hopeful and big-picture.

ITS VOICE

Helps people imagine more.



03 Paragon

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Holds a high standard and names what excellence requires.

ITS VOICE

Direct, honest, no flattery.



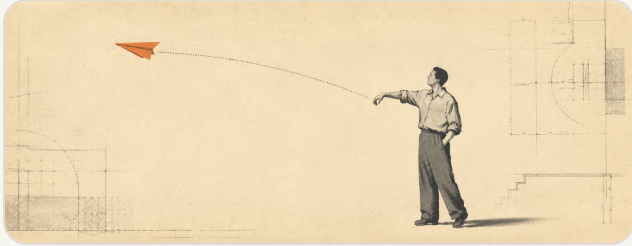
04 Lover

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Warm and personal. Speaks to you like you matter.

ITS VOICE

Makes the customer feel deeply valued.



05 Jester

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Light and self-aware. Takes the pressure off and makes a hard thing feel human.

ITS VOICE

Brings relief.



06 Everyman

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Down-to-earth and welcoming. “You belong here.”

ITS VOICE

Makes people feel included, never judged.



07 Caregiver

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Steady, patient, and reassuring. “You shouldn’t carry this alone.”

ITS VOICE

Helps people feel supported.



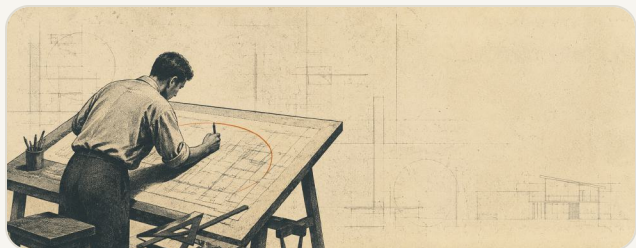
08 Ruler

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Calm and authoritative. “You’ve earned the right to expect more.”

ITS VOICE

Brings order and high standards.



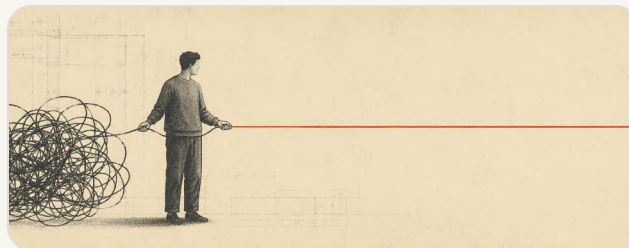
09 Architect

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Thinks from first principles and builds what hasn't existed before.

ITS VOICE

Structured and original.



10 Innocent

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Honest and clear. "It doesn't have to be this complicated."

ITS VOICE

Cuts through the noise with simplicity.



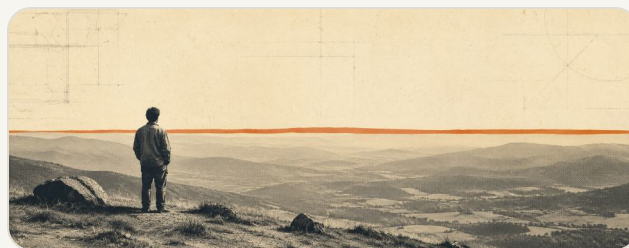
11 Sage

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Wise and measured. Asks the question you hadn't thought of.

ITS VOICE

Teaches instead of selling.



12 Explorer

HOW IT EARNS TRUST

Open and forward-looking. "You've been restless for a reason."

ITS VOICE

Speaks to people ready for something new.

LET'S BEGIN

Book the conversation.



"I love connecting with people about strategically using story for marketing and sales. Please book a conversation!"

THOM VAN DYCKE

[BOOK THE CONVERSATION →](#)

Clarity gets you considered.
Transformation gets you *chosen*.