

# BRAND ACTIVATION

The Power of Personality:  
Building a Higher Education Brand That Connects

April 2025



# Presenter



## Joe Master

SVP, Brand Management

Orange | Purple | Green

The Philosophical and Creative Curator

- 5 years in journalism/publishing
- 13 years in-house at Drexel, Temple
- 3 years consulting
- 43 years in love with language
- 11 year-old son obsessed with ***Back to the Future***

Because people are the point

# Personality Science is at the heart of institutional brand.





Back to the future ...



# Agenda

- 1 What is Brand Activation?
- 2 What institutions get wrong when they activate their brands
- 3 How can your team plan for a brand activation?
- 4 How do you measure success?
- 5 Takeaways



# *What is Brand Activation?*

In context ...

# In context

## BRAND

What an organization stands for in the hearts and minds of the people with whom you are trying to connect.

<b>BRAND RESEARCH &amp; STRATEGY</b>	Includes qualitative and quantitative research, as well competitor analysis – netting a brand personality definition and foundational frameworks.	Led by Carnegie, in collaboration with your team.	INTERNAL & EXTERNAL
<b>BRAND ACTIVATION</b>	The mobilization and equipping of internal stakeholders to <b>understand</b> and <b>live</b> the brand.	<b>LED BY YOUR TEAM</b> (w/ our support)	INTERNAL
<b>BRAND EXPRESSION</b>	All the ways an institution strives to reinforce and enhance its brand across channels – including direct communications, experiences, environmental design, as well as owned and earned media.	Led by Carnegie, in collaboration with your team.	EXTERNAL

This will be the topic in our next Webinar!

## Brand Activation is ...

→ ... the process of bringing a brand to life through strategic engagement and immersive experiences.



## Brand Activation is ...

- ... the process of bringing a brand to life through strategic engagement and immersive experiences.
- ... the careful engaging, equipping and inspiring of internal stakeholders with tools and training.

## Brand Activation is ...

- ... the process of bringing a brand to life through strategic engagement and immersive experiences.
- ... the careful engaging, equipping and inspiring of internal stakeholders with tools and training.
- ...ensuring that internal stakeholders experience the brand *first* — so they can be its ambassadors.

## Brand Activation is ...

- ... the process of bringing a brand to life through strategic engagement and immersive experiences.
- ... the careful engaging, equipping and inspiring of internal stakeholders with tools and training.
- ...ensuring that internal stakeholders experience the brand *first* — so they can be its ambassadors.
- ...the process of building brand equity internally before executing a plan to express it externally.

## Brand Activation is ...

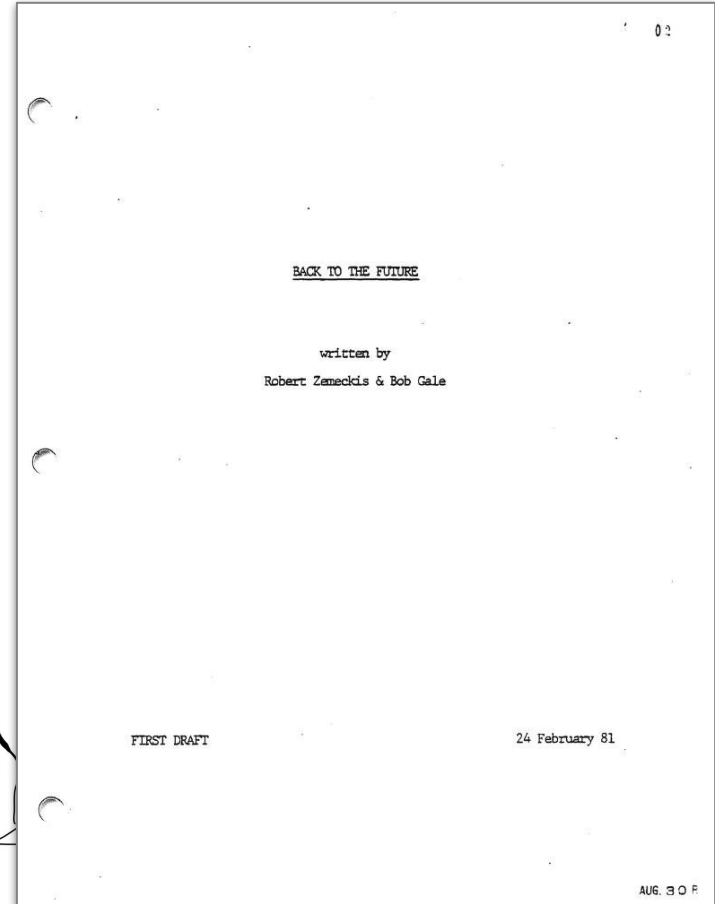
- ... the process of bringing a brand to life through strategic engagement and immersive experiences.
- ... the careful engaging, equipping and inspiring of internal stakeholders with tools and training.
- ...ensuring that internal stakeholders experience the brand *first* — so they can be its ambassadors.
- ...the process of building brand equity internally before executing a plan to express it externally.
- THE MOST COMMONLY OVERLOOKED STEP IN THE PROCESS.

*If a brand is a **movie** ...*



# BACK TO THE FUTURE

# This is the Brand Strategy

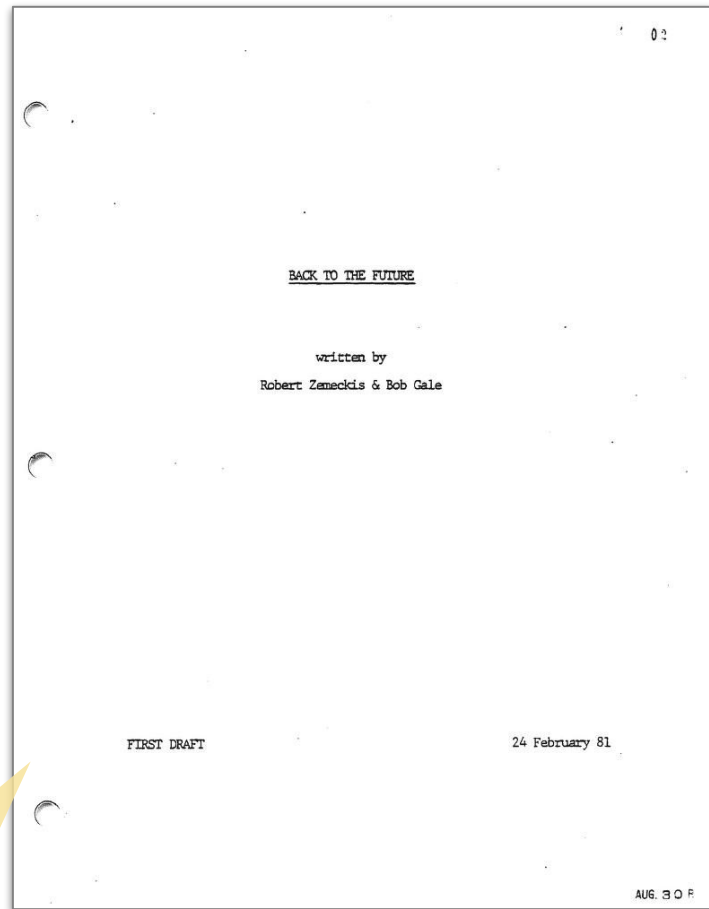


## This is the Brand Strategy

“I saw a great story. A story that was equal in plot to character. I saw a story where the characters created the plot as opposed to the plot creating the characters. It was almost a perfect storytelling machine.”

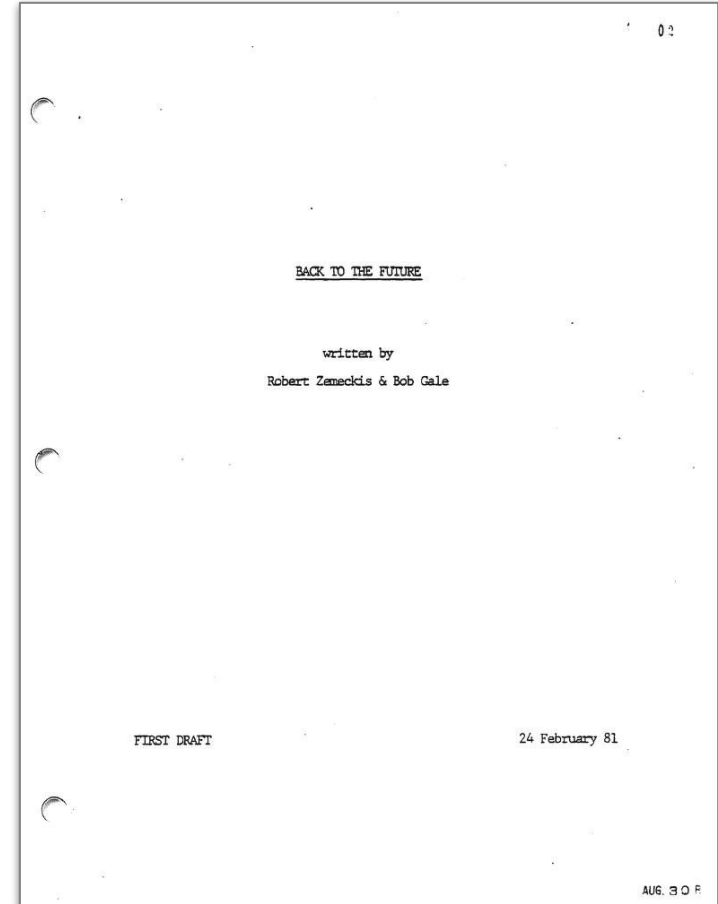
— Steven Spielberg  
Executive Producer

The product of 40 drafts

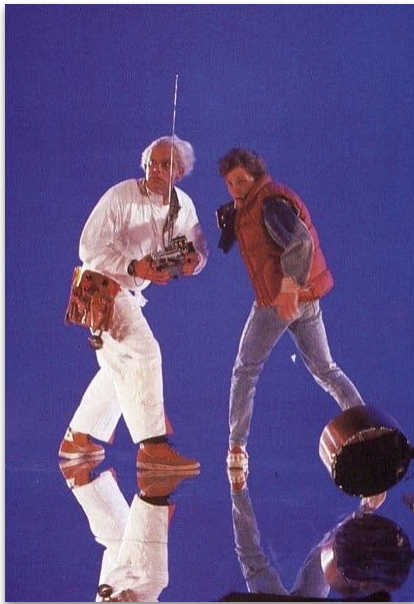


# This is the Brand Strategy

- + **Research:** Foundational work to identify audience motivations, expectations & competitive landscape
  - + *What authentic and distinct story can we tell?*
- + **Storyline:** Mission, vision, values, purpose, personality, pillars, traits
  - + *Why does this movie exist?*
  - + *What is the deeper motivating purpose for its characters?*
- + **Genre & Theme:** Brand market positioning
  - + *Where does the movie fit in the market?*
  - + *Where does it fit among competitors?*
- + **Target Audiences:** Segmentation strategy
  - + *Who is the movie for?*
  - + *Who is the movie not for?*



# This is Brand Expression





# This is Brand Expression

- + **The actors:** Brand personality & messaging pillars – expressed
  - + *What is the personality of the movie and its characters?*
  - + *How do the actors interpret the script and convey messaging themes?*
- + **Cinematography, score & visual effects:** Visual identity, fonts, colors, logos, design elements
  - + *How does the movie look? Sound?*
  - + *How does it visually and sonically execute the script?*
- + **Promotion:** Owned, earned, paid, and social media; organic and paid campaigns
  - + *How does the movie attract attention?*
  - + *How does the movie generate buzz externally.*



# This is Brand Activation



Kyra Sedgwick  
As "Jennifer"



Billy Zane  
As "Biff"



C. Thomas Howell  
As "Marty"



# This is Brand Activation

+ **Casting, rehearsals & training:** Internal training and alignment to ensure stakeholders understand and embody the brand

- + *Can we cast the right-fit actors to bring the script to life?*
- + *How do we train our cast to embody their parts?*
- + *If something isn't working, **we have to pivot.***

+ **Producers, directors, and crew:** Internal brand leadership, ambassadors, brand advocacy

- + *How can this team ensure that the cast and technical leads are able to perform at peak levels?*

+ **Production and editing:** Internal brand consistency

- + *Does the final product align with the the screenwriter's vision?*
- + *Does the movie look, sound, and feel authentic and engaging?*

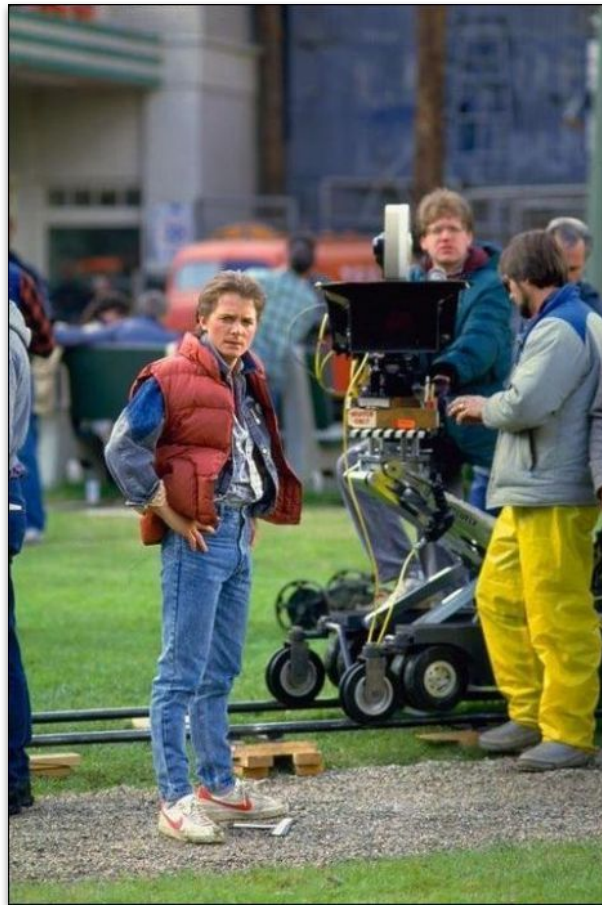




## This is Brand Activation

“Good directing is  
good writing and  
good casting.”

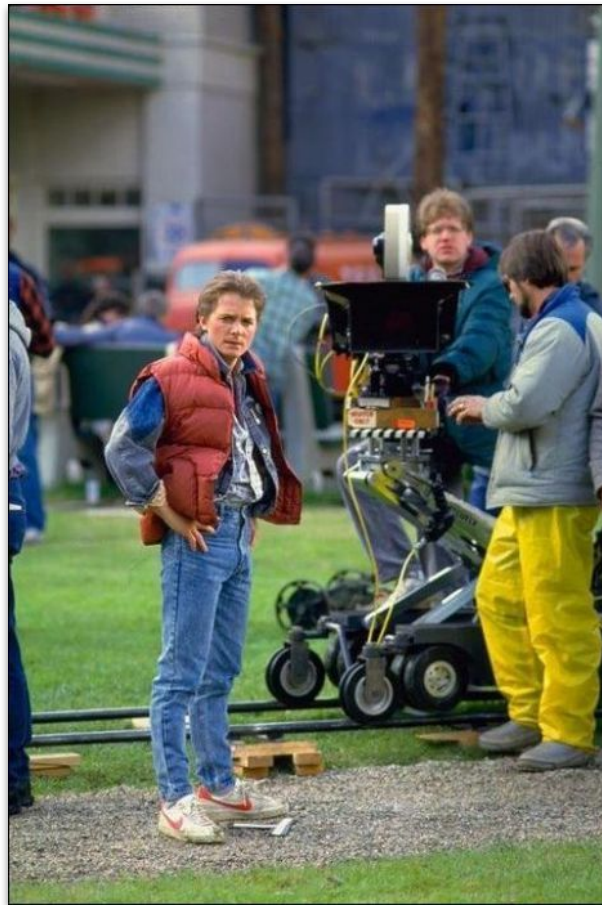
— Robert Zemeckis



## This is Brand Activation

“Good branding is good strategy, *activation*, and expression.”

— Anonymous





# *What institutions get wrong ...*

# What institutions get wrong

## Lack of internal buy-in

- Faculty, staff, students, and alumni must feel an emotional connection to a brand before they can be its champions. And that starts at the onset of research, not expression.
- It is essential for the WHO (stakeholders) to feel a part of the WHY.

## Over-reliance on the “brand book”

- If you're relying on a new tagline, logo and/or visuals, but not thinking about how they can work together and be shared via meaningful experiences, chances are people won't feel; and if they don't feel, they won't help.

## Inconsistent Implementation

- All brand elements must be consistent across all platforms, departments, and initiatives.

## One-size-fits-all messaging

- Each of your internal audiences require tailored storytelling. Be mindful of brand champions, and how they can connect to the new brand.

## Lack of measurement and adaptation

- Use KPIs (engagement, awareness, sentiment) to refine strategies.

## Inauthentic activation activities

- How you share must be influenced by WHO you are. Your brand personality should shine through all you do.

The right *leaders* to champion the project



Engaging the right *stakeholders* from the start

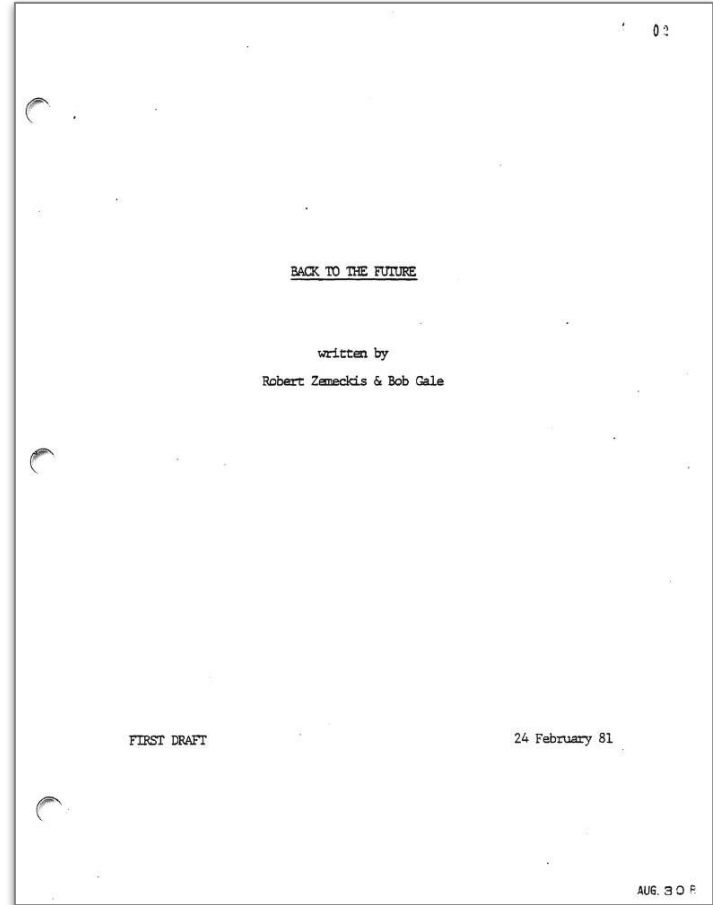


*Pivoting* internally to ensure authentic brand expression





Going directly from this ...



To this ...



# *How can your team plan for a Brand Activation?*

Hint: It's more about creating space for people to understand the brand than expressing it externally.

# Planning for Brand Activation

## Define clear objectives

- + *What emotions and actions should the brand inspire? How can you use your WHY to hone in on purposeful activation experiences?*

## Engage internal stakeholders

- + *Facilitate experiences early in the branding process that align and excite faculty, staff, students, and alumni.*

## Use a multi-phased approach

- + *Build momentum with strategically timed rollout phases.*

## Leverage omni-channel engagement

- + *Digital, print, events, and social media – everything to reinforce the brand internally first. Think of the testing and insights!*

## Create ‘authentically meaningful’ experiences

- + *Formal launch events, storytelling campaigns, and interactive touchpoints. Test and learn.*

## Measure and adapt

- + *Use KPIs (engagement, awareness, sentiment) to refine strategies.*

# Key Brand Activation Initiatives

Initiative	Description
Formal Launch Event	Host the event in-person and via live-stream to unveil the new brand identity and messaging.
Ongoing Training & Toolkit Preparation	Train student-facing faculty, staff and even leadership to <i>understand</i> and be <i>ambassadors</i> for the new brand.
Website	Update the homepage, landing pages, and other marketing-critical pages to reflect your institution's brand.
Social Media Campaign	Use hashtags, user-generated content and interactive features to encourage engagement.
Storytelling	Encourage user-generated content and testimonials in your storytelling and incorporate feedback.
Brand Advocacy	Encourage the entire community to share news and updates personally and provide tools and resources to enable them to do it effectively.

**If you plan and execute a successful brand activation...**

## You can create *lifelong* brand advocates



*How do you measure  
success?*



## This is what we're used to ...

KPI	Description
<b>Media Impressions</b>	Track the total number of impressions generated through media coverage, press releases, and other communication efforts.
<b>Social Media Engagement</b>	Analyze metrics such as likes, shares, comments, follower growth and referrals to website via social media platforms to assess audience engagement.
<b>Website Traffic &amp; Engagement</b>	Track website analytics, including the number of visitors, page views, bounce rates, and user engagement to evaluate the effectiveness of online content. <i>Be mindful of new/unique visitors during launch activities.</i>
<b>Content Performance</b>	Evaluate the success of content marketing efforts by analyzing the performance of blog posts, articles, videos, and other content pieces.
<b>Email Marketing</b>	Track open rates, click-through rates, and conversion rates for email campaigns, measuring the effectiveness of targeted communication.

This is what we're used to ...



# This is what we need ...

## Internal Brand Adoption Metrics

KPI	Description
Brand Training Completion Rates	Percentage of employees and key partners who have completed brand onboarding or training sessions.
Brand Guidelines Usage	Frequency of accessing or downloading brand guidelines, templates, and toolkits; percentage of assets audited that comply with brand standards.
Internal Brand Advocacy (Net Promoter Score)	Internal NPS measuring how likely employees or stakeholders are to recommend the brand internally or externally.
Employee Brand Understanding	Survey results on how well employees understand the brand values, positioning, and voice.
Brand Sentiment among Faculty & Staff	Qualitative feedback from employee surveys or focus groups on how the brand resonates internally.
Brand Engagement Metrics	Participation rates in brand-related events (e.g., brand launch events and workshops)
Leadership Alignment	Percentage of senior leaders actively using and reinforcing brand language and principles in their communications.
Stakeholder Confidence in Brand	Surveys assessing stakeholder confidence in using and representing the brand.

# *Takeaways*

# Takeaways

## Brand activation is not a one-time event

- + ***It's an ongoing strategy*** that begins at the very beginning of the brand-building process. You and your leadership are the project's champions. Your internal stakeholders are your crew, and your brand ambassadors. Engage them in the research, strategy and activation planning — before you get to expression.

# Takeaways

## Brand activation is not a one-time event

- + ***It's an ongoing strategy*** that begins at the very beginning of the brand-building process. You and your leadership are the project's champions. Your internal stakeholders are your crew, and your brand ambassadors. Engage them in the research, strategy and activation planning — before you get to expression.

## Activate your brand correctly, and you'll have internal and external champions — for life

- + If you enter a branding initiative solely thinking about expression, you're missing the mark. **Focus on the people, processes and platforms first.**



# Takeaways

## Brand activation is not a one-time event

- + ***It's an ongoing strategy*** that begins at the very beginning of the brand-building process. You and your leadership are the project's champions. Your internal stakeholders are your crew, and your brand ambassadors. Engage them in the research, strategy and activation planning — before you get to expression.

## Activate your brand correctly, and you'll have internal and external champions — for life

- + If you enter a branding initiative solely thinking about expression, you're missing the mark. **Focus on the people, processes and platforms first.**

## A strong, emotionally resonant brand can connect people in transcendent ways

- + A brand is an authentic expression of your organization's personality. Your stakeholders aren't just targets to entice engagement. **They're expressions of the brand, too.**

Back to the future ...



# As promised ...

## TYLER BORDERS

### THE CHARMING AND CONFIDENT VISIONARY

Visionaries are driven by growth, being forthright, and by a need to innovate. They possess foresight, imagination, and the ambition to bring their insights to life. As natural leaders, they are comfortable with uncertainty and the risk of failure, and are willing to bet it all to pursue the future of their dreams. Strategic and assertive, once they've set their sights on something, others can count on Visionaries to lead them to a better tomorrow.

#### → LEADING ARCHETYPES ←



#### Powerful & Assertive

Driven by growth and being a forthrighter. Delivers stability, order, and strength. Values power, influence, and accomplishment. Causes people to feel confident and in control.



#### Brilliant & Transformative

Driven by inventing the future through innovation. Delivers advancement, progress, and radical outcomes. Values newness, experimentation, and progress. Causes people to feel awe and amazement.



#### Sophisticated & Refined

Driven by experience, elegance, and beauty in all forms. Delivers excellence, finesse, and quality. Values grace, refinement, and beauty. Causes people to feel desired and important.



#### Daring & Rebellious

Driven by disrupting the norm and challenging the establishment. Delivers engagement, freedom, and boldness. Values independence, guts, and breaking with convention. Causes people to feel free and fearless.

## DAVID VIGGIANO

### THE RESILIENT AND FEARLESS RINGLEADER

Ringleaders are driven to challenge the establishment and by growth and being forthrighters. They are natural activists and inspire others to rally in support of unconventional ideas. They are confident, courageous, and assertive when in command, using position and status to persuade audiences to carry out radical change. Ringleaders are known for their enthralling demonstrations of mastery and power, always insisting on taking center stage.

#### → LEADING ARCHETYPES ←



#### Powerful & Assertive

Driven by growth and being a forthrighter. Delivers stability, order, and strength. Values power, influence, and accomplishment. Causes people to feel confident and in control.



#### Resilient & Tenacious

Driven by overcoming challenges through grit and determination. Delivers surprising strength, perseverance, and toughness. Values fortitude and hard work. Causes people to feel triumphant and inspired.

## JARED BRICKMAN

### THE IMAGINATIVE AND ANALYTICAL THEORIST

Theorists are driven to invent the future through innovation and by the quest for the unknown. They form astonishing opinions and theories within their own mind but do not always go so far as to test them against reality. Intellectual, systematic, and logical in their thinking, they possess a natural ability to connect the dots. Their aspiration is to understand everything, but in their journey to do so, they may lose the value of intuition and emotions that would remind to fully appreciate the now.

#### → LEADING ARCHETYPES ←



#### Brilliant & Transformative

Driven by inventing the future through innovation. Delivers advancement, progress, and radical outcomes. Values newness, experimentation, and progress. Causes people to feel awe and amazement.



#### Adventurous & Inquisitive

Driven by the quest for discovering the unknown. Delivers progress and a thirst for knowledge and exploration. Values investigation, curiosity, and venturing. Causes people to feel intrigued and enthralled.



#### Creative & Imaginative

Driven by self-expression and artistry. Delivers something new that encourages creativity. Values originality, creation, and new concepts. Causes people to feel constructive and expressive.

## VOLTAIRE MIRAN

### THE COMPASSIONATE AND CHARMING AFICIONADO

Aficionados are driven by experience, elegance, and beauty in all forms, and by a desire to cause others to get excited. They pursue their passions and interests with great devotion and enthusiasm. They meticulously commit themselves to their pursuits, not for status or money, but because they find them compelling in all their dynamism. Activities are neither a hobby or pastime, but a passionate calling to be cherished for a lifetime.

#### → LEADING ARCHETYPES ←



#### Sophisticated & Refined

Driven by experience, elegance, and beauty in all forms. Delivers excellence, finesse, and quality. Values taste, memorability, and beauty. Causes people to feel desired and important.



#### Cheerful & Enthusiastic

Driven to entertain and cause others to get excited. Delivers fun and the desire to amuse and uplift. Values energy, playfulness, and enjoyment. Causes people to feel exhilarated and happy.



#### Supportive & Selfless

Driven by compassion, warmth, and the desire to care for others. Delivers nurturing, comfort, and protection. Values stability, commitment, and generosity. Causes people to feel valued and supported.

Blog post



# As promised ...

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND CREATIVE CURATOR

Curators are driven to express themselves through artistry and by a need to compassionately care for others. They seek novel and creative ways of doing things, whether in their artistic endeavors or through service to those around them. Curators play to their passions, doing and creating things that speak to others in deep and distinctive ways. Their work reflects a keen understanding of what's good for humanity and inspires others to reflect and respond in meaningful ways.

### → LEADING ARCHETYPES ←

11

#### Creative & Imaginative

Driven by self-expression and artistry. Delivers something new that encourages creativity. Values originality, ideation, and new concepts. Causes people to feel constructive and expressive.

11

#### Supportive & Selfless

Driven by compassion, warmth, and the desire to care for others. Delivers nurturing, comfort, and protection. Values altruism, commitment, and generosity. Causes people to feel valued and supported.

10

#### Adventurous & Inquisitive

Driven by the quest for discovering the unknown. Delivers progress and a thirst for knowledge and exploration. Values investigation, curiosity, and trailblazing. Causes people to feel intrigued and emboldened.

### → TOP TRAITS ←

JOSEPH'S PRIMARY POSITIVES



Caring



Inspiring



Philosophical

### → TOP FAULTS ←

JOSEPH'S PRIMARY WEAKNESSES



Impatient



Stubborn



Anxious

### → TOP PEEVES ←

JOSEPH CAN'T STAND IN OTHERS



Dishonest



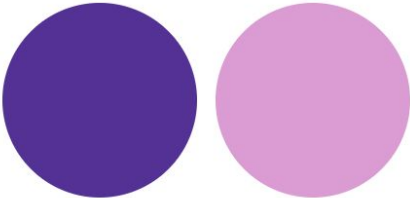
Predatory



Indiscreet

### → MOST DRAWN TO ←

JOSEPH IS DRAWN TO THOSE WITH HIGH LEVELS OF THE PURPLE PROVIDER OR PINK SOPHISTICATE ARCHETYPES.





# Thank You!

**Joe Master**

[jmaster@carnegiehighered.com](mailto:jmaster@carnegiehighered.com)

**CARNEGIE**

210 Littleton Road, Suite 100 Westford, MA 01886

978-692-5092 | [info@carnegiehighered.com](mailto:info@carnegiehighered.com)

[CarnegieHigherEd.com](http://CarnegieHigherEd.com)