

10 types of challenger brand strategy

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Overthrow II, by **eatbigfish**. and **PHD Worldwide**, explores 10 types of challenger strategy.



What do we need to challenge to succeed?

A challenger is not a brand that challenges somebody, but a brand that challenges something. Very few explicitly take on another brand in their category, but all of them are challenging something they feel needs to change.

Lemonade challenges people's historical relationship with insurance.

Tony's Chocolonely challenges the ethics of the chocolate category.

Universal Standard challenges a lack of inclusivity and bias in fashion.

Xiaomi challenges why the best technology has to be expensive.

COPA90 challenges how the existing power structure shortchanges football fans.

Oatly challenges whether a historical and much-loved cultural norm is something any of us should be doing at all any more.

Understanding that central challenge gives each of these challengers real strategic clarity – clarity on their positioning, on their culture, and on their communications behaviour.

And we can see in this clarity a critical antidote to a common tendency in marketers today to respond to a fast-changing world by focusing on the wrong things – the new shiny object, conference buzzword or a slavish adherence to Purpose, whether it is right for the brand or not – rather than the core elements of strategy and brand-building that will drive competitive differentiation.

A drift that is dangerous for a market leader, and fatal to a challenger.

Let's see what follows, then, as 10 different kinds of challenger clarity.

DEMOCRATISER

The Democratiser brings ubiquitous access to the things that have previously only been available to an elite. It believes in taking not from the rich and giving to the poor, but taking from the few and giving to the many. The Democratiser challenges elitism and privilege and champions diversity and accessibility.

DRAMATIC DISRUPTOR

The Dramatic Disruptor has a product or service offer significantly superior to the incumbent. It focuses on visually dramatising their offer, often compared to the competition, and leaning into that drama to change the category's criteria for choice in its favour.

ENLIGHTENED ZAGGER

The Enlightened Zagger deliberately swims against a prevailing cultural or category tide. It holds up an attitude or behaviour the rest of the world seems to accept, and provokes us to see it as the BS it really is.

FEISTY UNDERDOG

The Feisty Underdog presents itself as locked in a binary battle we can all recognise: 'small vs. big', 'good vs. evil', 'us vs. them'. Belief,chutzpah and resilience are everything, as is the absolute authenticity of this challenger's position as David, sticking it to Goliath.

IRREVERENT MAVERICK

The Irreverent Maverick uses wit and humour to challenge complacency and apparent comfort found in the bland. This challenger narrative is one of provocation, a poke in the ribs; deliberately setting out to entertain and engage.

LOCAL HERO

The Local Hero reflects the emotion and energy around a renewed appetite for localism and local character; it champions the importance of local needs, local culture and local people. This challenger does not just claim local provenance - it has a deep presence in (and understanding of) the community.

MISSIONARY

The Missionary exists primarily to change something in the world it sees as broken or unfair. This challenger has a single-minded focus and wears that strong sense of purpose on its sleeve. This purpose is not simply a marketing story, it is deeply rooted. The business is the mission, and the mission is the objective.

NEXT GENERATION

The Next Generation challenger questions the appropriateness of the market leader - or even the whole category - for the times we live in today. It can elegantly position the incumbent as perfect for a time gone by, but new times call for new brands and services. The world's changing - let's move on, people.

PEOPLE'S CHAMPION

The People's Champion is a brand with a mandate: it is standing up for a group of people short-served or exploited by the establishment for too long. However, this challenger is an agent of change, not just protest. It offers an alternative model for success, often creating 'people-powered' solutions with the community's interests at heart.

REAL & HUMAN

The Real & Human challenges the impersonality and faceless service of the market leader, and the dehumanising industrialisation of the category, appealing to us on a more personal and emotional level.

challengers to disrupt their markets. Get your copy at overthrow2.com.



eatbigfish. is a strategic brand consultancy whose unique focus is challenger thinking and behaviour. Our expertise is grounded in The Challenger Project - our study of how Challenger Brands succeed by doing more with less.

We act as catalysts rather than consultants, and through our collaborative approach we provide inspiration and frameworks which enable 'would be' challengers to deliver breakthrough solutions for their teams and brand.

If you would like to speak to someone please call or email our local representative for Africa Middle East: Delta Victor Bravo (Pty) Ltd.

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