

# THE HEINEKEN CREATIVE LADDER





# DESTRUCTIVE

Creativity that damages the sales or reputation of the brand or company

- Leads to rejection or disgust
- Leaves a negative memory

**Stand-out:** It is likely to be highly original work. It will go against the grain of other category communications, but in a way that is inappropriate or reckless.

**Emotion:** It will almost certainly cause an emotional reaction, but that emotional reaction will not be in the service of the brand. It will be an enduringly negative reaction.

**Alignment:** It will not be accurately aligned with the values and purpose of the brand. Or if it is, then there is a much bigger problem – a wholesale brand strategy rethink is required.

**Reaction:** ‘I really don’t like this’





# HIJACKED

Creativity that relies on borrowed interest, the appropriation of cultural topics, or popular references to mask the lack of idea and brand point of view.

- Generic associations that could be used by almost any brand in any category
- The audience will remember little about the brand

**Stand-out:** It will be low on originality, as it is, by definition, derivative work.

**Emotion:** Cultural topics and popular references have the power to resonate with people at an emotional level. However, because of a lack of alignment, there won't be uplift for the brand.

**Alignment:** The alignment between the hijacked material and the brand is not clear. It may exist, but won't be easily understood by people.

**Reaction:** "This brand is jumping on the bandwagon"





# CONFUSING

Creativity that leaves a feeling of “I just don’t get it”. There may be something interesting in the idea, but it hasn’t been thought through and feels disconnected from the brand.

- Presents a confused narrative or execution
- The desired meaning or relevance is lost

**Stand-out:** It may be original and different, and spark people’s interest. But this is attention without brand connection.

**Emotion:** Again, it may well provoke an emotional reaction. But this powerful reaction will be tainted by a feeling of confusion and disorientation.

**Alignment:** There will be a fundamental disconnect between the work and the brand.

**Reaction:** “What on earth was that about?”

LEGENDARY

CULTURAL PHENOMENON

CONTAGIOUS

GROUNDBREAKING

FRESH

OWNABLE

CLICHÉ

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# CLICHÉ

Creativity that uses familiar formulaic frames of reference and category codes.

- Could be done by any brand within the category – this work is wallpaper
- Easy to sign off, because it's what everyone else has been doing
- Feels safe and responsible, but is dangerous and irresponsible

**Stand-out:** It is not original, different or interesting. It is conformist and forgettable. This is a highly dangerous place for a brand to be.

**Emotion:** It will fail to stir the emotions: positive, negative, or anything in between.

**Alignment:** There might be superficial branding, but this type of work will give no sense of what the brand is all about. Cover up the logo, and it could be any brand in the category.

**Reaction:** “Booooring”

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# OWNABLE

Creativity that uses identifiable brand cues to rise above a cliché. It would be hard to mistake for a competitor. But it is more focused on the brand than on the audience.

- Does not unsettle existing category norms
- Creates or confirms the creative codes of the brand
- Is an example of competent marketing

**Stand-out:** It won't feel radically new or exciting. It is still falls within what's expected of the category.

**Emotion:** This sort of work is focused on the brand, rather than being rooted in powerful human insights. As a result, it might feel a bit emotionally flat.

**Alignment:** It is well aligned to the brand, both visually and tonally. It may not explore interesting areas through the lens of the brand, but shows a robust understanding of what the brand is all about.

**Reaction:** "Yup, that makes sense"





# FRESH

Creativity that delivers a fresh new take and is rooted in human insight. It brings something new and different to the brand and to the category.

- Will either reveal a new insight or refresh an old one in a surprising and delightful way
- A superior execution that stands out and speaks to people

**Stand-out:** It will not be overly constrained by category conventions. Unlike 'Ownable' work, it will stand out from its competitors on the basis of its creativity rather than just on the basis of its brand alignment.

**Emotion:** It is rooted in smart insights and will touch people on an emotional, human level.

**Alignment:** It seamlessly weaves understanding of the brand with understanding about people, to create something that is emotionally resonant and brand-aligned.

**Reaction:** "That's really good!"







# GROUNDBREAKING

Creativity that deliberately disrupts or subverts existing category norms or creative codes in an intriguing and relevant way.

- Generates significant impact and casts the brand in a brave, exciting light.
- Demands attention and aims for fame.

**Stand-out:** It is powerfully original, refusing to look or feel like competitor communications. It showcases innovative, independent thinking.

**Emotion:** It will make an emotional impression, in large part because of its originality.

**Alignment:** This is not just different for difference's sake. It has the brand's essence, tone and values at its heart.

**Reaction:** "This is unlike anything that I've seen!"







# CONTAGIOUS

Creativity that has been designed to be highly engaging and easily shared, weaponizing the brand's audience.

- Work that is talked about online, at school, and in the office.
- Work that demonstrates real understanding of the mechanics and nature of modern media (especially social media)

**Stand-out:** It feels unexpected, exciting and fresh.

**Emotion:** It provokes a strong emotional response, prompting action. It shows an astute understanding of what people share with others and how they share it.

**Alignment:** It ensures that the brand is clearly rooted in the idea, so that the brand benefits from the engagement and reach.

**Reaction:** “Wow! I need to share this!”

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# CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Creativity that transcends marketing by becoming a genuine talking point in culture. It does not just reflect culture, but contributes to it and moves the cultural conversation forwards.

- Is picked up and analysed by the mainstream (rather than just the industry) media
- May create a cultural meme

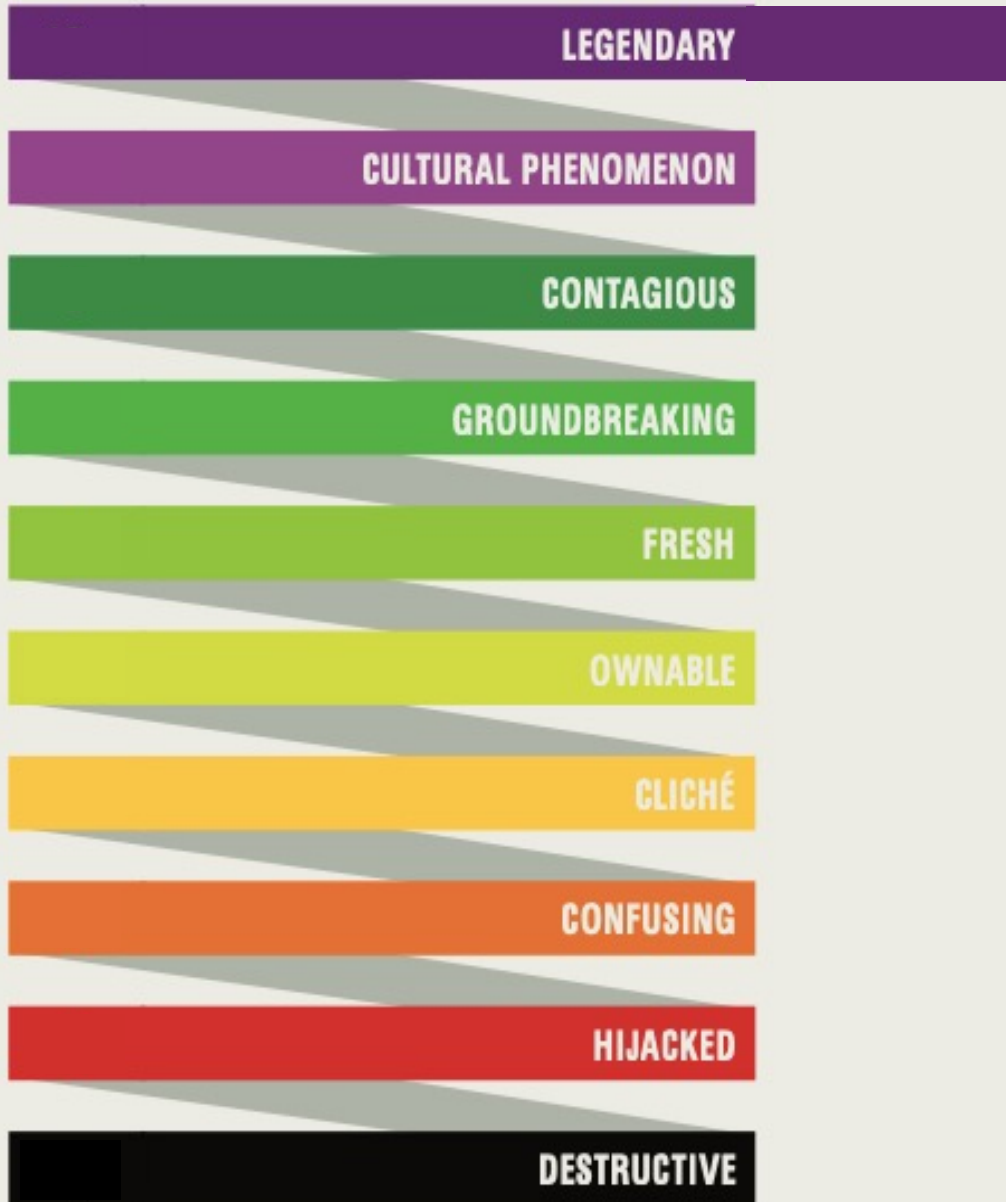
**Stand-out:** It is so original and powerful that it has weight beyond just the realm of marketing, but in culture more broadly.

**Emotion:** It can show that the brand is committed to the things that people care about. It provokes a powerful emotional reaction by being plugged into cultural trends, tempos and movements.

**Alignment:** It is an extension of the brand's values, and gives the brand a powerful voice in wider culture.

Reaction: "This is more than just marketing"





# LEGENDARY

Creativity that will live long in the popular imagination, continuing to generate fame and positive sentiment for the brand. This is not something that you can brief for, and 'Legendary' status will often only emerge over time.

- A creative landmark for the brand
- A truly rare thing

**Stand-out:** It retains its freshness and sense of originality, even years after it has been launched.

**Emotion:** It does not just make a short-term emotional impact, but stays with people for years to come.

**Alignment:** It becomes a defining creative asset for the brand. It will be one of the first things that people associate with the brand.

**Reaction:** "This is incredible"