

Tom Sharman

The Content Operators Playbook

Positioning. 3 principles.

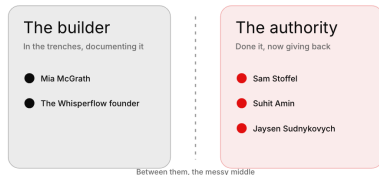
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1. Positioning

PLAYBOOK • POSITIONING

Builder or authority

Pick a side. The builder documents the journey while it happens.



- 01 Ask whether they have already done the thing their audience wants to do.
02 If yes, they are the authority: lead with the result and teach from it.
03 If they are doing it now, they are the builder: document every step in public.

THE CONTENT OPERATORS

TOR SHARMAN

Positioning, 1 of 3

Builder or authority

Two places a personal brand works: in the trenches documenting it, or having done it and giving back.

There are two places a personal brand works. The builder, in the trenches, documenting the journey as it happens. Or the authority, someone who has done it and is now giving back. Sam Stoffel made his money, sold the business, and now teaches. So which one are you right now? Pick the one that is true, and we build everything from there.

How do I use it?

1. Ask whether they have already done the thing their audience wants to do.
2. If yes, they are the authority: lead with the result and teach from it.
3. If they are doing it now, they are the builder: document every step in public.
4. Write the line down and test every video against it before it goes out.

Questions

What does "Builder or authority" mean? Pick a side. The builder documents the journey while it happens. The authority has done it and teaches from it.

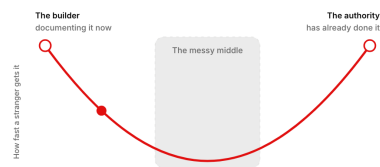
How do I put "Builder or authority" into practice? Ask whether they have already done the thing their audience wants to do. If yes, they are the authority: lead with the result and teach from it. If they are doing it now, they are the builder: document every step in public.

Why does "Builder or authority" matter? There are two places a personal brand works. The builder, in the trenches, documenting the journey as it happens.

tomsharman.com/playbooks/positioning/builder-or-authority/

Avoid the messy middle

The middle ground between builder and authority is where a brand stalls. Sit one side or the other.



The shape, drawn to explain it. Not measured.

01 Read their last 30 posts and mark each one builder or authority.

02 If the split is anywhere near even, they are in the middle.

03 Pick the side that is true today and cut the content that argues for the other one.

THE CONTENT OPERATORS

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Positioning, 2 of 3

Avoid the messy middle

Half builder, half authority reads as neither. Sit one side or the other.

When I look at a personal brand, the thing to avoid is the messy middle. You're either the builder documenting it, or the authority who has done it. Sit in between and nobody can tell what you stand for in the first three seconds. Let's pick a side today and cut what argues for the other one.

How do I use it?

1. Read their last 30 posts and mark each one builder or authority.
2. If the split is anywhere near even, they are in the middle.
3. Pick the side that is true today and cut the content that argues for the other one.
4. Keep the other side as story inside the content. It stops being the positioning.

Questions

What does "Avoid the messy middle" mean? The middle ground between builder and authority is where a brand stalls. Sit one side or the other.

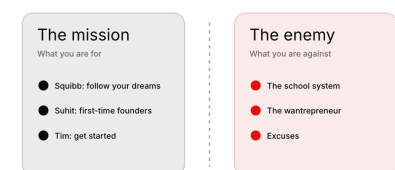
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tomsharman.com/playbooks/positioning/avoid-the-messy-middle/

A mission and an enemy

A brand compounds when it has a mission, and the shortcut to a mission is an enemy. Call out the wrong audience on purpose.



01 Write the mission as one sentence about what the audience gets.

02 Name the enemy: a belief, a habit or a type of person the audience already resents.

03 Call out the wrong audience in the hooks, so the right one feels picked.

THE CONTENT OPERATORS

TOM SHARMAN

Positioning, 3 of 3

A mission and an enemy

Name what you are against. The right people rally and the wrong ones bring them in.

The brands that compound have a mission, and the fastest way to a mission is an enemy. Squibb's is the school system, and anyone who tells you that you can't. So who are you against? Name them in the hooks. Some people will get wound up, and that's fine, because the wrong audience commenting is what brings the right one in.

How do I use it?

1. Write the mission as one sentence about what the audience gets.
2. Name the enemy: a belief, a habit or a type of person the audience already resents.
3. Call out the wrong audience in the hooks, so the right one feels picked.
4. Expect some people to be wound up. Their comments carry it to the people you want.

In his words

The biggest difference is essentially around mission and purpose, and often the shortcut to that is by creating an enemy.

Tom Sharman, 2026

Questions

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enemy. Squibb's is the school system, and anyone who tells you that you can't.

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