How to Create a Strong Brand Positioning

What is Brand Positioning?

Put simply, brand positioning is the process of positioning your brand in the mind of your customers. Brand positioning is also referred to as a positioning strategy, brand strategy, or a brand positioning statement.

Popularized in Reis and Trout’s bestselling “Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind”, the idea is to identify and attempt to “own” a marketing niche for a brand, product, or service using various strategies including pricing, promotions, distribution, packaging, and competition. The goal is to create a unique impression in the customer’s mind so that the customer associates something specific and desirable with your brand that is distinct from rest of the marketplace.

Reis and Trout define positioning as "an organized system for finding a window in the mind. It is based on the concept that communication can only take place at the right time and under the right circumstances."

Brand positioning occurs whether or not a company is proactive in developing a position, however, if management takes an intelligent, forward-looking approach, it can positively influence its brand positioning in the eyes of its target customers.

Positioning Statements versus Taglines

Brand positioning statements are often confused with company taglines or slogans. Positioning statements are for internal use. These statements guide the marketing and operating decisions of your business. A positioning statement helps you make key decisions that affect your customer’s perception of your brand.

A tag line is an external statement used in your marketing efforts. Insights from your positioning statement can be turned into a tagline, but it is important to distinguish between the two. See examples of brand positioning statements and taglines further below.

7-Step Brand Positioning Strategy Process

In order to create a position strategy, you must first identify your brand’s uniqueness and determine what differentiates you from your competition.

There are 7 key steps to effectively clarify your positioning in the marketplace:

- Determine how your brand is currently positioning itself
- Identify your direct competitors
- Understand how each competitor is positioning their brand
- Compare your positioning to your competitors to identify your uniqueness
- Develop a distinct and value-based positioning idea
- Craft a brand positioning statement
- Test the efficacy of your brand positioning statement
What is a Brand Positioning Statement?

A positioning statement is a one or two sentence declaration that communicates your brand’s unique value to your customers in relation to your main competitors. There are four essential elements of a best-in-class positioning statement:

- **Target Customer**

  What is a concise summary of the attitudinal and demographic description of the target group of customers your brand is attempting to appeal to and attract?

- **Market Definition**

  What category is your brand competing in and in what context does your brand have relevance to your customers?

- **Brand Promise**

  What is the most compelling (emotional/rational) benefit to your target customers that your brand can own relative to your competition?

- **Reason to Believe**

  What is the most compelling evidence that your brand delivers on its brand promise?

After thoughtfully answering these four questions, you can craft your positioning statement:

For [target customers], [company name] is the [market definition] that delivers [brand promise] because only [company name] is [reason to believe].

**Examples of Positioning Statements**

Amazon.com used the following positioning statement in its early days, when it almost exclusively sold books:

For World Wide Web users who enjoy books, Amazon.com is a retail bookseller that provides instant access to over 1.1 million books. Unlike traditional book retailers, Amazon.com provides a combination of extraordinary convenience, low prices, and comprehensive selection.

Zipcar.com used the following positioning statement when it was originally founded:

To urban-dwelling, educated techno-savvy consumers, when you use Zipcar car-sharing service instead of owning a car, you save money while reducing your carbon footprint.

**Examples of Taglines**

Once you have a strong brand positioning statement you can create a tagline or slogan that helps establish the position you’re looking to own. Here are a number of examples which may be familiar to you:

Mercedes-Benz: Engineered like no other car in the world

BMW: The ultimate driving machine
Southwest Airlines: The short-haul, no-frills, and low-priced airline

Avis: We are only Number 2, but we try harder

Famous Footwear: The value shoe store for families

Miller Lite: The only beer with superior taste and low caloric content

L’Oreal: Because you’re worth it.

Walmart: Always low prices. Always.

Nike: Just do it

Coca-Cola: The real thing

Volvo: For life.

Home Depot: You can do it. We can help.

Criteria’s for Evaluating Your Brand Positioning Strategy

An intelligent and well-crafted positioning statement is a powerful tool for bringing focus and clarity to your marketing strategies, advertising campaigns, and promotional tactics. If used properly, this statement can help you make effective decisions to help differentiate your brand, attract your target customers, and win market share from your competition.

To validate your brand positioning, you can use the following 15 criteria’s:

- Does it differentiate your brand?
- Does it match customer perceptions of your brand?
- Does it enable growth?
- Does it identify your brand’s unique value to your customers?
- Does it produce a clear picture in your mind that’s different from your competitors?
- Is it focused on your core customers?
- Is it memorable and motivating?
- Is it consistent in all areas of your business?
- Is it easy to understand?
- Is it difficult to copy?
- Is it positioned for long-term success?
- Is your brand promise believable and credible?
- Can your brand own it?
- Will it withstand counterattacks from your competitors?
- Will it help you make more effective marketing and branding decisions?

Repositioning Positioning

The unfortunate reality is that no marketer has the power to position anything in the customer’s mind, which is the core promise of positioning. The notion that positions are created by marketers has to die. Each customer has their own idea of what you are.
Positioning is not something you do, but rather, is the result of your customer’s perception of what you do. Positioning is not something we can create in a vacuum—the act of positioning is a co-authored experience with the customers.

Behind your positioning statement or tagline is your intention—how you desire your business to be represented to customers. Once the real role of positioning is understood, having a tagline or a positioning statement can be useful by clarifying your brand’s essence within your organization.

By examining the essence of what you are and comparing it with what your customers want, the doors open to building a business with a strong positioning in the mind of the customer. Why? Great brands merge their passion with their positioning into one statement that captures the essence of both.

**Integrating Your Brand Positioning in Your Customer’s Mind**

To position your brand in your customer’s mind, you must start from within your business. Every member of your organization that touches the customer has to be the perfect expression of your position. And, since everyone touches the customer in some way, everyone should be the best expression of your position.

Now comes the hard part: Put up everything that represents your brand on a wall. List all your brand’s touch points—every point of interaction with your customer. With a critical, yet intuitive eye, ask:

How can I more fluidly communicate my brand’s desired position?

Does every touch point look, say, and feel like the brand I want my customers to perceive?

Many marketers don’t have the clarity and conviction of following through on their words. Without certainty, you default to the status quo. Turn everything you do into an expression of your desired positioning and you can create something special. This takes courage; to actively position your brand means you have to stand for something. Only then are you truly on your way to owning your very own position in the mind of your customer.
Testimonials

“I'm very selective in the products that I expose our company to, as it's very difficult to quickly learn enough about a company to have a real impact without burdening the management team. Damian and Peter did an excellent job selling their consulting team's skills and then followed through on what they sold and over delivered on the project.”

Doug Burgoyne, Founder
Frogbox, Inc.

About Frogbox:
Moving is rated as one of life's most stressful events. FrogBox was created to fill a need for a convenient, cost effective and environmentally friendly alternative to using cardboard boxes for moving. Our purpose is to make your move as easy and affordable as possible while minimizing the impact on the environment.

Frogbox have secured financing from celebrity investors on the CBC television show “Dragons' Den” not once, but twice. The little company have expanded to 19 franchise outlets, and Burgoyne have been busy building a solid company while bettering the world.

“Damian and Peter were great through our consulting process! They held many meetings with us to evaluate our business, customers and staff, which enabled them to put together an accurate and achievable plan, to further our business growth and success. They offered great advice and support during the entire process as well as after. We are very happy that we decided to bring Damian and Peter in to help with our growing organization.”

Sonya and Brian Perkins, Founder and CEO
Forever Yours Lingerie

About Forever Yours Lingerie:
Forever Yours Lingerie is a Canadian bra and lingerie store in the heart of Langley, British Columbia catering to women of all sizes. Although personalized bra fittings are our specialty, we also place an emphasis on sourcing and stocking the best lingerie, sleepwear, swimwear, and shapewear brands for women, regular and plus size. Shop with us online or visit us at our beautiful store in Langley, BC for an exceptional lingerie shopping experience.

Forever Yours Lingerie was founded in 1996, by owner Sonya Perkins after she experiencing her own heart-breaking search for support wear and lingerie. From her small start-up store, to the 6000 sq/ft store that it is today, Sonya is still dedicated to making Forever Yours Lingerie the first and best choice for women in the Lower Mainland to find pieces that will make them feel gorgeous, from the outside in!
Recommendations

Anna Bukreeva, CPSM, CCMP MBA MOT Candidate
Connector, Supply Chain Guru, Technology Enthusiast
May 9, 2017, Anna was a client of Peter’s

Peter has been a stellar coach and played an instrumental role to help me crystallize my short and long-term life and career goals, as well as to determine a clear road map of how I can reach those. Prior coaching I lacked a clear guidance of how to get there, where to start and how to overcome seemingly impossible obstacles. Thanks to Peter I now have a clear vision and a road map to follow. Peter also helped me to improve my leadership and management skills, boost motivation and focus. I highly recommend Peter to anyone who wants personalized coaching that works, and looking to explore individual path to life and career success!

Frank Hennessy
Project Manager & Civil Engineer | Clean & Renewable Energy & Technology Focus | MBA Candidate
May 10, 2017, Frank was a client of Peter’s

I’ve recently completed a series of career coaching sessions with Peter that have proven to be very insightful and very valuable for me.

Peter’s personalized, structured approach allowed me to evaluate and refine my own goals, and better focus on my key objectives.

I recommend Peter’s coaching service to anyone who is considering the advantages of career coaching and to anyone who wishes to evaluate and develop their career path.

Shad Grunert, MOT MBA
Teaching Lab Technician
May 14, 2017, Shad was a client of Peter’s

Working through coaching sessions with Peter over the past months has proven to be an experience. He has helped guide me to challenging my own status quo, pushing me to define the steps to elevate my career and personal life goals. He has never doubted my potential yet patiently persevered in guiding me past my own internal apprehensions.

I recommend Peter to anyone who knows that there can be so much more to their work and life but are frustrated by not knowing how to wake up, reach out, and embrace uncertainty in that pursuit.

Chanelle Dupre
Director of Global Marketing in Wearable Technology, MBA (Technology) Candidate, P.Mgr, C.I.M.
June 24, 2017, Chanelle was a client of Peter’s

Peter provided career coaching services to me as an MBA student at SFU. I was very fortunate to have received his guidance on several topics related to my career. What I appreciated most about his approach was his professionalism, his ability to keep me focussed on high priority topics bringing more clarity to issues and his resourcefulness. His recommendations were very valuable. He gave me the tools and readings I needed to move in the right direction and he was very supportive, encouraging and empowering. He is a very talented coach and I would recommend him to anyone looking to strengthen their leadership skills.
Your Essential Partner

Running a small business is exciting, challenging and stressful all at once. It takes a special person to be able to handle all the demands of a small business, while at the same time carry the final responsibility for everything. Lots of small business owners initially started their entrepreneurship based on a particular attraction to the business itself. However, as the business grows over time and become more and more complex with an increasing amount of moving parts, it becomes necessary to move the focus from working in the business to working on the business.

Still you are not alone! I am here to help with anything big or small. You may want to have support in developing your future strategy or pivot part of your business to position it for greater strength. Alternatively, you may require extra focus on your current operation to ensure it operates efficiently and is scalable as you execute on your future strategy. Or you may face new leadership challenges which touches at the heart of the organization and everybody's desire to go all the way.

Running a marathon on your own requires a special psyche as well as a broad skillset to support you in your day-to-day. Running a marathon as part of a team brings in synergies, which can exponentially affect the outcome in the long run. When this team is made up of individuals driven by a deep passion for contribution magic can and will happen.

Getting the edge in business, requires a number of crucial components to all fall into place. Renewing oneself and continually staying relevant with existing and new clients and customers requires one to innovate and identify product or services, which allows the company to provide even more value add. Optimization of existing product and services is another angle which can be used to maintain this relevance. The center for either approach is the successful implementation, which ensures that the vision becomes reality.

It’s often said that the financials are the lifeblood of any company. Without that under control the vision and mission of the company will never be achieved at its full potential. A strong grasp of the monthly cash budget and the various financial statements as well as a deep analysis of variances and benchmarking within these numbers, is fundamental to enable smooth running company.

Irrespective of what you may be facing, I can help! My satisfaction guarantee to you, is that we will actively work together to develop a suitable plan for your business which you can fully endorse. If at any moment you feel that you are not receiving value, you are free to terminate the relationship immediately without any further notice.

Peter Lykke Nielsen, MBA, ACC, CPA, CMA
Performance Coach and Business Consultant

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