



Positioning and Brand Personality

Picture your target market's heart and mind as a map. The map has continents, countries, states, cities, zip codes, streets, and addresses. The continent might be “things to eat.” The country might be “eat at home.” The state might be “dinner.” The city might be “meal for the whole family.” The zip code might be “chicken.” The street might be “something new and different, not boring.” And the addresses on that street might be your brand of boxed dinner and your competitors' brands. Each of you occupies a location or “position” in the customer's mind. In marketing speak, that current customer perception is the positioning that you “own.” Positioning is the battle for territory in your customers' hearts and minds. Think of it as a mind map. This is a graphical way to capture the relationship among ideas.

What Is Positioning and Why Is It Important?

Positioning is what you stand for in the mind of the market. A good positioning answers at least one of three questions:

- Whom do you serve?
- What do you do for them?
- How are you different from their other choices? Or what are you good at?

Here are some simple, straightforward positioning statements for different companies:

- Light and crispy Southern-fried chicken breading for experienced Southern cooks
- Pure, great-tasting water for families
- The most aggressive divorce lawyers money can buy
- The not-for-profit venture capital fund for new developments in public education
- The friendly local bank for homeowners
- The rowdy fruit-flavored drink for young adult males
- The health care system that puts patients first

Position or Be Positioned

The question is not *whether* you have a position in the minds of your target market. The question is whether it is the *right* position.

Unless people have never heard of your business category or never heard of your business, they will place you at some spot on their perceptual map in relation to competitors. People tend to form their opinions early and hold them for a long time, so it pays to clearly establish the best position you can early in the development of your category or early in the introduction of your company. First impressions are lasting impressions.

However, it is not the first company with a product that gets to be the market leader; it is the first company that is perceived by the most people to be the market leader. This is the reason for “first mover” advantage. You can probably name the first two men to walk on the moon. But can you name the third? The sixth? The 12th? You can probably

TRY NOT TO CHANGE POSITIONS

It is extremely risky to change your market position.

Target markets tend to hold onto their perceptions of your company for years, so it takes time and money to change. The change often creates confusion, which opens the door for competitors to take advantage. And the new position may not be believable for your brand because of your old position or the position of a competitor that already owns the position you want to take. In general, you are better off building on or refreshing or updating or tweaking your positioning, than you are changing it.





**FOR
EXAMPLE**

RESEARCH PREVENTS BAD MOVE

As the new creative director and managing partner of an ad agency, I wanted the agency to be repositioned as a creatively led shop, producing original and award-winning world-class ideas. But the agency already had 10 years of reputation as a market-led shop, using research to guide all advertising decisions. Research with current and prospective clients showed that it was believable for us to create great creative work that was market-led, but not to create great creative work for its own sake. So I relented and sought to build a better creative department that built on our previous positioning.

name the first American president. But can you name the fifth? The 11th? The 27th? The same mental principle applies to brands. First one into the most hearts and minds wins. If you're lucky or smart, you can eventually become such a leader that you stand for your entire category. That's why Kleenex means facial tissue and Xerox means photocopy.

Figure 6-1 shows a perceptual map for three fast-food establishments (A, C, and M). Note that different brands are rated as being good at different things by the customers. These advantages can serve as the basis for choosing a position.

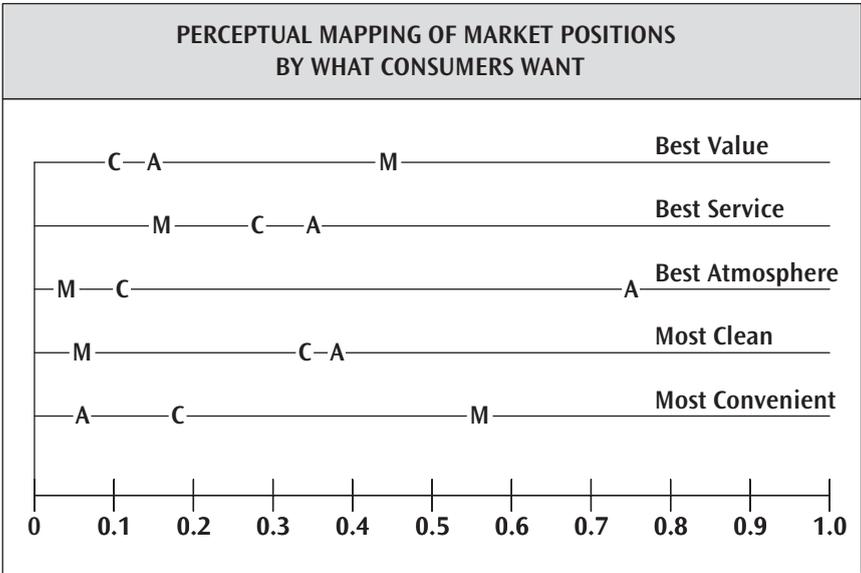


Figure 6-1. Position mapping: Perceptual mapping for three fast-food establishments

USE TRACKING RESEARCH TO DETECT POSITIONING CHANGE

My agency worked with a retailer that invented and owned a “brand names for less” positioning and sold billions of dollars of products for over a decade with that positioning. Tracking research that monitored awareness and attitudes spotted a major positioning problem years before there were major changes in buying behavior. The retailer’s success had attracted competition from above, as high-end department stores began to discount their products, and from below, as big-box discounters began to carry brand names. Eventually customers no longer perceived “brand names for less” as unique.

The tracking research gave our client years to get out ahead of the problem and find a new position. Unfortunately, the company chose to ignore it—until sales suddenly began dropping as customers defected to other stores. Thanks to the research, we were ready with some alternative positions to test. After a two-year slump, the client’s new positioning took hold in the minds of the target market, and sales recovered and then exceeded previous levels.



Whom Do You Serve? Market Segmentation

If you try to be all things to all people, you will end up being nothing to anyone.

Unless you are selling air or water, every product and service appeals to a specific subgroup of people. And today even water has different market segments, from industrial users who buy by the truckload to individuals buying water by the bottle of upscale brands. Because these groups are different, you cannot reach them in the same media with the same messages.

A subgroup is referred to in marketing as a *niche* or *market segment*. You can even run mathematical programs to break your target market naturally into *affinity groups*, groups of individuals who share a common set of beliefs and behaviors.

All subgroups are not of equal value to you. You have to prioritize your markets. At most, you can have a primary

Market niche, Market segment

A subgroup of total prospective customers with a common set of characteristics that make them likely to purchase a particular product.

Affinity group A group of people who share a common bond, such as interest, background, goal, or membership in the same organization.



SMART**MANAGING****OWN YOUR PRIMARY MARKET SEGMENT**

Every business and every nonprofit organization considers one group of people more important than any other—its primary target market. Without this group the organization could not survive. These people account for more of the profits and they remain loyal customers longer.

The smart marketer knows who these people are, what they fear and desire, and how to communicate with them regularly. When faced with a tough decision, the smart marketer makes the decision in favor of the retaining and growing the primary market segment, rather than reaching out to many market segments. Typically, one competitor is stronger in one market segment than other competitors. You are generally better off growing the market segment you own than trying to take market share from a market segment owned by a competitor.

SMART**MANAGING****THE ONE-RABBIT RULE**

If you are a hunter and you come across two rabbits running in opposite directions, don't try to chase them both, or you'll end up with nothing. Instead, choose one rabbit and stick with that one. You're far more likely to have rabbit stew for dinner that night. The same rule applies to target markets. Pick one primary market and stick with it.

market, a secondary market, and a tertiary market, as explained in Chapter 1. The most important subgroup is your primary target market. The people who constitute this market are most likely to use your product. They account for a disproportionate share of your sales volume and profits. They are the

group of people you cannot afford to do without.

There are countless ways to segment your target market, including these:

- by *geography*: neighborhood, city, county, state, country
- by *demographics*: income, age, sex, kids or no kids, home ownership, marital status
- by *psychographics* or *lifestyle*: believes in God, likes to drink beer, seeks new experiences and sensations, seeks safety and comfort, lives in the 53704 ZIP code, etc.
- by *product use*: heavy user, occasional user, light user, uses one brand exclusively, likes four different brands, etc.

- by *emotional dilemma*: wants high earnings but fears risking capital, wants to eat cake but fears gaining weight, and so on
- by *experiential occasion*: e.g., dinner, breakfast, lunch, brunch, mid-night snack, on the go

The best way to segment your market depends on which market segments you own and which segments your competitors own, which segments are the most profitable, which segments are growing, which segments respond strongly to a particular message, and which segments are reachable by media.

USEFUL TYPES OF MARKET SEGMENTATION

- Geography
- Demographics (statistical characteristics): e.g., gender, age, income, marital status, children
- Psychographics (psychological variables): e.g., attitudes, beliefs, values, fears
- Product Use: volume and/or frequency of purchases
- Emotions
- Experiential/Occasion: events, such as holidays and birthdays, or special occasions, such as a romantic dinner



TOOLS

DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

Sometimes what appeals to one market segment turns off another market segment. For example, both mothers and teenage boys buy a lot of backpacks, but for completely different reasons. Research showed the teenage boys liked images of death, a vibe of coolness, and a mocking sense of humor. Moms hated all of that. Moms were drawn to stories about self-sacrifice, hard work, and responsibility. Teen boys hated that. How do you create ads for these two audiences?

The solution is to create one ad campaign for moms and another for teenage boys and put each campaign in completely separate media. Attempts to create one campaign to reach both markets would have simply resulted in an unemotional, commoditized listing of product features and benefits that would not have made either group care about the brand.



Write an Emotional “Who Statement” for Your Positioning

The most powerful positioning statements are emotional as well as rational. When describing your targets, describe them (A) as people

types, (B) as seeking or avoiding, and (C) as being in a particular situation, occasion, or mindset (Figure 6-2).

People type ... seeking or avoiding ... situation/occasion/mindset
Nervous head secretaries seeking foolproof office furniture recommendations to the management committee
Sleep-deprived long-haul truck drivers who are facing an all-nighter
Groggy working stiffs who shave daily for work because it’s their duty
First-time cardiac patients who fear death and disability and hospitals
Millionaires past their prime earning years who now dream of relaxing and having fun

Figure 6-2. Examples of who statements for your positioning

What Job Do You Do for Them? Drill Bits, Holes, and Happiness

For-profit or nonprofit, product or service, everything has a job to do for someone. Sometimes that job can be literal and physical: “I want to make more money.” Sometimes that job can be more emotional: “I want to feel like I’m rich.” Essentially your product or service is an employee of the people in your target market. It does a job for them. The heart of any positioning is in the job it does or the promise it makes to the customers (Figure 6-3).

Product	Feature	Benefit	Emotion/Belief
Drill bit	Unbreakable	Hole	Job well done
Donation	Tax-deductible	Help the poor	I’m a good person
Sports car	0–120 in 15 seconds	Speed	Thrills
Plastic surgery	Safe	Look younger	Feel beautiful

Figure 6-3. What are people really buying?

The heart of your positioning statement about the job you do for your customers should be an active verb, not a passive verb. To most customers, it’s not as much about *who you are* to them as it is about *what you do* for them.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD AND BAD VERBS FOR POSITIONING STATEMENTS

Good

Teflon's your recommendation
Refuels your energy
 Lets you *autopilot* through shaving
Surrounds you with caring experts
Guides you to the right investment

Bad

Is the safe choice
Is the premiere energy drink
Is the Cadillac of shavers
 Are the caring experts
 Are your prudent investment guides

How Are You Different? USPs and Reasons to Believe

Today it is so easy to copy competitors' products or hire away their best people that it is difficult to achieve a genuine point of difference. In advertising, this difference is called your *unique selling proposition* (USP). Your USP is the main promise you offer that makes you different from your competition. To create a USP, ask yourself, "What does our product or service offer that our competitors' products or services don't offer, and what is the specific benefit for our customers?"

Own a Key Word

People take your entire company, in all its complexity, and

reduce it to one or two words or images to store in their brains. It is the difference between the bull and the bullion. Many companies try to stand for too many things, and they end up standing for nothing. Pick one promise to stand for and stick with it, year in and year out. You can freshen it with new advertising, but stick with the same basic promise. Stand for the same thing over and over again. You will be bored with it long before it seeps into the brains of your target market.

Unique selling proposition

What sets one company's products and/or services apart from those of its competitors and offers prospects a specific benefit that they consider worth purchasing.

The USP is a simple statement about your product, service, or brand that tells prospects that it is the only choice for them. It is a concise, memorable statement that answers the question, "Why should I buy from you and not somebody else?"



KEY TERM

For example, Las Vegas stands for wild adult times and gambling. Disneyland stands for good clean family fun. Las Vegas shouldn't try to attract families and children. Disneyland shouldn't offer gambling.

EXERCISE: "THE _____ ONE"



TOOLS

1. List the names of your company and your top competitors.
2. To the right of each name, write two headings: "Positive" and "Negative."
3. When customers in your industry think about each company, what one positive word comes to mind? For example, is it "the safe one" or "the cutting-edge one"? Write that under the "Positive" heading.
4. When customers in your industry talk about each company, what one negative word comes to mind? For example, is it "the risky one" or "the expensive one"? Write that under the "Negative" heading.
5. Study the words for each company. They probably show how your customers have positioned you and your competitors in their minds. Rather than inventing a new position or trying to take the position of a competitor, you are better off identifying the strengths of your current position and owning and reinforcing your strengths. Accept your strengths and weaknesses and take a stand.

"THE _____ ONE"—SOME TYPICAL PAIRINGS:



Top Competitors	Positive	Negative
Company A	best-quality	expensive
Company B	low-cost	bad service
Company C	innovative	risky
Company D	big leader	arrogant
Our Company	safe	dated

There is increasing evidence that all brands now are being driven to one of three positions:

- price leader
- quality leader
- specialty leader

For example, Wal-Mart is a price leader, Mercedes is a quality leader, and Robitussin® is a specialty product.

The brands that are suffering today are those that try to stake out a position in the middle of the road. They face price competition from the

price leader, quality competition from the quality leader, and specialty competition from the specialist. They cease to stand for anything. Brands in the middle of the road get run over.

What if You Don't Have a USP?

Maybe what you do for customers is not unique. So what is something you do really well as a product, company, or organization? Perhaps you offer a product feature, a cultural difference, a location, or a core strength. That's what your positioning statement should reflect—something special that you offer, even if it is not unique.

Prove Your USP or Core Strength with a Strong Reason to Believe

Just as you have something you do really well, you have a reason why you do it really well. It might be a technology, a patent, a process, a skill, a focus, or an investment. Or you might have proof that you do it really well: a measurement, a certification, a demonstration, a cue, a client list, a testimonial, or a behavior. This is your *proof point*.

Proof point A fact that provides evidence in support of the marketing claim of a USP or a core strength.



KEY TERM

EXAMPLES USPs OR CORE STRENGTHS AND PROOF POINTS

USP/Core Strength

Most popular choice
Without an energy crash
Won't cut you
Caring experts
Investment team

Proof Point

Made from titanium
Doesn't use caffeine or sugar
Contour blade-buffer
Psychologically tested
Triple-reviewed recommendation

Avoid B.S. Words

Today, as a result of advertising, the following words are virtually meaningless: "convenient," "friendly," "professional," "quality," "partnership," "affordable," "solutions." B.S. words tend to be empty claims, abstract, and overused. The best words are concrete, specific, conversational, unusual, and emotionally charged.

“Convenient” is a B.S. word in part because it can mean so many things. In contrast, consider “Next door. Instant. Effortless. One-step. Intuitive. Open 24/7.” All these words are more specific about the convenience being offered. “Bulletproof” is more unusual and specific and emotional than “safe”—although “bulletproof” is losing its strength through excessive use. Perhaps the ultimate B.S. word is “solutions.” It should come as no surprise that a company is in business to provide solutions for its customers’ problems. That’s not much of a claim.



CUT DOWN ON JARGON WITH A JARGON GENERATOR

Before the next meeting to review advertising copy, have the group of writers and reviewers create a jargon generator. It’s easy and fun, and it will sensitize contributors to

B.S. words in your own advertising.

1. Divide a pad or board into three columns: (A) verbs, (B) adjectives, and (C) nouns.
2. Ask the group to suggest for each column five or 10 words that are overused, jargon, or B.S. in advertising in your business category.
3. When the three columns are filled, combine one word from column A, one word from column B, and one word from column C to create a phrase such as “Enjoy Extraordinary Amenities” or “Celebrate Superb Cuisine.” Try random ABC combinations to generate tons of meaningless phrases, and read them aloud. It is hard for participants not to laugh, because these very phrases often appear in competitive advertising.



JARGON GENERATOR: SPA INDUSTRY

This jargon generator was created using common advertising words in the spa industry.

Spa Jargon Generator		
A	B	C
Enjoy	Exquisite	Accommodations
Celebrate	Exceptional	Services
Experience	Extraordinary	Ambience
Be rejuvenated by	Superb	Amenities
Savor	Beaufful	Cuisine
Luxuriate in	Luxurious	Luxury

Brand Personality: Hitler vs. Mother Teresa

Both Hitler and Mother Teresa were famous leaders in history, influenced millions, had a strong set of beliefs, and inspired others with their beliefs. In addition to the great difference between the things they did and the results they produced, they were very different from each other in their personalities, styles, and beliefs.

Think of your product or service or company as a person with a personality. Sometimes, what truly differentiates companies that provide roughly the same product is the style of their culture or the reputation of their brand. This style is known as their *brand personality*.

Brand personality, as defined in Chapter 5, is a key part of your positioning statement. Basically, think of your company or your product as a person, not a thing, and just list either names of people or adjectives that are very descriptive of your brand. Try not to list more than four. Avoid B.S. words and generic words. Avoid contradictory combinations like “calm yet exciting.” Above all, avoid meaningless words like “exciting,” “curious,” “intriguing,” “interesting,” “compelling.” Use these criteria:

1. If you described a person this way, would it help me pick the person out in a crowd?
2. Would it help a writer, art director, musician, or actor choose a different word, design or photo, musical instrument, or character to play?
3. Does it conjure up a specific image?
4. Is it loaded with feeling?

BRAND PERSONALITY DESCRIPTORS

Good

Bulletproof
 Revved
 Airplane pilot
 Mother Teresa
 Guide dog

Not as Good

Safe
 Enhanced
 Easy
 Caring
 Trustworthy



Put It All Together in an Emotional Positioning Statement

Your product and services have both rational and emotional attributes. Your positioning statement will contain both attributes, but the strongest positioning statements are emotional. They are written in emotional language and consist of the following parts organized into a formula:

1. Title: Usually states what you do (E) and whom you serve (A)
2. Who: "For (A) type of person who wants/fears (B) benefit/loss when facing (C) situation ..."
3. What product/service does: "... product (D) active verb (E) ..."
4. (Optional) Why care: "... so that reason to care (F) ..."
5. Why best: "... product does main strength (G) best, because of reason to believe (H)."
6. Brand personality adjectives: List up to four personality characteristics (I).

Here's an example, labeled to show the various parts of the formula:

(E) **Teflon Furniture Recommendations for (A) Office Secretaries**

For (A) nervous head secretaries seeking (B) foolproof office furniture recommendations (C) for the management committee, (D) Brand X (E) Teflon's your recommendation so (F) you don't have to worry about being questioned or fired.

Brand X is (G) the most popular choice because (H) it's made from titanium.

(I) Bulletproof. (I) Solid. (I) Unquestioned.

Emotional Positioning Statement #1

Refueling Truck Drivers

For sleep-deprived long-haul truck drivers who are facing an all-nighter, Brand X *refuels* your energy without a crash (so you don't have to worry about crashing your truck), because it doesn't use caffeine or sugar.

Personality: Revved, Pony Express, Alert

Emotional Positioning Statement #2**Shave on Autopilot**

Groggy working stiffs who shave daily for work because it's their duty to look clean-cut and not offend others. Brand X lets you autopilot through shaving. You don't have to worry that it will cut you, because of its contour blade-buffer.

Personality: Airplane pilot, Guardian, Dutiful, Uncomplaining

Emotional Positioning Statement #3**Surround Cardiac Patients with Compassion**

For first-time cardiac patients who fear death and disability and hospitalization, Brand X *surrounds* you with caring experts who have been psychologically tested for their heartfelt compassion.

Personality: Mother Teresa, Attentive, Empathetic, Respectful

Emotional Positioning Statement #4**Investment Guides for Millionaires**

For millionaires past their prime earning years who now dream of relaxing and having fun, Brand X *guides* you to the right investment. Every investment recommendation from our crack investment team is triple-reviewed.

Personality: Wise, Thorough, Meticulous, Guide Dog

How to Use an Emotional Positioning Statement

Now that you've developed a positioning statement, how can you get the greatest benefit from it?

- Create internal communications to employees to guide them in their daily choices.
- Guide employee recruitment, training, performance, and rewards.
- Guide or evaluate marketing message strategies and creative campaigns.
- Guide or evaluate product, price, and distribution decisions.

Manager's Checklist for Chapter 6

- ✓ Know that positioning is the territory you own in the hearts and minds of your target market. You either position or get positioned.
- ✓ Positioning answers one or more of these questions:
 - What do you do?
 - Whom do you serve?

- How are you different?
- What are you good at?
- ☑ Positioning tools include position mapping, market segmentation, a jargon generator, and an emotional positioning statement.
- ☑ Both brands and people have personalities or styles.