

POSITIONING THE BATTLE FOR YOUR MIND

How to be Seen and Heard in
the Overcrowded Marketplace

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MAIN IDEA

Positioning is an organized system for creating product awareness in the minds of prospective customers. Products which are positioned effectively are connected mentally to the perceptions of consumers in their target markets. Elements of positioning include the product's name, its price and everything which is included in the total package. When all of these elements work together, they create -- in the prospect's mind -- a unique market position for the product. That unique market position then translates into sales, because when people think of products in that industry, the well positioned product comes to mind first. In practice, positioning suggests that products can be marketed more successfully if, instead of trying to be all things to all people, the product has a narrower marketing focus. Products that are specifically oriented to one specialist niche -- or in other words that are positioned for that niche -- can then put greater emphasis on serving that niche well. The trick lies in establishing and maintaining a market position that nobody else is targeting.

1. THE CONCEPT OF POSITIONING Page 2

Positioning is all about how your product or service is perceived in the mind of a prospective customer or client. Positioning is not what you do to a product, but how you can change the name, the price, the packaging or other elements to secure a worthwhile position in the prospect's mind. The basic goal of positioning is not to create something new and different, but to connect your product or service meaningfully to the mental perceptions that already exist in the mind of prospective customers.

2. PRODUCT NAMES AND POSITIONING Page 3

The single most important marketing decision is what to call a product. On this decision alone can hinge the future marketplace success or failure of a product. The name of the product is the positioning hook on which the company builds. In the prospect's mind, a mental ladder (of sorts) exists for each product category, with the company they perceive as the market leader at the top of the ladder. The objective of positioning strategy is to establish a position on that ladder for your own company.

3. POSITIONING STRATEGIES Pages 4 - 6

Developing a positioning strategy for a business requires you to first think through the problem before starting work on the solution. The six questions that should be answered before a positioning strategy can be developed are:

1. *What position do you currently own in the mind of the prospect?*
Talk with some potential clients or customers. Find out how they perceive your company and your product. Find out precisely where you're starting from before going any further. And look for existing perceptions you can tie into.
2. *What position do you want to own?*
You'll never be able to be all things to everyone, so be specific. Over the longer term, what position (in the mind of the consumer) do you want to own? And most importantly, what position can you successfully defend in the marketplace?
3. *Who will be your competitors in establishing your preferred position?*
This is usually the main problem. You should spend just as much time looking at things from your competitor's perspective as from your own. To position your product, you may have to reposition one or more competitor's offerings.
4. *Do you have sufficient resources?*
Creating awareness by rising above the background noise will take expenditure. It takes money to establish and maintain a position. If you can't afford to do so on a national scale, it's better to reduce your geographic area, and focus on establishing your position in one specific market. From that beachhead, you can then expand into other regions.
5. *Can you stick it out?*
Establishing a position is cumulative -- each year's effort will build on the successes of the past. Once your positioning strategy is determined, you have to be prepared to stay with it year-in and year-out to reap any rewards. Your tactics will vary from year to year, and you'll find ways to enhance and refine your position, but once you own any specific position, our focus will be on pressing home the advantage.
6. *Do you match your position?*
Once you decide what position you're aiming for, everything in your company and your product needs to be aligned with that effort if it is to succeed. Will that alignment create any internal conflicts -- will you be forced to do something you'll be uncomfortable with later, or that just doesn't match your personality or your corporate culture? It's easier to consider this issue when developing a positioning strategy than to cause long-term conflicts later on.

4. PERSONAL APPLICATIONS OF POSITIONING THEORY Pages 7 - 8

Positioning theory can also be used to promote your own personal business career. The same principles apply, with just a few subtle tweaks and refinements.

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