

Position Starts With Positioning Statement



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Every business strives for its position to be reflected in its positioning statement — however, in reality, one is not necessarily the other. A position is a statement of how you are perceived in the minds of prospects and clients. A positioning statement declares how you wish to be perceived. It is the core message you want to deliver to your target audience to influence their perception of your service. And it is the starting point to getting the position you want.

The value of a positioning statement is that it allows you to tell a story — and more important, your story. It also creates a common sense of purpose for employees, who then communicate it to customers and prospects.

It is imperative that your positioning statement communicates a clear and concise message, so as to become ultimately ingrained in your organization's culture. If it is embraced both internally (employees) as well as externally (prospects and clients), your positioning statement will start to drive your position in your industry, as opposed to your position driving your prospects' perceptions of your position within the industry. And the more consistent your core messaging is, the sooner you'll achieve the desired position.

The fundamentals of positioning statements fall into four primary categories:

- Relevant — addresses the needs of your target audience; your target audience must value your attributes;
- Distinctive — identifies attributes and capabilities that differentiate you from your competition;
- Credible — communicates beliefs that are perceived as genuine and believable;

- Sustainable — maintains stature now and in the future.

When the four components are combined, the positioning statement provides a strategic and dynamic foundation for all elements of the marketing communications strategy — as long as it's ambitious. Without ambition, the statement won't be sustainable. It may work for a short time, but over the course of time, it will break down and eventually lose credibility. And once you've lost credibility with your target audience, it will take more than a positioning statement to earn back the trust that you lost.

Before any positioning statement can be launched, it needs to be evaluated and tested to ensure validity. The evaluation process should answer four questions: What is the positioning statement's primary focus? What attributes are emphasized? What peer group does this categorize you in? What are the pros and cons with the positioning statement?

After the testing and evaluation period, the positioning statement — the platform for the marketing communications strategy — is ready to be embraced by the employees and launched. And just how does this happen?

Draw upon core messages that are derived from the positioning statement and communicate them in a clear and concise way through various mediums — media relations, Web, direct marketing, e-mail marketing, identity systems, advertising and trade shows. Depending upon your budget and target audience, the various mediums may or may not be suitable for your company. As mentioned above, the positioning statement must be relevant to your target audience; therefore, you must choose your communication channels carefully in order to maximize your effort and budget.

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