

Small Business Marketing – Positioning Against Hyper Competition

Is your service or product lacking a differentiation approach? Or worse, have you positioned your company without determining how and why your customers use your service or product? Are you losing market share?

Positioning is the strategy used to differentiate your product or service against competitors; to position how potential buyers view your product as unique. The concept was made popular in 1969 by Al Ries and Jack Trout with their first book, "Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind". According to Ries and Trout, "*Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect.*"

Positioning, branding and the unique selling proposition (USP) are on-going disciplines within your business that must be constantly reviewed on a per segment basis. Every service or product has a life cycle and your market segments develop over time. Positioning enables your company to differentiate its product or service in the mind of the consumer through vast channels of communication; make sure you are correctly meeting the needs of your target market. Be thoughtful on what drives each of your market segments and be sure to target your message accordingly.

Too often, a company will seek to position itself in the marketplace with little knowledge of how or why a customer uses or perceives the company's product. The strategy becomes a company driven message as opposed to customer driven. With a first-to-the-market product or service, your company may thrive with an unstructured positioning strategy. But, as the market develops, competition inevitably draws market share from companies with a weak position. A structured positioning strategy enables your company to command a higher price, build brand loyalty, and create brand evangelists.

To remain customer driven, keep in mind the following attributes that lay the groundwork for your position and unique selling proposition:

- Important:
 - Does your product promise a benefit?
 - What are the highly valued benefits to your customers?
 - Is this a benefit that only your product offers?
 - Is your product or service "nice to have" or a "must-have" item?
- Distinctive:
 - How is your product distinctive in the customer's mind?
- Superior:
 - Will your customer see your product as better than the competition? If so, how and why?
 - How is your product uniquely different from the competition?
 - Is your marketing message truly different from the competition?
 - Is the position believable to the target market?
- Affordable:
 - How do your price point(s) compare to the competition?

Positioning cannot serve solely as a marketing message within advertisements; your company must live the strategy. This means that everyone, from the customer service representative to the CEO, must have a clear vision of why the company's product or service is superior to the competition; in terms of what the customer values as a superior attribute. Once you determine the attributes that convert customers, you must guarantee these key features to the target market and nail the features every time. You cannot simply state that your company offers 24 hour turnaround and low pricing within your advertisements, you need to guarantee it by *always* meeting the customer's expectations. A real, deliverable guarantee will communicate a believable marketing message and in most cases, distinguish you from your competitors.

About Sprite Marketing

Sprite Marketing is a full-service, affordable, marketing consulting and implementation firm based in beautiful Portland, Oregon. We specialize in both small and medium size businesses. With many years of experience in advertising, marketing and business development, we don't sell marketing fluff. Rather, we offer solid strategies and solutions for both the short and long-term. Our role within your business is up to you; you may choose to use our services on retainer or for specific marketing initiatives. Contact Sprite Marketing today for a free, one hour business consultation. (503) 740-1577, [abby\[at\]spritemarketing.com](mailto:abby[at]spritemarketing.com), www.spritemarketing.com