

# Brand Positioning Guide



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## About The Author

In case you want to see the face behind the awesomeness, that's me rocking a pink shirt

I'm a brand and content marketing consultant, who works with purpose-driven small businesses. I turn companies into stellar brands by clarifying their brand message and creating strategic content.

I help build businesses without sounding like a sleazy salesman or relentlessly chasing clients.

A concept I like to call mindful marketing.

I've worked with brands like EY and British Council before going freelance as a brand positioning consultant.



# Introduction

Choosing a brand positioning for your business can be difficult. There are a lot of factors to consider, and there's no one-size-fits-all approach. That's why we created this guide! We'll give you the tools and information you need to make an informed decision about how you want your brand to be perceived.

*Positioning is not what you do to a product. Positioning is what you do to the mind of a prospect.*

Al Ries and Jack Trout

This guide covers everything from brand differentiation to writing a positioning statement and how to create marketing messages that give your brand a competitive edge. You'll also find some examples of successful brands and how they use the different approaches.





Chapter One

# **What is brand positioning**

# What is brand positioning

The goal of brand positioning is to claim a particular position in your customer's mind. By carefully crafting your communication and designing your brand experience, you can position your business to get a positive association. Every interaction with your brand should aim to position your brand as “the one” for them. These touchpoints include your marketing messages, brand messaging, visual identity, customer service, and on-site experience.

*It's all about telling a story; the better it is, the more customers remember it.*

Vivek

Positioning isn't just about what you want but how your audience feels about your product or service. You can't just create a vague brand message and expect it to be successful. You have to earn your customers' attention, so you need a memorable brand story that sticks!

# Why is brand positioning important

Brand positioning helps a company present itself in the best way possible.

As a brand, you should have one clear message for your consumers and other stakeholders because when they're all on board with your purpose, you'll be unstoppable. This strategy allows you to carve out a niche in your consumers' minds in your category.



Chapter Two

# **Brand positioning statement**

# Brand positioning statement

A brand positioning statement explains what your company does, for whom, and what sets you apart. It's different from a tagline or a slogan. Your positioning statement is usually internal, while your slogan or tagline is external.

A brand positioning statement has three elements:

- Target customer
- Category
- A promise
- The differentiator with proof

## Nike positioning statement

"For athletes in need of high-quality, fashionable athletic wear, Nike provides customers with top-performing sports apparel and shoes made of the highest quality materials. Its products are the most advanced in the athletic apparel industry because of Nike's commitment to innovation and investment in the latest technologies."

- Who your product is for = For athletes in need of high-quality athletic wear.
- Your product category = sports apparel and shoes
- A promise = provides customers with top-performing sports apparel and shoes made of the highest quality materials.
- The differentiator with proof: products are the most advanced in the athletic apparel industry because of Nike's commitment to innovation and investment in the latest technologies."

## Apple positioning statement

Apple computers offer the best personal computing experience to students, educators, creative professionals, and consumers around the world through its innovative hardware, software, and internet offerings.

- Target customer = students, educators, creative professionals, and consumers around the world
- Category = computers
- A promise = best personal computing experience
- The differentiator with proof: = innovative hardware, software, and internet offering



# Brand positioning examples

Nothing explains concepts better than real-world examples, so let's look at a few brand positioning examples.

## Listerine vs. Scope



Listerine was the undisputed king of mouthwashes with the “taste you love to hate twice a day.” campaign. They positioned themselves around a product attribute: Listerine's burning sensation. They claimed Listerine kills germs and keeps bad breath at bay. It was hugely successful, and they ruled the market until Scope knocked them off with their “fights medicine breath” campaign. Scope de-positioned Listerine by saying mouthwashes don't have to burn or smell like medicine to be effective.

# Brand positioning examples

## Visa vs. American express



Both Visa and American Express are in the credit card category, but they have very different positioning.

Visa claims to be accepted everywhere and by everyone. While just 'being present' might not seem like an effective marketing angle, it has been proven to be one of the most critical attributes in the payment solution sector.

American Express has always emphasized the prestige associated with using their card.

Their business model revolves around offering elite members a range of premium advantages, including concierge services, dining discounts, insurance, lounge access, and air miles.

A combination of these factors and the brand's sponsorship of high-end events and sleek titanium-covered black cards created an image of luxury and the perception that the brand is not for everyone.





Chapter Three

# **Brand positioning strategies**

# Brand positioning strategies

## Positioning strategy #1: competitive advantage

You can leverage any features that make your brand unique and use them to position yourself differently. You can take advantage of any unfair advantage that no one can easily replicate.

For example, Microsoft has power BI and power automate applications; using these two technologies to automate tasks is not something a competitor can replicate. Microsoft can position on the competitive advantage their suite of products offer.

## Positioning strategy #2: Personnel Differentiation



This brand positioning strategy capitalizes on the claim that your staff is the best in the industry. This angle is great for the hospitality sector, where the customer is paying for a service and not just buying an item.

Put your employees in the spotlight to emphasize their quality. If you are hiring staff to work in your hotel or restaurant, then it would be worth highlighting how qualified they were at the interview stage so that customers know you hire only top-quality talent.

For example, Kingfisher airlines pride themselves on how well-dressed and courteous their staff looks.



### Positioning strategy #3: Channel differentiation

This brand positioning strategy focuses on your superior distribution channels. For example, if you are a retailer, then it would be worth highlighting how many stores or outlets there are in your chain and the benefits of shopping with you (such as free delivery).

FedEx is a prime example of this strategy with their “When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight” tagline. FedEx became synonymous with overnight delivery, and this was a crucial factor in their success.



### Positioning strategy #4 Image differentiation



This brand strategy requires a deep understanding of your target audience. The brand associates itself with a specific type of image that potential customers desire. For example, a brand might portray itself as youthful and macho to create demand among younger male customers who prefer that personality. They buy your products because they want to be associated with this image too. An excellent way to achieve this is to use celebrity advertising campaigns, which show your audience who uses your product.

Old Spice is a prime example. The brand features a macho man on a horse talking about the product's benefits. See how this brand created an image that appeals specifically to men.

Image differentiation isn't always about images or videos. Hyatt has associated itself with luxury with its atrium lobbies, state-of-the-art amenities, and traditional and local flavors. You can experience a true sense of elegance and style at Grand Hyatt.

## Positioning strategy #5 Self-expressive or Surrogate positioning

This type of positioning emphasizes the indirect benefits the prospective customer will get from using the product – benefits that satisfy emotional needs. The emotional satisfaction customers receive from using your product can be self-esteem or self-expression. This strategy aims to build an emotional connection with the customer. It is a very effective strategy to create an audience segment fiercely loyal to the brand.

An example is Harley Davidson, with their leather jackets and loud bikes, expressing themselves as people who are free from the bound of societal rules and expectations. They stand for personal freedom.



## Positioning strategy #6 Direct features

The product features are highlighted to create a competitive advantage. These features are objectively measurable and primarily tangible. Feature-based angle is generally weak when used on its own unless it's a ground-breaking feature.

Product-based industries like automotive and FMCG use this strategy to highlight technical product features like horse-power and airbags.

Duracell is an example of feature-based positioning. Their focus on the product attribute of long-lasting battery life has been very successful.



## Positioning strategy #7 Abstract attribute

These are usually a group of benefits that are not tangible and are not measurable. It's challenging to get this type of positioning right since it's abstract, but it can be effective if done correctly. Examples are companies claiming high quality and innovation.

Apple is good at this positioning since they promote creativity and innovation in their products. Everything from their premium pricing and disruptive product design supports this positioning.

## Positioning strategy #8 Functional benefits

Communicate the advantages of a brand and discuss how it solves problems with functional benefits. These benefits are usually derived from product attributes. For example, a small car makes it easier to park in small lots; offers comfort and convenience.

Listerine is an example of functional positioning. They focus on the burning sensation that alcohol produces and connects this to the functional benefit of preventing bad breath.

## Positioning strategy #9 Associative positioning or "The Brand You Know" angle:

**Avis is only No.2  
in rent a cars.  
So why go with us?**

**We try harder.**

**(When you're not the biggest, you have to.)**

**We just can't afford dirty ashtrays. Or half-empty gas tanks. Or worn wipers. Or unwashed cars. Or low tires. Or anything less than seat-adjusters that adjust. Heaters that heat. Defrosters that defrost.**

This type of branding uses the strength and familiarity of an existing brand to create positive associations for another product or service.

A new (or lesser-known) brand can achieve customer recognition faster by associating it with a well-known brand. The goal of an association strategy is to create perceived similarities between the two brands.

Avis had a hard time catching up with the market leader Hertz. They decided to use associative positioning and make a campaign that would associate Avis with Hertz and position them in the number two position. The result was an advertising slogan.

Avis - "We're number two. So we try harder." Avis wholly owned that positioning, and it became the core of their marketing strategy. They created ads saying why they try harder than the number one company. The campaign was a massive success and increased their market share considerably.



## Positioning strategy #10 Emotional messaging



Emotional positioning is all about your consumer. It is the way that you leverage the emotions of your customer. It can be as simple as telling your brand story and introducing a positive business philosophy. Or it could be as broad as creating a brand that emotionally reflects your target market's values and lifestyle.

Coca-cola should be in the hall-of-fame for their epic campaigns based on emotional positioning. A big part of their positioning and ad campaigns are designed to evoke a sense of joy and happiness among consumers.

Coca-Cola's 'Taste the Feeling' campaign shared the message of finding happiness in the little things in life. The campaign was an ingenious way of engaging consumers with universal stories and putting Coca-Cola at center stage to reflect both its functional and emotional aspects.

The background is a dark navy blue with a repeating pattern of 3D geometric shapes. These include cubes and cones, some rendered in bright pink, some in cyan, and some in yellow. Each shape is outlined with a thick line and contains a small white semi-circular mark on one of its faces. The shapes are scattered across the entire page, creating a dynamic and modern aesthetic.

Chapter Four

# **Brand positioning process**

# Positioning process

## Step 1: Understand your frame of reference

### BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGY

- 01** UNDERSTAND YOUR FRAME OF REFERENCE
- 02** UNDERSTAND YOUR CURRENT BRAND PERCEPTION
- 03** CONDUCT MARKET RESEARCH AND COMPETITOR ANALYSIS
- 04** CREATE A BRAND POSITIONING MAP
- 05** CHOOSE YOUR BRAND POSITION
- 06** COMMUNICATE YOUR BRAND'S POSITIONING

The frame of reference is the collection of products against which the target customer compares your brand. These are usually very similar in function and design.

For example, if a company's frame-of-reference includes Nike, customers would compare it against brands like Adidas.

## Step 2: Understand your current brand perception

The best way to understand how your brand is perceived is to interview your current and lost customers. Learn what they think of your brand and how they perceive it, as well as the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

Make this part of your onboarding process until you have a clear understanding of your ideal buyer persona.

## Step 3: Conduct market research and competitor analysis

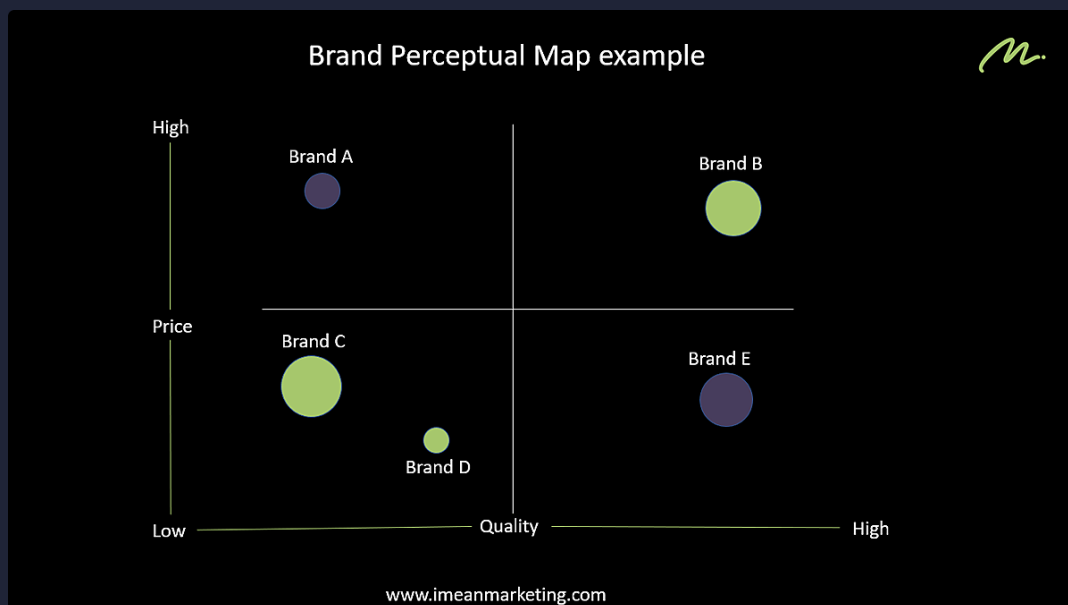
An effective brand positioning strategy involves market research, customer interviews, as well as a candid assessment of your company's market position.

Analyze the market to identify other players offering similar products or services. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your competitors. Now create two lists: one labeled points of parity and a second one labeled points of differentiation.

Points of parity are the bare minimum requirements you need to offer to compete in a category.

Points of differentiation are what set you apart from your competitors in a category. They should be unique features that will make customers choose one brand over another.

## Step 4: Create a brand positioning map



A brand positioning map puts brands on quadrants based on two attributes. It shows how brands are positioned in the marketplace. Identify the two most important characteristics to include in the positioning map based on industry knowledge and previous research. Now choose the major players in your category and score each competitor against the two attributes.



## Step 5: Choose your brand position

From the perceptual map, you can identify the best position for your brand. The quadrant with a maximum success rate and minimum competition from other brands would be the ideal position for your brand.

## Step 6: Communicate your brand's positioning

Now that you have identified the mindshare you want, you need to create a strategy to bring that to life. You have to translate the intangible concept into tangible words by creating a positioning statement, brand messaging strategy, marketing message, and visual identity.

Brand positioning gives you a clear vision. To be successful, a brand needs to activate the positioning. You need a well-designed inside-out communication plan. An internal communication campaign will bring people together and inspire them to work toward a common goal.



# **Do you want help positioning your brand?**

Reserve your free discovery call

Become the brand that your competitors wish they were.