

# **DISPATCHES**<sup>TM</sup>

*Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front*

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Sunday, November 25, 2007

## **ESTABLISH "OWNABLE" POSITIONING**

An insightful young marketer participating in one of our Strategic Positioning & Ad College programs came up with this statement about brand positioning: "It is uniquely tied to your brand. If any other brand tried to use the same positioning it would be false." Inherent in this statement is the noble ideal of an ownable, competitive and enduring positioning. We refer to it as "Power Positioning".

In Power Positioning the brand's positioning statement becomes the source of all the brand's initiatives. The brand positioning is reflected in everything you do -- all the brand's marketing mix elements, not just what you say on paper on in advertising.

Starbucks is a wonderful example of Power Positioning in practice. Howard Shultz, Chairman and CEO of Starbucks successfully positioned the brand as the authentic coffee experience without the benefit of conventional TV and magazine advertising. Each of its marketing mix elements served as a plank to establish and reinforce the basic positioning. Here are some of the ways Starbucks established Power Positioning and with it created brand loyalty:

- **Product** – Starbucks has been fanatical about purchasing only the highest quality Arabica beans and roasting them to their optimal flavor characteristics. Additionally, Starbucks reinvented coffee by introducing coffee beverages such as the Cappuccino and Latte, which many of us have acquired a taste for.
- **Customer** – Customers are greeted in each Starbucks store by baristas who know their coffee. The baristas are trained to help educate and deliver the optimal beverage experience in meeting the needs of customers. Starbucks, through its baristas, listens to customer needs and evolves the product offerings (such as providing a skim milk option

for their beverages) to satisfy and, in the company's words, "delight them."

- **Distribution** – You can find Starbucks at company owned and operated stores, airports and select venues such as Barnes and Noble Booksellers. Starbucks venues create a special ambiance with their coffeemakers, unique sounds (the barista calling out your order, the hiss of steam from the espresso machine, their jazz notes playing the background and the voices of their customers engaged in friendly chatter) and inviting décor (rich, warm wood paneling, green colors and posters). The Starbucks place is as important to the experience as the beverage. It's a cultural site of what's happening designed to nurture social interaction.
- **Identity** – Going beyond distribution venues Starbucks uniquely packages its products. We're not just referring to their whole bean coffee bags either. Instead look at the cups, the Starbucks mermaid logo, attractive displays, the baristas with their familiar green aprons, exotic coffee paraphernalia and the recycled paper.

We are not saying that advertising isn't important to building brands and creating brand loyalty. The Starbucks experience merely evidence that developing an ownable, competitive and enduring positioning comes from everything you do in the marketplace. These same opportunities are open to all of us.

### **BOATS & HELICOPTERS:**

Here's something you can do to apply the learnings ("Boats and Helicopters") of Starbucks to your brand. Think about your brand with your brand team. Set this ground rule – imagine you have absolutely no money for advertising! Then spend a few hours in brainstorming initiatives that will serve to establish and/or reinforce the brand's positioning for each marketing mix element. These planks should include:

- Product (including improvements, line extensions and, even intangibles such as terms, etc.)
- Pricing
- Packaging
- Distribution (what channels, what locations in each channel)
- Promotion
- Public Relations

- Authority Opinions and
- Endorsements, among others.

Perhaps, too, you might identify new planks for your brand such as brand presence. The key of this “Positioning with Advertising” exercise is to identify what it takes to establish the brand’s positioning in everything you do (Power Positioning) – not just what you say, to ensure an ownable, competitive and enduring brand positioning. When you do put advertising behind it, your positioning will be all the more powerful!

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