

# DISPATCHES™

Insights On Brand Development From The Marketing Front

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Sunday, December 5, 2010

## THE MOST IMPORTANT “P” IN MARKETING

Anyone who has studied marketing has, undoubtedly, been taught the 4-Ps of marketing. These are: Product, Price, Place (i.e., distribution), and Promotion. But the most important “P” is absent, or, when presented, is inappropriately relegated to the role of being a subset of promotion. What is that “P?”

It’s “positioning.” More specifically, it is “brand positioning.” We define brand positioning as **how we want target-customers to perceive, think and feel about our “brand” (not product, but brand) relative to the competition.** It goes beyond what we say (such as in advertising) to encompass everything we do. It is the marketer’s *blueprint* for transforming a product, with similar features and attributes to that of the competition, into a brand that generates unswerving customer devotion in the form of “brand loyalty.”

Let’s examine the meaning behind each of the words highlighted by bold font in the previous paragraph:

- ***How we want*** Marketers are the architects of carving out a special place in the market that they want to own, and can occupy with their target-customer segment. It goes beyond what the product development people give us, to what we do with, and can make of, it. It is our vision for something that is bigger, and more important than the product alone.
- ***Target-customers*** Positioning is “customer centric” versus product (or organization) centric. Moreover, this is not about every customer for the category of products. Instead, it is the specific segment (or grouping) of customers that the marketer has chosen to serve, and is committed to serve better than competitors, based on a host of factors such as the lifetime value of that customer segment, the ability to meet their unique needs, and being able to establish a meaningful relationship with them, among others.
- ***To perceive, think ...*** Perceptions are reality. Nothing else matters. Not even data! This is about the reality that we plan to create for our target-customer with our brand offering. “Think” is about seeding the mind of the target-customer to help create the intended perception.

- ***Feel about*** A brand that creates brand loyalty to generate unswerving devotion goes beyond occupying thoughts, to winning hearts. We need target-customers not just to think of the brand but feel for it, really feel for it.
- ***Our brand*** The brand is more than the sum total of features and attributes of the product. It is a constellation of values that has special *meaning* to the target-customer. If the brand does not have (relevant) meaning then customers will not feel for it. It will not connect with the heart. The brand is also the resultant bond that is established through the sum total of the customer *experiences* we deliver.
- ***Relative to*** Positioning is never an absolute but relative to other entries that could be viewed by the target-customer as substitutes for your offering. In other words, it is relative to all that could be perceived as being part of your larger market (going beyond the category in which your literal competitive framework would suggest you compete).
- ***The competition*** Taken together with the previous point it is all about creating a perception of relevant, and meaningful *differentiation* versus competition to drive customer preference for, and loyalty to, your brand.

Positioning is the alpha (taken from the Ionic Greek alphabet as being the first, or beginning) and omega (the last, or ending) of marketing. It is the source for marketing strategy and tactics and, at the same time, is reinforced by, and gains power from them. Everything proceeds from the brand positioning, and revolves back into it. Therefore, positioning should never be an afterthought, or limited to one, or merely a few, marketing mix elements. It needs to be the first order of every marketer, and marketing organization. It should then direct the other “Ps” of marketing: product (the solution to your target-customer’s needs); price (the value perception you create with the target); place (access to your brand and their experiences with it); and promotion (the dialogue with which you engage the target-customer).

To view a video we created that captures the distinction between brand and product, and underscores the need for the development of a competitive brand positioning strategy statement [\*\*\*click here\*\*\*](#). (*Note: The “click here” option is only valid if you are viewing this online.*)

## **BOATS & HELICOPTERS:**

- 1) ***Create, or update, a Brand Positioning Strategy Statement*** – This is the obvious first move. It serves as our blueprint for transforming the product into a brand. You can download tools for creating the Brand Positioning Strategy Statement from our micro-website [www.competitivepositioning.info](http://www.competitivepositioning.info)
- 2) ***Make it competitive*** – Make a difference! Our goal is not to fill-in a template but to create a strategy that will drive target-customer preference for our brand. Create a vision

for something that your target-customers will not just want, but demand. Something that distinguishes the brand from competition.

- 3) **Use it to drive all marketing activities** - Positioning is the alpha and omega of brand marketing. It informs everything we do if we are to establish relevant, and meaningful, differentiation in the marketplace to create brand loyalty. It will be strengthened, and elevated by our marketing choices, and tactics. Be a steward of the BPSS and ensure that all functional elements (e.g., R&D, manufacturing, etc.) are acting in accordance with the brand blueprint. When the brand positioning is established in the marketplace through our actions (not just on paper), and the subsequent adoption by the target-customer, then we are rewarded with brand equity!
- 4) **Do it right** – Hey, here’s our pitch: If you haven’t already ordered our new book, **COMPETITIVE POSITIONING – Best Practices for Creating Brand Loyalty**, don’t wait. Do it. Click on [www.competitivepositioning.info](http://www.competitivepositioning.info) to learn more about the book. If you like what you see, and we hope you do, order it. Importantly, apply what you learn from it, and our DISPATCHES, to outperform your competition.

Make positioning the first order of business. It’s the most important “P” in all of marketing.

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