

principle 3

Positioning

*What's your Position...
Differentiate yourself!*

Positioning is a pivotal marketing concept that actually encompasses many aspects of marketing today. But the word itself generally refers to your position "relative to" or "against" your competitors. That's because, these days, you're likely to have a lot of competitors no matter what kind of business you're in. Just open up the Yellow Pages. How many dentists are listed in your town? How many plumbers? How many insurance brokers? The list is long in most categories.

The dilemma that immediately confronts the thinking business owner is: "Why should anyone select me, rather than the other guy? We all have about the same level and quality of service, we all have prices within the same basic range, we're all equally accessible, and so on."

What is the answer to this dilemma? Many people might jump in and say: "Prospects tend to choose the one with the lowest price."

You cannot compete on price alone

But this is simply not true. Study after study shows that price is seldom the primary factor in making a decision to choose one dealer over another. If it were so, no luxury, premium or high quality goods would ever be sold. The fact is, many factors enter into why people choose one business over another, and often the choice is merely random. Not everyone is a discriminating shopper who weighs every factor before choosing a product or service.

This is where positioning comes in. If you want customers to choose you, then you need to position yourself against the competition in a way that makes you stand out, and which gives good reason for people to choose you. One of the best ways to do that is to foster an image of



yourself as being “an expert in your field.” In other words, you want people to think: “Sure there’s a lot of good dentists in this town, but Mr. Bill Johnson is a dentist’s dentist - he’s an expert, he knows more about the science of dentistry than the average dentist.”

How would people obtain that view of Bill Johnson? Well, what if he published a book of tips on dental care, and how to anyone can maintain healthy teeth and also reduce their dental care bills by 30%? What if Bill Johnson also conducted free seminars in dental care, or offered his services to local schools to come in and talk to young students about proper daily dental care? And what if he also used those opportunities to promote his book? And since Bill Johnson has published a book on dental care, it’s likely a local radio station and newspaper will grant him an interview to talk about his book, and why he wrote it. He may also get invited onto TV and radio programming when basic health topics are discussed - reporters usually invite the guy who’s an expert, and the guy who “wrote the book” book is mostly likely to be that man.

Positioning yourself as an expert means doing something that makes you stand out as an expert. That can be:

- Writing a book.
- Publishing a regular newspaper column on your area of expertise.
- Giving seminars.
- Getting yourself listed in key directories, such as “Who’s Who.”
- Getting yourself invited on TV and radio talk shows.
- Getting to know editors and reporters and telling them they can call you when they need information involving a story that involves your expertise. They’ll then quote you and get your name into news stories, which is among the very best kind of free publicity you can get.
- Establishing a “hot line” to answer questions in your field of expertise.
- Issue press releases related to the latest development in your field, and list yourself as a resource for further information.

You don’t have to be a dentist or a professional. A car mechanic, a plumber, a builder - anyone can do all of the above and establish themselves as the “go to guy” when it comes to questions or information in any particular field.

Don’t think you can write a book, or don’t have time? Hire a ghost-writer to write it for you - it’s a time-honoured tradition used by thousands of people all the time. The bottom line is, in today’s strenuously competitive marketplace, becoming viewed as the “expert in your field” can be the ultimate positioning tool. Better yet, once you establish your position as “expert” you may never have to compete on price again. Many people will be glad to pay premium prices for “the best.”



Finally, your positioning activities can actually earn you money while you promote and bolster your image. Sales of your book can mean a tidy sideline income, and you can charge admission for seminars. When you are interviewed by local media representatives, it's like getting top-notch advertising for free.

The benefits of positioning are many. I urge you to start considering and planning to put your positioning strategy into play right now!

Personality Positioning

In these days of mass production and huge chains stores, many long for those bygone days when every shop and store had the unique atmosphere and personality of those who owned and operated those businesses... The classic mom-and-pop corner store, a real Mexican restaurant run by a genuine Mexican family rather than a plastic Taco chain outlet, or perhaps a cosy bed-and-breakfast in the English countryside hosted by a charming elderly couple.

Of course, we'll never completely get back to those days again, and millions of people still love, and even demand, the low prices and massive selection of the giants, such as Tesco, Woolworth, John Lewis and others.

Through personality positioning SME's can offer something the multi-nationals can't

Yet, there is opportunity here for small business owners who can't possibly compete against the giants on price and selection... Small business owners can create an all-unique, homey, ethnic or other kind of atmosphere that the "rubber stamp" chain stores can never match. You should not only create such an atmosphere, but advertise it. This is classic position marketing - you position yourself AGAINST your competition in a way that makes you stand out from the crowd. You tell your market base audience that if they're tired of being 'one of the crowd' and want a unique shopping or experience, they come to you.

Remember, shopping, dining and buying is as much an EXPERIENCE as it is anything else. Make your selling environment a special experience with a unique personality, and you will garner a loyal core of repeat customers, who will not only come back again and again, but spread the story about

your place by word-of-mouth, which is the best kind of advertising you can have.

Actually, what I'm talking about here is a combination of three powerful marketing concepts -- a Unique Selling Proposition, Position Marketing and Persona. It's a powerful combination that even larger businesses can use to make their operations stand out and capture a loyal army of customers and repeat business.