

The world of brand and marketing communications is full of complex, inconsistent terminology, approaches and outputs. We aim to make things simple.

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# In black & white:

# *Brand positioning*



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Brand positioning involves capturing and communicating how your organisation, product or service performs relative to its peer group. In competitive terms it's the 'why you should buy our brand rather than someone else's': an encapsulation of what defines your brand and gives you your competitive edge.

## **Identifying positioning**

There are many ways of identifying your brand positioning. Some organisations use research to identify their target audience's needs, how effectively other brands are fulfilling those needs and will base their positioning on filling the 'needs gap'. This is particularly the approach for fast moving consumer brands, and requires real investment in ensuring the product or service can deliver on its promise. Other organisations consult with their teams and their audiences, to identify and base their positioning on their real, positive differences. This delivers a brand with competitive appeal that cost effectively and authentically delivers on its promise. This approach can be used anywhere, and is a particularly credible approach for business-to-business branding.

## **Capturing and articulating positioning**

There are also many ways of capturing and articulating brand positioning. This will involve identifying values and behaviours (e.g. 'innovative, dynamic, professional'), and a shorthand (e.g. Accenture: high performance delivered). The problem with this approach is that on its own, it doesn't go far enough. So we qualify the values we develop and describe what the values mean for performance of the brand and the behaviour of the people who deliver it. And though we'll deliver a shorthand for the positioning, we'll also develop a full brand positioning statement, underpinned by and derived from a series of messages: key facts about the brand, as well as more emotive messages (values).



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We work hard at understanding the needs and shapes of the different organisations we work with, and so the shape of the positioning deliverables we develop, and our approach, will vary from client to client.

A brand positioning needs to go well beyond words and messages. So we work with clients to 'evidence' their brand positioning: developing a series of facts that 'prove' its credibility. This will highlight any 'over-promises', and we will then work with clients to develop action plans to ensure over time they can more comprehensively deliver on their positioning. The positioning must also work as a strong creative driver, so the visual identity and collateral that is produced, looks the part as well as sounds the part. This demands the positioning is written in a style that is visually evocative. We work very hard at this: it helps designers design and clients make more objective creative decisions.

### **Using positioning**

The positioning is not the property of the marketing team but the organisation as a whole. Properly executed, the same consistent messages can be traced from the smallest communication right back to the business plan. And those messages will be used by and have credibility with people across the organisation, because they will be flexible enough to accommodate the personalities and needs of those that work with them, and authentic enough not to be undermined at every turn.

Above all, properly executed, a positioning sells. Because it delivers the single-minded simplicity that makes it easier for clients and consumers to understand, buy into and ultimately buy.