

# Bolstering Positioning With Research



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Most of our clients who want to develop a strong brand position all have their own ideas about how to accomplish this feat. With years of experience of testing positioning and helping our clients formulate a unique and effective position, we have landed on some concrete methods we thought we would share with you.

## Component parts:

- **Brand Identification/Brand Promise**
- **Market Research: Used to validate a formulated position or help identify a position through exploratory discussions.**
- **Company Position (Internal Use)**
- **Positioning statement (External Use)**
- **Executing in the marketplace (Consistent & Repetitive)**

## The History of Positioning

Historically, companies have avoided putting a stake in the ground with regard to their brand because they have not wanted to alienate potential buyers. Brands were given broad leeway to evolve on their own through creative license, trial, and error. The development of strong brands had more to do with brilliant creativity than exacting science. Shrinking budgets, need for ROI, and the likelihood of failing within a highly competitive and/or saturated market has forced businesses to take a "new" look at how they communicate about their company and brand.

Positioning moves brands from the abstract to the concrete, from ethereal to tangible. It takes the core elements of what makes your company strong, what differentiates, or simply what offers the most compelling value, and provides a roadmap to follow you're your employees and target audience alike. By positioning your company you leave less room for interpretation and inspire directed action.

Recently, Neville Isdell, the former CEO of Coca Cola spoke about properly building a brand, positioning, and the research misstep that caused the failure of New Coke. [Click here](#) to watch or, you can view the 2012 archives of the Charlie Rose show at [CharlieRose.com](http://CharlieRose.com)

“In the course of positioning statement development, (consumers) are exposed to **FULLY FORMED MESSAGES** that mingle **PHYSICAL** and **EMOTIONAL** benefits with aspirational claims often incorporating **IDEALISTIC DEMANDS.**”

—Vanderveer, 2007

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## Positioning Today: *Who Gets It?*

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Very simply, two elements are responsible for the success and failure of branding your organization and creating a message that permeates the marketplace: Consistency and Repetition. Looking at the most successful brands, they have these core characteristics in common. For example, by viewing the list of companies below, you can easily come up with the position they have created, continued, and won:

- BMW (automobiles)
- Subway (sandwiches)
- Geico (insurance)
- M&Ms (candy)
- General Electric (GE)
- The list could go on and on...

Whether grasping the wheel behind the Ultimate Driving Machine, or saving 15% in 15 minutes your expectation as a consumer has been set before you even experience the product or service of the provider. Companies like BMW and Geico have cracked the code, they have consistently told you what they will deliver, and they have carved out a position both in the market and in your mind. You have an expectation, hopefully the correct one, of what you will receive/experience before you have ever lifted the phone or entered a showroom. Delivering on that position, and/or Brand Promise, is up to the provider... and a topic for another time.

Figuring out which of the many "promises" that you could make is the one that is most unique, compelling, differentiating and appealing can be the difference between success and failure. Market research helps you identify and refine the Promise your brand can (and should) communicate.

### **Company Positioning:**

In order to begin to carve out a competitive place in the market, a company must understand who they are, who their target is, where the company is strong, and how the company will convey this claim of strength to their target audience. To define market position, a company should consider conducting primary research.

For positioning, market research will likely be qualitative and focused on clearly understanding the current "position" your brand holds among your target audience. From there, you will be able to identify the current position, potential improvements, and the most compelling drivers of your target audience when they are considering products and/or services like yours.

By understanding these drivers you can position your brand in the right place in the market, but more importantly, in the right place in the minds of your influencers, buyers, and end users.

“ Positioning is the **DELIBERATE, PROACTIVE, ITERATIVE** process of **DEFINING, MODIFYING, AND MONITORING** consumer perceptions of a marketable object.

—Blankson, 2004

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## Positioning: *What does it mean for you?*

Unlike the company position, the Positioning Statement is the relevant external promise you will convey to the marketplace that defines the company's direction. The positioning statement answers seven (7) essential questions:

- Who are you?
- What business are you in?
- What people do you serve?
- What do those people need?
- Who is your competition?
- What differentiates you?
- What unique value is derived from your product/service?

“**POSITIONING IS THE HEARTBEAT** of an effective communication plan. A well-crafted positioning statement defines your company's direction.

—Kanzler, 1998

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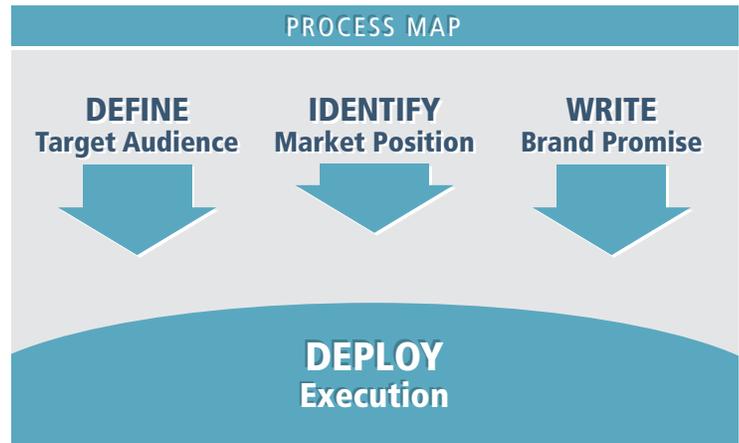
There is always more than one way to uncover the mysteries of the marketplace. Qualitative research offers us the opportunity to develop the methodology that best fits the clients' needs, objectives and logistical requirements. We have much more to say about developing and testing positioning statements and look forward to helping you with yours.

## Process Map: *Extension of the 7 Questions*

By deconstructing the essential components of your position above, the ingredients of a Positioning Statement can be easily defined, developed, and incorporated:

### Development Process:

- Who are you?
- Participation – Identify key players
- Frame Thinking – Define Positioning
- Ideation – create the ideas
- Respectfully Challenge and Focus
- Revisit/Analyze
- Trial and Execution



## Sample Positioning Statements:

Below are examples of strong and weak Positioning Statements. From these, it is easy to see how success can be manufactured through Consistency and Repetition. The fundamental objective of any positioning activity is to permanently occupy a place in the mind of your target audience, developing an association of your product with, ideally, a need, or, at the least, a frequent demand that your target consumer/buyer has.

### **VOLVO:**

**STRONG**

*For families concerned about safety, Volvo builds a vehicle with state-of-the-art safety features that give you peace of mind when driving.*

### **LG ELECTRONICS:**

**STRONG**

*Pursuing a 21st Century vision of becoming a global digital leader who makes customers worldwide happy through innovative digital products and services.*

### **NIKE:**

**STRONG**

*For serious athletes, Nike gives confidence that provides the perfect shoe for every sport.*

### **LEXUS:**

**WEAK**

*A company focused on the relentless pursuit of perfection.*

Generating a lasting, resonant, and strong positioning is not something to leave to chance. Hitting the mark requires knowing your company, knowing your audience, and how to best marry the two. Through internal and external research, then an effective launch of those results, you are able to carve out share of mind and share of market among your target audiences.

## End Note: Achieving Success or Failure

For a deeper look into our Whitepaper or if you would like to talk to us about specific details of Positioning and Qualitative Market Research, please feel free to contact us. We look forward to hearing from you, if nothing more than to discuss your current realities and the various ways we might be able to help.

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“ **IF A 9-YEAR-OLD KID CANNOT QUICKLY UNDERSTAND** what the positioning statement is trying to say and what need a particular brand is satisfying, **IT'S PROBABLY TOO COMPLEX.** Refine it, and try again.

—Cobbin, 1998

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**Baccus Research Group** is a full-service qualitative marketing firm working with clients who need to evaluate messaging, positioning, product concepts and virtually any element that furthers your brand with your audiences. Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, but reaching global audiences, Baccus Research Group serves clients and partners from all industries. They have been delivering the highest quality and most actionable market research insights available around town, and around the world, for more than 15 years.