



Marketing Messages

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Proper positioning is essential for sales success

Positioning is all about placing your business products or services in the part of the market where they will be favoured over competing products. Positioning defines what your business stands for, what's in it for the customer, and how they should evaluate it.

You communicate your positioning to the marketplace through things such as, your business image, store design and layout, your prices, your product lines or services and how or what you communicate through your advertising and media choices.

Let's look at a few successful approaches to positioning used by local companies.

1. **Positioning by attribute.** This is where you emphasize specific features and benefits of your business over others. **Telus** has a catchy TV and print campaign currently running to tell consumers about their bundled telephone services. Two rabbits run off screen and then return with many additional bunnies. The song track "One thing leads to another" is accompanied by the tagline, "Get more than you expected." The humour used is an effective way to make something as potentially boring as getting call display with your voice messaging seem attractive. The Telus bundle feature is the attribute that sets them apart from competitors. Telus is positioning itself as the company of choice for all your telephone communications needs.

2. **Positioning by price or quality.** This is a commonly used positioning tactic. You can position by price on its own, quality on its own, or by a combination of the two. When you shop at **Walmart**, price is the driver, quality is distant second. Clearly they position on price. **Kintec Foot Labs** positions themselves as quality experts in footwear, orthotics, and the biomechanics of feet. Their positioning line is "We know feet". Their product lines, service, store image and radio advertising all lead you to expect a quality product and knowledgeable service. Price is secondary. **HMY Airways**, a new Vancouver based airline, positions themselves as offering a high quality flying experience at a low price. They have used the combination of positioning by price and quality to find an industry niche that they feel is poorly serviced in the marketplace. Your business can create a strong position by taking ownership of one or both of price/quality features.

3. **Positioning by product user.** This is when a company associates their product with a user or a class of users. **Panda Shoes** sells quality ki shoes. Although they are clearly positioned by product user, they also position by quality, with price as a secondary factor. **Ladysport** sells active wear and shoes exclusively for the female market. **Tallgirl** sells clothing for women over 5' 10" and their associated store Tallcrest Shoes sells women's footwear sizes 11 to 13 in narrow and wide widths. Although the majority of shoe retailers seem to believe all women fit into shoes sized 10B or smaller, **Tallcrest Shoes** recognizes a small fringe who are poorly served by most retailers. They have built their business around this group. Typically, businesses that position by product user are destination in nature. A specific consumer group seeks them out. If this group is significant enough in numbers, this niche positioning strategy can be very successful. Sorry for the female slant on the example guys, but you're dealing with a tall, active woman, with big feet, who has young kids!

4. **Positioning by product class.** This is when a store positions its product beyond the traditional perceived use. Lenscrafters has a TV campaign running right now which is an excellent example of this technique. It used to be Lenscrafters sold glasses, to people who needed them to see, and they could get them in 1 hour. Time was the differentiating factor. Their current commercial asks, "Are you lucky enough to need glasses?" Clearly they have positioned glasses as a fashion statement. What they are really saying is, whether you need glasses or not, you should get some new ones because they look good. And heck, while you're at it, you really should have several pairs as a style accessory or to suit your mood. You can still get them in about an hour. Sometimes positioning by product class can rejuvenate a tired message or previous position.

Is your business clearly positioned in the marketplace? Ask your customers and staff what their perception is. If their reply is not what you'd expect, you may not have clearly defined your position or you may not be communicating it effectively. Positioning helps clearly define who you are, what you stand for and what customers should think about you. If that message doesn't exist or is muddled, chances are you are not as successful as you could be.

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