



Marketing Messages

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Cypress hits Games Gold with positioning and marketing

Positioning and leverage. Successful marketing demands both. Just look at **Cypress Mountain**, our local day skier area, which has landed five of the highest-profile events of the **2010 Winter Olympic Games**. Cypress Mountain will host freestyle moguls, freestyle skiing, snowboard halfpipe, snowboard parallel giant slalom and boardercross competitions. They grabbed a few pieces of the IOC's gold on the way to Whistler. Strategic positioning and achieving leverage was key to their success.

Positioning defines who you are and how you're different from competitors. Cypress used to position themselves as "the best in local skiing". But there was something apologetic about being a poor man's Whistler. While still boasting the most expansive terrain and the largest vertical rise on the North Shore, they now position themselves as being Vancouver's premiere winter playground. They don't see themselves as second to Whistler and Blackcomb, and they're not a destination resort. They are a unique experience and part of the city's culture.

Leverage is how you gain an advantage from your defined position. Cypress has leveraged their position in the local marketplace several ways. They have gained loyalty with an urban crowd. Although Cypress obviously targets the experienced skier, the new skier market is where the future lies. Only 1 in 7 who try skiing staying with it, so Cypress realized their future success hinged on building new customers and gaining their loyalty. The ski card, sold daily throughout the season at kiosks in lower mainland malls, has allowed them to aggressively breed new customers. Being able to process cards right away meant they could gain early loyalty from a low use group. Most ski cardholders visit on average 3 times a season. The mountain also committed to lowering the barriers for new users by providing all inclusive good quality rentals, including clothing, flexible lesson packages and investing in beginner terrain and lifts. They have reached out directly to the Asian population with newspaper ads and shopping center kiosks in Asian malls. Cypress has leveraged their position as a true winter playground. They are the only one of the three local mountains to offer alpine skiing, boarding, cross-country skiing, tubing and snowshoeing. And much of it is offered on lit trails at night, expanding their position to a truly unique urban evening retreat.

But just how did they leverage their position to become host for five Olympic events? Cypress is owned by **Boyne US**, who also own **Brighton**, a day ski area close to Salt Lake in Utah. They saw Brighton miss out on the 2002 Salt Lake City games, and realized that Cypress, being similar to Brighton, had Olympic potential. They knew Cypress was just 10 minutes from downtown, accessible from a 3-lane road leading directly to parking and it offered good proximity for busloads of athletes, officials and spectators. When the IOC site inspectors voiced concern about the long, winding drive to Whistler, Cypress was positioned as a solution. They leveraged themselves as the missing link in the Sea to Sky games. They were close to Vancouver, but in the mountains, and offered a backdrop of Vancouver's skyline. They leveraged the fact that they had the appropriate terrain. With a base elevation of 2,995 ft, and 60% of the slopes being illuminated at night it worked well with the bid committees desire to run some events in the evening. Cypress is well utilized. With 400,000 skier days in the downhill area, 100,000 in the cross-country area, they are the third most popular alpine areas in BC behind Whistler and Big White. And it sure didn't hurt that the Olympic game's requirements meshed with the mountains overall long-term plan. "Our master plan pretty much dovetailed with what the Olympics needed, in terms of our location and the ability to stage events for 15,000-20,000 people", says **Cypress Marketing Director Matthew Broadbent**.

Of course, now that they have won the right to host five of the alpine events, they will no doubt use their Olympic status to lure current and future customers to the mountain. Here's where leverage goes a step further. Cypress customers will be able to ride the Olympic 1/2 pipe, and the Olympic ski run. Since most venues have to be completed by 2006, you can bet the mountain intends to connect with the lead up energy the games will generate. They will leverage the direct connection for the customer to felling it's "my mountain, and my games".

What can your business learn from this? To be successful you must develop a unique position for your business, one that differentiates you from your competitors in the marketplace. To truly flourish, you then must leverage this and pursue opportunities, which your unique position offers you. Take a few minutes and jot down what makes your business unique. Then for each of those points, brainstorm opportunities, which could be available to you and not to your competitors. That's called going for gold to achieve position and leverage.

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