



Six Steps to Improve Your Brand and Positioning

When I was a brand marketer, I learned that your brand is what your best customers say about you. But that can be a chicken and egg situation. Your strategy, your value proposition, and positioning are typically expressed as the words and sentiments you would like your prospects and customers to understand and use in differentiating your brand from others. So, there's marketplace reality on one hand and what your aspirations are on the other. Reality checking and fine tuning need to be a constant process, not a one time activity. Here's a quick exercise to keep your brand relevant.

1. **Talk to your best customers**, they will tell you what you are really good at, and more importantly, what you need to do better. Understand what your product and feature gaps are. Your best customers will validate all the qualities you want to own and the ones that really don't matter. For fine tuning, develop three to five success stories by doing in-depth customer interviews. I'm also a big fan of implementing formal customer success programs. Consider complementing a quick positioning exercise with a complete and on-going customer success/customer experience analysis. But that's a topic for another day.
2. **Get a reality check on why you lose.** Always do a win-loss analysis on major deals with an independent third party. Analyzing each loss is an opportunity to learn valuable lessons that may improve your future win rate and, if you are diligent,

convert some lost deals into new opportunities. You need the unvarnished truth and that can be painful. But you need to listen. I've worked with many very large companies who never do this or do it just once and a while. It always feels like a sales report card, but it's not. Find the budget, make the time, and uncover the information you need to get better after every lost deal.

3. **Don't forget the inside-out view.** In addition to the customer/prospect view, workshop an internal SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). I'm always amazed by how much healthy disagreement there can be around this kind of analysis. Good strategic collaboration, alignment on the issues, and team building should be your goal. These kinds of analyses can quickly devolve into a finger pointing exercise. Hire a good facilitator, get in a conference room, put your egos aside, and just do it. You'll get some really good insights not just on your marketing and sales process, but on your overall business.
4. **Do an honest and thorough competitive assessment, map competitor strengths, and weakness against your own.** Visit the websites of all main competitors and do a regular SWOT analysis on each of them. Leverage industry reports, research, and analysis. This is another opportunity to get some outside consulting help from analysts

who follow your industry. Be aware that when you do this, you may find that your competitors may not be who you think they are. This understanding can drive your segmentation or partner strategy and, at a minimum, **better align your strengths and weaknesses to your offerings**. These insights are key to making adjustments in your product roadmap and positioning. Are there any unclaimed positions within your market that would be relevant to both your value proposition and your product portfolio? Resist the temptation to be everything to everyone, focus, and refocus.

5. **Redefine your positioning.** Take a fresh shot at updating your positioning statement. This template is as old as the hills but it still works: For **(your brand's broad target market/personas)** who **(statement of main problem you address)**, **(your brand name)** excels at **(statement of main solution you provide/category)** because **(primary support/reasons why)**. Like **(three leading competitors)**, we also **(main point of parity)**. But unlike them, we **(main point of differentiation)**. Therefore, in/for **(specify market segment)**, we would argue that we are the only **(position name)** brand in the category.
6. Knowing your strengths is good but knowing when and how to use them is even better. Your position should form the backdrop against which all your messaging and communication takes place. It should define your tone and manner and be developed into a communication theme that

frames your relationship with the market. It should be reinforced with the way you communicate and interact with your online audience. Reassess your content marketing strategy and go-to-market materials focusing on your tuned positioning and competitive advantages and the messages that are truly unique and differentiating. Revise and refine your online presence accordingly. Prioritize your website and search, both SEO and SEM if you are a small company. Lead the right prospects to the strongest part of your offering to drive the most meaningful revenue.

Fortune 1000 companies pay consultants and agencies big bucks for this kind of thinking, taking months to execute. A small but mighty marketing team can do much of this on their own over a couple of weeks, or even days with some good prep work—especially if they have help from a small but mighty consultant.

— by Dennis Driscoll, Principal

About MSP

Marlborough Street Partners is a team of senior operating executives that works with private equity and venture backed firms. We guide portfolio companies through their most important inflection points. Our C-level partners assess, reengineer, and when required, provide interim management to get companies on a winning trajectory.

M A R L
B O R
O U G H
S T R E E T
P A R T N E R S

Marlborough Street Ventures LLC

W: www.marlboroughst.com

E: info@marlboroughst.com