

# The marketing classic positioning

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



The Encarta World Dictionary defines communication in various ways, a message, an act, exchange of information or a means of access. Therefore it is only fair, to endorse the important role that communication plays in society. Despite such, ineffective communication is the cause of business, government, labor and marriage problems throughout the world.

Al Ries and Jack Trout recognized the importance of communication, in the delivery of products, goods and services to communities. They discovered a new approach to communication, called 'positioning'. These world-renowned marketing strategists, Ries and Trout, are the authors of the book 'Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind'.

This marketing classic, published by McGraw-Hill Companies should be the bible of every marketer. It is written in a very simple format, to make reading interesting and enjoyable. Throughout this marketing classic, 'Positioning' Ries and Trout teach how to manipulate, by bringing their revolutionary idea to life with various examples.

Philip Kotler, Ph. D., discusses in the foreward, how positioning can affect marketing's four P's- product, price, place and promotion. The authors recognize that in order to be successful in our overcommunicated society, one must enter the prospect's mind, similar to advertising and marketing.

Most of the examples discussed derive from advertising, the most difficult form of communication that exists. Positioning is a powerful tool and a very simple concept that has changed the nature of advertising.

Positioning must start with something, whether it is a product, place, institution, organization, merchandise or person. It is a popular strategy in the business world, used to help get ahead of competitors.

Consumers are burdened with a heavy amount of advertising, which affects the mind a great deal. Ries and Trout realize the difficulty in creating something that does not already exist in one's mind.

The authors say, " the only defense a person has in our overcommunicated society is an oversimplified mind". The mind is already saturated, yet still vulnerable to information marketers continuously bombard us with.

The solution to this overcommunication is '... the oversimplified message". Marketers must undergo a selection process and only present the material that has a greater chance of reaching the consumer. Communication can only be effective if we concentrate on the receiver's perception of the intended message and not the product itself.

It takes a great deal to keep abreast with all information communicated to us and only a small portion actually gets through. The average person may have difficulty in digesting all the information presented to them.

People often remember who is first and rarely who is second, therefore the easiest way of getting into one's mind is by getting there first. Even though the second entrant's product may be better than the first, those first entrants have already made an impression. In our local market, Colgate is the brand associated to toothpaste, like Breeze and soap powder.

History shows that brands, especially those rated as 'number one', impact on consumer's minds. That leader brand holds a much greater market share in comparison to the immediate competitor, so too does the number two brand in comparison with the number three and so forth. For example, Goodyear outsells Firestone and Mc Donald's outsells Burger King. Marketing experts believe that the success of a brand is not due to marketing, but it is an advantage of being first in the competitor's mind.

Market leaders must be aware of their position in a particular industry. Ries and Trout exhibit that the ability to maintain that position is not an easy task. Boasting about being a leader is not always the way to go. Coca-Cola does not boast about being number one, instead they reinforce the fact that they were the first to introduce the product. A classic strategy they used in their advertising campaign was Coca-Cola being "The Real Thing".

Leaders must be willing and readily able to adapt to change, in order to maintain their position. Political, Social, Technological and Economical issues are some external factors that leaders cannot avoid.

The authors discuss the multibrand strategy, the single-position strategy and covering with a broader name. The multibrand strategy involves introducing multiple brands, instead of changing an existing one. Proctor & Gamble have already established a position in the market place and recognize they may encounter difficulty if they introduce a new product. Hence, each leading Proctor & Gamble brand has its own identity: Joy, Crest, Head & Shoulders, Bounty, Pampers, Sure, Charmin and Duncan Hines.

The single-position strategy involves introducing a new brand, a cheaper and easier strategy in comparison to others. Companies are able to make the mental transition by broadening their names. Sales Management changed its name to Sales & Marketing Management to facilitate a wider range of services.

Brands appeal to each and every one of us differently, thus it is important for marketers to recognize such. Tastes and preferences vary from one individual to a next. Local radio stations such as 97. 1 and 93. 5 would target a different listening audience, perhaps one that is more mature, compared to 96. 1 and 98. 9, that target mostly teenagers.

Repositioning a competitor is another way to maintain market share and this is done by convincing prospects to view the competitor in a different way. Consumers rarely read labels and choose to perceive the origin of a product by its name. A brand name is an important factor affecting the perceptions of the brand.

An important aspect in positioning is 'name'. Some companies may encounter problems when another has a similar name, like Goodrich and Goodyear who sell the same product and VEMCO and VMCOTT, two local companies with unrelated products. Sometimes it is necessary for companies to change their name to something more general to maintain a distinct identity.

The use of abbreviations is also a popular strategy than long names or wordy names, it is much easier to say and pronounce as well. General Electric is

also referred to as GE, American Airlines as AA, Republic Bank Limited as RBL and International Business Machines as IBM. Some have legally changed their names to an abbreviated form. Kentucky Fried Chicken changed to KFC, Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago is now RBTT Bank.

Not all companies are easily recognized by their abbreviations. In our local market the abbreviation ABC can refer to ABC Dynamic Trading Limited or ABC International Couriers (T & T) Limited Consumers or even ABC Entertainment Limited, therefore we need to say the entire name for receivers to understand clearly, which one is being discuss

Like firms, individuals can also be referred to by an abbreviation of their name, but usually after they have already established themselves in the minds of others. The former president of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson is often referred to as ANR Robinson.

Leaders are in the best position to explore opportunities as they arise, however anonymity also has its advantages as well, since the product would be viewed without bias. Extending a products line, is not always the best strategy, at least according to Ries and Trout. It has its advantages and disadvantages. It is a high risk, since market leaders may be sacrificing their positions, especially if the product is unsuccessful.

It is difficult to build a brand from scratch and even more difficult to position that product in the consumer's mind. Some are successful in accomplishing

both. There are a number of different ways to position a product and what may work for one leader, may not be the same for a follower.

Positioning is a powerful communication tool geared towards making us better marketers, as long as we play the positioning game the right way. The main purpose of positioning is to acquire success, to become a market leader, whether it is a country, island, product, person or organization. Once we take those factors mentioned by the authors into consideration and adopt the right strategies we would accomplish our goal, to be positioned in the prospects mind.

Subtlety and simplicity also affect one's mind in a positive way, to help achieve that leadership state.

Positioning applies to a wide range of offerings in a very broad sense. Al Ries and Jack Trout have written this book in a very simple way, thereby making it easy to understand. They discuss various positioning strategies and use realistic examples to help the reader visualize exactly what is being said, thus leaving an impression on the reader's mind at the same time. This book teaches us the importance of communication and the negative impact it can have if used incorrectly.

Various factors assist in achieving our goals. In positioning we must be conscious of the words we use and its effects on others, words trigger meanings, but not necessarily the intended ones. Once we use the right words, we are able to influence one's mind. Change is an inevitable factor in life and one must be prepared to deal with such, so too changes in the

workplace. Vision is important in getting ahead and so is having the courage and patience to stay focused. Open minded individuals who are more objective become successful at positioning.

Ries and Trout have clearly displayed their knowledge on the concept of 'positioning' throughout this book. Readers can relate to the companies referred to in the examples, in order to better understand the concept of the authors just as they intended. The strategies discussed would help us all succeed in communicating effectively, thereby achieving leadership state. We should no longer be trapped in an over communicated environment; it would only be selfish of us to neglect what we have learnt from Ries and Trout.