



Week 1 - Position Your Brand For Success

PREP-WORK: READING

1. Overview

What is positioning?

In their bestselling book, "Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind," Al Ries and Jack Trout define positioning as:

*"An organized system for finding **a window in the mind**. It is based on the concept that communication can only take place at the right time and under the right circumstances."*

On the most fundamental and impactful level, positioning is about becoming familiar with the minds of your customers. What do they think of when they think of your brand?

Positioning thus serves as the guiding light for the most important decisions that will face your brand. Everything from product design and marketing campaigns to major strategy decisions will be evaluated as they relate back to your positioning, which ensures you stay "on brand."

Check-In: Before you dive into this section, take 45 seconds to consider the question "WHY?" The positioning process detailed below will add pertinent data, nuance, and strategy to your positioning. But before all that, it is of the utmost importance that you clarify the WHY of your company. Why do you exist? Why does it *matter* if your company succeeds or fails? What is the purpose of your company? Gaining clarity on that will be the single most impactful aspect of the positioning process, and will serve as a diving board for all the rest.

The Positioning Process

Here's a roadmap to follow as we walk through the steps to defining your positioning:

1. Gain a clear, sharp understanding of what **differentiates** your product.
2. Understand the **market**.
3. Identify your direct **competitors** & understand their positioning.



4. Define the **“white space.”**
5. Understand your **target audience**, their pain points, and how your product fulfills their needs.
6. Develop a simple, distinct **positioning statement** that centers on VALUE.

2. The Market

What is “market research”?

Market research is multilayered, and can best be explained as researching, analyzing, and interpreting information in three main areas:

1. **The market** - we might also call this “the industry.” This is the macro category. Market research here relates to the size, growth, and trends of the category. Ex: Plant-based dairy or plant-based snacks
2. **Products within the market** - this is the next level of specificity, and relates to the products within the broader category that has been defined. Market research here also relates to size, growth, and trends. Ex: Plant-based yogurt or plant-based protein bars
3. **The consumers** - the current and potential customers for the designated products. Market research of the customer relates to understanding the demographics, unmet desires, pain points, spending habits, trends, and location of consumers.

What does market research tell us about positioning?

If your brand is looking to produce a plant-based milk, it is worth knowing that the category is sized at \$1.9B in the United States, and growing at a healthy 6% rate. (If you were in a different master class, and instead were looking at opening up a dairy, you might similarly take into consideration that dairy milk sales are actually falling at 3% each year.) It is important and validating to see a healthy growth rate in your category. Similarly, understanding what consumers are seeking in the market (and potentially not getting) is a vital component in understanding who might be most interested in your products, why they’re interested, and how to best connect with them.



How do you perform effective market research?

To a degree, the answer to this question depends upon your means. If you have funds to spare, it is well worth your while to perform some custom, in-depth market research from an expert concept testing company. This offers clear, actionable insights into what consumers do (and don't) like about your products, what about them resonates, what needs they fulfill, etc. (Speak with us if you're interested in custom market research, and we can help!) Similarly, if you have the funds available, it can be extremely helpful to invest in Nielsen or SPINS data that is specific to your category.

Of course, resources are often limited. There are some great statistics offered by the Plant Based Foods Association and the Good Food Institute, and sometimes a good old fashioned in-depth internet search can yield some helpful snippets. We also encourage you to speak with us about more affordable options that we can provide you with.

3. The Competitive Landscape

What is a “competitive set”?

A competitive set is the group of direct competitors to your brand based upon similarity of product or services, target audiences, etc. Your competitive set consists of those offering alternatives to your products. How you choose to define your competitive set - i.e. more broadly or more narrowly - has many implications for your company.

Imagine a company - call it “ABC” - which makes veggie burgers. ABC has a decision to make as it contemplates its competitive set. It might choose to compete in:

1. The veggie burger market
2. The plant-based meat alternatives market
3. The “healthy” protein market
4. The protein market

The company's decision here has huge implications for the trajectory of the company as a whole. If they choose (1) - the veggie burger market, their competitive set may be Boca, Hilary's, Dr. Praeger's, Impossible, Sunshine burgers, and so on. If they choose (2) - the plant-based meat alternatives market, perhaps the set includes Gardein, Beyond Meat, Yves, Lightlife, the Jackfruit Company, etc. For (3) - the “healthy” protein market, ABC might consider their competitive set the organic, specialty meat items in addition to the plant-based meats. For (4) - the protein market, the



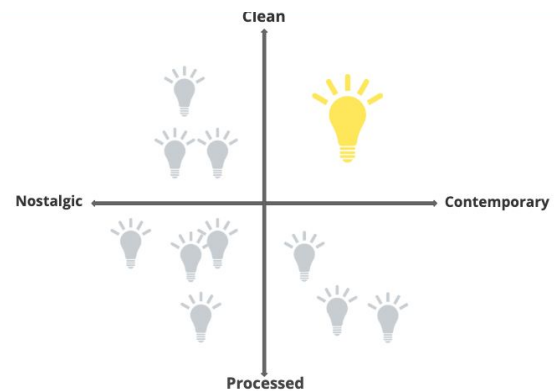
huge, traditional players - Cargill, Tyson, Perdue, JBS - might be included. So, it is well worth giving sufficient thought to your broad goals and plans as a company as you begin to conceptualize your competitive set.

What is a “competitive landscape”?

Once the competitive set is defined, the next step is to perform a competitive landscape. This piece is the analysis of what each of the companies within the competitive set is doing - who they are targeting, what their key messaging is, what they do well, what they do poorly, what differentiates them, and so on. This can also include the competitor’s mission, vision, and core values if you are able to access that information. Asking “what is the competitive set *not doing at all?*” may be the most important insight gained from studying the competitive landscape. This is what we refer to as “white space” - the area in the marketplace that has thus far remained untouched. This space can provide a clear direction for a company with regard to their positioning.

Mapping white space

When we speak about white space, we envision an x and y axis. Suppose you’re mapping key attributes of your brand versus those of your competitors’ - perhaps your branding is very contemporary relative to your competitors' more nostalgic branding. And your ingredients are clean, while most (though not all) are processed. This example might show your white space mapped against those sets of spectrums. After Module 1, you can complete exercise 1.3 where you map your product against your competitor’s products.





4. Target Audience

What is a “target audience”?

Simply put, a target audience is the group of people most likely to be interested in and willing to purchase your product. A target audience is also the group that you, as a brand, aim to reach and sell to. Once reached, your target audience has a higher likelihood of converting to sales, since there is alignment between what they need and/or want and what you are offering.

Doesn't having a target audience mean excluding many other groups?

The concept of identifying a target audience does *not* mean that those who fall outside the determined criteria are “excluded.” Instead, identifying a target audience means that you are able to devote your marketing spend to targeted campaigns that will have *the greatest impact on your sales*. Knowing your target audience means that each dollar you spend on marketing is significantly more efficient and effective at reaching those who might actually buy your product, and therefore is more effective at boosting sales. ***Note:** Even the most incredible, functional, affordable, game-changing products will not be purchased by every consumer. When you know your audience, you won't be attempting to sell real-beef jerky to vegans.

Defining your target audience

Before trying to understand your target audience as a group, you can narrow down the process down to just one single consumer. You will create a target audience profile in exercise 1.2 to help define your customer.

The insights gained from asking questions about your customers are valuable because they paint a multi-faceted picture of *who* your consumer is - not only what they are buying, but also where, when, how often, and why they buy a product.

Check in: You should now have an idea of how your product and company are positioned in the rest of the market landscape, are differentiated from others in the market landscape, and your target audience/consumer.



5. Positioning Statement

The starting point for positioning is the positioning statement. You will work on your positioning statement after the module in Exercise 1.2. The positioning statement is structured as follows:

1. **Target Market** - A very concise demographic & psychographic description of the group that your brand is attempting to resonate with [ex. professional Millennial mothers]
2. **Target Market Need** - The need you're addressing (a.k.a. **the value**) for the specific group of consumers you've defined? [ex. want to feed their families healthy food]
3. **Brand Promise** - What is the most compelling (emotional or rational) benefit to your target customers that your brand can own relative to your competition?
4. **Reason to Believe:** What is the most compelling evidence that your brand delivers on its brand promise?

Examples:

1. Amazon Positioning Statement: For consumers who want to purchase a wide range of products online with quick delivery, Amazon provides a one-stop online shopping site. Amazon sets itself apart from other online retailers with its customer obsession, passion for innovation, and commitment to operational excellence.

2. Nike Positioning Statement: For athletes in need of high-quality, fashionable athletic wear, Nike provides customers with top-performing sports apparel and shoes made of the highest quality materials. Its products are the most advanced in the athletic apparel industry because of Nike's commitment to innovation and investment in the latest technologies.

A positioning statement should be:

- ✓ Simple & readily understandable
- ✓ Unique
- ✓ Memorable
- ✓ Aligned with the brand's core values
- ✓ Clear on the value the brand offers

✓ Differentiated

A positioning statement is an **internal asset for internal use only**. It is not something to be shared externally, but the core of the brand.



Additional Resources

- [Creating a Positioning Statement? Position the Problem, Not the Product](#) | Harvard Extension School
- [How to Create Strong Brand Positioning in Your Market](#) | The Cult Branding Company
- [How great leaders inspire action](#) | TEDTalk | Simon Sinek
- Forbes - [Steps to Identify Your Target Market](#)
- **Book:** [22 Immutable Laws of Marketing by Al Ries and Jack Trout](#)