

Step One: The company as a whole

Company Name

Has the name been chosen? Is it trademarked? Is the corresponding domain name available? Could the name be confused with competitors' similar sounding company names? Does the name describe the business purpose of the company? If the name is long, can it be nicely abbreviated? With so much research and business being conducted on the Internet, have you thought about how your current or expected company name would fare in alphabetized lists?

Company Tag Line

Do you need one? For instance, if your company name is abstract, you may need a tag line to clarify your business proposition. Does it capture the essence of your company? Does it set you apart? (leader is a word to stay away from – it is overused, and unless you truly are a household name, not very credible.) Get a trade magazine from your industry and start collecting advertising pages of products or companies with tag lines that resonate with you.

Company Logo

Have you selected a logo? If not, be prepared to be specific about the design directions: do you prefer modern or classic styles, bold or subtle colors, do you prefer a logo solely based on the company name or do you also want a graphic image? Which font styles do you like? Which colors appeal to you to represent your business? Is your chosen color already used by a very well-known company? Can your logo be confused with that of another company?

Corporate Design Guidelines

If you completed all the above steps, it only remains to establish usage guidelines for all of these components. This will be especially crucial as you increase your visibility through partnerships, public relations etc. You do want to retain the authority to decide how your company name and logo will be represented by third parties. We have an extensive library of corporate design guidelines that can be adapted to any situations.

Step Two: The business you're in

Business Purpose

What business are you in? Can you describe it succinctly and clearly? What problems are you solving? Who are your customers? These are a set of generic questions that launch the most critical part of the strategic positioning definition.

The success of the exercise at this stage is very much dependent on the readiness level of the business owner / management. For a start-up, it is essential to have either completed, or be well underway to complete the business plan.

Market Focus

In order to strategically formulate your best positioning messages, it is vital to segment your prospects into different target markets. This will allow you to identify the best opportunities within that market, and will help you prioritize the problems facing that market that you can best solve. The clearer you are in this, the greater the chances to craft positioning messages that will resonate with your intended customers. This step should be repeated for each market you want

to target. And, as much as you know you want to solve customer problems, customers do not like to be told they have problems. They will however easily identify with a problem statement that addresses their industry as a whole.

Business Attributes

This is where what possibly could be the most crucial step of the brainstorming session happens. We'd like you to think about your business as a person, and describe that person using adjectives. Is that person exciting, calm, competent, low-key, knowledgeable, consistent etc., you get the picture. We'll help stimulate your creativity during this process. Don't hold back, just throw these adjectives out one after the other. This leads to a character profile that captures not only the essence of your company, but also very much incorporates your own values and ethics.

Step Three: The positioning

Strategy

We need to understand the strategy for the business by *specific time frame*. As your business evolves, grows or changes in any form, it is critical to adapt the strategy accordingly. Key messages can only be crafted to the current strategy, and the process should incorporate at least two reviews per year to ensure that consistency and clarity is maintained. If for instance your next fiscal year strategy is to increase penetration in your existing customer base, the messages that will support that strategy are going to be very different from the following year's strategy, if it is to expand into new markets.

Customer Focus

Once we've defined the business purpose, the market focus and the business attributes, it is time to think about real customers. Name them. Which companies are you going after? If you are in the consumer market, what are the characteristics of that customer? What is your customer's purchasing process? This should again have been clearly outlined in your business plan. The answer to this question will go a long way to craft the messages that will appeal to your customers as a whole.

How about partners? If your business plan includes a strong partnership component, you need to identify them as well, but in a separate category, as the messages to reach them will be greatly different from the messages to your customers.

How about the press and analysts? This is yet another group that requires a very different approach, as they will be looking for messages that will help them attract readers and customers. Your job will be to make it easy for them to achieve their goals.

Positioning Objectives

"Positioning is not what you do to a product. Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect." Al Ries and Jack Trout, Advertising Age, 1972. Here we will brainstorm positioning objectives specific to your situation. These might start with "Demonstrate leadership in....Capture the attention of.... Establish mindshare with..... to Showcase products at.....".

Primary Messages and Additional Speaking Points

We recommend not only to establish primary messages that address the above steps, and to share them with anyone in the company that interacts with customers, prospects and other external sources, but also to draft

additional speaking points. This will go a long way to ensure consistency of messages across your entire company, and will give your sales force the right tools to address a specific customer situation.

Final Comments

These brainstorming sessions tend to be very intensive, and very rewarding. Often times, business leaders are tempted to skip that process – to go run their business! But we have found that devoting a few hours over the course of two-three weeks will be amply rewarded by clarity of corporate goals, and foremost, consistency across your entire company.

Turbuilder Marketing can help you figure out how to best position your company in the market place – simply call us at 508-366-9212 or email brigitte@turbuildermarketing.com to get a jump start on these critical business-generating strategies.