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Donald Cooper, MBA, HoF

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An article by Donald Cooper, MBA...

Do you have a clear ‘value’ message...and are you using it consistently to grow your business?

Whatever business you’re in, wherever you compete, your marketplace is crowded with too many competitors and your target customers are confused and cynical. That’s just the way it is. To stand out, you need a clear and compelling value positioning statement that communicates what you do in a way that clearly differentiates you from your competitors, creates confidence, makes you “famous” and creates a buying decision.

If the name of your business or your product does that all by itself, like Speedy Muffler King or plant fertilizer Miracle Grow, so much the better. But, if your company or product name is not also a clear Brand promise, you’ll want a positioning statement that “grabs” your target customers. Then, you’ll want to use that positioning statement in everything you do to reinforce it, promote your value and grow your business.

Wal-Mart recently changed their positioning statement from “Low prices...always low prices!” to “Save money. Live better.” This is both simple and brilliant as it reinforces the key benefit that shopping at Wal-Mart will help us to “live better”, a concept which appeals to folks in every income bracket. Who doesn’t want to live better?

The new positioning statement is on all their stores, in all of their ads, on their business cards and on every page of their website. They’re making it work for them everywhere. Let’s look at some other businesses that have positioning statements and see how well they’re using them.

Enterprise Car Rental has a defining slogan, “**We’ll pick you up**” that they’ve used since day one to differentiate themselves from their competitors. They still use it in their ads...but go to the front page of their website and it’s nowhere to be found.

TD Canada Trust, one of Canada’s best-run banks, has as their Brand icon a green leather easy chair & a slogan, “**Banking can be this comfortable.**”...but go to their website and, hey, no chair and no slogan. Even worse, go to any of their branches and, once again, no green chair. Their Brand Icon exists only in their ads and nowhere else.

Debt management company, A. Farber & Partners is currently running a radio ad campaign in the Toronto area in which they position themselves with the very clever statement, “**Respectful debt solutions.**” If you’re in financial trouble, wouldn’t you like to be helped by someone who will treat you respectfully? Of course! This is brilliant positioning. But go to their website and if you look really, really hard you’ll find the words, “**Respectful solutions to debt problems.**” hidden way down at the bottom. “Respectful debt solutions” is shorter and punchier and should be featured right at the top of the page. It’s what can make them “famous”.



Even worse, I couldn't find Mr. Farber mentioned anywhere on the website. In the listing of company Partners, there's no picture or mention of poor old Mr. Farber. He may be dead, but at least they should say so and tell us what a wonderful caring person he was and how committed the Partners are to his belief in respect and professionalism.

I love the ads for Boundless High School, a wonderful accredited outdoors training facility near Ottawa, Canada. They offer 2-week transformational wilderness experiences for kids in grades 9 to 12 and their slogan, or positioning statement, ***"Send us your kid and we'll send you back a new one."*** is absolutely brilliant. But go to their website, and you won't find it. What a waste of one of the most incredible slogans ever created.

Now, let's look at a few companies that "get it". The Daniels Corporation builds homes in the Toronto area. Their wonderful, heartfelt positioning statement, ***"Love where you live™"*** is registered to protect it, it appears everywhere their name appears and it makes an emotional connection with potential homebuyers. Smart marketing and Brand building.



Furthermore, they live and communicate the "Love where you live™" theme in everything they do. Here's a quote from the section of their website, *"We love building homes. All kinds of them, big or small, rent or own."* The word "love" gets repeated and gets reinforced. Don't we all want to be in love with where we live? And don't we want to buy a home that was built with love? Of course we do.

Mr. Handyman, an international franchise, has a clear self-explanatory name and then creates confidence with the simple positioning, ***"On time, done right."*** More great marketing! Their ads end with that slogan and every page of their website includes it. But, their trucks show a different positioning statement which is, "Professional, safe, reliable." In my opinion, they'd be better off to pick one, stick with it and keep plugging it.



So, what about your business? Do you have a clear and compelling positioning statement? If not, should you? If you have one, does it clearly differentiate you, create confidence, "grab" your target customers and build your Brand? Then, do you use it everywhere? Are you focused and consistent in its use...or are you scattered? If so, what will you do to fix it?

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