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No Guts, No Glory—The 4 Things Executives Must Do to Develop a Strong Positioning Strategy for Their Company

Be prepared to follow these challenging, yet effective rules if your company is serious about developing a powerful positioning strategy that resonates with prospects.

Most executives recognize that developing a strong positioning statement, as well as the accompanying communications strategy to support it, is vital to any organization's business development efforts. After all, defining what key attributes and positive associations you want to come to mind when your prospect thinks about your company and its offerings makes it easier for them to grasp what you do, thus drawing them into the pipeline. That's exactly what effective positioning is designed to accomplish.

Yet despite its importance, some companies are averse to undertaking this effort, often shoving it aside. Why? Because positioning is *difficult*. It takes guts on the part of management.

Here are four tough, yet effective principles you must follow to build a strong positioning platform for your organization:

#1 Simplify

In positioning, less is always more. And in today's oversaturated, immediate gratification society, simplicity is a highly valued commodity. People crave it, decision makers demand it. If you want to be heard and understood above the din of your competitors, your positioning must be crystal clear. Sure, your technology is complex—even more reason your communications shouldn't be. You have to make it easy for prospects to quickly grasp what you do, why your solution is different and why they should care about doing business with you.

#2 Sacrifice

Great positioning requires great sacrifice. No company can be all things to all people. This is especially true for entrepreneurial businesses with limited resources. In order to achieve broader appeal, you have to focus. This may mean giving up a target market or offering two products instead of nine (hear the teeth gnashing yet?). It is often better to "own" a niche as a specialist than to be awash in a sea of competitors scrambling for the same deals. While it may seem counterintuitive, following this principle almost invariably leads to increased revenue.

#3 Be Believable

Let's see...You are an entrepreneurial software firm with four employees and five early adopter clients (only 3 of which are installed), but you are claiming to be the industry leader? That's simply not believable as your positioning strategy. Great goal, poor positioning. Here's the smell test: if the gap between where you are now (your "position") and your positioning strategy (how you *want* to be perceived) is too large, it's going to be too much of a mental leap for prospects to make. Instead, play to your current strengths.

#4 Have Patience

Sticking to a well thought out positioning strategy and the marketing programs to support and nurture it requires perseverance. Positioning cannot be treated as the next business fad. Those companies with an enduring positioning strategy may update the programs that carry the message to market, but they preserve the message. Good positioning takes time and consistency to "stick." Have the patience and foresight to recognize that.

If your firm has the grit and determination to follow these simple, yet challenging principles, count yourself among those rare organizations that will be able to successfully communicate with audiences in a way that is compelling and meaningful. By doing so, you will increase your ability to drive prospects into your sales pipeline.

The Inline Advisor is written by Lori Siragusa, President of Inline Marketing Partners.

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