

The Skill of Positioning

Creating and Establishing Your “Unique Comparative Advantage”

It has been said, and you’ve probably heard it, that people treat you the way you condition, or teach them to treat you. If you display a certain lack of confidence, others are likely to treat you as if you have little confidence, and will tend not to ask your opinions on certain, perhaps important decisions.

On the other hand, if you radiate confidence and high self esteem, others will have a tendency to look at you for leadership and direction.

The same holds true in business. It’s really all a matter of positioning – how you portray yourself and how that portrayal comes across to your customer. Reality doesn’t count. It’s not what *is*, that matters. It’s what is *perceived in the mind of the customer* that makes the difference. And that is where positioning comes into play.

Dominating Your Selected Market

Positioning is a matter of niche-manship. That is, finding a certain niche or place in your market that you want to occupy, then convincing your customers and prospective customers that you’re the only one to do business with in that niche.

In reality, you may not truly be there as I mentioned, but if your market believes you’re there, then you are.

For instance, when Avis, the car rental company, first started using the, “*We’re Number Two; We Try Harder,*” advertising slogan, they weren’t number two at all. They were in 16th place.

But in a very short time, they shot up to the number two spot, and held it for a very long time. Their market believed they were number two, and that they did, indeed, try harder, and it paid off for them.

Now, think about some companies that you might be familiar with that not only occupy, but dominate certain niches or positions in their markets.

In the world of computers, for example, most people would probably automatically think of IBM first.

Copiers, would most likely cause you to think of Xerox. Instant photography? There are a number of them on the market today, but Polaroid might be the first to come into most people’s minds.

How about the fast food industry? McDonald’s gets a big percentage of votes every time.

Market Position May Not Mean “Best”

While these companies occupy certain niches or positions in most people’s minds, they may or may not occupy those niches in real life.

One thing is for certain though, those companies didn’t just “fall into” their respective niches. They occupy them because of carefully designed and executed strategies.

Each of those companies just discussed, is considered to be a leader in their respective industries, but none of them really have an exclusive product that can’t be had, or at least duplicated in pretty close measure from another company.

For instance, there are many IBM compatible computers in the marketplace that are faster and more versatile than those sold by IBM, and they can be purchased for less money. The same holds true with copy machines, instant photo cameras, and fast foods.

Perception Vs Reality

The difference isn’t so much in the product itself, as it is in the buying public’s *perception* of what that product, or what the company that sells that product, will do for the customer.

The same thing holds true with the products and services you sell, the company itself, and you, yourself. It’s not the actual business or products you sell, that are so different, as much as it is what your buying public believes you can provide beyond and in addition to the products or services you sell.

Because there’s really very little actual difference in the products or services provided by one company over another, the net result is that the buying public can purchase the same, or a similar product, for the same, or a similar price, from a variety of companies that offer those products.

So, if the reason that people buy from you or your company isn’t in the product or its price, what is it?

It has to be in *their perception of the value of what you have to offer*. And you create their perception of you and what you have to offer, by the niche or position you establish and occupy in their minds.

The Most Common Niche

Most businesses have already, very effectively, established their niche or position in their market, and have become well-trenched in that niche.

In fact, for most businesses, it is very difficult to dislodge them from their chosen position, or for them to move into other, non-related market niches.

Unfortunately for them (but fortunately for you), the most common niche they occupy is one of mediocrity and just doing enough to get by. To prove it, just take a look around your

local community. How many businesses are there in your marketing area? And out of those, how many really stand out as exceptional performers, and do it on a consistent basis?

Once in a while you may run across a business that rises above the rest, and is known throughout the community, but by and large, most companies that operate similar types of businesses are doing what everybody before them has done, and are getting the same results. They are in a comfort zone, and either don't want to, or don't know how to break out.

Earl Nightingale once wrote that,

"It's easier and more comfortable for a person to adjust themselves to the hardships of a poor living than it is to adjust themselves to the hardships of making a better one. To prove it, just think of all the things you are willing to go without in order to avoid doing the things you don't like to do."

That quote doesn't only apply to people, it also applies to businesses. Business owners are often in a comfort zone and find it very difficult to either recognize that they are there, or if they do recognize it, very difficult to break out of that zone and begin doing things differently.

There is an important point here. And that is:

**"If you keep on doing what you've always done,
you'll keep on getting what you've always got."**

If you're happy with that, great. If not, you simply need to change what you are doing, and you will get new and different results. It's that simple and that predictable. By establishing a new and unique perception of you and what you have to offer, as well as the position you occupy in your customer's minds, you can expect to realize some new and unique rewards for your efforts. Rewards that the majority of businesses will never realize because they aren't willing to take the necessary steps to break out of their comfort zones.

Creating Your Unique Position

In order for you to establish your unique competitive position, there is some information you will need to develop regarding:

- Your Market,
- Your Competition,
- Your Personal Situation, and
- Your Driving Force.

Gathering this information will require some time and a little effort on your part, but the benefits you will realize as a result will be well worth your efforts.

The Market Analysis

Step one in creating, developing, and establishing a unique position in the minds of your customers, is to do a Market Analysis.

There are some critical questions you need definite answers to regarding the market you wish to work in. And with a little effort, you can put this information together in a relatively short time.

Without knowing and understanding your market and its buying behavior, you will have a tough time trying to establish yourself as different, unique, and the one person your customers and prospects should call on if they want the job done right, and in a professional manner.

The following questions are designed to help you identify the needs and concerns of your market:

1. What do they need or want?

People who live in different areas of town may have different needs or requirements. The same is true of businesses, if that is your market. Some people or business owners buy certain types of products or services because they're required to, or to comply with the law. Other people buy them because of other benefits they may provide.

Your market is going to help determine how you posture or position yourself, and what specific niche you occupy.

2. Why do they want it?

Once you have discovered what your customers and prospects want, determine why they want it. Two customers may both want the same product, but one customer may want the product for completely different reasons than the other customer.

Knowing specifically why a person wants a certain type of product will not only help you sell it, but keep it sold, as well. Later, when buyer's remorse sets in and your customer wants to cancel the deal or return the product, you can remind them why they purchased it, the benefits it provides and what it was to be used for.

Knowing their reasons for wanting a particular product will also help guide you in the types of products or services you recommend.

Often there may be hidden reasons why people buy certain things. They may tell you one thing, but in reality, mean something completely different. Determining what they want as well as why they want it, can not only help you make a sale, but also has the possibility of opening other doors for additional products, services and referrals.

3. When do they need it?

Determining urgency is of critical importance. If you try to sell something too far in advance of the actual “need date,” you run the risk of educating your prospect, only to have them end up shopping your competition for better prices, and the chance that you’ve done all the work and your competition reaps the rewards.

4. What have your prospects purchased or used in the past?

The best predictor of the future is the performance of the past. Determining how your market has performed in the past will give you an open window into what they’re likely to do in the future.

When you know what your prospects and customers have purchased previously, as well as why they bought those products or services, you’ll have a tremendous advantage over those businesses who are only selling to the immediate concerns of their customers.

5. What other choices do they have?

It’s important to make sure you know what other choices your prospects have, and how they might respond to what you offer. Are there other companies that are currently selling to your market and effectively occupying the niche you desire? If so, how and why does your market respond to them?

6. Are there specific requirements of your market?

If your business caters to consumers in a retirement community, for instance, your customers may require something different than families with young children.

People of retirement age may be more money conscious, but may be very willing to look at investment opportunities or “gifting” opportunities for their children or grandchildren.

Affluent areas may have more high-value personal possessions, computers, swimming pools, antique cars, and so on, that could require a certain expertise that someone located in a different area might not encounter.

Businesses that sell to other businesses may find it more difficult or perhaps easier to sell to start-ups than to better established businesses, depending on their product mix or offering. Or, it may be just the opposite, with established businesses more willing or able to buy than the start-ups.

7. How will your product or service benefit the people in your market the most?

You need to know how to tailor the products and services you sell to the needs of your customers, so they will not only want to buy them, and buy from you, but that they will benefit the most from what you offer.

8. Who makes the final buying decision?

In some families or cultures, the husband is clearly in control of decisions regarding finances or expenditures. And in other families or areas, customs or situations dictate that the wife handles the purse strings.

The same is true in business. Some business owners want strict control over purchases and expenditures, and others are comfortable in delegating these responsibilities.

Knowing who the decision makers are will make it easier for you to prepare and deliver more effective presentations.

9. What is your customer's budget for the products and services you offer?

No sense trying to sell something that your market can't afford. It is always best to find out in advance. Too many business owners can relate stories of how they (or their salespeople) have been on an appointment with a well laid out, professionally prepared and printed presentation, only to discover that the particular product or service they were proposing was too costly for their prospect's budget.

After a few of those embarrassing (and costly) moments it won't take long to begin asking the right questions to determine what your prospects can afford so you can prepare the right proposal for their needs.

10. What will motivate your customers and prospects to take advantage of the products or services you have to offer?

Are there certain "hot spots," or "buttons" you can push that will cause your prospects and customers to take positive action towards buying from you?

If you deal in a consumer market, are your prospects and customers proud people, self-reliant, keep-up-with-the-Jones' types? Or are they security oriented, or family-comes-first people? Perhaps they are retired and live on a fixed income and saving money is a real motivation to them.

If you deal in a business to business environment it will serve both you and your customers well to identify the motives that will move them to take the desired action to acquire the products or participate in the services that you offer that will bring them the benefits that will help their businesses operate more effectively, more efficiently, and more profitably.

11. What might keep them from going ahead?

There are a number of reasons that an individual person or a business owner won't buy, including economic, personal, seasonal, customs, or some impending event, such as a possible layoff, or shut-down of a local plant or factory where a number of people might work.

Try to identify any reasons that might be common to your market, as a whole.

12. How can you most effectively communicate with your market?

Certain areas lend themselves to particular kinds of advertising and promotions. Some, rather affluent markets might have a large percentage of homes that have unlisted phone numbers, and a telemarketing campaign might not be feasible.

A door-to-door approach might work better, if you are so inclined. Door hangers might work well in one area, but not in another.

Retirement areas are great for building a business by referrals. Older people generally have quite a bit of time on their hands, and they read every piece of mail they get. And once you sell one, and give them the attention they want and need, they will use that time to tell others about you.

Competitive Analysis

The next thing to do before trying to establish your unique position is to do a Competitive Analysis. That is, to determine just who your competition is, what they're doing, how well they are doing it, and how effective they are at it.

One of the best methods of developing information on your competition is by simply calling them on the telephone. You can ask for quotes on the products or services they offer, answers to general and more specific product questions, and even request promotional or advertising materials to be sent to you or one of your office staff.

With a little effort, you can get to know almost as much about your competition, and their products, prices, and operations, as you know about your own business. This information can be filed by product and/or company and up-dated regularly. This puts you in a very enviable position when you are in front of a customer and they mention that they are considering getting prices or buying from someone else.

Since you already know what they are going to find out, you can save them a lot of work and effort by pulling out the file you have compiled, and letting them know what they can expect from the competition.

You will be more professional in their eyes, because you care enough to have done your homework, and your prospect will appreciate the time savings and will be more apt to reward you with their business. Remember the Law of Reciprocity.

Personal Analysis

A "Personal Analysis," will help you determine what your Unique Factor is. Your Unique Factor is that certain something only you possess. It is the one thing that can't be duplicated by anyone else.

You should take the time to carefully analyze all your strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, talents and abilities. Think back about skills you had at one time but have put on the shelf for now, and are not using. They are still skills you can pull out and dust off, if necessary.

Consider some of your most significant accomplishments. What have you done in your life, both in, and out of your current or previous business or occupation that have been worthy of note? What about those accomplishments? Why did you attempt them, and what

was the outcome, positive, or negative? Are there some experiences you have had that are transferable to your current business, that make you unique or different?

Now, think about why your customers buy from you. What makes them drive across town, and pass up several businesses, perhaps businesses that sell the same (or nearly the same) products or services as you do, just to do business with you? What is so special about you?

Next, think about why people should buy from you. What do you have to offer that no one else can?

Now focus on what niche or unique position in your profession you now occupy. Can you identify it clearly and specifically? Do you specialize in a certain line of products or services? Perhaps you sell to the owners of very large homes, or maybe small businesses. Or, maybe you are known for the service you give, or the personal attention.

If you can't identify a niche, is there one you could effectively develop or occupy with a certain amount of work or effort?

How would you like to be able to describe yourself in terms of your Unique Factor? How would you like others to describe you?

Now, what steps do you need to take to achieve that niche or position, if you don't already have one, or "plus" it, if you do?

Driving Force

Next, determine what your "Driving Force" is. What makes you do what you do? Do you come to work everyday just for the money? Or do you earnestly strive to serve your customers' needs, and let the money take care of itself?

Whatever your driving force is, as well as how strong it is, will help push, or drive you towards what you do. Whatever your Unique Factor is, will position you in the minds of your customers, to help them want what it is you do.

So your driving force, then, becomes your motivation, and your Unique Factor becomes your competitive advantage.

These two areas are vital to your success. While they might change, from time to time, they will, none the less, continue to help you dominate your market.

Your Competitive Advantage

As was mentioned earlier, it is known that in the business world, you will never again, be able to maintain a competitive advantage in your marketplace for very long, by the prices, the products or the services you offer. There will always be someone who can provide the same or a similar product, or perform the same or similar service, faster, better, quicker, cheaper, more completely, or with added incentives.

There will always be someone who will be willing to make promises they may or may not intend to keep, in order to get the business from you.

But with a strong Unique Factor, you virtually eliminate the competition. Because you are now providing something the customer can't get anywhere else, or from anyone else. You are strongly positioned in the mind of your customers as someone different and unique, who stands apart from all your competition.

Since the products and services you offer are probably not much different than those offered by other competing companies, you should consider spending less time discussing the actual products or services, and spending more time on the value you can be to your customers, in helping them solve their individual problems.

In an earlier chapter, we discussed the fact that only about 35 percent of a customer's reasons for buying a certain product are for the actual product, itself. The other 65 percent of their reasons for buying, are for what is provided beyond the product.

That is where you and where your uniqueness comes in.

Retaining Accountability

With all the competition today, it's not enough to just sell a product or a service.

If you really want to be successful on a larger scale, you must position yourself as an expert – someone who has something no one else can offer, and then communicate with your market to make sure they know about it.

Then, after analyzing your prospect's needs, you make your recommendations as to how you can help them solve their problems.

Then you *retain accountability* for those recommendations. That is, you stand by your recommendations. If you are going to represent yourself as a professional problem solver or counselor, and suggest that a customer or prospect take your advice that what you have recommended to him or her is right for their particular situation, then you should be willing to back it up, and assume full accountability and responsibility for your recommendations.

That's what real professionals do, and by doing that you've just set yourself apart from the rest of the crowd. You're no longer selling *products*; you're providing the solutions to certain problems that your customers and prospects have – solutions that you are willing to retain accountability for.

That, then, becomes your Unique Comparative Advantage. Your UCA. This is what you emphasize, rather than the products you sell. And this is what will differentiate you from the competition. And in fact, what separates and removes you from the competition, and places you in a unique position all your own.

**If You're an Executive, Expert, Coach, Consultant,
or the Owner of a Business in a Competitive Market
- Someone Who Wants to Take the Lead, Stand Out, and
Get Noticed, Then You've Come to the Right Place...**

I'll help you discover what makes you unique, craft your marketing message & marketing plan, create a recognizable brand, and help you design and produce all the tools and

products you'll need to position yourself as an authority in your market and dramatically boost your income.

Most businesses, consultants, coaches, and professionals rely only on advertising to build their business. The problem is, all advertising is just that - advertising. It is the *advertiser* talking about *himself*. Prospects are skeptical or suspicious. BUT - when other people talk about, recommend, or endorse your products or services, an incredibly powerful thing happens... you become the obvious choice.

If you've been to all the seminars, read all the books, listened to the audio programs and know what you need to do but just can't seem to get it done, done right, or soon enough then I have your solution.

I can help you:

- Establish yourself as an Authority
- Build your Credibility
- Position yourself within your market
- Stand out - and get noticed.
- Get clients and prospects coming to *you*
- *Double or triple your current income.*

If you're ready to get started, or want to find out more, just give me a call at: **(435) 467-2187** or send me an email and we'll schedule a time to talk. You can tell me where you want to be, and what you want to accomplish, and I'll tell you what it will take to make it happen - and if I'm the right person to help you.

Also, a downloadable version of my eBook, "***Finding Your Own Uniqueness***" is yours free, as a thank-you for visiting my website. It shows you how to discover what it is that makes you unique and sets you apart from anyone else. It is 27 pages plus 6 worksheets.

[Click here](#) to learn more about it and download.

I look forward to talking to you.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dane W. Shakespear', with a long, sweeping underline.

Dane W. Shakespear
Marketing & Publicity Strategist
www.daneshakespear.com