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## The Power of Brand Repositioning: A Four-Phased Process

by Gregory Pollack



Published on January 29, 2008 [Comments](#) 1

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So many brands and companies are constantly reinvigorating their businesses and positioning them for growth. There is a constant need to innovate, reinvigorate, update, recalibrate, or just simply fend off the competition in an effort to better explain "why buy me."

To move forward, companies and brands need to first take a look at their current brand positioning. But for a moment, even a brief moment, it would make sense to go back to the brand drawing board to answer the question, Just what is brand positioning anyway?

Brand positioning creates a specific place in the market for your brand and product offerings. It reaches a certain type of consumer or customer and delivers benefits that meet the needs of several key target groups and users.

The actual approach of a company or brand's positioning in the marketplace depends on how it communicates the benefits and product attributes to consumers and users. As a result, the brand positioning of a company and/or product seeks to further distance itself from competitors based on a host of items, but most notably five key issues: Price, Quality, Product Attributes, Distribution, and Usage Occasions

As companies and brands today look to brand repositioning, they first have to ask what the reasons are for repositioning the brand. They can include declining sales, loss of consumer/user base, stagnant product benefits, or the competition, including such issues as increased technology and new features.

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What's next after identifying the reasons for pursuing a brand repositioning?

A four-phased brand repositioning approach will help guide you through the process and allow your company and brand group to best calibrate based on timing, budget, and resources to get the job done.

Phase I. Determining the Current Status of the Brand

The purpose of this phase is to understand the company and brand, including exploring key issues, opportunities, and challenges. The reason is to obtain a clear snapshot of the company and brand in present terms, which will offer a clear

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insight to opportunity identification and assessment.

Understanding the brand includes reviewing the complete history of the company and brand, including its current brand positioning, the original positioning, how it has evolved, and most important: what the company and brand stands for today. Key questions to ask and answer:

- What differentiates our company and brand from the competition?
- What are the equity drivers of the company and brand?
- What are the historical ways to communicate the company and brand equity to consumers and customers alike?

As we dive deeper into the current status of the company and brand, we also need to get a clear understanding of the company and brand, including a review of the current brand customer. Key questions to ask and answer:

- Who is the current target customer base?
- What is his/her profile?
- What are the reasons for purchase?
- What are the buying patterns?
- What are the user patterns?

Once we better understand the current brand customer, we can then review the company and brand sales history, including revenue, growth, and industry and category market share. It is also important to look at the specific core product and/or service offerings.

This review should include the current product strategy and mix, with specific emphasis on understanding the current SKU product strategy in the case of a company, specifically a manufacturer. If your business is in the service-offering or professional consulting arena, this would include a review of the total service offerings and programs offered. Key question to ask and answer: Do all products live under the same brand strategy or are there different product strategies that fall under one brand strategy? This can include determining whether your business is a category leader, or a player as a secondary brand.

This phase should also include looking at production capabilities and constraints, distribution strength and strategy, top key accounts, key selling points, along with a careful review of all sales and marketing promotional materials.

Last, but of equal importance, is to review the competitive landscape, including the number of competitors, keys to their success, and what they are doing right as well as determining some of their key challenges. Key questions/areas to look into are market share, industry strength, customer profiles, and consumer buying trends; include a review of the industry and category trends and forecasts.

#### Phase II. What Does the Brand Stand for Today?

We now need to understand how consumers feel about your company and brand today. In consumer packaged goods (CPG), this might mean talking to kids and moms, as well as other user groups, to determine what your company and brand stand for.

Obtaining a clear insight to the way consumers feel and relate to your company and brand will provide the starting point of the repositioning work. First we need to gain parameters, including...

- Identifying key growth areas for your brand, marketplace and industry opportunities
- Looking at your brand positioning in the competitive landscape
- Measuring the current equity of your brand
- Determining opportunity areas of where to take the equity of your brand.

Clear objectives include the following:

- Understanding current consumer perceptions and needs of your brand
- Determining how far to move your brand without alienating current customers and loyalty base
- Identifying how to position your brand to attract new users and their ultimately becoming loyal purchasers/users/buyers

The first step on the course of brand repositioning is to hold "brand equity groups," which will directly ask consumers and users of your brand key questions, including "Why select our brand?" and "What was the key decision making element?" Beyond these general questions, the brand equity groups will also seek to understand their reasons for purchase, determine their hierarchy of needs and what your brand currently delivers, understand usage occasions and patters, and showcase brand equity dimensions. In addition, one of the most important functions of running brand equity groups is to identify similar affinity groups, lifestyle, and behavior patterns among your consumers and loyal customers that can translate into better understanding your customer profiles.

From a logistical perspective, the brand equity groups could take place over the course of two days with about four groups total. To ensure good program read and reach, it would be best to run these groups in approximately three to four cities.

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Through this process you will identify needs, both unmet and met, in category and industry, determine the delights and dissatisfiers of your brand, as well as determine current brand-equity drivers of your brand. In a sense, the process will provide you with a current measure of the value of your brand to consumers or end-users.

This will not only provide a snapshot of today and where your brand sits but also an immediate look into where you can take your brand tomorrow.

The goal of the brand equity groups is to identify opportunities, including looking at growth areas for your brand as well as unmet consumer and user needs.

Once we can find the current equity value of the brand, the next step would be to run "brand positioning workshops."

### Phase III. Developing the Brand Positioning Platforms

Now that we have a good and solid understanding of where the company, business, and brand sit within the overall marketplace, as well as a good understanding of its value to consumers, the next step is to find out how far to grow, expand, and stretch the brand.

The purpose of Phase III is to utilize all marketing research, brand, industry, and consumer information to reposition what your brand should and can stand for. The key reasoning is that determining effective and successful brand repositioning will help retain existing customers and acquire new ones. As we look to begin brand repositioning, we need to keep in mind that it needs to capture "How we want consumers to think and feel about your brand."

This process will develop and create several key brand positioning platforms to showcase how far your brand can move to retain existing customers and acquire new ones. It will answer these questions:

- Who do we want our brand to be?
- What benefits will it deliver to the consumer?
- How will we promote the brand product purchase, collection, and user patterns?

The most important guidelines to success will be to ensure that all aspects of where to take your brand are carefully reviewed to ensure that the core values and essence of your brand are maintained. With this in mind, as a general guideline, there are four key ingredients as part of the brand repositioning work. The new Brand Positioning will be...

- Ownable—Unique to the brand
- Leverageable—Important and relevant to the target
- Sustainable—Relevant other categories in the future
- Extendable—Appropriate for partnership marketing and other marketing programs

There are two key components to the brand positioning workshops—strategic and creative—and they should involve two sessions. The first session would be "Developing The Brand Vision," which includes where the brand is and what it should become tomorrow, as well as mapping out where to take the brand in the short and long term.

The second session would be "Stretching The Brand." Essentially, you would take everything you have heard and learned, and review consumer insights with the goal of taking your brand where it should go. This process should include exercises to stretch your brand into the future.

For instance, you might develop a different marketing positioning platforms that can take key dimensions as far as possible. For a toy or consumer brand that might include such parameters as fun, mystery, anticipation, taste, usage occasions. However, this process should really center on what consumers think you should explore.

As a result, the brand positioning workshop should determine four to five key benefits and potential platforms that are agreed upon by the entire group. Then it is up to every member of the group to refine and validate each positioning platform. These workshops review key marketing research information and consumer attitudes and, most important, the current purchase patterns. The overall purpose is to determine which areas and brand positioning platforms to pursue.

The final output of the brand positioning workshop is "Developing the Brand Vision," "Developing the Brand Drivers for Future Positioning," and "Developing Brand Alternatives."

Now that we have developed new brand positioning platforms, we need to test it and validate it with consumers as well as key customers. The ultimate purpose and goal is to refine the brand positioning platforms.

So, we go back to the focus group format in which we would again talk to key consumers and customers with the purpose of checking back with them to validate the new brand positioning. This essentially allows for refinement of the new brand positioning. It will also help determine just how far your brand can be stretched. It is also essential to develop visual concept boards to position your brand and its products in a new light in front of consumers and customers.

The final output of this phase includes a concise and clear understanding of consumer views on key new brand positioning platforms as well as the final brand positioning. This will provide and deliver an overview of consumer attitudes toward the new brand positioning, with a focus on retaining existing brand customers and acquiring new users.

It will also showcase the final new brand positioning statement, explaining in detail the reasoning behind the new brand positioning.

### Phase IV. Refining the Brand Positioning and Management Presentation

Now we have a great start, a new thinking, and (most important) the beginnings of the new brand positioning for your company, business, and brand. The purpose now is to review and refine the new brand positioning and communicate to all function departments in order to align efforts.

The main reason is that it is important that everyone on the brand team and all function areas understand, buy in, and



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support the new brand positioning. Essentially, this will become the umbrella strategy for the brand group dictating marketing programs and tactics.

As part of this final and very important phase in brand repositioning, we need to refine the positioning. This includes finalizing the brand by incorporating all feedback from consumers, customers, vendors and agencies, as well as the brand group, to ensure achievable positioning vs. aspirational positioning.

The ultimate final stage results in building a strong team to carry the message to senior management and leaders within your company. This includes developing and presenting to the brand group and senior management the new brand positioning.

Once the entire senior management and leadership buy in and endorse the new brand positioning, there is still much work to be done. The main focus now shifts from research and development to solidifying, marketing, and communication.

As such, we need to create a "brand identity manual" that provides a clear direction on the new brand positioning. Most important, it describes how the new brand positioning will deliver growth for the business. The "Brand Identity Manual" showcases industry and competitive trends and consumer attitudes that resulted in the new brand positioning.

Its purpose would be to communicate all marketing research and findings, along with the reasoning for the new brand positioning, as well as deliver clear and concise brand messaging for all subsequent brand function areas, support groups, agencies, etc. The result is that the "Brand Identity Manual" ensures unifying and agreed-upon brand positioning for the entire company and support groups and functions.

The final output for Phase IV is the production of a "Brandscape." This includes a visual imagery and musical score combined to bring the new brand positioning to life. It can be shared with the entire brand group and brand support groups to communicate new brand positioning and is a core way of communicating the new brand positioning to anyone in the company or anyone connected to the brand group.

The reasoning is that the "Brandscape" could be utilized by all future brand departments as "Brand Communication Guidelines," including packaging, marketing, sales, communications, etc. The overall purpose is to ensure consistent communication of the brand equity across any medium and by any partner.



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by **y.s.s.patro** Wed Mar 11, 2009 via web

very informative about brand re positioning, add some of the indian examples

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