

Putting the Customer at the Heart of your Brand (Positioning)



Given the increasingly competitive markets that most pharma and healthcare brands play, it's no surprise that companies invest heavily in defining how they can truly differentiate their brand and stand out in the crowded markets in which most of them play.

We believe effective brand positioning is one, if not the, most important tools brand teams can use to develop the enduring value essential to the future success of their brands, and ultimately, of their businesses.

In recent years there have been hugely positive moves across the pharma industry to become more patient and customer centric, to focus on uncovering insights into customer and patient needs and experiences. Nevertheless, in the work we do as research and brand strategy specialists, partnering with pharma and healthcare teams on some of their most strategically important brands, we rarely see that trend being pulled through into the process that pharma companies use to develop the, all-important, positionings for their brands.



In most pharma companies the positioning development process tends to include many of the same components – lots of testing of TPPs and written, often quite similar, positioning statements which often tend to focus on product features rather

than customer benefits and research approaches that do little to help brand teams really understand the underlying customer problem that their brand could solve.

So how should it be done differently to make it more fit for purpose in this era of killer competition?

For us, it has to start with the customer. If brand positioning is about defining the *unique place you want your brand to own in the mind of your customers*, you must start by getting into the mind of

your customer – whether that be a healthcare professional, patient or even a caregiver. This means high quality, insightful market research. Not the sort that simply “tests” positioning statements or TPPs, but thoughtful research that delivers real richness and provides a deep understanding of not just *what* customers do now or might do in the future but also the *why* they do it or might do it.

Whilst this research must be the critical foundation, we believe truly effective positioning is developed by when research specialists work as part of a single integrated team alongside strategic and commercially-orientated specialists who have what is best for the brand and business at the front and centre of their thinking.

We call this process the *integrated brand positioning journey* – an iterative, multi-stage process that invariably incorporates one or more rounds of market research, and multiple cross functional team workshops.

The approach generally covers three distinct, sequential phases:

Stage 1: Defining the opportunity space

This covers the key strategic question “*where will you play*”. Ensuring brand teams crystallise and make a choice about the customer unmet need space that they aim to target.

Stage 2: Brand positioning platform development

This stage then hones and focuses, to define how the brand will win in the agreed opportunity space, developing an output that we call the *brand positioning platform*. Much more than the traditional positioning statement, this framework is designed to address many of the inadequacies of the traditional positioning statement, providing a foundation for more emotive, customer centric brand building.

Stage 3: Brand positioning engagement & activation

A final distinct stage focused on bringing to life and embedding the brand positioning platform for the key internal and external teams that will need to execute against it.

By the end of this tried and trusted approach, our aim is to ensure everyone is aligned behind and fully understands all aspects of the brand positioning platform – the insight upon which it is built, the strategic choices the brand team have made and the critical components that need to be adhered to in order to successfully bring the brand to life for customers. Then, and only then, will the brand be primed to deliver the powerful and enduring differentiation it needs to survive in this era of killer competition.



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