

The Ultimate Guide To:



# POSITIONING **YOUR PRODUCT** AND CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE

# The ultimate guide to positioning your product and crafting your message.

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# The ultimate guide to positioning your product and crafting your message.

Product positioning and messaging are two of the most important aspects of any marketing strategy. When done correctly, these foundational components help you stand out from the competition, connect with your target audience, and set the stage for all your marketing efforts.

This step-by-step guide will discuss the fundamentals of crafting a compelling positioning and messaging strategy. By the end, you will understand your buyers and their desired outcomes, identify your unique ability to solve their problems and how to communicate those differentiators.

Whether you are a seasoned marketer or just getting started, this guide provides tips and templates to create a successful positioning and messaging strategy.

## 1. Set the Stage

The first thing you need to do is define what you are promoting. Are you promoting your brand, a multi-faceted solution, or a specific product? This detail might seem obvious, but it is crucial because everything else hinges on it.

Going a step further, ask yourself:

**What are we actually selling?** Said another way, what does this product accomplish for the buyer? Try describing your product in a short phrase, such as “A [thing] that [target market] uses to [do what].” You may come up with several short phrases depending on how many markets you serve or how many functions your product performs.

When you can clearly understand and articulate what you're selling it is more likely to speak to the hearts and minds of those most likely to benefit from what you offer.

*Note: For simplicity's sake, we use the word 'product' throughout this guide but these techniques also apply to services.*



## 2. Understanding Your Customer

Understanding the market for your product is akin to having a GPS for your strategy. It's essential for pinpointing who your buyer is and what challenges they're trying to solve, allowing you to tailor your language, messaging, and features to their specific pain points and desires.

Consider who is buying your products today and the additional buyers you want to reach. By digging into the details of who your customer is, you can then determine the best ways to get in front of them and craft the most compelling messages to spark their interest.

Ideal customer profiles (ICP) and buyer personas are powerful tools that help you analyze your audience and figure out what motivates them.

### Ideal Customer Profiles

An ideal customer profile (ICP) is a detailed description of the type of company or group that would get the most value out of your product or service. The purpose of your ICP is to prioritize your marketing efforts on accounts and market segments that are most likely to convert into customers and bring the highest return on investment.

To find your ICP, analyze your existing customers, talk to sales, perform a competitive analysis, conduct market research, hypothesize, test, refine, and iterate.

A well-defined ICP usually includes info like industry, company size, organizational structure, revenue, location, and global reach, but may also include other specific characteristics, such as technology stack.



Additionally, it's critical to understand the typical purchasing journey for different types of customers. Are your typical customers agile and quick to make decisions? Or are multiple approvals required before a purchasing decision can be finalized? These factors may help you further refine your targeted buyer and the way you approach them.

## Buyer Personas

A buyer persona is a semi-fictional representation of an individual within your target audience based on market research and actual data about your existing customers. Personas help you tailor your messaging and approach to resonate with people using your products and making purchasing decisions.

Multiple personas are often developed to represent various stakeholders involved in a B2B buying process.

### These may include:

- **End Users**
- **Influencers**
- **Decision Makers**
- **Procurement Specialists**



Attributes of a buyer persona start with their position in a company, identifying their role in the decision-making process, pain points, and goals. You want to determine what motivates the purchase and any hesitations or objections they may have.

In a B2B buyer persona, there's less focus on demographics, but age and education level may still be relevant. For example, you may learn some older buyers have a preference for email or in-person communication while younger buyers prefer messaging apps. Demographics may also point to their most trusted sources for information, what publications they read, and which conferences they attend.

## Before and After Situations

It's been said that every purchase is made by a buyer wanting a transition from one state to another. At its core, a purchase is about solving a problem or fulfilling a desire to move someone closer to a desired outcome. Telling the story of these before and after transitions is central completing the profile of a buyer persona.

The "before" state of a persona is where your potential customer starts: the problems they're facing, the pain points, the dissatisfaction. It's a snapshot of their life or situation without your product. Your product serves as the answer to solving this pain or fulfilling that need for the buyer.

The "after" state is where you show them what their situation will look like when they decide to buy your product: their problem is solved, their life is improved, and they are generally happier or less frustrated because they've used your product. The key to great marketing is to clearly show the transformation your product can bring about, overcoming objections or doubts, and making your offer irresistible to the target audience. Here's a simplified example of the before and after states for the buyer of a cybersecurity product:



**Before State**

**Persona:** "CISO Carol," a Chief Information Security Officer at a mid-sized company

**Pain Points:** Constant security threats, expensive manual monitoring, compliance worries

**Emotions:** Anxious, stressed, always on alert

**Limiting Belief/Doubt:** Thinks effective cybersecurity requires a large team and a bigger budget than she currently has to spend.

**After State**

**Persona:** Still "CISO Carol"

**Solutions:** Automated threat detection, compliance reports at a click, cost-efficient

**Emotions:** Relieved, protected, confident

**New Belief:** Realizes there is an automated cybersecurity product that can be used by a small team without being incredibly expensive.

The messaging for the product would aim to move Carol from her "before" to her "after" state, emphasizing the benefits you offer the persona. Case studies and testimonials from other CISOs can serve as proof points to make the vision of the transformation seem achievable to your audience.

## 3. Analyze the Competition

Your competitors are other companies or products that offer alternative solutions to your target audience. They're vying for the same customer attention and dollars. An honest competitive analysis will help you identify your next steps forward.

### Who Are Your Competitors

Knowing your competitors helps you understand your market, refine your messaging, and position your product more effectively. Competitors can be:

- **Direct Competitors:** They offer a product or service that could directly substitute yours. Think Coke versus Pepsi.
- **Indirect Competitors:** They solve the same problem but in a different way, like taxis versus buses for city transportation.
- **Emerging Competitors:** New players with a more simplified offer who may not be a threat to your product now, but could be in the future.
- **Lack of Action or Status Quo:** This invisible competitor is usually overlooked. Sometimes buyers need to be persuaded that a change or product is needed. A customer's indecision can be a barrier to your sales and marketing efforts and should be identified.



### What Is the Competition Doing

Evaluate each of your competitors. Categorize them based on their market share, product quality, features, pricing, and marketing strategies. Identify gaps and shortcomings in the products that are already on the market.

- **Study your competitors' websites, social channels, press releases, and marketing campaigns.**
- **Read their marketing materials and case studies; identify their sales tactics, keywords they use, and which verticals they are targeting.**
- **Tune into the messages being pushed in the market to figure out where you do and don't fit in.**
- **Search for customer perceptions, online reviews, and social media comments about your competitors.** The auto-suggest results provided by Google and Bing can be a goldmine of insights into problems that customers may be experiencing with competitors and competing approaches. AnswerThePublic.com is also a good tool for gaining insights into questions potential customers may have about their challenges.
- **Perform a SWOT analysis for your top competitors.** Articulating the competition's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats can help you benchmark your business and guide your strategy.

The main goal of this exercise is to determine how your competitors have positioned themselves. When you understand where and how your competitors are positioned, you can do a better job of positioning your company and products in a way that's differentiated.

## 4. Identify Your Competitive Advantage

After you have dug into the details of your customer and the competition, you can start to develop the story about how your product is different and why a potential buyer should consider it. Bringing unique value to the market is critical to stand out.

### List Features and Benefits

Your product features and benefits are two sides of the same coin but serve different purposes in marketing and sales.

**Features are factual statements about a product — what it is, what it does, its dimensions, important capabilities, ingredients, etc. Think of features as the "specs" on the back of a product box.**



**Example of Features:** A laptop with a 16-inch Retina display, 1TB SSD, and 16GB RAM.

Once you list your product's features, translate each feature into the benefits they provide to the customer. A benefit is the positive outcome or advantage that the customer receives from that feature. These answer the "So what?" question about each feature. Benefits are value-driven, explaining how those features make the user's life better, easier, or more enjoyable.



**Example of Benefits:** The 16-inch Retina display provides stunning visuals for an immersive entertainment experience. The 1TB SSD allows you to store all your important files without worrying about space, and the 16GB RAM ensures you can multitask smoothly.



## Pinpoint Product Differentiators

Product differentiation is distinguishing a product or service from others in the market to make it more appealing to a particular target audience. Differentiation can be achieved through things like unique features, superior quality, lower cost, or even strong branding.

You can pinpoint your product differentiators by comparing your competitive analysis, and what you know about your customers, with your features and benefits list. Highlight the areas where your product excels versus alternatives or areas where your product is unique.

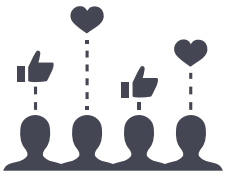
**In addition to looking at your features and benefits, look for differentiation in categories such as these:**

- **Innovation:** Offering something new or improved that no other company or product offers.
- **Quality:** Providing a superior product that outlasts or outperforms competitors.
- **Customer Experience:** Making every interaction with a company or product delightful.
- **Total Cost of Ownership:** Improving the costs a customer experiences to get started, maintain, and support the product.
- **Niche Targeting:** Focusing on serving a specific audience's needs better than anyone else.
- **Price Positioning:** Offering better value for the price or establishing a premium brand justified by extra benefits.
- **Storytelling:** Crafting a compelling narrative about a company's origins, mission, or customer success stories.
- **Personalization:** Offering customizable options so customers feel like the product is uniquely theirs.
- **Convenience:** Making a product easier to buy, learn, and use than competitors.
- **Identity-focused:** Alignment to things like eco-conscious, LGBTQ, or gaming cultures can serve to differentiate products based on the identity and values of your buyers.

It is important to note that differentiators must be aligned to things that your target buyer cares about.

## Proof Points

Proof points are evidence of your product's benefits and differentiators. You can't just say that your product is better. You need to show your audience that your product is superior with testimonials, statistics, or success stories.



**Social Proof** Most consumers trust online reviews as much as they trust personal recommendations from family and friends.

Online reviews, testimonials, social media mentions, and user-generated content provide valuable social proof and are today's "word-of-mouth" marketing.

While it is important to have these mentions appearing on sites you control, it can appear more credible when these mentions appear on sites you don't control.



**Case Studies** Case studies are a great way to share real-life examples of how your product solved a customer's problem.

A well-written case study highlights the customer's pain points, your solution, the results, and the benefits. Include data showcasing how a customer's situation improved with the use of your product.

Compelling customer testimonials connect with your audience on a personal level, getting them to see themselves in the story while getting a better understanding of how you deliver value.



**Statistics** A data-driven audience wants to know "how much" better your product is, and it's critical to show quantifiable justification for buying your product. Product performance data, customer survey results, and market statistics are examples of quantitative proof that can trigger emotions and convince your audience to take action now.

Performance data is important for showcasing your product's capabilities, offering concrete proof of its strengths, and differentiating it from competitors. Customer survey results are equally crucial, providing insights into customer perceptions and guiding improvements. Demonstrating expertise in your customers' challenges through relevant market data establishes you as an industry thought leader.

Moreover, the use of objective evidence, such as independent research or industry awards, is crucial for adding credibility to your claims.

**Differentiators and proof points make it easier for customers to remember and choose your product over competitors, allowing you to set higher prices as the perceived value increases.**

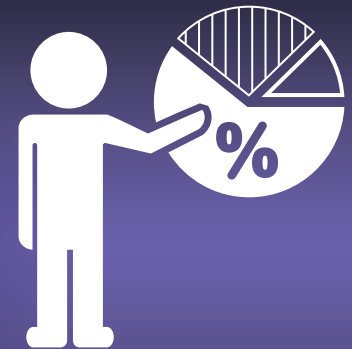
## 5. Define Your Product Positioning Strategy

Up to this point, we have been collecting information about your product, customers, and competitors. Now, it's time to pull it all together and make some decisions about how to position your product.

Positioning captures the strategic intent of the business or product and how it will compete in a market segment. Effective positioning lays the groundwork for your overarching narrative and strategy. Product positioning outlines your product's unique place in the market and in your customer's minds.

### Define Market Segments

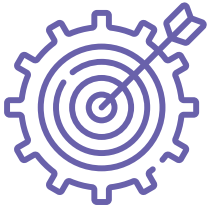
Your product might be perfect for everyone, but you must pinpoint which markets have the most opportunity for you. By identifying which customers are best suited for your product, coupled with their ability to buy, you can spend your time and effort targeting the audience most likely to become customers.



Start with the universe of potential buyers and create clusters or groups with similar characteristics. You may segment by industries, budgets, or cohorts of people with the same problem to solve. Finding these clusters of potential audiences is critical for developing your positioning and message.

### Here are some ways you may want to break down segmentation:

- **Business Size:** Selling into the enterprise is much different than selling to entrepreneurs. Consider your product's attributes and if it is suited better for a particular size of business.
- **Vertical or Industry:** Your product may be best suited for a specific vertical because they have a greater need or it solves their issues more uniquely. You can start by focusing on this segment and then work to expand.
- **Geographies:** Regional buyer needs, regulations, and even geo-specific delivery concerns may impact the most ideal geographies for a product.
- **Sensibilities:** You may be able to create segments by buyer preferences. Some customers are more inclined to “do things themselves” and others want products delivered with services. Consider these types of differences and target buyers who best suit how your product is built and how it is used.



## Target Audience Perceptions

After identifying your target segments, consider what specific task or purpose you want them to associate with your product.

Look back at your personas, features, benefits, and differentiators for ideas. Interview current customers to see how they perceive your brand and products.

Your customers may highlight elements of your product or experience that you have not considered before. Any job you are solving for your customers, especially jobs that aren't covered by competitors (or are covered weakly) should be considered heavily when creating your positioning.

Whether it's cutting-edge technology, the scope of services, high quality, or low cost, it's all about creating a distinct product identity that positions your product as the best choice relative to alternatives. Don't get tunnel vision around the things you may personally think are important but that the buyer may not care about. Listen to your research. Consider how it stacks up against the competition and what resonates with your target audience.

The perceptions you are aiming to drive will also influence your pricing, but be careful. Although many people believe "you get what you pay for," they mostly want to perceive your product as having a higher value and believe a positive outcome is realistically achievable before they will actually pay more for your product over the competition. In marketing, perception of what the customer is paying for is just as important as delivering it after the purchase.

## Positioning Statements

Positioning statements help you connect your market segments with the perceptions you want to drive. For each segment you are targeting, create a positioning statement that articulates what they can achieve with your product. Positioning statements are internal facing and help everyone align to how your product is to be perceived in the market.



Overall, you want your positioning statement to achieve the following:

- Describes who your target consumer is, **ex. Automotive manufacturers**
- Describes what your product is, **ex. Analytics software**
- Explains why you do what you do, **ex. Reduce scrap**
- Explains how you fill a need in a different way than your competitors, **ex. Using AI generated insights to spot anomalies earlier**

Example positioning statement:

**We revolutionize automotive manufacturing with our AI-powered analytics software, cutting scrap rates through early anomaly detection.**

## 6. Craft Your Message

Now it's time to create the messages that will convince your buyers to make a purchase. What are the big ideas you want your target audience to know about your product and the problems it solves? Why is your product the best choice to solve their challenge? That's the foundation for your product messaging. Product messaging is external facing and articulates what your product stands for and how it helps customers achieve their goals.

In the following sections, we go through the basics of creating your value proposition, product description, and elevator pitch. These components serve as the cornerstone for everything a prospect or customer will see regarding your product. Product messaging may vary based on the marketing channel, but regardless of channel, you want to have a consistent voice, from web pages and blog posts to press releases and even job listings.

### Articulate Your Value Proposition

Your product's value proposition grabs attention and persuades people to take the next step, whether signing up to learn more or making a purchase.

It's a clear, concise statement explaining your product or service's unique benefits. It should resonate quickly with customers by highlighting what your product does and the most compelling reasons why they should choose this product over others in the market.

Similar to a positioning statement but designed to be public facing, your value proposition should tell prospects who you are, who you solve problems for, and why they should choose you. Value propositions are short and act as a North Star for the more detailed product descriptions and messaging work you will unpack later.

Examples:

#### **Salesforce:**

"Bring companies and customers together. Unify marketing, sales, service, commerce, and IT on the world's #1 CRM."

#### **CrowdStrike:**

"We stop breaches with our cloud-native endpoint security platform so our customers can go and change the world."

#### **HubSpot:**

"HubSpot is an all-in-one growth platform that helps scaling companies grow better."

Each value proposition succinctly captures what makes the brand unique, who it's for, and why potential customers should care. They're honed to resonate with their specific audience's needs and challenges.

## Product Description

Your product description is the detailed information that tells customers what the product is, the details of what it does, and how it delivers value.

**It's not just a list of features; it's a crafted message that aligns with your brand and value proposition, speaking directly to your target market's needs and desires. It shows how your product uniquely solves a problem or offers a benefit that others can't.**

Creating a compelling product description involves a mix of understanding your audience, highlighting key features, and weaving in the benefits. Here's a step-by-step guide:

- 1. Know Your Audience:** What are your audience's needs, pain points, and desires? Speak their language.
- 2. Header or Title:** Start with a catchy header that grabs attention and gives a simple idea of what the product is about.
- 3. 100 / 50 / 25-word Descriptions:** Start with a short paragraph of no more than 100 words that gives an overview of what the product is and who it's for. Cut this down to more simplified 50 and 25-word descriptions for use across multiple channels and formats.
- 4. Features and Benefits:** List the key features and benefits that resonate with your targeted segment and buyer personas.
- 5. Technical Details:** Include specs, compatibility, or other relevant technical info, but keep this concise.
- 6. Social Proof:** Include testimonials, reviews, or ratings to bolster the credibility of your product.

When writing your descriptions, keep the tone consistent with your brand voice. If you're selling to engineers, the tone may be less fluffy and more direct. A playful tone might be more appropriate for a fun, youthful B2C product.

Investing time and effort into crafting compelling and accurate product descriptions will directly impact perception, sales, customer satisfaction, and brand reputation.



## Elevator Pitch

In addition to a written description, it is often useful to have a condensed, clear description of your product designed for verbal delivery. An elevator pitch is generally around 1 to 2 minutes (or 125 - 250 written words). Your goal is to grab someone's attention and make them interested enough to want to learn more. It's useful for networking events, sales calls, or any time you need to make a quick, impactful impression.

Because this is a verbal format, it will differ slightly from the 100-word written description. You should write out multiple lengths and vocalize them as you are creating them. This exercise will help you discover words and phrasing that feel unnatural to say, but work in a written form. Writing it out helps you think through the key points you want to make, building in your value proposition and a call to action.

An engaging and informative elevator pitch that exudes enthusiasm will spark your audience's interest so they ask for more information.

## Characteristics of Great Messaging

With so many websites, ads, and emails from companies with solutions to promote, product messaging is constantly being put in front of us. The challenge in developing great messaging is making it stand out from the crowd. By clearly defining your target audiences, strategically developing your positioning, and crafting complete product descriptions with proof points, you will have everything you need to begin creating content that stands out.

### Let's look at some characteristics of great copywriting that stem from putting in the work to develop solid product messaging beforehand.

**Clarity:** Your message should be easy to understand, avoiding jargon and complexities. The goal is for anyone who encounters your message to grasp it immediately. When people understand you, they're more likely to trust you.

**Relevance:** Your message should relate directly to your target audience's needs or pain points. Irrelevant info will lose people. Tailor your message to answer the audience's core question: "What's in it for me?"

**Value:** Beyond being relevant, your message should also communicate the unique benefits that your product or service brings. Make the value so clear that the audience can immediately know if your product is (or isn't) for them. Getting an audience to understand you are not right for them is valuable to both parties and is a sign that you have been clear in your messaging.

**Differentiation:** Given the plethora of choices out there, your message needs to clearly state why you're the best option. Make it clear why you are still the better choice for them.

**Brand Perception:** People are emotional creatures and often make decisions based on how something makes them feel. Your messaging should evoke the desired emotions that align with your brand, whether that's excitement, trust, or a sense of belonging.

Emotional triggers can be found by understanding the deepest wants, needs, and fears, and then focusing on the transformation the buyer will experience after using your product. By "entering the conversation already taking place in the customer's mind," you can tailor your message directly to your audience and connect with them on both a rational and emotional level.

Effective messaging ensures that your audience not only hears you but listens and engages. Crafting a message that's clear, relevant, valuable, differentiated, and emotionally resonant guarantees that you'll stand out in a sea of noise and stick in their minds.

## 7. Enlist Help from Experts

You are busy running your team, managing projects, and meeting deadlines. Meanwhile, your marketing and product management teams are spread thin, juggling priorities and unable to focus on the big picture. It's time to enlist help from experts.



LJA is a full-service product marketing agency. We help technology companies reap the benefits of an experienced, fully-staffed technical marketing team without the effort of searching for and hiring the required talent.

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