

**Play to win!**

**MARKETING®  
DEPARTMENT**

# **POSITIONING: THE WINNING ZONE**

**Owning a unique position in the  
mind of the market and customer.**

# Play to win!

A marketer (a good one anyway) will strive to find a company's positioning. Smart branders know that before developing a logo or a tagline or starting a marketing plan, a critical first step is to discover the brand's positioning. Let's explore how the best consultants, leaders and marketers get there!

## What is brand positioning anyway?

Brand positioning is a process that leads to visibility and generates the *right* leads. It ensures that the market understands exactly what you do better than anyone, and makes your brand compelling.

The most effective positioning promotes what a company does best to a group of perfect customers who want and value exactly what you do. That's when you're playing in what we call the **Winning Zone**.

As you can see from the diagram, if you don't focus on the right thing, you could land in a different, less positive zone.

Lets examine what it takes to enter and stay in the **Winning Zone**.



# Play to win!

Especially in B2B markets, brands have to cut through a lot of clutter in order to stand out and be valued. Let's look at one example.

If you've ever researched CNC companies, you know there are about 100,000 machine shops in America. Of course 99,000 of them all claim to have "the best quality, pricing and turnaround times." Sometimes they claim to specialize in specific markets. That gets them a bit closer to the the Winning Zone, but even that strategy isn't nearly specific enough.

Manufacturers often do a great job of talking about what they do (CNC) and how they do it (equipment list). But a company's positioning often lies in WHY they do what they do.

A few years ago, Digitrace LTD., a great CNC company near Grand Rapids, Michigan, came to us looking to expand from automotive commodity work to more profitable endeavors. Through a discovery process, we learned that they're obsessed with precision — it's their passion! They thrive on projects that require tight tolerances and love to innovate better material processes.

As it turned out, their team had such a strong precision mindset, their approach wasn't conducive to price-driven automotive commodity work. But there's another sector that needs and values that level of detail and specialty materials: aerospace!

# Play to win!

We immediately pivoted to repositioning this 50-year-old automotive “machine shop” so they could capture a corner of the aerospace market that needs large CNC parts (think fuselages and rockets) and values a manufacturing team that understands lightweight materials and tight tolerances. DigiTrace quickly shifted and is now a real player in the aerospace sector.

## Positioning in the Winning Zone.

In my experience, even though every company has a brand, it’s a concept that many people don’t quite understand. I define a “brand” simply as a company’s reputation. Despite this absolutely critical aspect of creating and sustaining a business, most brands just sort of evolve or happen with little or no intention.

When a company takes control of their positioning and brand, it puts them in the Winning Zone. This positions you to win more business in several ways:

**Increase RFQ win rates with the right customers.** A key to winning new business is to decrease the number of RFQs you respond to and the cost it takes to deliver those quotes.

So many companies have busy “sales” teams whose win/lose RFQ ratio is a pretty tepid 1:8; we usually see “win” rates between 15% and 35%. With some exceptions, we push clients to aim for 70-75% win rates. Nearly 100% of the time, immediately after repositioning and reenergizing their brands, we see companies scaling toward that percentage. Really smart positioning will attract customers that fit your business model and value what you can do for them (which is always more than price and turnaround times).

# Play to win!

**Increase customer loyalty and repeat long-term revenue.** *Birds of a feather flock together.* Have you ever noticed that your best customers don't feel like customers? Instead, they feel like an extension of your team. Great positioning will allow you to attract companies with similar values, culture and goals. This will lead to more meaningful, longer-term relationships.

**Raise your prices and margins.** Customers and buyers are willing to pay more knowing that they aligned with a partner who “gets them”. In fact, the more focused and specific your positioning is, the more value you offer. The idea is to appeal more strongly to fewer people.. You will eventually see the difference in your margins.

Here's an example. Let's say the DoD is searching for an electronics supplier to design and manufacture new lightweight 3D cameras. Soldiers must be able to mount the cameras to their helmets and the equipment must be tough enough to survive combat. I researched two companies (who will remain anonymous) that engineer, prototype and manufacture very similar products for similar customers. Here's the first thing on their websites:

Competitor 1: “Delivering solutions through innovation and collaboration”

Competitor 2: “Lightweight and mountable vision electronics for land and weapons systems”

Competitor 2 offers a perfect example of a company that's operating in the Winning Zone. As I researched Competitor 2 further, I found that their positioning is reflected throughout their marketing, from LinkedIn content to branding, product spec sheets, etc. — a winning strategy!

# Play to win!

**Drive your branding and marketing with confidence.** Positioning will drive your branding, messaging, identity, marketing strategies, LinkedIn content, trade show messaging, sales processes and more. In fact, great positioning will make brand strategies, sales strategies and marketing plans obvious.

Ultimately, great positioning will help you target more specific channels and give your marketing and sales teams strategy and focus.

**Focus your business development efforts to gain better results.** Is your sales team wasting time with leads that will likely generate nothing? Great positioning will keep them focused, selling the right product **to the right type of customers.**

**Create credibility.** In the example above, Competitor 2 commands much more credibility and comes across as far more confident. Brands with positioning in the Winning Zone are like the captains of the football team (or hockey where I live!) They're attractive, their identity is strong, they're leaders and they exude capability and confidence. The girls (customers) want them, and the other boys (competitors) want to be them.

# Play to win!

## Where to start? Develop your positioning statement.

Please don't overthink this exercise. It's not a marketing message, but it will provide your branding, marketing and sales efforts with direction. There are examples on the next page. Good luck with yours and once again – don't overthink it!

**For (target market – be as specific as possible)  
(brand name) is the (category) that delivers  
(competitive advantage – point of difference) so  
they can (user benefit) because (reason to believe).**



**Call us direct to understand how we can help  
you find the winning zone! (906) 483 - 2000**

**Play to win!**



**We believe that markets are cluttered, and  
businesses need clear positioning, unique strategies  
and revenue growth.**

**For aerospace, DoD and automotive suppliers,  
Marketing Department, Inc. is a nationally  
recognized marketing firm that has built a strong  
reputation for helping clients quickly and  
strategically experience growth.**



**Play to win!**



**For individuals who want the best personal computer and mobile devices, Apple is the leader of the technology industry that delivers the most innovative products so they can enjoy seamless experiences across all devices and be empowered with breakthrough services because Apple takes an innovative approach to business and best practices, and considers the impact that our products have on people and the planet.**

**Play to win!**

*Coca-Cola*

**For individuals who are looking for high-quality beverages, Coca-Cola offers a wide range of the most refreshing options – each delivers a positive experience for customers when they enjoy a Coca-Cola brand drink. Coca-Cola products inspire happiness, and make a positive difference in customers' lives, and the brand is intensely focused on the needs of consumers and customers.**