

# Guide To Positioning

Tools and strategies to navigate positioning effectively.



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This simple guide is designed to equip you with tools and strategies to navigate positioning effectively. Whether you're new to the concept or seeking to refine your existing strategy, this will serve as your compass in the journey toward a strong positioning and a powerful brand identity.

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# Introduction

## Going beyond the UVP

**You may already have a classic UVP?**  
*(Unique Value Proposition)*

**If not, it really won't hurt to create one. You can complete this template, as a start point.**

You may notice that completing some of these requires knowledge, insights and a creative leap. Read the rest of our guide to discover more about answering the right questions.

 **TOTEM TIP**  
Complete the UVP based on what you know now, and review it again at the end of your positioning discovery process.

<b>FOR</b>	(THE TARGET CUSTOMER)
<b>WHO</b>	(SPECIFIC NEEDS, REQUIREMENTS, DEMANDS, BUYING CRITERIA)
<b>WE PROVIDE</b>	(SOLUTION NAME/DESCRIPTION)
<b>THAT</b>	(GIVES SPECIFIC BUSINESS BENEFITS/VALUE TO CLIENTS)
<b>UNLIKE</b>	(THE COMPETITION)
<b>WHO</b>	(PROVIDE SOLUTION, FEATURES, FUNCTIONS, BENEFITS)
<b>OUR COMPANY</b>	(MORE/BETTER APPROACH, SOLUTION, FUNCTIONS, BENEFITS)
<b>THAT</b>	(HOW IT ADDS REAL VALUE, OFFERS A BETTER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE)

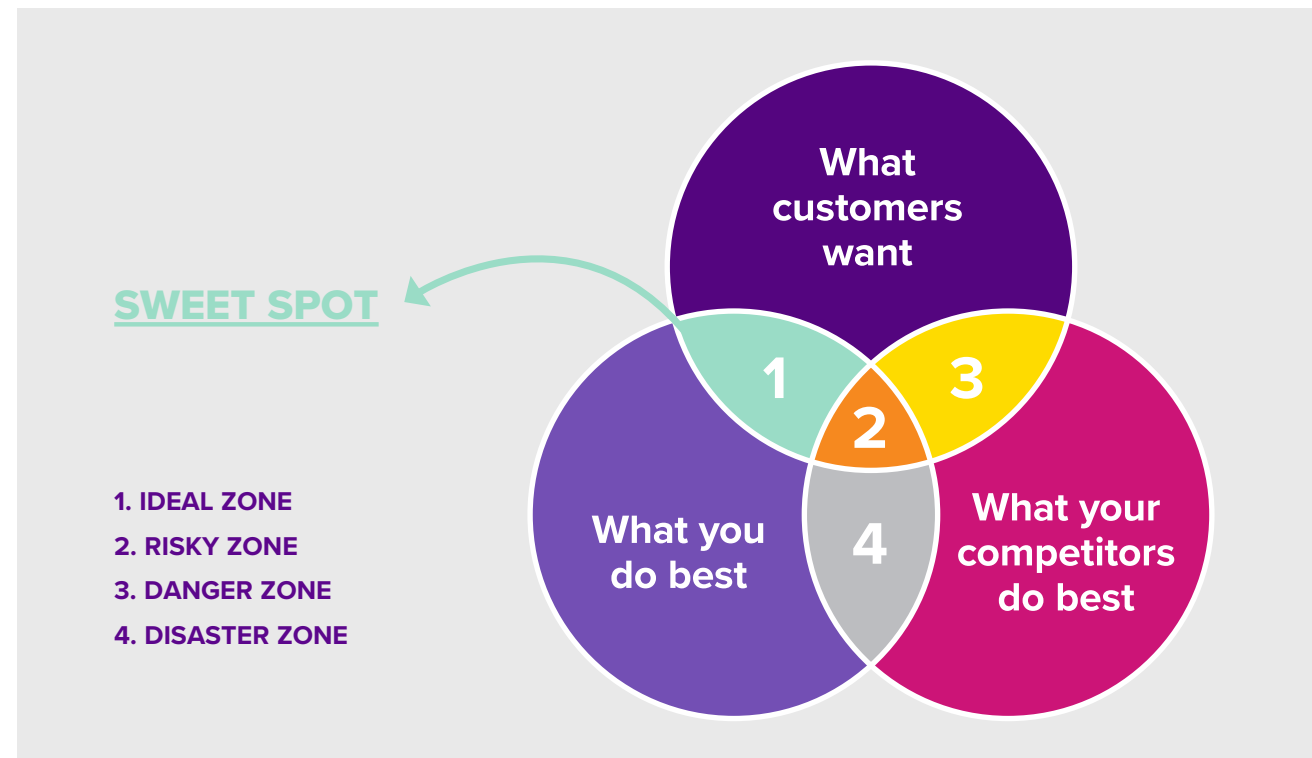
## What a positioning is not!

**Your positioning is not your messaging, a tagline, a slogan or campaign idea. But it should and can be the platform all of these launch from.**

Positioning is not branding, but it is a key part of your brand – and your branding can be a key component in bringing your position to the fore.

Positioning is not your value proposition, but it can be a distillation of that – married with where we sit in the market, in the minds of our customer.

At TOTEM we define a strong positioning as the **'sweet spot'**. It's where what you do best intersects with what customers want. Of course, this requires understanding what's unique to you, and uncovering what your customers are motivated by.



## Steps to success

**When you have done the work and prepared your positioning, you are ready to get to work on your messaging and tagline, to be sure your positioning lands with the right people.**

Here is a typical positioning journey, unsurprisingly, we put the customer first and then try to see the marketplace and our touchpoints through the customer's eyes.

STEPS	ACTIVITIES	PURPOSE	KEY STEPS
<b>1. Customer Research</b>	Conduct surveys, interviews, analyse data, analyse customer journeys	Understand customer needs, preferences	Define research objectives, gather data, uncover customer insights
<b>2. Competitor Analysis</b>	Evaluate competitors' positioning, strengths, weaknesses	Identify gaps, opportunities	Identify key competitors, Analyse strategies
<b>3. Define Value Proposition</b>	Articulate unique value proposition based on research	Differentiate product/service	Highlight benefits, solve pain points
<b>4. Positioning Statement</b>	Craft a clear, concise statement communicating value	Guide marketing and messaging	Identify target audience, define uniqueness
<b>5. Implementation Strategy</b>	Plan integration of positioning across all business aspects	Ensure consistency in brand communication	Develop action plan, align teams. Develop tagline, key messaging pillars

# Steps to uncover your positioning

# 1. To understand what customers need? Listen to them.

## A lot of positioning focuses on competitors. Understandable, right?

We like to start with customers. Asking real customers what they value, and the alternatives they would choose from, is much more useful than creating 'personas' on paper.

### Key intelligence you must have:

- If they didn't have you (product/service), what would they do? (Tip: Don't ask a leading question, they answer might surprise you)
- What's the best thing about what you offer, from their point of view? And why? Is it timesaving, cost saving, risk reducing, etc.

It's important to ask open questions (not just looking for the expected answers!). And. Actively listen, your customers time is precious, and this gold dust can transform your business. Talk to as many happy customers as you can, you're looking for patterns and recurring themes.

There are many forms of customer research, and all will have value. But we find talking to happy customers\* does more to get you to what you need for positioning.

### \* Why speak to 'happy' customers?

You're not troubleshooting or trying to broaden your appeal to everyone. You are trying to identify what makes you truly useful, even indispensable' to some customers. The goal is to identify your unique strengths and then see where you can best take those to market.

“

You can spend your time on stage pleasing the heckler in the back, or you can devote it to the audience that came to hear you perform.

Seth Godin

”



### TOTEM TIP

If you can, get someone skilled outside of your organisation to do the interviews for you. They are more likely to get full and frank answers.



## 1.2 Understanding the customer more deeply – put yourself in their shoes

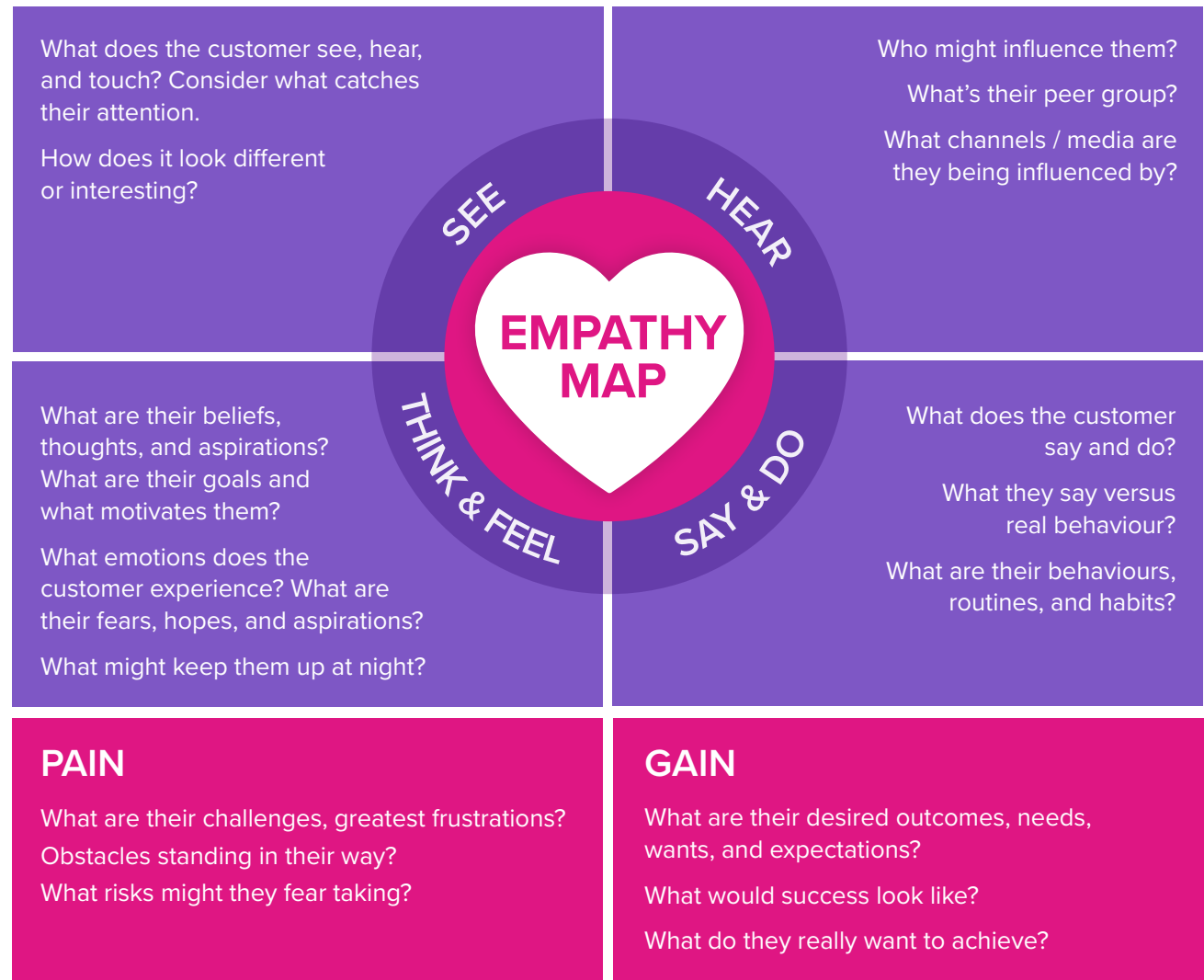
**If you want to do a deeper dive into the customer, their needs, the buying process and their world, here are two useful tools.**

### Customer Empathy Map

Detailed in the book ‘Business Model Generation,’ this is a tool used to understand and empathise with customers thought process and state of mind by visualising their thoughts, feelings, actions, and pains.

This is helpful not only because it gets you to consider *Pains and Gains* (great for drafting your value proposition) but because you can draft personas of your ideal customers. These can be useful if you want to take the next step and understand typical customer journeys.

**NOTE**  
If you have more than one type of buyer or market area you will need to brainstorm and complete this for each.



## 1.3 Mapping your customer's journey

**A map of the customer journey creates a visual representation of the experience a customer has with your brand, from initial awareness to post-purchase interaction.**

### **Insights**

Find out as much as possible about your customers through surveys, interviews, and your analytics.

### **Touchpoints**

Identify your customer touchpoints: website visits, social media interactions, or customer service calls.

### **Stages**

Outline the stages of the customer journey, including awareness, consideration, decision-making, and post-purchase.

### **Emotional states at each stage**

Map customer emotions, pain points. Consider and note their motivations, concerns and actions at each stage.

### **Moments of truth**

When you've made a visual map mark the critical 'moments of truth'. These are usually three to four critical points. Think about highs and lows, potential decisions and turning points. It can help to map the likely mood states at each point in the process

### **Analyse your map**

The map and the process will help you identify opportunities for improving customer experiences and aligning brand positioning with customer needs and expectations.



## 1.3 Mapping your customer's journey

As an example, here's an imagined customer journey for a group of consulting engineers.

Stage	1. Awareness	2. Research & Discovery	3. Engagement	4. Proposal	5. Decision	6. Implementation	7. Delivery & Support	8. Relationship
<b>Description</b>	The customer identifies a need for engineering support	The customer explores the consultancy's offerings	The customer contacts the consultancy	Consultancy presents a detailed proposal	The customer evaluates proposals	The consultancy works on the project	The consultancy provides ongoing support	The consultancy nurtures the relationship
<b>Process</b>	Quality of online presence and visibility	Clarity and relevance of case studies, content, and expertise	Responsiveness & professionalism of initial interaction	Alignment between proposed solutions and client needs	Competitive pricing, credibility, and flexibility	Adherence to timelines, quality of deliverables	Responsiveness to issues, effectiveness of support	Communication, understanding of evolving needs
<b>Emotional states</b>	Confusion, overwhelm	Curiosity, Skepticism	Excitement, Hesitation	Anxiety			Satisfaction / Disappointment?	Confidence, Trust-building
<b>Moments of truth</b>			First contact or interaction that leaves a lasting impression.		Client's decision to explore further or dismiss the proposal.		Solidify or jeopardize the client's trust in the firm's capabilities.	

## 2. Your special attributes

### What have you got that the alternatives lack?

List your attributes or features. You probably already have this information;

- Now chart these. A simple spreadsheet is fine, if you want you can download ours.
- Describe the feature, mark if it is unique (be honest with yourselves, it's important!).
- Now make a note of the real benefit to the customer. (If you've spoken to customers, or conducted win-loss analysis on your leads, this will help you).
- Last, try to score the value of the benefit to the customer. Again, put your 'customer hat' on here. (You might be surprised how often we hear from sales teams how important an attribute is, only to hear little about it from customers).

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION	UNIQUE TO US?	BENEFIT TO CUSTOMER?	VALUE?
		✓		★★★★●
				●●●●●
				●●●●●
				●●●●●
				●●●●●
				●●●●●

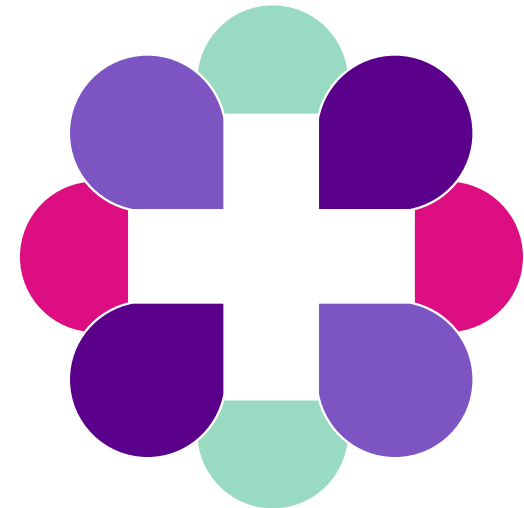
**TOTEM TIP**  
 Be sure to engage with all of your team to see how they evaluate these attributes. Ask your sales people which names come up regularly and how you're being compared (Price, Benefits?). If you're working together, Post-it notes are helpful to list and sort through the attributes.



## 3.1 Benefits into value: Defining your unique value proposition

**How does all of the previous translate into value for your customers?**

- What problem do you solve for your customers?
- What does it enable for them? A larger benefit solving this problem brings?
- What real difference does it make to their lives?
- What core desires and emotions does your product tap into? This will be particularly useful later.



**TOTEM TIP**

Remember we are looking for key themes (priorities!), not a shopping list of features or benefits.

## 3.2 Who cares most about this?

**This can seem counterintuitive, but you need to go narrow!**

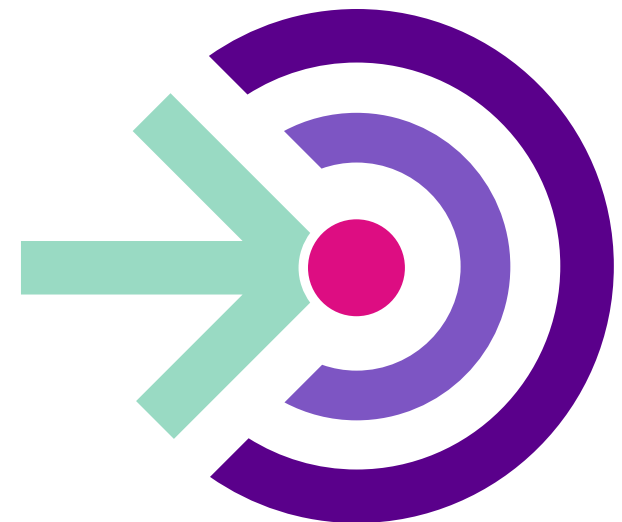
At least in the short to medium term you are better to cater really well to the kind of customers that really love what you offer\*. We are aiming to be the 'go-to' for anyone who needs to enjoy these benefits we offer.

When you have met all of your targets and are ready to tackle a broader cohort, your positioning can evolve to do that. This is what's described by Geoffrey Moore as the 'beachhead strategy'. Successfully establishing your foothold and a loyal following, top pave the way for a broader market adoption.



### NOTE

How narrow is too narrow? Okay, if it is so specific that you are narrowing your market to very few customers, that's not going to fly.



## 3.3 Choose your frame of reference, carefully

### This is without doubt, the tricky stage!

You need a marketplace to play in. Potential customers need context, or a frame of reference for what you offer. But you need to choose one that best fits what you do well, not one that pits you against a strong competitor, where you won't compare favourably.

Often businesses want to create a 'category of one' - which is the business equivalent of finding the holy grail. We're not saying it can't be done, but it is actually much easier to sell something when customers know what category you (mostly) fit in. It's easier to create a space in a category, or adjacent to it, that create a new one. Before you decide you're a category of one, rule the other options out first.

The thing you're looking for is a frame that puts your strengths front and centre.

#### Exercise

Try three different approaches using these questions...

1. Can you (re)frame your business against a different category, or competitor set?
2. Can you add something unexpected?  
How can you break category conventions?
3. Can you attack something your competitors care about?



#### TOTEM TIP

While the goal is to stand out, it's wise to seek a category that customers can easily understand. Even if you then create a subset of that category. If you don't identify one, it can lead to confusion, with customer's unsure about where you fit. This is not something you want!



## 4. Draft the positioning statement

The key things you need to cover in the statement, start with the UVP (Unique Value Proposition).

**For** [target customers]

**Who** [have this specific need or problem]

**Our offer** [name of product/service]

**Is a** [category]

**That** [provides this key benefit]

**Unlike** [primary competitor or alternative]

**Our product** [unique differentiator or reason to prefer it]

### OR SIMPLIFIED

**Our** [offering]

**is the only\*** [category]

**that** [benefit]\*\*

**Now, see if you can write it shorter. And simpler.  
(And again)**

What you're aiming for here is the essence, not every detail. This can then be simplified again, into key messages and a tagline.

We find that generally the best strategies are expressed in one sentence

When you think you have got it, well done!

It can be helpful to encapsulate the work in one page, containing all of the essential information. This should be shared and discussed with all of your team to ensure you have 'buy in' from everyone who will deliver the positioning to customers.

“

**When you confuse, you lose.**

Donald Miller

”

\* Renowned branding author Marty Neumeier calls this 'onlyness'.

\*\* We would add that the [benefit] here can be a collection rather than singular.

## Bringing it all together

<p><b>Our name:</b></p> <p><b>Our Positioning:</b></p>		<p><b>Market category (macro):</b></p> <p><b>Subcategory of the market (if applicable) that we compete in:</b></p>	
<p><b>Customer's alternatives:</b></p> <p>What would customers do/use if we did not exist?</p>	<p><b>Unique attributes:</b></p> <p>What features/capabilities do we have that the alternatives do not</p>	<p><b>Value:</b></p> <p>What value do those attributes enable for customers?</p>	<p><b>Who cares a lot:</b></p> <p>What are the characteristics of a customer that makes them care a lot about the value you deliver?</p>
<p><b>Brand identity:</b></p> <p>How do customers perceive our brand?                  Reputation, perceptions. Are we consistent.                  Are we visually distinctive, how do we stand apart?</p>		<p><b>Messaging to market:</b></p> <p>When you have got your positioning statement, it's the beginning – not the end!                  Write in plain language the key messages you need to get across to communicate the positioning to customer groups.</p> <p><b>Note 1</b>  <i>This is not your sales pitch, or advertising (yet) but it's what those messages should build upon (And then stick to!)</i></p> <p><b>TOTEM Tip</b>  <i>If you want to get the best work, this level of creative work belongs in the hands of professional copywriters and communications specialists.</i></p>	

# Get to market!

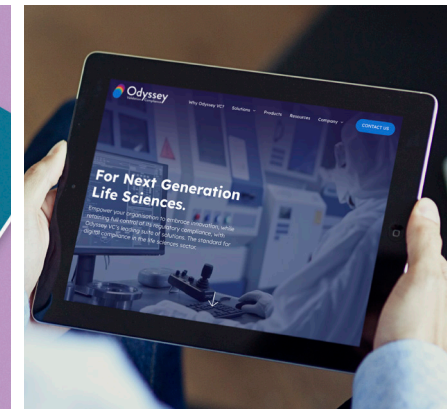
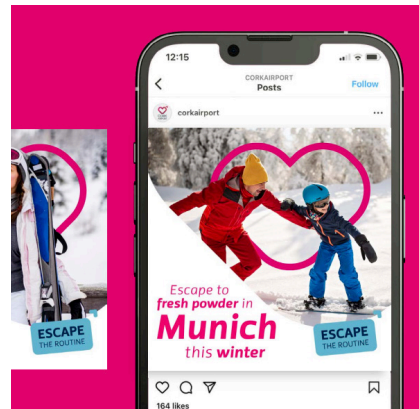
Putting the right message  
to prospects

## Get to market! Putting the right message to prospects

Remember that your positioning statement is internal. It helps you define who you're serving and the difference you make to them.

Now you need to put that into the customer's realm. Your messaging pillars should outline the key messages you want to get out there. To the people who need what you can offer.

And then it's time to get to work creating the engaging messaging, distinctive design and sharp sales pitches. To communicate powerfully and consistently with one voice. To help you connect and convert the perfect prospect.



# TOTEM can help propel your proposition to the next level.

**TOTEM's team includes experts in brand strategy and positioning, writers who can craft compelling messaging, and designers of distinctive brand identities.**

From strategic direction, through to creating digital communications and high-performance campaigns. (After all, clever strategy is not much use, without creative, consistent and intelligent execution).

TOTEM is dedicated to B2B businesses with ambitious leaders. We help ignite your growth, propelling your brand to the next level, to help create your success story.

Start a meaningful conversation with TOTEM today to understand how we can help you realise your ambitions.

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# Thank You