



# The Positioning Statement

## Positioning Yourself as a Consultative Resource

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Chances are good that even if you work for a major corporation or a marquee local organization, your prospect still may not know exactly who you are or what you do. Your prospect may have assumptions about who you are and what you do that may not be entirely accurate. Where many salespeople go wrong is allowing the prospect to define them and their value proposition instead of immediately positioning themselves for maximum impact early in the initial sales call.

I was first exposed to the concept of the positioning statement by world-class marketing guru Jay Abraham. The positioning statement is a sound bite that defines who you are, what business you are in, what is unique about your organization or product, what results you deliver to your clients, and how you deliver those results. Your positioning statement will create intrigue and leave your prospect wanting to know more.

The desired outcome of your positioning statement is to get your prospect's attention, make a profound first impression, define yourself and create intrigue. Here is the format for creating your positioning statement:

- Who are you?
  - Your company
  - Your division
  - Your title and role
- What business are you in?
  - What end result does your business deliver to your clients?
- What is unique about:
  - Your company

### Sample Positioning Statement

Today's Office Solutions is in the business of helping organizations achieve business efficiencies and cost savings as a result of better managing their documents and the related technology.

We specialize in consulting with organizations to evaluate and control their operating costs associated with the production, management and distribution of documents.

We have worked with companies like xyz and xyz to help them identify their objectives and challenges in managing document technology. We also help them gain an understanding of their workflow processes, device populations and total cost of ownership.

Our unique consulting process allows us to collaborate with our clients to identify areas in which they can harness new technology to increase productivity while reducing costs. Based on our expertise and technology, we can recommend innovative solutions leading to measurable and sustainable results for years to come.

If this sounds like something you are interested in, I have a brief presentation on our consulting process and some sample deliverables that will help you determine if what I do would be of value to you. If it looks like something you would like to pursue, we can talk about taking the next step.

- Your products, services or programs
- You
  - With whom do you do business?
- Industry-specific references
- Title-specific references
  - What specific results do you deliver?
  - How do you work?
- Your sales process
- How you go about delivering results

Let's begin with, "Who are you?" While the question is simple, the answer is not always so. What two or three words, beyond the name itself, define your organization?

This first step in this exercise generally results in what is referred to as a “tag line.” Your tag line should be simple, compelling and concise — just three to four words. A few examples: HP — “Invent,” Xerox — “The Document Company” and Factiva — “Inspiring Business Decisions.”

Even if your organization already has a tag line in place, you still need to define who you are personally — what division you are from and what role you play in that division. For example: “I am with (your organization and tag line). I am calling on behalf of the (your division). My role is (your title).”

Next, comes the most misunderstood question in sales: “What business are you in?” I start out most sales seminars with this simple question, “What do you sell?” Some of HP’s imaging and printing people respond, “We are in the printer business; we sell printers.” Salespeople at another one of my clients, which distributes LCD projectors, say, “We sell projectors.” You get the picture. They tell prospects what products they sell instead of captivating them with what business solutions their products or services deliver.

When I pose the question “What business are you in?” to top management and owners of businesses, they usually get it. Rich Raimondi, vice president of Hewlett-Packard’s Imaging and Printing Group, says, “We’re in the information-delivery business.” The owner of the LCD projector distributor answers, “We’re in the business of enabling people to give high-impact presentations that will get their ideas accepted.”

Next is what I call the “so what?” question. Imagine during your presentation that the prospect is sitting in front of you holding a flashing neon sign that says, “So what? Why should I keep listening? What’s so unique about your organization, products, services or yourself that positions you head and shoulders above your competitors?” In other words, what is your competitive distinction?

One thing, 10 seconds, what is it? What expertise, market leadership, exclusive feature, quality, pricing, support, technical capability, customer-satisfaction rating or strategic partnerships put you far ahead of the pack? Maybe it is you, your reputation, your commitment to service or your personal expertise that your competitors just cannot match.

You are now about a third of the way into your sound bite. You sound intelligent and intriguing, far better than the last several salespeople this prospect has seen this week. Now, it is time to kick in the turbocharger. You need to answer the prospect’s next

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two questions: “Why should I keep listening?” and even more importantly, “Why should I consider engaging you as my consultative resource?” Here is where you do some name-dropping. Announce the names of your best marquee clients and state the results that your product, service or program enabled them to realize. Be specific and quantifiable where possible.

Now you are well into your positioning statement and you have 10 to 15 seconds

left. It is time to provide a brief explanation of how you work. Tell the prospect about your process for engaging similar clients, determining their requirements and consulting and collaborating with them to drive the desired results.

It is really quite simple. Just explain your consultative sales process from start to finish. It may sound something like this: “The way I work is to first invest some time assessing your requirements, your current situation and your objectives and challenges. I then offer a proposal and an implementation plan. With your approval, we work together to implement the solutions. Finally, I commit to measuring results and assisting you in managing the project on an ongoing basis to assure that you achieve the maximum return on your investment.”

So there you have it, a 60-second sound bite that positions you in the prospect’s mind as an expert resource who is intriguing and compelling, focused on results, and — how refreshing — a salesperson with a logistical process for driving long-term results! For maximum effectiveness, keep it simple, concise (60 seconds maximum) and compelling (no hype).

In my work, helping hundreds of clients create their positioning statements, I am always amazed at how profound this exercise is. Beyond a powerful sales tool, this positioning statement often becomes the cornerstone of all sales presentations, marketing collateral, advertising content, prospecting letters and telemarketing scripts. ■

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