

Corporate Positioning and Messaging for start-up companies

Overview

You can't communicate with the outside world until your message is crystal clear and everyone is agreed it represents exactly what your business is all about. Your corporate positioning will clearly define your brand for all stakeholders, setting out your strategy and vision for the marketplace. This will be reflected in all your written, spoken and online communications to external and internal audiences. Meanwhile, your messaging sits at the heart of all marketing communications, providing specific guidance on what your company should say to most effectively communicate your corporate positioning to different audiences.

To gain everyone's input and make it a collaborative process, we recommend a corporate positioning and message development workshop attended by as many of your senior people as possible.

Our workshop structure

What's the present position? (45 minutes)

Individuals brainstorm alone for 5 minutes writing down Strengths; 5 minutes on Weaknesses; 5 minutes on Opportunities and 5 minutes on Threats.

Where do we want to get to? (45 minutes)

We ask the group to imagine we're in the same room next year, looking at the best media headlines there have been about the company. We visualise what these are, and ask what kind of company achieves these headlines? What does that company stand for?

What stands in our way? (45 minutes)

We work in pairs to look at the common themes we identified in the last section and the vision and values we said we wanted the company to have. We ask each other how realistic these are right now?

What makes you different? (45 minutes)

We make notes individually then share as a group what we think makes our organisation special and better than the competition. The moderator groups this input into themes — we start to look at what these differentiators have in common. Is it technical excellence? Is it strong community involvement? Is it our motivated sales team and their leads?

What does your corporate positioning look like?

First we'll review your different audiences are what we want their perceptions of you to be. In smaller groups we work on an 'elevator pitch' that sums up what we all want to say about the organization to different audiences (investor, potential employees, an FT journalist, a Gartner analyst, for example).

Experts in European Communications



After the workshop Ascendant will formulate a brief corporate positioning statement (1 paragraph), a 'vision and values' document (1 page) and a messaging ladder with 3-4 key messages and supporting proof points and sound-bites.