

VIDEO 1: WHY IS POSITIONING IMPORTANT?

Hi, I'm Sarah from HubSpot Academy. Welcome to, "Defining Your Agency's Positioning." This class is part of the "Market" section of the Agency Partner Methodology.

Defining your agency's positioning is one of the most important components of a successful inbound strategy.

Why? Because you can't market your agency successfully without a clear positioning strategy. Positioning provides a focus for who you work with, what services you provide and how you do it. Without this focus, you can't create marketing that resonates with your intended audience.

So positioning is clearly important, but what does positioning really mean?

Here's a definition: Positioning is an articulation of what services you offer and which markets or customer segments you serve.

Now the key thing to remember here, is that the answer can't be "everything" and "everybody." Your agency can not be all things to all people.

Nobody buys a product or service because it can do everything, but rather because it can do something.

Imagine you're planning your wedding. One item on your seemingly endless to-do-list is to hire a photographer for your big day. You begin researching online—what do you search for? You aren't looking for a freelancer "with a wide range of photographic experience." What you really want is a photographer who specializes in wedding photography. You want to see a portfolio filled with wedding photos specifically, and testimonials from happy newlyweds.

Your prospective clients are thinking the same way!

Whether talking about wedding photographers, or agencies, there isn't a brand in any category that can actually fulfill every need. Your prospects aren't looking for an agency with a wide range of expertise, but rather a specific kind of expertise.

So if that's the case, why do so many agencies continue to describe themselves as "full service?"

One reason is fear. Positioning requires focus, it means that you're saying "no" to things. The lead fear is the belief that if you focus your agency to solve a particular problem for a particular audience, then you make your agency less appealing to everyone. But remember, businesses aren't marketed to "everyone." If you try to appeal to everyone, you end up appealing to no one.

And really, with thousands of agencies around the world, the real thing you should fear is NOT finding a way to specialize and stand out from the crowd.

Conquering this fear of focus is essential to your agency success. But how exactly does positioning benefit your business?

First, positioning provides direction. You and your staff are able to move forward boldly—marketing your agency, deciding who to work with, and how you will execute on strategies and tactics. There will be no question about what you do, whom you do it for, and how you do it.

Second, positioning provides a borderless market. Regional agencies struggle to attract talent and clients outside of their area. By determining a focus and building this up as a core part of your service, clients will want to work with you and people will want to work for you regardless of your location or size.

Think of other specialists such as surgeons, lawyers, or even universities. If you're a professional athlete and you have a knee injury—are you going to just go to the nearest physician? Or are you willing to fly halfway around the world to see the best knee specialist there is?

Positioning also provides a clear target audience. Does your agency have buyer personas? Do you currently have a list of prospects that would be interested in your services?

Strong positioning helps you understand the unique pain points of your target audience, what they need and want, and how they buy. By identifying these shared goals and challenges of your target audience, you can create a more efficient and targeted sales process.

Speaking of sales, a positioning strategy allows you to have a strong qualifying process.

Nailing your messaging will allow you to attract the right leads. Your marketers will know which type of content to create and will be able to pass more qualified leads to your sales team.

You'll know what qualities to look for in a lead. Without positioning, you're going to be wasting too much time qualifying your leads.

Lastly, positioning drives premium pricing. Profound expertise demands premium pricing. Brands want insights, not more generic information on how to market their products or services. With specialized knowledge of an industry, an audience, or a service offering, you can promote how your agency isn't focused on learning a new market, rather it's consumed with developing creative ideas that work.

Positioning is no easy feat. It takes time, dedication, and the courage to say “no” to some things. But it is necessary. Especially if you're struggling to create consistent revenue streams, bring in

new clients, and retain your clients. A strong positioning strategy allows you to attract prospects, talent, and influencers to your agency, and that's something you definitely have time for.

Ready to get started? Jump into the next video where we'll go through how to define your agency's positioning, step-by-step.

VIDEO 2: HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR AGENCY'S POSITIONING?

Your positioning strategy is a critical piece to understanding your marketing strategy. This video will cover a step-by-step process to define your agency's positioning strategy.

Much of this is based on the work by Tim Williams, a recognized thought leader in the advertising and marketing industry. We'll go through an in-depth process, but for even more details, check out his book "Positioning for Professionals," linked to in the Additional Resources.

Before diving in, a few important things to note:

First, make sure you get the right people involved. Typically, a positioning strategy isn't created by just one person at your agency. Get all the key players together. Include your CEO and other members in leadership, depending on your agency's size and structure.

Second, document your positioning strategy. It's not enough to just get everyone in a room and talk about it, you also need to be able to share this strategy with the rest of your team. This is a living, breathing document that everyone in your organization needs to be able to review and understand. Use HubSpot's "Agency Positioning" Project and template to help.

Third, in order to set your agency up for success, you must pick a position. You can't thrive as a full-service, inbound marketing, generalist. The most successful HubSpot Agency Partners pick a position and aren't afraid to say "no" to prospective clients that don't fit their agency.

And lastly: Keep in mind that everything you do with your inbound marketing strategy moving forward should tie back to your positioning. Building your agency's positioning will take time, but it's so important. Taking the time to establish this now will help your marketing, and your business, excel.

Okay, now, let's get started. Defining your agency's positioning strategy is a six step process. Those steps are: Assess your current positioning strategy, define your agency's purpose, identify your agency's best client, identify your agency's core competencies, define your agency's culture, and create your positioning statement.

First, assess your agency's current positioning strategy.

What is your agency's unique selling proposition? How do you communicate that differentiation on your website, social media, and content?

Now before you answer that, note that a "mission" statement, like "We strive to provide the best client service and always fresh ideas." is not a positioning statement.

While providing quality customer service isn't a bad objective, that's all it is. An objective. An objective points the way, but it takes an effective strategy to get you there. And "to be the best" is not a strategy!

Your agency is also not differentiated by things like your full-service capabilities, your integrated approach, your superior service and commitment to clients, or your ability to produce results.

While you may argue these claims are important to many clients, they're not unique. Instead, they contribute to what is called the "sea of sameness." Agencies competing in the same space for the same clients. It's much better to strike out for the uncharted waters, where nobody's sailing.

So with that in mind, take a moment and really think about what makes your agency unique today. How you communicate that differentiation on your website? In your content? With your clients?

Now, attempt to write down in one or two sentences what you stand for and what differentiates you.

How'd you do? If you struggled to think of ways your agency is different, that's okay! You're certainly not alone, and that's what you're here to change.

Most agencies fall short in defining relevant points of differentiation for one of two reasons:

Either the leaders of the agency haven't devoted the time and attention required to understand how their agency creates value...

...Or, the agency has in fact attempted to articulate its positioning strategy, but still hasn't moved beyond the expected points of parity because doing so requires making some trade-offs. They want to be all things to all people.

In the beginning, it's tempting to want to be everything to everyone. You take what comes through the door because you have mouths to feed. But the sooner you realize what types of clients you enjoy working with, and the services you're passionate about, the sooner you'll be able to carve out a position for yourself and get more, and better clients.

Now that you know where your agency stands, you can focus on developing a strong positioning strategy that sets your agency up for success.

The next step? Define your agency's purpose, or "the why." Purpose defines why you do what you do—why you exist. It's the difference you're trying to make in the world.

Your purpose provides a clear answer to the questions: Why does your company exist? Why do you go to work every day? Why do your employees continue to come to work? And why do clients want to work with you?

Very few people and very few organizations can clearly articulate why they do what they do. But people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it. Understanding your agency's "why" is essential to knowing how to communicate "how" and "what" you do.

Making money is NOT a "why." Revenues, profits, and salaries are simply results of what you do. Purpose gives your agency and your staff a reason for existing—a purpose for making a profit.

Your purpose provides you and your team with a view of how your agency will make a difference, setting everyone on the same path and giving everyone the chance to aspire to be better, create better work, and form better relationships.

So how can you find your agency's purpose?

Start by asking these questions:

- Besides profits, why does your organization exist? And what would people miss if you didn't exist tomorrow?
- What inspires you to go to work each day?
- What is the purpose and the meaning of what you do?
- What problems do you solve?
- And, if your people were volunteers instead of employees, what would they be volunteering for?

Make sure the CEO or agency owner is involved here. Buy-in from your team is extremely important to make sure your positioning succeeds, but having the CEO be the key stakeholder in defining your positioning strategy is crucial because it's about your agency's envisioned future.

And once you've uncovered and solidified your purpose, you have to commit. Write it in stone—figuratively or literally—and share it internally and externally.

The third step is to identify your agency's best client, or "the who". The goal here is to figure out what type of client you're not only best suited to serve, but who you want to do business with in the future.

Focusing on an audience is a particularly powerful form of positioning because it allows you to become an expert in understanding the attitudes, values, habits, wants, needs, motivations, and behavior of a particular class of people.

This in-depth knowledge is infinitely attractive to companies who market their products to the audience you have chosen.

In fact, 72% of businesses are more likely to buy from thought leaders, people, or businesses that are recognized as an expert in their marketplace.

This specialization could be built around a specific industry or vertical. You can find agencies that specialize in B2B companies, healthcare, ecommerce, higher education, or even fresh produce companies.

HubSpot Agency Partner Gorilla 76, focuses on the industrial industry, helping B2B industrial companies generate website traffic, qualified leads and paying customers through their websites and other online media.

In addition to specializing around a specific industry or vertical, you'll also find agencies who build a focus around a particular audience such as millennials, women, senior citizens, company size, or geographic location.

League Digital, part of HubSpot Agency Partner MPULL, focuses solely on helping grow businesses in South Africa.

So how do you define who you want to work with?

Start by answering these questions:

- What type of clients have you been most successful with in the past?
- What traits do they have in common?
- Which industries, business categories or market segments do you know best and excel at?
- What type of companies do you enjoy working most with?
- And, what type of clients do you NOT want to do business with?

The purpose of a positioning strategy is to state that your firm is right for some clients but not all clients.

Narrowing your focus will allow you to start saying “no” to the clients that aren't a good fit, and start saying “yes” to the clients you actually want to be working with.

Step four is to identify your agency's core competencies, or the “what”.

Every organization and individual knows “what” they do. For agencies, this is typically the services they offer.

Becoming an expert in a particular discipline or competency is another effective way to focus your agency. For example, you could specialize in providing social media, website design, or video creation services.

Again, the goal isn't to offer every service possible, rather to choose an area of specialization.

Take a look at your current services. Can you be seen as an expert or thought leader in any of these? Which services do your best clients need from you?

Concentric Marketing, a HubSpot Agency Partner located in the UK, specializes in designing and building websites on the HubSpot COS.

To help identify your agency's core competencies, answer these questions:

- What do you do particularly well, better, or more efficiently than other agencies?
- Which of your capabilities and services provide the most value to your clients?
- If you could only provide one service, what would that be? What services would you give up to have that focus?
- What are the things that your clients can't do on their own if they chose to invest internally?
- Where does HubSpot and inbound fit in here? Do you call yourself an inbound marketing agency or do you offer inbound as one of your services?

Make sure you clearly identify your agency's abilities, but also the core competencies that create economic value to your clients and distinguish you as an expert among the competition.

The next step is to define your agency's culture, or the “how.”

The culture of your agency is your company's way of life, and it is reflected in everything you do. It's the values, beliefs, and behaviors that you accept and use to guide your decisions.

The philosophies and methods your agency follows can be a key differentiator that positions you far above your competitors. But be careful. This is also the most common way agencies cop-out

on truly differentiating themselves. Don't let a tag line, like "Built on results," masquerade as a positioning strategy.

To help you develop a clear picture of your agency's culture, start by answering these questions:

- What are the philosophies and methods you follow to service clients?
- Do you have a unique way of thinking or working processes?
- What is the one thing that you would never change about your agency?
- Will you say "no" to a prospective client because of your values and culture? If so, what are some of the reasons that would cause you to say "no"?
- Regardless of role, what does it take for someone to truly succeed at your agency?

It takes a lot of hard work to really hammer these out. But once you do, put it all together by creating a Culture Code for your agency. Here's the principles that HubSpot Agency Partner New Breed follows.

Share this culture code internally and externally. This will help you identify the type of people that are successful at your agency, showcase what makes your organization unique from others, and help you market your agency to prospective employees and clients.

Keep in mind that the most effective culture-defining principles are easy to remember, differentiating and more valuable than profits. By creating a strong value-based agency culture, people will be more motivated to work for you and excel at their jobs.

Now that you've documented your agency's "why," "who," "what," and "how," it's time for the fun part: Creating your positioning statement to put it all together!

This step will help you finalize your positioning strategy. Before you begin, now is also a good time to schedule a meeting with the involved team members to share and discuss the results of each previous step.

After you've met, fill in this template to help craft your positioning statement: We (provide this service/value/outcome) for (this type of company/industry/market) by (using this kind of approach) because (why).

Fill in these blanks based on all the work you've done in the previous steps.

Here's an example: "We create custom, user-centric websites for B2B companies by using growth-driven design because we value your customers' experience and believe your website is essential to achieving your business goals."

Let's break it down: The “what” is that you create custom, user centric websites. The “who” is “B2B companies.” The “how” is by using “growth-driven design.” And the “why” is because you value “your customers’ experience and believe your website is essential to achieving your business goals.”

Make sure you get the substance first, don't focus too much on the shiny words—your positioning strategy needs to be clear and make sense. Don't cut corners at the end here! The positioning statement will help your marketers to produce clearer, tighter, and more consistent messages that prospects will hear and understand.

And there you have it, the steps to define your agency's positioning strategy: Assess your current positioning strategy, define your agency's purpose, identify your agency's best client, identify your agency's core competencies, define your agency's culture, and create your positioning statement.

Keep in mind, positioning is not a one-off; it's an ongoing process that evolves with your agency, your clients, your employees, your goals and the marketplace. Always adapt and adjust.

Ready to get started? There's a lot that goes into crafting your positioning strategy, so remember to put in the time and effort now to better set your agency apart from the competition. Now, get your team together and start building out your positioning strategy!

VIDEO 3: HOW DOES POSITIONING IMPACT YOUR MARKETING?

So, you've defined your agency's positioning, now what?

Good question! You've done a lot of hard work, but don't stop there. A positioning strategy is nothing without execution.

From the marketing of your brand, to the services you provide, to the employees you hire, you must bring your positioning strategy to life in all your agency's major business practices.

For this video, we'll be focusing specifically on how your positioning informs your agency's marketing strategy. We'll cover an action plan to align your positioning with your marketing strategy.

Okay, so now that you've defined what you do, who you do it for, and how you do it, it's time to figure out what aspects of your marketing must alter to turn your positioning strategy into perceivable differentiation.

As a marketer, you want to communicate this positioning, highlight your thought leadership and expertise, and attract the right type of clients.

To do this, focus on your website, content creation strategy, and lead qualification.

Start with updating your website to reflect your positioning.

First, look at your homepage—do you clearly convey your positioning strategy? When someone lands on your website, they should be able to clearly state what you do, who you do it for and how you do it. Now that you have your positioning statement, make sure to add this to your homepage.

Now, audit your other pages as well. Based on the client you want to work with, and the services you want to provide, are there changes you should make to reflect this?

Next, publish case studies to your site. You now know who you want to target, so make sure to focus on creating success stories of the types of clients you want to get more of. Potential clients want to know if you can do what you say you can do. This is ultimately about building credibility.

If you have existing case studies, look at them with fresh eyes. Do they reflect your target client? Do they highlight the services that differentiate your agency?

And don't just throw up a bunch of logos. This does nothing to answer the question, "How can you help grow my business?" Provide links to in-depth case studies that showcase how your agency's processes and expertise helped a current or previous client meet his goals.

Along the same vein, collect and add testimonials to your site. Prove that your clients are happy with your work and passionate about spreading the word about your agency. It will help visitors to connect with your current clients—people who have similar challenges and objectives—and it is an additional point of credibility for your agency.

Next, focus on your content creation strategy.

Start by completing a content audit for your existing offers. This may be something your agency has already started in the past. If not, you can download a template in the additional resources.

After you document the offers you have, bucket them into the proper buyer's journey stage and buyer persona. Now, take a hard look. With your new positioning strategy in mind, do you have content that speaks to your ideal client? Are there any gaps or content that is no longer an accurate representation of your agency?

Next, develop your content strategy with your positioning in mind. Any future content you create should be specific to your agency's positioning. Having defined your best client, core competencies and culture, it should be much easier to focus your content efforts and turn "general" content offers into more "specific" offers that will resonate with your audience.

For example, if you specialize in working with schools take an offer like, "The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing" and update it to be "The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing for Universities."

Beyond your content offers, take a look at your agency's blog. Your blog is an important part of your marketing strategy. By creating a blog that aligns with your positioning and value proposition for clients, you will establish your company and executives as authorities and attract potential clients. When building out your blogging schedule, make sure you're writing content that is more specific to your target client and specialization.

This third step to start bring your positioning to life is to review your lead qualification. Remember, a positioning strategy allows you to have a strong qualifying process. You now know what qualities to look for in a lead.

For example, let's say you've decided to specialize in building optimized websites for B2B industrial companies. This would not only impact the content you create, but also the questions you ask to qualify your leads.

Look at the forms on your current website. Do you ask leads which industry they're in? Do you ask what their biggest marketing challenge is?

You want to make sure you're asking the right questions on your forms so that you can pass quality leads to your sales team.

As a marketer, your agency's positioning strategy will impact everything you create. Start aligning your marketing and positioning by focusing on your website, content strategy and lead qualification process. Remember, a strategy is nothing without action. It's not enough to write down your positioning strategy, you must bring it life in all your business practices.