



Brand Story and Messaging: *How to Tell the Story of Your Business*

How many networking events have you been to where the question, "What does your company do?" results in an answer that is either undecipherable or too vague to make a difference? Or perhaps it's your product/service description that falls flat.

It is true what they say – you do not get a second chance to make a first impression. Your company messaging needs to be tight, clear, and compelling. Your positioning statement needs to describe what your company does and for whom, identify the key benefit to clients who purchase your products or services, and demonstrate the "unfair" advantage you have over competing brands. And it must do this in 50 words or less.

As you start the process of developing your positioning statement, or revamping an old one, remember that it is designed to be actively communicated to the target audience: be sure to keep them in mind as you determine your word choice, tone and style.

Begin with the Elevator Statement

An elevator statement is your positioning statement in 25 words or less that can be "delivered" verbally in 30 seconds or the time it takes to tell someone what you do in a ride in an elevator. It describes (1) WHO you are, (2) generally WHAT you offer, and (3) for WHOM.

Expand to 50-Words

Next add more detail around the single UNIQUE BENEFIT a client gets working with you and experiencing your COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE. Your 50 words describe (1) WHO you are, (2) WHAT you offer, generally (3) for WHOM, for (4) WHAT result, and (5) WHY you.

Expand the Message to 100-150 Words

Finally, add more detail around your product/service offering to create your 100+ word version. Your product/service detail should be in a bulleted list, with only a short small description of each product/service. The 100+ word version describes (1) WHO you are, (2) WHAT you offer (general), (3) for WHOM, (4) WHAT you offer (detail), (5) for WHAT result, and (6) WHY you.

Brand Story

Once you have 25-, 50-, and 100-word positioning statements, it's time to create your brand story. Your brand story describes your history and background, highlights how your products and services grew from that past background, and illustrates how your unique philosophy or methodology impacts what you offer.

Once you have solid messaging, it's time to execute. The key to successful messaging – after being tight, clear, and compelling – is consistency. Marketing requires repetition, repetition and more repetition. Finally, you must self-enforce and live it. If you say you target a certain client, be sure you really are targeting them. If you say you offer something, be sure you do offer it. And, if you say you offer a specific benefit, be sure you are committed to ensuring your clients see that result.