

BRYCE OTT

BRAND POSITIONING IN A NUTSHELL

Unlock your brand positioning
with this jargon-free D-I-Y guide



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How to use this book

Brand Positioning in a Nutshell is designed to be used in conjunction with a workbook where you develop your thinking as you read the book. The workbook can be downloaded from the Nutshell website, www.nutshell.net.au

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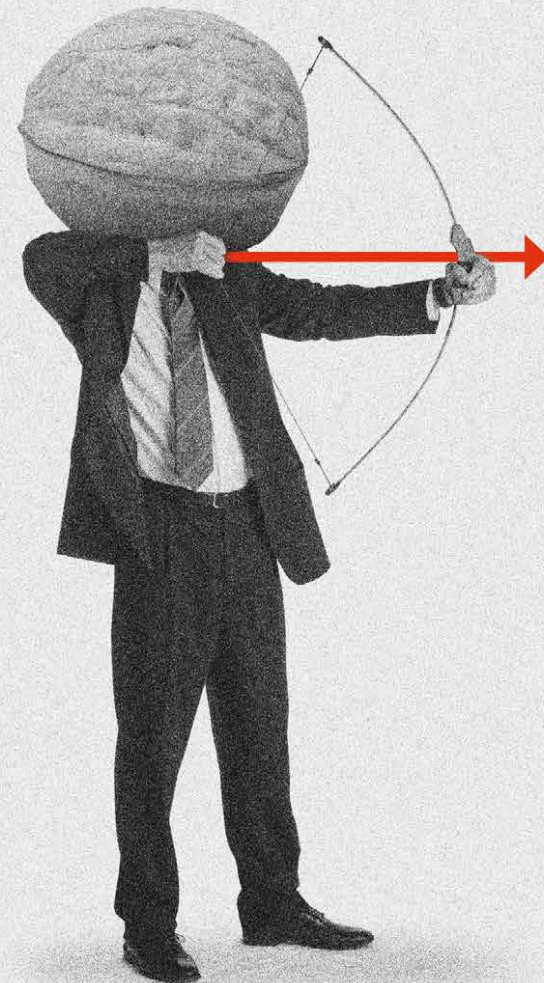
PART ONE PRACTICAL THEORY

This part of *Brand Positioning in a Nutshell* will quickly and efficiently get you up to speed with the concepts and terminology involved in unlocking the positioning of a brand.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



Would you like to be able to explain your business or product in a clear, compelling way **in 10 seconds or less?**

Would you like to be confident that you know exactly **who your organisation needs to talk to** and exactly **what it needs to say?**

Would you like **everyone** in your organisation to be **galvanised by the same vision** and aiming towards the same flag on the hill?

This book and its companion workbook will get you there.

Brand Positioning in a Nutshell is all about helping you unlock the ideal positioning of your brand. It takes a very practical, accessible approach that quickly covers theory and moves on to practice.

Chances are you've got a great story to tell, but can't find the right way to tell it.

I once worked with a family-owned manufacturing company that makes bathroom and kitchen fittings. The patriarch of the family was the founder of the business and an engineer. His natural tendency was to talk with great pride about the details of the machines he had designed or customised to achieve the precise tolerances required to make taps and fittings of a very high standard at a very affordable price point. The look of the end product was a bit of an afterthought for him. The beauty for him was in the technical excellence of his products. By the end of the brand positioning process I took them through, they were clear that what they really offered was 'meticulously designed tapware, without the designer prices'. The patriarch's daughter, who was in charge of marketing, said to me when I presented my recommendations, 'I'm so glad you see us as meticulous.' But they had always been meticulous. It was just a matter of identifying that as a defining trait of theirs and crafting the right words to capture the strength of their offer, from a technical as well as an aesthetic perspective.

Brand Positioning in a Nutshell is written for non-marketers, although it can help marketers as well. It guides you through a simple process I've successfully implemented for all kinds of brands in all sorts of categories, using clear, accessible, non-technical language.

If this happens to be the first book you read on the subject of brands, great! It's an excellent place to start, because it focuses strictly on brand positioning, which lays the foundation for everything else about brands. It doesn't mix brand strategy with business strategy, marketing strategy, logo design, brand management, or any other related but different disciplines. All these disciplines are connected, but I will help you

tease them apart to ensure you're focused on brand positioning and understand its specific role relative to the others.

This is the only book I know of that focuses on starting with the basics and developing the right positioning to become the flag on the hill for your brand. As I see it, you can't do anything valuable with your brand until you have absolute clarity on what your brand positioning is. It's no secret why my business is called Nutshell Brand Consultancy!

I've met countless people working in many different organisations who all have variations on the same problem – they haven't found a clear, concise, compelling way to talk about what their brand has to offer. Sound familiar?

The solution is to strip back all the jargon and complexity to three clear, practical steps that do not require any marketing training or expertise. In this book, I:

1. List and define the nine elements of a successful brand positioning.
2. Provide simple questions and exercises to help you focus and define those nine elements as they apply to your brand.
3. Guide you through a practical, logical system for evaluating the brand strategy you develop, to ensure it will work.

REASONS YOU MIGHT BE READING THIS BOOK

Great literary scholars often say there are only seven basic stories in the world, so writing is about finding new and engaging ways for those stories to play out.

In 30 years of helping organisations work out the issues associated with their brands, I've found six stories that come up time and again. Who knows, maybe I'm missing one! Let's start with the six most common as a backdrop for talking about brand positioning. If literature is about finding new ways to flesh out classic stories, brand positioning is about finding specific ways to address classic challenges in defining a brand. See if you recognise yourself in any of these scenarios.

1) Too Busy Doing The Doing

As the Queen of Hearts famously said in *Alice in Wonderland* – 'My dear, here we must run as fast as we can, just to stay in place. And if you wish to go anywhere you must run twice as fast as that.'

What did you say last time someone asked how you are? You probably replied, 'Busy!' In fact, the person asking you probably said 'How are you? Busy?' It's almost a given in our culture that you're *supposed* to be busy. If you're not busy, you're falling behind.

But are you busy with things that are genuinely productive, things that are moving your organisation forward? Or are you spending three hours a day wading through hundreds of emails and five hours a day sitting in meetings, before you actually get to *do* anything?

I can't make emails and meetings go away, but I can promise that this book is a practical, efficient way to help you work *on* the business rather than *in* the business, so that doing the doing becomes more focused and more productive.

2) Herding Cats

It's a great image, isn't it? Cats are notoriously independent and free-thinking creatures. Trying to get them all marching neatly in the same direction is nearly impossible. This mental picture can be extremely relevant to any organisation that has more than two people in it as well.

Fortunately, people tend to respond a bit better to reasoning and relationship building than our feline friends. If you feel like you are spending your life herding cats, chances are you're dealing with an underlying *process* problem, more than a *content* problem. It may seem like the issue is finding the right answer, but it's more likely to be about reaching **consensus**. The process aspect of this book addresses this problem.

Consensus is literally half the battle. It's one of only two non-negotiable outcomes in developing a brand positioning that will be successfully implemented. The other one is **clarity**, but more about both of them later.

3) Nobody Understands Me

If you were a hormonal, angst-filled teenager moaning that no one understands you, we'd all make supportive noises whilst thinking to ourselves that it's just a matter of time before you grow out of this phase. But if you're part of an organisation trying to achieve its vision and goals, time isn't going to fix this. You need to.

If you struggle on a daily basis with agencies and other suppliers, or even staff who aren't giving you what you need because they don't understand what you're all about, then it's time to take responsibility for that yourself.

Ask yourself whether you're doing the best job you can in telling your brand story to people around you. Do they get it instantly and respond in a way that is productive and mutually beneficial? If the answer is no, don't panic, but do keep reading. We'll get you sorted out before you know it.

4) It's All About You

You're probably familiar with the visual metaphor of a swan that appears to glide effortlessly and gracefully across the water, while underneath the surface its feet are paddling furiously, unseen.

There's always going to be lots more going on with you than your customers need to, or want to, know about. Successfully positioning your brand requires that you step back from yourself and think about your offer from the perspective of your customer. Your customer wants the graceful swan, not the frantic paddling.

Another variation on making it all about you is something I call the 'If you build it, they will come' model, after the movie *Field of Dreams*. In the film, this approach worked out pretty well for Kevin Costner, but it doesn't turn out so well for many.

In this scenario, a business has a machine sitting around, so they figure out all the things it can make and then go see if anyone wants to buy them. Often it's done in the name of innovation, which is just a fancy name for change. There's no point in making changes unless they represent something somebody wants. Just ask the people responsible for Pepsi AM or Coke Zero.

Another version of this scenario is when someone makes something just because they know how to make it, or because it's what **they** like, without checking that it's something that people want. Sometimes it works, but it's the luck of the draw.

By following the steps in this book, you'll see how you can factor in your perspective without losing sight of your customer's perceptions, ensuring that you have a winning brand positioning.

5) Caught Up In The Detail

Detail is a funny thing. It strikes me as odd that both the expressions 'God is in the detail' and 'The devil is in the detail' are commonly used. Is attention to detail a good or a bad thing? Maybe it's both.

Pablo Picasso said 'One does a whole painting for one peach and people think just the opposite – that particular peach is but a detail.' Picasso was an amazing artist, but in my opinion he would not have made a good brand strategist.

The art of brand positioning is in seeing the big picture without losing sight of the details. Details may be how you manage your way to excellence, but the big picture is how you engage as a brand with customers, suppliers and colleagues.

A brand is what you stand for. An engineer at BMW could tell you all about the technical precision and quality of every part in one of their engines, but the BMW brand stands for The Ultimate Driving Machine. One is the detail. The other is the big picture. Seeing the difference between the two and learning how to capture and use them both is part of what you will learn in this book.

6) Your Light Is Under A Bushel

Surely this is the most basic problem of all. You're good at what you do, offer an excellent product or service and deliver on your promises. There just aren't enough people who know about what you have to offer.

In today's world, removing that bushel to let your light shine out is the role of marketing. Many businesses live or die based on their marketing prowess. In some organisations, it plays a smaller role. Maybe you're part of an organisation that just isn't marketing driven, so you can't justify having marketing professionals on staff. That doesn't mean it's not important to make sure that your target audience knows you're there and understands what you have to offer.

There's no doubt that marketing is going through a period of major change, driven largely by technology. Social media is redefining the marketing toolkit and people (marketers and non-marketers alike) are reinventing ways of getting the message of a brand out into the world.

That's why it's important to make a distinction between brand and marketing. Brand positioning underpins marketing strategy and needs to be identified first. Whether you're a blogger getting your story out via the internet, or a manufacturer making a niche product, the starting point is to go through a disciplined, structured process of defining your brand.

So, going back to the light under the bushel analogy, marketing is about removing the bushel and brand positioning is about describing the light in such a clear, compelling way that people can't wait to see it.

7) ?

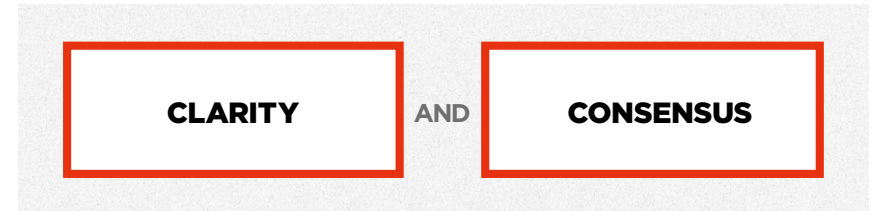
Is there a scenario that describes the situation you face with your brand that I haven't described?



This is a hands-on, DIY book, so let's start putting it into practice right now. Use your workbook (page 4) to jot down notes on the challenges you think are facing your organisation in relation to your brand. Feel free to identify multiple challenges from the list in this section, or describe others if none of the ones here quite capture your situation.

OUTCOMES YOU CAN EXPECT FROM USING THIS BOOK

There are two words that are my mantra in developing a successful brand positioning:



Clarity

Clarity in a brand positioning is about articulating the vision for the brand in such a way that everyone who is exposed to the vision gets it instantly and understands it perfectly.

Having clarity means that everyone involved with the brand has a shared understanding of what is desired and expected from the brand. Having clarity means that everyone in the organisation can do their job independently, without the risk of making decisions in their particular area that will lead to the brand being presented inconsistently.

Achieving clarity is related to the content of the brand positioning. One key is to articulate the brand positioning concisely, using words that are telegraphic and not subject to diverse interpretations. You want to use as many words as you need to capture the core of what the brand has to offer, but as few words as possible to ensure that it is clear and streamlined.

Using the Nutshell model, we'll work through nine component parts of a brand positioning and bring it down to one key sentence, which will rarely be more than six or seven words. And the whole model will fit on one page.

Consensus

Early on in my career, friends used to joke that one day I would have a consulting business and the tagline for that business would be, 'Shut up and do it my way!' Ouch!

Fortunately, I have acquired some decent listening skills since then and learned that it's difficult to get anywhere without engaging with people and working together to reach consensus.

Where clarity is about content, consensus is about process. The 'right' brand positioning can only be 'right' if it has buy-in from the various

people in the organisation who will have a role in bringing the brand to life. And, realistically, that’s pretty much everybody, isn’t it? Don’t worry, though, there are some good tips for designing a process that is more efficient than engaging with every single person in the organisation.

The bottom line is that you need to have **both** clarity and consensus for your brand positioning to be successful.

This simple chart summarises the importance of having both clarity and consensus.

Clarity without Consensus	If everyone understands the brand positioning, but they don’t believe in it, they will find opportunities to do a ‘better’ job and the brand will appear inconsistent or schizophrenic.
Consensus without Clarity	If everyone thinks they agree with the brand positioning but they are interpreting it differently, the execution will be inconsistent despite their best intentions and the brand will appear inconsistent or schizophrenic.
Both Clarity and Consensus	Only when all key stakeholders have a shared understanding and commitment to the brand positioning, will it be executed consistently and well.

My favourite thing about what I do for a living is the ‘Aha’ moment. It happens when a client sees everything that’s been spinning around in their head come together and settle into a clear, concise summary that captures their brand in a powerful way. I see the fog lift and a light go on in their eyes telling me they know their brand positioning is going to galvanise their organisation and drive their business forward. Everyone on the team says ‘That’s it! That’s us!’ often in disbelief that they didn’t think of it themselves.

They have achieved clarity and consensus.

This book packs my 30 years of experience into a practical guide to achieving that ‘Aha’ moment for your brand. Reading it and applying it is like hiring a consultant for the price of a book.

Before we get into the main content of this book, let me tell a brief story about a failure that has haunted me for most of my adult life. Perhaps this is a controversial way to start a book designed to motivate you and fill you with confidence, but it partly explains why this book exists and the reason that what it sets out to help you achieve is so important to me.

In my late teens, I read a book called *Stranger in a Strange Land*, by Robert Heinlein. He’s a wonderful science fiction writer and it’s a great book.

In it, the central character is an alien who comes to earth with no understanding of the way humans think, feel and behave. The extraordinary thing about this character, and one of the key premises of the book, is that he has an ability to grasp what is going on with people around him that far exceeds human notions of ‘understanding’ or ‘empathy’. In fact, Heinlein had to invent a word to capture the concept. That word is ‘grok’. It’s a verb. ‘To grok’ means something like ‘to understand so completely as to become one with’.

I was so taken by this brilliant concept that I took it upon myself to try to get this word into common usage. I would drop it casually into conversations and then provide an enthusiastic explanation of the meaning in response to the blank faces staring at me. What seemed self-evident in its value to me just didn’t connect with my friends. I failed miserably in my campaign to gain common acceptance of the word ‘grok’. Maybe it just sounds too funny. Or maybe it was just way ahead of its time.

In any case, I went on to become a brand strategist on a mission to help organisations find the story of their brand and articulate it so well that all their stakeholders, prospects and customers understand their brand so completely as to become one with it.

So, if you’re ready to get clear on the story for your brand to take it to the next level, let’s get started!