

# Positioning: RX for Your Identity Crisis

**Have you ever had a prospect ask, “What do you do?”** There are few questions that will send us into deer-in-the-headlights stuttering as fast. When it happens, we resolve to Do Something About It. But figuring out a short, compelling way to explain your value as a business is HARD. So it gets shelved until the next time it happens and another identity crisis shakes your world.

## ***The antidote: Positioning.***

Positioning is the strategy you use to develop your brand. Your brand is essentially what your market thinks of you, based on all the experiences they have had with your organization. The crucial difference: **Positioning is done proactively by you so that your brand will be perceived the way you want.** Positioning tells your customers what they should think about you, instead of waiting for the effect of brand experience to kick in.

When you position proactively, you give yourself a big advantage. To get started, you need to decide how to complete these four statements:

- 1. This is what I offer:**
- 2. This is whom I can best serve:**
- 3. This is why I’m different:**
- 4. This is why that difference matters to my target market:**

Your statements must be clear and specific no matter what type of business or organization you have. **They will help you understand your value from your buyer’s perspective so you can explain it to your prospects effectively.** When you are clear about your purpose, your market, your difference and your value, those recurring identity crises become history.

For example, if you’re in retail, you need to explain why people should buy shoes from you and not Macy’s. If you are a lawyer, you need to be able to say why clients



should hire you to do their estate planning and not the firm their cousin recommended. If you do economic development, you have to show why a business should locate in your community and not down the road.

Once you have your four positioning statements, you will have the basis for an effective response to “What do you do?” **You will also have the answer to their next questions (spoken or unspoken) which are “What’s in it for me?” and “So what?”** These are the most important questions that an effective marketing plan must answer.

Going through this exercise for my design and marketing business was eye-opening. I realized I could not answer the four questions adequately on my own, so I sought guidance from three awesome marketing colleagues whose work I respect and who understood my work and my market. They were also willing to point out when I was deluding myself or going down an unproductive path.

**When you tackle these critical questions, be sure to engage the help of a feedback provider who is objective.** You could start by consulting with your partner, trusted colleagues or favorite clients. And if you’re not convinced that your positioning is clear, it may be time to work with a marketing professional. I know how valuable the results are, yet how hard this process can be. I would love to help — let’s explore the answers together.