



Insights and Sound Bites

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"Research is to see what everyone else has seen yet to think what nobody else has thought." - Albert Gyorgyi

Positioning Case Study

Ladd Research Group was approached by Company ABC to help them reposition their product in the cardiology space. There were a number of new entrants in the category and their product, Product X, was losing share.

Company ABC had developed 12 potential positioning statements. They had considered doing this as a quantitative survey but felt that they had a lot to learn about the current market perceptions that would likely not be captured in a survey. One of the particular considerations was Company ABC's desire to include focus groups in the methodology. They felt that focus groups would enable a broader mix of physician segments without exceeding budgetary constraints. There was also a hope that the dialogue among the physicians would provide some further insights into market dynamics.

One of the first questions they asked us (and we asked ourselves) was, "is this even possible?" As anyone who has done positioning or message testing knows, respondent fatigue is always a major consideration. 12 messages in 2 hours with 6-8 physicians averages out to about 1 minute of commentary per physician for each message (and that's best case scenario!)

From a big picture perspective, we knew that the key to developing the optimal repositioning for Product X would be to effectively:

- 1) Identify what is most important for the category
- 2) Determine how Product X was rated on these various factors
- 3) Determine what if anything is unique to Product X
- 4) Identify the compelling reasons for customers to select Product X over the other competitors

In other words, the eventual positioning must be: important, believable, unique and compelling.

Taking all of this into consideration, we brainstormed some options and suggested a two phased process using a 4 step approach in each phase.

Phase I: Focus Groups – narrow the initial 12 statements to a smaller, more manageable set of statements.

Phase II: Further evaluate the remaining statements and focus on the nuances of the language.

Phase I was conducted using a broad-brush elimination exercise.

Step 1: Important

- Respondents were given a sheet with the 12 positioning statements written for the overall category (not for Product X at this point).
- Respondents individually rated each statement on a scale of 1-7 in terms of "importance" (1 is least important and 7 most important). We did a show of hands for how many rated each statement a 5, 6 or 7 and recorded those on a flip chart.
- Those statements that earned more ratings in the range of 5-7 were briefly discussed to ascertain what made them more important.

Step 2: Believable

- Respondents were given a sheet with the 12 positioning statements now written specifically for Product X.
- Again, respondents rated each statement on a scale of 1-7 in terms of how "believable" the statement.
- Those that earned more ratings in the range of 5-7 were briefly discussed to understand rating rationale.

Step 3: Unique

- Respondents used the same sheet of 12 statements but rated them on a scale of 1-7 in terms of how "unique" the statement would be for Product X if it were believable.
- We briefly discussed those that were most unique.
- Any that were "unique" but were not "believable" for Product X were discussed to understand why.

Step 4: Compelling

- We then selected just those statements that had high 5-7 ratings on all three aspects "important," "believable," and "unique."
- Respondents ranked these statements in order of how compelling the statement would be as a reason to purchase Product X in the current competitive environment.
- The meat of the discussion occurred around why these were/were not compelling for Product X.

At the conclusion of the focus groups, the positioning statements were whittled down to 5. Phase II was an iterative process of IDIs which gave us an opportunity to obtain more in-depth feedback on each statement and evaluate some wording options for each.

This process enabled Company ABC to obtain substantive, high-quality feedback on a large number of statements and include a broad sample of physicians segments, while minimizing fatigue and staying on budget.

We aren't suggesting that positioning work should start with 12 statements, but we are suggesting that if this is indeed the starting point, there are options for obtaining the feedback in a qualitative, meaningful way.