

“If you don’t have
time to do it right,
when will you have
time to do it over?”*

*John Wooden, “the Wizard of Westwood”, basketball coach



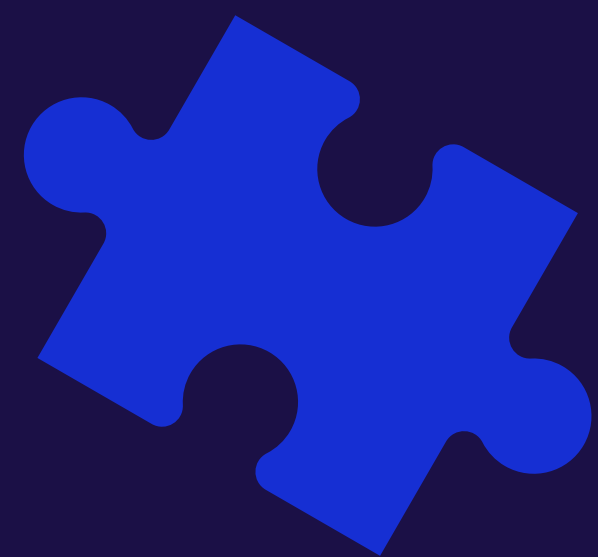
Why taking shortcuts doesn't lead to brand positioning done right.

Advice for third sector and
founder-led, service-based
organisations.





There are numerous elements involved in arriving at your brand positioning. Just like with a jigsaw puzzle, if you miss a piece, you end up with an incomplete picture – frustrating and underwhelming in equal measure.



How to get the full brand positioning picture →



The Leader

Can the founder or chief exec define your brand's positioning?

The short answer is 'no'.





Why? A senior leader defining your brand positioning throws up the issue of selective attention. All humans benefit, as well as suffer, from this. Selective attention may give the organisational leader the benefit of laser-sharp focus but it also comes with blind spots – they may not be able to see the wood for the trees. The other danger is that without team engagement, you get no team buy-in.

Of course, taking the senior leader's viewpoint (their insights and hypotheses) into consideration is vital, in fact the whole brand positioning process may derail without it.



The Audience

Can you define your brand's positioning from audience research?

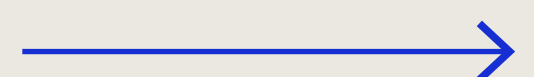
The short answer is 'no'.





Why? The problem of only using audience research to define your brand positioning is that brands don't exist in a vacuum. True understanding of positioning comes from knowing the market, alternative providers, i.e. the competition, and the business objectives of your organisation.

You have to listen to your stakeholders, both internal and external, and wherever possible introduce research into the process as early as possible, but their insights should sit in the round with all the other pieces of the puzzle. And it's also essential to remember that not everything they tell you will be relevant.



The Data

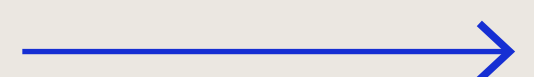
Can you define your brand's positioning from data?

The short answer is 'no'.





Why? Data alone won't engage your audience. Brand positioning only becomes effective when audience heads and hearts are engaged. Take data into consideration but recognise that it can only ever be one piece of the puzzle.



The Team Workshop

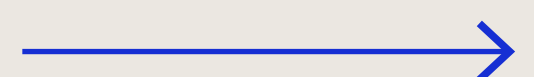
Can you define your brand's positioning from a team workshop?

The short answer is 'no'.





Why? The problem of defining your brand positioning from a team workshop/series of workshops (even if you bring in an outside consultant) is that it will only give you the insiders' perspective. Informative and essential, you'll undoubtedly uncover some gems but you need to be doing more than just looking inward.



The Talent

Can you define your brand's positioning by bringing in creative talent?
Surely, a creative is all you need – a brand writer or intuitive designer to look at what you're currently saying and how you're presenting yourself, do a little desk research and then come up with the brand positioning answer?

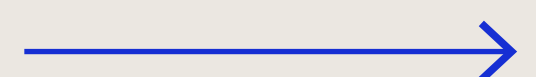
The short answer is 'no'.





Why? A creative, working in isolation can only offer a very one-sided view. They'll come up with something based on what they know. In the absence of their having an understanding of your world, its challenges and how you're perceived, their biases, assumptions and preferences will inform their choices. You may get something clever and snappy but it won't be a true reflection of your organisation.

Creative talent is important and will bring your positioning to life, but this part of the puzzle only comes into play once your brand strategy has been defined.



The Brainstorm

Can you define your brand's positioning from a brainstorm?

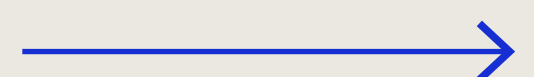
The short answer is 'no'.





Why? The problem with defining brand positioning from a brainstorming session is that the loudest, most confident people in the room end up asserting themselves which leads to an outcome that reflects only their views – a group-think mentality sets in.

You can incorporate brainstorms by all means, but these do need to be managed carefully. You need to make sure that the environment is a safe one, that everyone gets heard and that those who maybe aren't able to respond as fast in this sort of session can input ideas at their own pace.



The Moodboard

Can you define your brand's positioning from a moodboard?

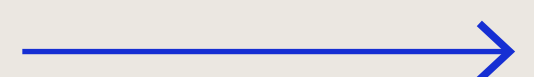
The short answer is 'no'.





Why? As it only presents what you and your team likes and dislikes, a moodboard is never going to be an adequate tool for a fully defined positioning. Moodboards can't tell you what your audience cares about or what else is happening in your market or in the wider world.

A moodboard represents a jumping ahead in the process. You can incorporate moodboards and co-creation but they're never a good place to start.



The Difference

Can you position your brand by looking and sounding different?

The short answer is 'no' – the longer answer is, 'in part, yes'.





Why? Merely looking and sounding different is an 'easy' fix that, without the other pieces of the puzzle in play, can only ever offer a superficial positioning answer, creating a position that will be difficult to 'defend'.

Researching your market category, considering whether you want to go for parity or difference (sometimes parity is stronger than difference) means that this piece is then able to add weight to the overall picture you're putting together.



The Tagline

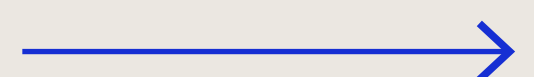
Can you express your positioning in a tagline – a single positioning line?

The short answer is 'yes'. But the long answer is heavily caveated.





Why? The problem with defining your brand positioning with a tagline is that it won't be useful to those working in the organisation: operations, human resources, front desk... It may be tempting to jump to a concise, clear brand message but your team/s need to understand the thinking behind the words. This is where a strategy document comes into its own as it includes not only brand statements like mission, vision and values but also provides your team with evidence, guidance and direction.





A thorough process of scoping, gathering and defining will ensure that all bases are covered and all jigsaw pieces are in play. Effective brands are effective precisely because they listen to different perspectives and are able to look outwards as well as inwards and all around.





Nobody
cares why
you think
you're
different





But they do care about **how you can make a difference to their lives.**

Forging a clear position in the marketplace means making your position —————>

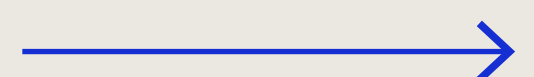
Relevant

Relevant to your audience – focusing on something they care about



Specific

– highlighting what you bring to the table and not falling back on lazy superlatives or vague generalisations



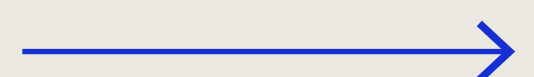
Impactful

— solving the need or desire of your target audience



Credible

– making a promise and proving you can keep it



Distinct and defensible

– putting you in control of your niche with clear water between you and your competition



Spirited

– sparking chemistry and connection



Getting clear on your positioning is a superpower but only if, once you've settled on it, you stick to it. Don't chop and change. Your audience won't remember your brand if you say it or they see it only once. Consistency of approach is key as it builds memory and mental availability when the time comes for action.

Explore how we've helped organisations just like yours create powerful brands from firm brand positioning foundations.
thecofoundry.co.uk/work ↗