

## "The Business Journal" Publishes Positioning Story

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### **Positioning is Dick Maggiore's Mantra**

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Name awareness is no longer enough for a brand, if it ever were, in this era of hypercompetition.

"Without meaning, a name has no power," remarks Dick Maggiore, president and chief executive officer of Innis Maggiore. Without a differentiating idea, he says, then a company's only hope is to win on price, which is "not a good game to play unless you're Wal-Mart."

The goal of branding, Maggiore explains, is to make the company name an equivalent or surrogate for an idea, "a differentiating idea that is highly meaningful and highly motivational" to the target prospects.

"Positioning is how you differentiate your brand from the competition," he says, as well as how that distinction from the others in its class is expressed through the use of words, pictures or sounds "to get your idea into the mind of your prospect.

"Differentiating is fundamentally about defining or redefining why a prospect should buy from you and not your competition," the CEO of the Canton-based marketing agency says. "Without a competitive difference, customers will stick with the competition, the brand they know."

Before Ford acquired the Swedish automaker Volvo, its marketing efforts focused on how safe its cars are, Maggiore notes. Safety was what set its cars apart. For FedEx, born as Federal Express, guaranteed overnight delivery set it apart in the marketplace. That guarantee was creatively dramatized several years ago with the slogan, "When it positively, absolutely has to be there overnight."

The idea behind branding is having a "truly differentiated position" and being able to command a higher price because of the perceived greater value.

Author Jack Trout, who coined the term "positioning" and is widely known as the father of positioning, credited Maggiore in the dedication of his most recent book, *In Search of the Obvious*, by introducing him to Obvious Adams. About five years ago, Maggiore says, he stumbled across the 1916 book, "about a man who succeeded in an advertising agency by paying close attention to obvious details."

The book reminded him of Trout, he recalls, and his concept that "the obvious idea is the best idea, because if it's obvious to you it will be obvious to your customers - which is why it will work - the best idea meaning the differentiating idea."

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Maggiore gave a copy of the book to Trout, with whom he had worked in 2002 on a campaign for Microsoft.

"When Dick introduced me to Obvious Adams, I immediately recognized it as the best book I had ever read on marketing," Trout says. "Why? Because the search for any marketing strategy is the search for the obvious. It's simple, easy and evident."

Maggiore first became familiar with Trout's work more than 25 years ago, which he says left an indelible mark on him and his agency. His enthusiasm for positioning eventually resulted in the two meetings and, eventually, working together on campaigns.

The two advertising executives applied the positioning strategy to boost Microsoft's MSN Internet service against the industry leader in dial-up Internet service, America Online. They came up with a strategy that attacked the inherent weakness in AOL's strength. "We repositioned AOL as the easy dial-up service for newbie, for kids, so the idea is that when you are ready to step up to the advanced dial-up service, MSN is it," Maggiore recalls.

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