

Dick Maggiore: Find your business' Holy Grail

By [Dick Maggiore Special](#) to The Canton Repository

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In the Christian tradition, the vessel Jesus and his disciples used to drink wine at the Last Supper is called the Holy Grail.

Through the centuries, the Holy Grail has come to be known as something very special and highly sought for its miraculous powers.

More than 30 million businesses scattered across our country compete fiercely for our attention and our dollars. All of them are in search of their own miracle, their Holy Grail, to give them an advantage in their respective marketplaces.

The need for a business to stand out by establishing a differentiated and sustainable [competitive position](#) in the minds of its customers and prospects might be greater today than at any time in history. The challenge is finding how to break out of the sea of sameness. Otherwise, to compete, you might be left with only one option: lowering your price.

It is finding how to be distinctive that has become businesses' search for the Holy Grail. Whether you succeed in finding your Holy Grail could make or break your business.

One of the best clues in the search is your customers. They are central in your quest.

Your customers have voices in their heads that drive almost every decision they make and everything they do — all day long. Customers are driven by the WIIFM question, “What’s in it for me?” It’s the first filter we use in responding to our environment. WIIFM must be answered.

We must also consider the competition and your own company’s ability and passion to come through with that differentiating idea that sets your brand apart.

Without a brand position, you are rudderless.

The first job is to find your differentiating idea. The second job is to stay focused on it.

Some companies confuse their products or services with their brands’ positions. The position is the idea that your brand owns in the minds of your customers and prospects. It isn’t the product or service itself, but it clearly does have a heck of a lot to do with your product or service.

Your brand’s position is not tangible. It’s the idea held in the brain.

This distinction matters. How do we want our customers to think and feel about our product or service as compared to the competition? We want to “own” an idea in our customers’ minds.

Think of our brains having numerous ladders, each representing a category. The steps or rungs on each ladder represent brands with associated ideas.

For example, one ladder in our brain is for the pizza category. Each step of the pizza ladder lays claim to a different idea that customers care about in the pizza category.

The idea of “delivery” is owned by Domino’s. “Taste” is owned by Papa John’s. Little Caesars owns “low cost.”

The goal is for your brand to own a rung on your category’s ladder. If you own that rung, congratulations! You have found the Holy Grail.

The more meaningful your idea is to your customers and prospects, the higher that rung is on your category’s ladder.

Here’s a format you can use to determine your difference and get your brand on the ladder. It’s your brand positioning statement:

- To (your target customer or prospect)
- Your brand name and category
- Benefit (your promise)
- Reason why (support the promise)

Amazon’s original positioning statement read:

- To book lovers,
- Amazon.com is a bookseller
- That provides quick, convenient access to more books
- Because we stock millions of books.

Crest toothpaste’s statement read:

- To mothers who want their children’s teeth protected against cavities
- Crest is a toothpaste
- That fights cavities better
- Because it has fluoride and has the seal of acceptance with the American Dental Association printed right on the box.

Brand positioning statements aren’t just for consumer brands. Businesses selling to other businesses need to develop their brand positioning statements:

- To construction-related businesses looking for an accounting firm that “gets” their industry

- ABC Accounting is an accounting firm
- That understands the unique issues facing companies in the construction-related industries
- Because its accountants work exclusively in this vertical industry, becoming experts who deeply understand your business.

The “benefit” is why the target will buy your product or service. The “reasons why” make the benefit promise believable. There’s no smoke and mirrors. You need to be the real deal.

The success of businesses like Crest, Amazon, the pizza giants and accounting firms that know and understand their customers and what differentiates their brands in the minds of those customers is indisputable.

They found their Holy Grail — and used it as the rudder to steer their way to success.

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