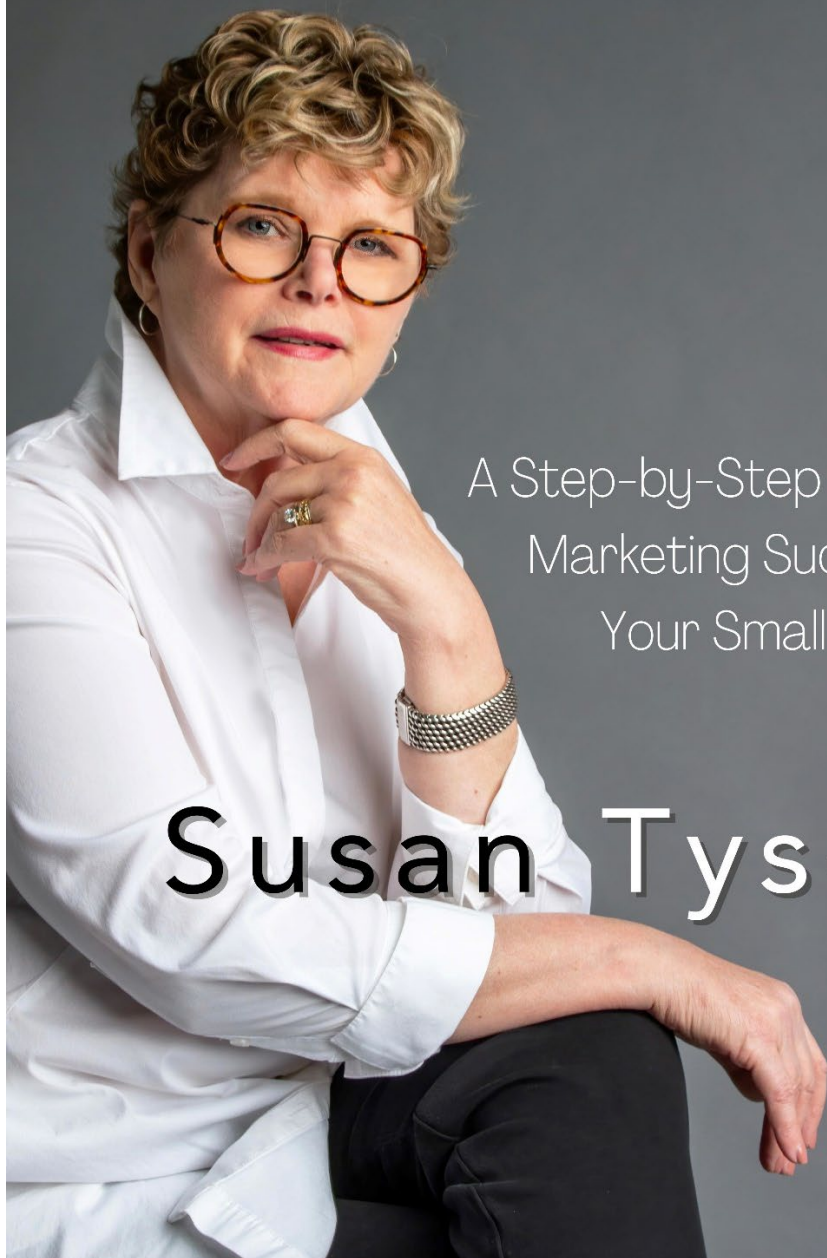
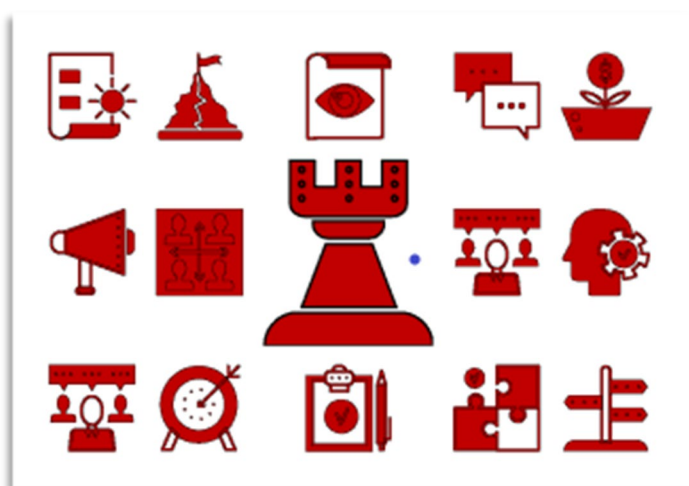


B U S I N E S S  
**MARKETING**  
S T R A T E G Y



A Step-by-Step Guide to  
Marketing Success for  
Your Small Business

**Susan** Tyson



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## **PREFACE**

You're good at what you do.

You've developed a great product or service.

You have a large customer base.

You know how to service the heck out of your accounts.

You understand product or service development.

Billing.

Administration.

You've taken your business as far as you can relying upon your own expertise.

Now it's time to take it up a notch.

Now it's time to learn how to market your business.

Now it's time to call in reinforcements.

That's why I'm here.

Read on.

## How to use this book

- Scan the table of contents to get familiar with the topics covered
- Flip through the pages to the end, scanning any that catch your eye
- Go back to the beginning of the document and scroll through each page
- Make notes on points to remember or questions you may have
- Pull out your notebook and start to put your plan together

## Who should use this book

- Business owners who are responsible for their own marketing and would like a reality check
- CEOs who want to better understand what their marketing team or their marketing agency is telling them
- College students interested in learning more about real-world marketing
- Start-ups who realize they've missed some great opportunities by pushing marketing to the bottom of the priority list

- Marketing professionals who would like to get out of the day-to-day grind to take a breather and be reminded of the basics
- Anyone – owner and employee alike – who doesn't understand how important marketing strategy is to the business
- My mom, RIP, because she never understood what I did for a living

You don't have to do this yourself

- This might look like an intimidating process, but it doesn't have to be.
- Have questions? Email me at [susan@sgtyson.com](mailto:susan@sgtyson.com).
- Would you like to schedule a free 30-minute Zoom session to review your business and your strategy work to-date, and talk about your likely next steps? Access my calendar here: <https://calendly.com/sgtyson>.
- Hire me as your fractional CMO and we'll work together to build a plan for you

NOTE: Throughout the book, I use the word customer; you may call them clients.



## Why Marketing Strategy Matters

Defining your marketing strategy can be an intimidating process. Although you can run your business without a marketing strategy, you don't know what you're missing without this all-important road map for your business.

It's not hard to do – you just need to understand the strategic marketing process and commit to completing it.

Once you've established your marketing strategy, you'll better understand your company's features and benefits, who you're targeting and why, what message best resonates with your target and how to market to that audience.

**After reviewing this book and implementing the tactics within, your business will have a leg up over the competition.**

This guide breaks out the elements of a strategy plan into manageable parts and takes

you step-by-step through the creation of a plan.

Use this guide to create your own strategy.

Or contact me and we can work through the planning process together.

## RESEARCH

The first step in developing a marketing strategy is research. It provides an opportunity to pause, reflect and review your current situation so you can prepare for the future, and it can reduce the uncertainty surrounding the decisions you're making.

With effective research you will

- Get internal and external feedback on your company
- Define the competitive landscape
- Identify key strengths and weaknesses of your company
- Uncover new insights or unknown capabilities about your company
- Gain a better understanding of your business

**Research can reduce the uncertainty surrounding the decisions you're making.**

We often shy away from research because it sounds like it could be difficult to do. Or the questions are too hard to ask. It doesn't have to be like that.

Start with **Interviews** with current and former customers. A simple telephone interview format can provide great insights into your company's strengths and weaknesses.

Through **Interviews**, you'll find that an outside view of your business will provide greater insights into what you're good at and what you need to do better. As a bonus, you could get some great content, too.

A **Competitive Analysis** gives you a chance to objectively review your competitors in relation to your company.

By reviewing your company's **Core Competencies**, you'll develop greater insights into skill sets within your company.

And an examination of your **Goals** will tie your Marketing Strategy to your overall business plan.

The Research steps include:

- Interviews
- Competitive Analysis
- SWOT Analysis
- Core Competencies
- Goals

## Interviews

To learn how your business is doing, how it's perceived and what's working (or not), all you need to do is ask.

Identify a dozen current or former customers and invite them for a friendly 15- to 30-minute telephone chat

- Consider having someone else do the calls if you think your customers might be shy when responding directly to you.
- Include the questions you plan to use (suggestions below) in your invitation email so your customers can prepare for the call.
- Prepare a call script and use the same questions in all calls so you can assess similarities and differences in your interviewee responses

**To learn  
how your  
business  
is doing,  
all you  
need to  
do is ask.**

## Record and transcribe all interviews

- This is important. You want to focus on what your interviewee is saying and not be sidetracked by taking notes. You'll be surprised by the additional insights that come through when you read the word-for-word transcripts a week or two after the interview.
- Please remember to let your interviewee know that you're recording. I like to tell them that I'm recording so I can focus on our conversation rather than on taking notes.

## Some interview questions you can use:

- What is your history with [YOUR COMPANY NAME]?
- How long have you worked with them?
- What services do you use?
- What does [YOUR COMPANY NAME] mean to you?
- How would you describe [YOUR COMPANY NAME] to others?

- How has your interactions with [YOUR COMPANY NAME] impacted your business?
- What is [YOUR COMPANY NAME] best at?
- What could [YOUR COMPANY NAME] do better?
- Do you recommend [YOUR COMPANY NAME]?
- Do you have any other comments?  
Anything else that we should know?

Summarize your findings

- Similar comments made
- Unique highlights uncovered
- Strongest strengths and weakest weaknesses
- Potential messaging statements

*See the Interview Call Script in the APPENDIX*



## Examples

*By interviewing current or previous customers you could learn*

- *Their perception of your business that is different than your perception*
- *A selling benefit that you're not currently highlighting*
- *Strengths that you've not been featuring*
- *Weaknesses that you have been unaware of*
- *An interesting POV on your company's features or benefits that you've not considered*
- *Competitive differentiators or competitive advantages*
- *Recommendations for improvements that could enhance your products or your customer relationships*
- *Tag line(s) or benefit statement(s) that you could use in your marketing communication*

## **Competitive Analysis**

When it comes to understanding your competition, there is no such thing as too much information. The more you know about your competitors, the better equipped you will be to develop strategies for differentiating your own business.

To that end, take the time to research your competitors in depth.

Visit their websites, read their marketing materials, and talk to their customers.

By getting a feel for how they operate, you can begin to identify areas where you have an advantage.

**Identify each competitor's strengths and weaknesses and opportunities for you: areas where you can improve and areas where you already outshine.**

Perhaps they're not leveraging technology as effectively as they could be, or maybe they're not appealing to certain customer segments.

Whatever the case may be, knowing your competition inside and out will give you a major leg up in the marketplace.

## **Process**

- Identify 3 or 4 companies that you consider your competition
- Make note of your impressions of each company based on the website content, language, graphics, photos, customer comments and feedback, etc.
- Analyze their strategies, identify the areas where they are strongest and where they are most vulnerable
- What do they do better than you? What do you do better than them?
- How are they similar or different from your business?
- Describe the selling process and the buying environment

- How do they present their products or services?
- Do they ask for the order? Can a web user easily contact them?

Map your findings in a spreadsheet to compare and contrast the competitors against each other and against your company. Highlight the important differentiators.

*See the Competitive Analysis Worksheet in the APPENDIX*

## **Examples**

*Through a well-executed competitive analysis, you could learn:*

- *How your competitors are using sales tactics that are similar to or different from yours*
- *Where a competitor excels compared to your company*


- *How your company outshines a competitor*
- *Different ways your competitor asks for the order (or doesn't ask)*
- *How your competitors convey their brand personality through their website*
- *Unique strategies that your competitor employs*

## **SWOT Analysis**

Now that you have completed your interviews and reviewed your competitors' websites, it is time to prepare your **SWOT Analysis** to examine your company's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats – key areas that form the foundation of your marketing strategy.

Strengths and Weaknesses are internally driven and can be changed or impacted by you.

Your company's Strengths could include its size, financial stability, location, history, innovative products or services, etc.

Your Weaknesses could include your reliance on a small number of customers, lack of **name recognition**,  limited marketing budget, etc.

**A SWOT Analysis forms the foundation of your marketing strategy.**

Opportunities and Threats come from an external source and are likely not something you can change or modify

Your Opportunities could include growth in your target market, new technologies that you can capitalize on, etc.

Threats could include intense competition, changes in consumer tastes or preferences, etc.

By taking a close look at all these factors, you will be able to develop a marketing strategy that is tailored to your company's unique strengths and weaknesses. You will also be able to identify potential areas of opportunity and threat that you need to keep an eye on.

## **Elements of a SWOT Analysis**

### **Internal Factors**

- Strengths
  - What do you do better than others?
  - What are your unique capabilities?
- Resources?
  - What are others' perceptions?

- Weaknesses
  - What does your competition do better than you?
  - What can be improved?
  - What are others' perceptions?

## External Influences

- Opportunities
  - What are the positive trends or conditions in your marketplace?
  - What prospects are available to you?
  - Are there underserved markets in the area?
- Threats
  - What are the negative trends or conditions that you face?
  - Competitors' actions?
  - Financial situation?
  - Changing regulatory environment?



**A SWOT Analysis is oftentimes represented in a grid format.**

For example, a SWOT for a medical equipment manufacturer:

<i>INTERNAL</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
	<i>Patented technology on 2 devices</i> <i>FDA approved</i> <i>Principals with extensive experience and expertise</i>	<i>Needs equity investments to fund the first 2 years' operation</i> <i>We have no relationships with the close-knit group of medical device distribution</i> <i>The equipment required for the manufacturing procedures is expensive and difficult to find</i>

EXTERNAL

***Opportunities***

*Only a small fraction of the available market has had experience using this equipment*

*The demand for our product category has been doubling each year*

*Several potential partners have expressed interest in conducting research with us*

***Threats***

*There are several alternative device manufacturers in the market*

*Margins are potentially very slim with our potential user base*

For example, a SWOT for a highly specialized technology manufacturer:

<i>INTERNAL</i>	<b><i>Strengths</i></b>	<b><i>Weaknesses</i></b>
	<i>Our management team has extensive experience in the category</i>	<i>High startup costs to build, open and maintain the necessary specialized manufacturing facility</i>
	<i>We have excellent relationships with our potential distribution network</i>	<i>Long lead time to build and equip the facility</i>
	<i>There are no other manufacturers in this category in the region; distributors have said they prefer working with a local resource</i>	

EXTERNAL

***Opportunities***

*The lack of manufacturing competitors represents enormous potential for sales and growth*

*Our R&D indicates there is potential for additional uses of our product*

***Threats***


*Environment protection standards must be updated when government regulations change*

*If our resource for raw materials becomes obsolete, we will lose our supply*

## **Core Competencies**

Your company's **Core Competencies** are the fundamental basis of the value it delivers to customers. They provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace by enabling your company to deliver superior customer value.

In order to be successful, a company must identify and develop its **Core Competencies**.

 You'll want to use these competencies to guide the creation of products or services that meet or exceed the needs and expectations of your customers.

**Core Competencies are operational attributes rather than the physical resources and are not easy for competitors to imitate.**

By doing so, you can build a loyal customer base and achieve long-term success.

Your company's **Core Competencies** are your special skills and capabilities that provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace. It is the fundamental basis for the value added by your company that allows you deliver superior customer value.

In other words, your **Core Competencies** are what makes you better than the competition. They are the heart of your company, and they need to be nurtured and constantly strengthened if you want to maintain a competitive edge.

It's important to remember that your competitors are always looking for ways to improve their own Core Competencies too, so you can never rest on your laurels. You must constantly evolve and adapt if you want to stay ahead of the pack.

Probably the best way to understand a **Core Competency** is to consider some examples.

**Core Competencies** that a business may have focus on people and processes:

- *Innovation expertise*
- *Speed and flexibility in the marketplace*
- *Superior product development skills*
- *Greater marketplace and customer understanding*
- *Strong analysis and database skills*
- *Industry/market knowledge and expertise*
- *Experts in marketing communications*
- *Fast or friendly customer service*
- *Streamlined and efficient processes*
- *Logistics expertise*
- *Strategic/entrepreneurial insight*
- *Skills in the early identification of trends/opportunities*

You'll notice that there are no physical resources or assets listed. That's important because **Core Competencies** are unique to your business and deliver an ongoing competitive advantage.

## **Marketing Goals**

Your **Marketing Goals** are a subset of your business goals and should fit in with your company's financial objectives. These are quantifiable and are specific to your marketing activity.

Good marketing goals will be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART).

**Specific** — defined in clear, specific terms with real numbers and real deadlines

**Measurable** — easily trackable and measurable

**Attainable** — realistic given the resources available (your employees, your budget, your tools)

**Relevant** — make sense for your specific needs and should tie in with your big-picture plan

### **SMART GOALS**

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Relevant

Time-based



**Time-Based** — clear deadlines (long- and short-term), without which your goals will just be a form of wishful thinking

They will also be aligned with your business goals.

For example, if your business goal is to increase sales by 10% in the next fiscal year, then your marketing goal could be to increase traffic to your website by 20% in the next quarter.

This goal is specific (increasing traffic to your website), measurable (20%), achievable (with a well-executed marketing campaign), relevant (to revenue growth) and time-bound (in the next quarter).

Keep in mind that your marketing goals should always align with your company's overarching goals – if they don't, you're not working towards the same endgame.

And remember that just because you can measure something doesn't mean it's worth measuring. Make sure your metrics are meaningful and will help you make better decisions.

Great marketing plans are built on a foundation of goals that represent your most pressing business needs and are quantifiable.

For example:

- *Increase sales*
- *Generate leads (or opportunities)*
- *Acquire new customers*
- *Reduce churn (or retain customers)*
- *Up-sell and cross-sell*
- *Improve awareness*
- *Increase customer satisfaction*
- *Increase web traffic*
- *Refine go-to-market strategy*

## **ASSESSMENT**

To really understand how your business is doing, you need to complement the data you compiled through research with a qualitative analysis. This involves looking at the bigger picture and making assumptions based on your experience and judgment.

For example, you might look at your sales figures and decide that you need to increase your marketing budget.

Or you might examine your customer satisfaction surveys and conclude that you need to improve your product quality.

Either way, a qualitative analysis can help you better understand your company and make more informed decisions about its future.

Assessment tactics include

- Target Profiles
- Mission Statement
- Vision Statement

- Positioning Statement
- Value Proposition
- Brand Values
- Unique Selling Proposition

## ■ Target Profiles

Your **Target Profiles** are a representation of your ideal customer. They are drawn from market research data and demographics of your existing customers and identify the characteristics of the prospects most likely to purchase from you.

**Target Profiles** are based on well-informed judgment and assumptions.

Demographics include age, gender, occupation, location, income level or education.

Psychographics include personality, values, opinions, attitudes, interests, decision drivers and pain points.

**Your target group possesses similar unique characteristics and needs – just like your company and your products.**

You'll likely want to create more than one profile, since you deal with a number of decision-makers within an organization, each

with his or her decision driver or pain point. For example, your messages to the owner of your target business likely will be different than the finance guy or the sales manager.

With well-defined **Target Profiles**, you will be able to make informed decisions about your marketing strategy, product development, and sales efforts.

Remember, your Target Profile is not static – it should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as your business grows and evolves. By taking the time to define your Target Profile, you will be well on your way to reaching your business goals.

Characteristics that could be included in a **Target Profile**

Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Occupation
- Location

- Income level
- Education

### Psychographics

- Personality
- Values
- Opinions
- Attitudes
- Interests
- Decision drivers
- Pain points

Target Profile can be as brief or complex as needed.

### **For example:**

- *The Meyers Company targets women business owners aged 30 to 55 located in busy suburban communities. These business owners generally have advanced degrees and income in low six figures.*

*These business owners are extremely independent and outspoken, dedicated to their customer's success and are highly successful themselves. Their biggest challenge is the difficulty they*

*have distancing themselves from problem clients.*

- *Burgess & Jones Ltd. targets 35-55-year-old men and women who work at law firms, business consultancies and accounting firms. They are successful in their business as evidenced by their loyal customer base and personal income level*



## **Mission Statement**

Your **Mission Statement** is a declaration of what makes your business important to you and your customers. By design, it guides the actions of your employees and draws in customers by outlining what the company intends to accomplish.

Your **Mission Statement** should be clear, concise, and actionable, rooted in your values, and reflect your company's unique strengths.

**Your mission statement it defines how your company sets itself apart from the competition without limiting the business**

The Statement is set in the present tense; it defines your company's purpose and primary objectives and serves as a framework, giving everyone involved a launching point to build from when establishing the brand.

Most importantly, your **Mission Statement** should inspire everyone who reads it to do their best work.

For customers, it defines how your company sets itself apart from the competition without limiting the business purpose.

For employees, it establishes a common goal to work towards.

And for shareholders, it provides a clear understanding of the company's purpose and how it plans to achieve its objectives.

**Mission Statements** tend to be short, clear, memorable, and powerful. Ask yourself:

- Why do you exist?
- How are you unique?
- Why do you do what you do?
- How do you do it?
- What inspires you?
- What motivates you?
- Who are your customers?
- What do you want for your customers?

- What kind of environment do you want for your employees?
- What impact do you want to have for your community?

Once you have answered these questions, you will be well on your way to creating a powerful Mission Statement that will guide your company for years to come.

*See the Mission Statement Template in the APPENDIX*

Mission Statements can be used to motivate and energize your internal team and your customers.

**For example:**

- *RBB & Company is a marketing agency that provides creative and strategic services to small businesses to help them improve their online search and social media presence so they can acquire new customers and build their brand online.*

- *Our mission at Mather & Company is to help our business consulting clients make distinctive, lasting, and substantial improvements in their performance and to build a great firm that attracts, develops, excites, and retains exceptional people.*

## **Vision Statement**

Your company's **Vision Statement** reflects your internal values. It defines your company's purpose and outlines your goals and aspirations for the future.

A clear and well-defined **Vision Statement** ensures that everyone within an organization is rowing in the same direction and working towards a common goal.

The **Vision Statement** is future-oriented, with a focus on goals and aspirations. Unlike a mission statement, which focuses on what an organization can do for its customers, a **Vision Statement** takes an internal perspective and is motivating for employees.

Employees who find their company's vision meaningful have significantly higher engagement levels.

In short, a **Vision Statement** is the foundation upon which a company builds its future.

Be sure to craft it carefully and keep it updated regularly.

### **Characteristics of a good Vision Statement**

- Written in the present tense with a focus on the future
- Describes and clarifies what success looks like for your organization
- Uses clear concise language to articulate your goals and aspirations
- Exudes passion and emotion
- Is simple, specific and inspirational
- Unique to your organization

Given the impact that a **Vision Statement** can have on your company's long-term success and even its bottom line, it is worth taking the time to craft a statement that

synthesizes your ambition and mobilizes your staff.

To write your **Vision Statement**, specify the accomplishments you plan for your company and the action you'll take to accomplish them.

*See the Vision Statement Template in the APPENDIX*

### **Examples of good Vision Statements:**

- *Bryson Area Community Markets aims to continue growing organically in the Midwest and create a cooperative, sustainable environment in which the natural and organic supply chains thrive.*
- *We want KWPA to be the insurance agency of choice, dedicated to educating, serving, and protecting local families and businesses with the best insurance policies at the right price.*

## ± Positioning Statement

Your **Positioning Statement** is not a tagline but rather, it is an expression of how your products, services or brand fills a particular consumer need in a way that your competitors do not. It is a guidepost for your marketing efforts.

By clearly articulating what need you are solving for and how you are different, you will be able to make better decisions, faster.

**A Positioning Statement is simple, memorable, and tailored to the target market.**

Your **Positioning Statement** should be short, sweet and to the point, memorable and different. Most importantly, it should be authentic. Your **Positioning Statement** is not something that should be taken lightly - it is the foundation for your entire marketing strategy.



**Positioning Statements** are often confused with taglines, which are shorter memorable phrases meant for consumer-facing communications.

A **Positioning Statement** is a much more detailed and internal-facing statement that explains the specific consumer need you are trying to meet, how your product or service meets that need better than your competition and why this matters to your target consumer.

### **What makes a good Positioning Statement?**

- It is simple, memorable and credible
- It provides an unmistakable and easily understood picture of your company or brand that differentiates it from your competitors
- It is a promise that your brand can deliver
- You can “own” it; your company or brand can be the sole occupier of this position in the market

- It can be used to help evaluate whether marketing decisions are consistent with and supportive of your brand or company
- It leaves room for growth

### **Components of a good Positioning Statement**

- The unique value or service you deliver
- To your target audience
- Because of these reasons to believe



*See the Positioning Statement Template in the APPENDIX*

Write your Positioning Statement to highlight the benefits your target audience is looking for.

#### **For example:**

- *Magna Technology is a B2B review site for business professionals who are looking to quickly discover, buy, and manage the best technology for their*

*needs. We're able to do this through our 700K+ unbiased and verified user reviews in over 1400 categories.*

- *Brinn Consulting, the nation's leading IT consultancy for law firms and legal departments, is uniquely positioned to make your practice more productive and profitable through our extensive knowledge of hundreds of software applications used by the legal community. Our proprietary suite of tools makes migrating and configuring systems faster and more efficient. We also have a reputation for doing a job once and doing it right — that's why 4 out of 5 clients put us on long-term contract.*

## **Value Proposition**

A well-crafted **Value Proposition** is the cornerstone of a strong competitive advantage.

It states how your company plans to deliver benefits to customers and why your innovation, service, or product is the best option for solving their problems.

**Your Value Proposition is the key component of your business that solves a problem your competitors cannot.**

Your **Value Proposition** must be clear, differentiated, and appealing to your target market; it should be the primary reason a prospect chooses to do business with you rather than your competitor.

Your **Value Proposition** must be supported by your product or service offering, your pricing strategy, and your go-to-market approach.

It is the filter through which all your marketing and sales efforts must pass. Get it right, and you will be well on your way to building a sustainable and successful business.

When done correctly, a **Value Proposition** can be the deciding factor that wins you new business.

**Your Value Proposition includes:**

- Target customer definition
- “Need” or “opportunity” statement
- Your business category
- Key benefit statement or compelling reason to buy
- Differentiating statement versus your competition

*See the Value Proposition Template in the APPENDIX*

Focus on your competitive advantage in your Value Proposition.

**For example:**

- *For cat wranglers who need high-quality cat wrangling equipment, the Wrangling Emporium is the world's only dedicated online cat wrangling equipment distributor that provides the very best cat wrangling equipment, delivered straight to your door.*

*Unlike other cat equipment supply companies, the Wrangling Emporium is the only e-commerce business in North America that caters specifically to cat wrangling aficionados.*

- *For hiring managers and HR professionals at technology companies in the Midwest who are staffing call centers, Thompson Staffing is a resource with a smart, ambitious team dedicated to delighting our customers.*

*Our culture of ownership and transparency empowers our team to achieve goals they didn't think possible.*

*For all those on board, it's going to be a challenging and rewarding journey – and we're just getting started.*

## **Brand Values**

Your company's Brand is unique. It's what sets you apart from your competitors and articulates what you stand for as a business. Your **Brand Values** reflect that uniqueness and should guide all your choices and actions.

They provide the foundation for everything you do, from the way you interact with customers to the way you design your products and services.

**Your  
company's  
brand is  
articulated  
through  
your Brand  
Values.**

By living and breathing your **Brand Values**, you'll ensure that your company always stays true to its identity.



Some questions to ask that define your  
**Brand Values:**

- What does your company and your brand stand for?
- What values are most important to you?
- What principles guide your internal and external actions?
- What are some of the core values or beliefs you hold in high regard that you can tap into to facilitate engagement with your audience.
- How can your values support meeting your goals and objectives?
- How can they support your target in meeting their needs?
- What do you want your target to know about you and your business mission?
- What kinds of conversations will facilitate this relationship growth?

**Here are some sample words you could use to describe your Brand Values.**

Humorous	Diverse	Adaptable	Competent
Honest	Empathetic	Consistent	Approachable
Sophisticated	Efficient	Flexible	Confident
Independent	Trustworthy	Attentive	Grateful
Kind	Expert	Visionary	Decisive
Loyal	Fair	Capable	Curious
Committed	Strong	Calm	Spontaneous
Motivated	Appreciative	Communicative	Diplomatic
Reliable	Optimistic	Focused	Innovative
Cordial	Original	Genuine	Inspiring
Proficient	Selfless	Generous	Intelligent
Transparent	Positive	Creative	Intuitive
Resilient	Successful	Energetic	Assuring
Resolute	Supportive	Professional	Wise
Pragmatic	Skillful	Responsible	Satisfying

## **Examples of Brand Values statements:**

- *A law firm's Brand Values could include*
  - *Trustworthy*
  - *Capable*
  - *Professional*
  - *Competent*
  - *Wise*
  - *Diplomatic*
- *Brand Values for a printer could include*
  - *Skillful*
  - *Committed*
  - *Efficient*
  - *Adaptable*
  - *Creative*
  - *Innovative*
- *An interior decorator could convey these Brand Values*
  - *Visionary*
  - *Expert*
  - *Curious*
  - *Focused*
  - *Assuring*
  - *Committed*

## **Unique Selling Proposition**

Your **Unique Selling Proposition** is what sets your company apart from the competition and aids in attracting customers.

It is the essential descriptor of what you offer, how you solve customers' needs, and what distinguishes you from your competition.

**Your  
Unique  
Selling  
Proposition  
states what  
makes your  
company  
different  
from  
others.**

A well-crafted USP will clearly describe how your product or service solves or improves problems, what benefits customers can expect, and why customers should buy from you instead of a competitor.

Use your **Unique Selling Proposition** in marketing materials and in conversations with potential customers to give them a clear

picture of what your brand has to offer. Remember, your USP is unique to your company, so make sure it is reflective of what makes your business special.

**Your Unique Selling Proposition will include:**

- Your product or service
- The solution you provide
- Who you provide the solution(s) for (i.e., target audience)
- What sets you apart from the competition (unique benefits or features)

It is a statement about what makes you and your company different from others.

*See the Unique Selling Proposition Template in the APPENDIX*

Your Unique Selling Proposition informs your marketing materials or sales talking points.

**For example:**

- *The Thompson Staffing team is dedicated to delighting our manufacturing-focused customers by empowering our team to achieve goals they didn't think possible, nurturing a culture of ownership, transparency, and camaraderie throughout the organization.*
- *Newman & Associates Insurance Brokers provide the highest quality consultation service for all our small business customers' Medicare insurance needs through timely and proactive delivery of relevant and up-to-date information using efficient electronic and online solutions.*

## **EXECUTION**

Once you've completed the Research and Assessment portion of your Marketing Strategy development, we can approach certain executional considerations.

This isn't the place for a deep dive on the topic; rather, it is a topline summary of key executional considerations from a strategic point of view. Included in this discussion is

- Content Considerations
- Brand Voice
- Brand Tone

## **Content Considerations**

The language you use for promotional writing – website content, emails, social media posts, customer service communications, blogs – should be different from your business writing (emails, letters, reports) in several ways.

- Business writing tends to be direct, brief; it rarely reflects the sender's personality
- Your promotional writing should be as warm and personable as you are
- Spelling rules apply in promotional writing; grammar, too, although we can be a little more flexible with some of the rules
- You want your content to sound like someone's normal way to speak
- Interact with your reader

**You want your reader to see themselves in your content. Your writing should reflect the wants and needs, style, and interests of your target audience.**

**Include content that your reader wants to see; not what you want to tell them.**



You know how you can quickly spot your name in text? When you read something that interests you or that you agree with, you're happier with the content?

You want your reader to see themselves in your content. Your writing should reflect the wants and needs, style, and interests of your target audience.

One trick is to picture someone from your target audience group and write specifically to that person, addressing the questions and concerns of that one person.

Another way to develop this type of content is to develop a list of all the questions about your product or service that you, your sales team or customer service has received.

Those questions should form the basis for your content because that's what your customers and prospects want to know about.

This isn't the place where you want to brag. Telling your readers how great you, your product or your services are will fall on deaf ears.



They'd rather **hear** from other customers – people like them – to **hear** about your customers' experience and takeaways.

It's more believable. That's why you'll want to use testimonials freely.

With more than 80% of business buyers going to the internet before making a buying decision, a contemporary, well-thought-out website will be crucial for your success.

Your website needs to quickly convey your brand personality through layout, colors, graphics, and content.

It should telegraph what your business is all about, what services or products you offer,

how to order or buy those products or services and provide a means for your prospects and current customers to contact you.

People don't read any more; they scan. Set up your content so it can be easily scanned.

When your reader sees something that interests them, they'll stop and read more carefully.

- Write short, simple sentences
- Be conversational
- Use small words
- Bullet points are good, too

Remember that teacher with the horribly tedious lectures in high school?

Remember how easily you were able to zone out despite your best efforts? **Don't be that guy.**



## **Brand Voice**

Your **Brand Voice** reflects your company's personality and helps you connect with your customers.

It should be consistent across all platforms, from your website to your social media posts to your ads and your one-on-one communications with your customers.

Your **Brand Voice** is as important as the colors and designs you use for your logo, website or products, and helps you connect with your customers.

**Brand Voice: your brand personality conveyed through your words.**

It should be distinct and easily recognizable, so that your target audience can identify it immediately. When used correctly, your **Brand Voice** will help you stand out from the



**noise** and build a strong connection with your customers.

Of course, within your voice you can employ different tones to suit the situation – but the key is to make sure that your voice is always easily recognizable, no matter where or how it's being used.

**Here are some sample words you could use to describe your Brand Voice.**

Humble	Understanding	Simple	Formal
Authentic	Genuine	Playful	Respectful
Poetic	Caring	Opinionated	Smart
Romantic	Professorial	Compassionate	Warm
Honest	Sarcastic	Optimistic	Humorous
Upbeat	Informative	Provocative	Expressive
Inspiring	Passionate	Serious	Plain
Strong	Enthusiastic	Heartfelt	Straightforward
Positive	Engaging	Dry	Promotional
Irreverent	Conversational	Empowering	Considerate
Fun	Personal	Witty	Personable
Calm	Friendly	Expert	Quirky
Edgy	Frank	Trendy	Direct
Unexpected	Bold	Clinical	Helpful
Sympathetic	Trustworthy	Funny	Devoted

## **Examples of Brand Voice:**

- *If you're an attorney, your Brand Voice could be*
  - *Authentic*
  - *Straightforward*
  - *Direct*
  - *Professorial*
  - *Trustworthy*
  - *Understanding*
- *An IT service company would have a Brand Voice that includes*
  - *Smart*
  - *Helpful*
  - *Friendly*
  - *Empowering*
  - *Honest*
  - *Expert*
- *A research company would use Brand Voice words such as*
  - *Positive*
  - *Strong*
  - *Helpful*
  - *Compassionate*
  - *Respectful*
  - *Serious*

## **Brand Tone**

The way you use your words in all of your promotional materials – from your website to your sales messages, emails, newsletters, ads, customer service communications, and more – reflects your brand's personality and values.

This is what we refer to as **Brand Tone**.

**Brand Tone**  
is how you  
use your  
brand voice  
in various  
situations

Just like in real life, you adjust your tone according to who you are talking to and what you are talking about.

For example, you would use a different tone when talking to a friend than you would when talking to a client.

But no matter who you're talking to or what you're talking about, your Brand Voice should remain the same.



**Here are some words that could be used to convey your Brand Tone.**

Formal	Soothing	Coarse	Friendly
Casual	Boisterous	Conservative	Cheerful
Respectful	Cheeky	Conversational	Funny
Irreverent	Short	Edgy	Humorous
Matter of fact	Sharp	Enthusiastic	Sarcastic
Forceful	Professional	Informative	Smart
Dry	Provocative	Nostalgic	Snarky
Frank	Quirky	Passionate	Trendy
Authoritative	Romantic	Playful	Trustworthy
Caring	Upbeat	Witty	Unapologetic
Benevolent	Candid	Impassioned	Complex
Philosophical	Optimistic	Thoughtful	Pragmatic
Unassuming	Celebratory	Inspirational	Gentle
Whimsical	Objective	Virtuous	Curious
Sincere	Compassionate	Warm	Earnest
Inoffensive	Sophisticated	Relaxed	Laid-Back
Lighthearted	Lofty	Wry	Polite

## Examples of Brand Tone:

- *The Brand Tone words for a social media consultant could include*
  - *Casual*
  - *Humorous*
  - *Trendy*
  - *Earnest*
  - *Upbeat*
  - *Informative*
- *If you're a restaurant owner, the Brand Tone words you'd use could include*
  - *Boisterous*
  - *Enthusiastic*
  - *Friendly*
  - *Cheerful*
  - *Caring*
  - *Warm*

## **Putting it all together**

Congratulations.

It isn't always easy to conduct an in-depth review and reflection on your company.

Oftentimes, it's easier to just keep barreling along without a strategy.

But now you're armed with the data you'll need to pull together a great strategy plan.

Successful companies have a clear vision and a well-defined road map.

Your strategy plan will be instrumental in helping you achieve both.

Use it as a reference point when making decisions about your business.

And don't forget to revisit it periodically to make sure you're still on track.

Compile all your findings into one document that will give you a clear and comprehensive view of your business.

This will be your business guide going forward.

Summarize what you've learned about your company and make specific recommendations for improvement.

Use actionable language so that you can easily track whether or not you're seeing results from your strategic planning.

And remember, Rome wasn't built in a day — give yourself time to implement.

Refer to this guide when you're developing new products or making revisions to existing products.

Check this guide when you're making pricing decisions

Look at this guide any time you start or revise your marketing communications – website, email messages, brochures, ads, even your customer service responses – to be sure that

- your message resonates with your target audience
- reflects your company's mission, vision, and positioning
- incorporates your brand values, voice, and tone

Revisit this exercise every year, so you stay up to date with changing market conditions.

++++++


You don't have to do this yourself

- Click [here](#) to connect with me with any questions
- Click [here](#) to schedule a free 30-minute Zoom session to review your business and your strategy work to-date and we'll talk about your likely next steps
- Hire me as your outsourced Marketing Director and together we'll build a plan for you

Best of luck! You'll do great.

## Great Quotes on Strategy

*I'm a lifelong learner and a student of strategy. Here are some of my favorite quotes on the subject. You'll find a lot of wisdom here.*

Strategy is a fancy word for coming up with a long-term plan and putting it into a **plan**. — *Ellie Pidot.* 

If you don't know where you're going, you'll wind up somewhere else. — *Yogi Berra*

Strategy is about making choices, trade-offs; it's about deliberately choosing to be different. — *Michael Porter*

You build your own strategy. You don't define it by what another competitor is doing. — *Ginni Rometty.*

I believe people make their own luck by great preparation and good strategy. — ***Jack Canfield***

He who fails to plan is planning to fail. — ***Winston Churchill***

You cannot be everything to everyone. If you decide to go north, you cannot go south at the same time. — ***Jeroen De Flander***

Strategy is a fancy word for coming up with a long-term plan and putting it into a plan. — ***Ellie Pidot.***



Hope is not a strategy. Fear is not an option. — ***Vince Lombardi***

Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat. — ***Sun Tzu***



Strategy is not the consequence of planning, but the opposite: its starting point. — ***Henry Mintzberg***

There is only one winning strategy. It is to carefully define the target market and direct a superior offering to that target market. — ***Philip Kotler***

A vision and strategy aren't enough. The long-term key to success is execution. Each day. Every day." — ***Richard M. Kovacevich***

A good marketing strategy without a proper business setup is like car tires on a bicycle. Don't expect it to move faster. — ***Francesca Anastasi***

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Susan Tyson is a marketing strategist and fractional marketing executive focused on recharging business owners, executives, and board members.

Employing high-level strategy, tactical roadmaps and daily execution guidance, her detail-oriented process, creative problem-solving, operational mindset, and extensive experience give her clients the confidence, capabilities, and control to drive true change for a positive impact on their bottom line.

For more than thirty years, Tyson has been a marketing and advertising professional and an independent marketing consultant since 2014.

She has worked with a wide range of ad agencies and corporate entities for an impressively diverse client base including

- Enrich Enterprises Inc (EEI) management consulting
- Cars.com dealer marketing, various trade shows and conferences in the automotive space
- ComEd business-to-business
- Similac Welcome Addition Club consumer marketing
- Carson Pirie Scott department store catalog marketing
- Chicago Sun-Times circulation marketing
- Budget Rent a Car business travel marketing
- Automotive aftermarket companies
- Oldsmobile 88
- The College of American Pathologists (CAP).

Based in Chicago, Illinois, USA, Tyson earned a Master of Liberal Arts degree (MLA) with a focus on teamwork and leadership from DePaul School for New Learning in Chicago and a bachelor's degree from the same

institution. She is Net Promoter Certified, Hub Spot Certified and a Constant Contact partner.

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## **APPENDIX**



## INTERVIEW CALL SCRIPT

GOOD MORNING/AFTERNOON, **[NAME]**. THANKS FOR AGREEING TO SPEAK WITH ME ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS ON **[YOUR COMPANY NAME]**. I EXPECT THIS WILL TAKE ONLY 15 TO 20 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME.

I'M RECORDING THIS CALL SO I CAN FOCUS ON OUR DISCUSSION RATHER ON TAKING NOTES. DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS? {PAUSE}

MAY I BEGIN?

*WHAT IS YOUR HISTORY WITH **[YOUR COMPANY NAME]**?*

*HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED WITH THEM?*

*WHAT SERVICES DO YOU USE?*

*WHAT DOES **[YOUR COMPANY NAME]** MEAN TO YOU?*

*HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE **[YOUR COMPANY NAME]** TO OTHERS?*

*HOW HAVE YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH **[YOUR COMPANY NAME]** IMPACTED YOUR BUSINESS?*

*WHAT IS [YOUR COMPANY NAME] BEST AT?*

*WHAT COULD [YOUR COMPANY NAME] DO  
BETTER?*

*DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS? ANYTHING ELSE  
THAT WE SHOULD KNOW?*

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR TAKING TIME TO SPEAK WITH  
ME THIS MORNING/AFTERNOON. YOU'VE PROVIDED  
SOME VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO [YOUR COMPANY  
NAME].

I'LL BE IN TOUCH IF THERE ARE ANY FOLLOW-UP  
QUESTIONS.

HAVE A NICE DAY.

## **COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET**

**[COMPANY NAME]**

WEBSITE OBSERVATIONS: COLORS, CONTENT,  
LANGUAGE, PHOTOS: \_\_\_\_\_

---

STRATEGIES: STRONGEST AND MOST VULNERABLE

---

SIMILAR / DIFFERENT FROM **[MY BUSINESS]** \_\_\_\_\_

---

SELLING PROCESS / BUYING ENVIRONMENT \_\_\_\_\_

---

PRODUCT / SERVICE PRESENTATION \_\_\_\_\_

---

ASK FOR THE ORDER? HOW? HOW TO CONTACT?

---

WHAT DO THEY DO BETTER THAN **[MY COMPANY]**?  
WHAT DO WE DO BETTER THAN THEM?

---



REPEAT FOR EACH COMPETITOR. TRANSFER THESE FINDINGS TO A SPREADSHEET SO YOU CAN COMPARE; HIGHLIGHT IMPORTANT DIFFERENTIATORS.

## **MISSION STATEMENT TEMPLATE**

THE MISSION OF [YOUR COMPANY NAME]

IS TO PROVIDE [PRODUCT OR SERVICE]

---

TO [IDEAL CUSTOMER]

---

THE [PRODUCT OR SERVICE]

---

WILL BENEFIT THE CLIENT OR CUSTOMER IN THESE  
WAYS

---

---

---

## **VISION STATEMENT TEMPLATE**

**[YOUR COMPANY NAME]** WILL ACCOMPLISH

---

---

BY **[ACTIONS]**

---

---

## ± POSITIONING STATEMENT TEMPLATE

[YOUR COMPANY NAME] PROVIDES [TARGET AUDIENCE]

---

WITH [YOUR UNIQUE VALUE] \_\_\_\_\_

---

UNLIKE ANY OTHER IN [YOUR INDUSTRY].

WE DO THIS BY

[REASON TO BELIEVE #1] \_\_\_\_\_

---

[REASON TO BELIEVE #2] \_\_\_\_\_

---

[REASON TO BELIEVE #3 ] \_\_\_\_\_

---

## **VALUE PROPOSITION TEMPLATE**

FOR [TARGET CUSTOMER] \_\_\_\_\_

WHO ["NEED" OR OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT] \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ /

[YOUR COMPANY NAME] IS A [YOUR CATEGORY]

\_\_\_\_\_

THAT [KEY BENEFIT OR COMPELLING REASON TO BUY]

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

UNLIKE [PRIMARY COMPETITOR(S)]

\_\_\_\_\_ /

[YOUR COMPANY NAME] IS [PRIMARY  
DIFFERENTIATION STATEMENT] \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

## **UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION (USP)** **TEMPLATE**

[YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE]

---

[SOLUTIONS PROVIDED]

---

FOR [TARGET AUDIENCE]

---

BY [UNIQUE BENEFIT]

---

[UNIQUE BENEFIT]

---

[UNIQUE BENEFIT]

---