

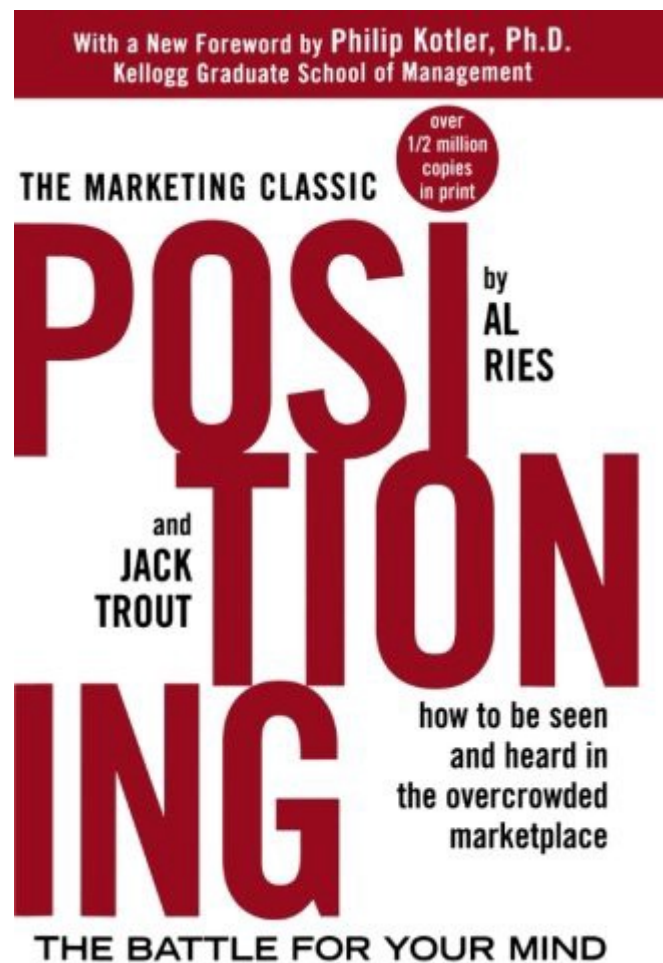
# Book Summary: Positioning by Al Ries, Jack Trout



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## Book Summary: Positioning by Al Ries, Jack Trout



I was given the opportunity to take on customer acquisition at work, which was an exciting, but also scary opportunity. I had background in marketing, and in paid media, but it certainly wasn't my expertise. As I began to learn more and more, I realized how important it was to have a solid creative and copy strategy.

At the time, copy was definitely not my strength. I asked someone with a strong marketing background for a good book on copy writing, and I was immediately shot down.



“Copy writing is about understanding the psychology of the customer.” They touted, “It all starts with getting in the head of your customer.”

That’s when I was recommended **Positioning**. A book on nothing else, but: Brand Positioning. It’s a bit high level, on **how to approach building a strong brand**. The basics.

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## What I took away from Positioning:

*Here are a few of the key takeaways.*

### 1. **Being the first in any category is extremely important.**

To be #1 in your category, for example, the #1 car rental service (example used in the book), being the **first** is a huge advantage. It means that you’ve positioned yourself in the prospects (your potential customers) mind first. And it’s hard to take a company down from the first spot.

The analogy that is most often used in the book is a ladder. If you're the top rung on the ladder, it's very hard for 2nd highest rung to become the top (think Coke vs. Pepsi in cola's, or McDonalds vs. Burger King in burgers). That takes us to the next key takeaway:

## 2. If you're not first, create your own ladder.

Instead of trying to fight for a position in the prospects mind as the best cola, or the best fast food burger, your best bet is to position yourself in a different *créneau*, or niche. Essentially, creating a new ladder for yourself.

To stick with the car rental example (and now I'm going to start to make up these examples, but they're relevant :), if the #1 car rental service in the country is positioned as the best car rental service in the prospects mind, then position your brand differently. Be the best car rental service for business trips, or the best car rental service for trips in Africa & Asia.

The goal is to try to **STOP going head-to-head** with the #1 in your category, and to create your own ladder to be #1 of. In the end, this is could be a good strategy for beating your competitor somewhat less directly. Just because you are positioned as the best service for Africa & Asia, doesn't mean people won't see you as the best in Europe. In fact, **being more selective in your marketing can help you grow in unpredictable ways.**

Instead of having the best burger, maybe you have the best fries?

## 3. Echo what is already in your prospects minds.

Often times, when trying to plan a marketing strategy, teams look inward. You may have a brainstorm with your team, or think about how YOU see your business (or want to see it), and build your strategy around projecting that. Positioning says to look outward.

**Position your business the way that it is already seen in your prospects mind.** Does your company think it is the most convenient, but your customers see you as having the best customer service?

Keep pushing on what your customers, and prospects already see as your strengths.

#### **4. The name of your brand matters!**

This one seems to be self explanatory, but the name of your brand is important. The name of your brand will automatically hold a position in the prospects mind, so **keep it relevant**.

Consider some top brands like Kleenex, Brauny, and Cottonelle, each of them may seem like just a random name, but look again and you'll see how they each relate to the position they want the brand to hold in your mind.

#### **5. Don't line extend.**

This is an important one, that is also one that surprised me a lot. Line extending is when you have a strong brand like Coke, and then decide to use the same brand name on a new product. There are of course some areas where line extension may make sense, but often times you should be weary of line extension.

For example, if you were Coke, and decided to start a new juice brand, it'd be in your best interest not to name that brand Coke Juice. Line extension dilutes your brand, and also makes it more difficult for your brand to hold a strong position in the prospects mind. Is Coke a cola company, or are they a juice company now? When you do that, you run the risk of the #2, like Pepsi, who may still hold a strong position in Cola, taking the top spot.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, for a single brand to hold a position in the prospects mind on 2 different ladders. So, don't risk it, and create a new brand. The book offers a lot of great examples for this, so I'd suggest reading it for those details.

#### **6. Peg your brand against other brands.**

If your brand is on the newer side, then you may benefit from pegging your brand against a brand that your prospects are already very familiar with. I think an obvious one is something along the lines of: The Rolls Royce of X. Everyone automatically associates the Rolls Royce brand with luxury and glamour. It's the best of the best.

Currently, I work at a kids clothing company, FabKids. We're a smaller brand compared to some giants like GapKids, H&M, or Target, and we could easily position our selves

against one of these brands. And, like the Rolls example, it doesn't have to be in any defamatory way. For instance: FabKids is the Target of online kids clothing stores. Automatically, you may think of us as being affordable, fast-fashion. But, in this statement, I'm trying to differentiate us as being the online version of Target, which eludes to us being online only, and possibly us having a superior online shopping experience.

. . .

In the end, I would definitely recommend giving the book a read. If you're interested in how to build a brand (big or small), this book can help you better understand how to position your brand to win.

Thanks so much if you read this far :) Hope it was helpful.

-Ezra

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