

# Positioning your dental business in the market – Part 1

**Market positioning is often mentioned among marketeers, but what does it actually mean? Having good positioning makes attracting new customers easier, faster and cheaper, so it is an area that is vital for good marketing and a successful business.**

**By Mark Oborn**



When a person decides to make a purchase they will have a mental map of all the products available that fulfil this need. As an example, let's say you are out for a run and are thirsty, to satiate your thirst you go into a shop and look in their chiller cabinet for a drink.

You are now faced with a whole array of drinks: Coke, 5Alive, Tango, Evian, innocent smoothie, the list goes on. You will now compare them with your mental map of drinks: Coke and Tango are both fizzy; smoothies are thick and creamy; Evian and 5Alive are still drinks. You will then compare this map against your need, i.e. your thirst; you may decide that a smoothie is not thirst quenching enough and that you are running so a fizzy drink is not right. You may therefore settle on one of the still drinks.

This decision-making is all done in the blink of an eye, and becomes an

unconscious process with this type of purchase. But what happens if a manufacturer brings a new drink on to the market?

This manufacturer will research consumers' 'maps'; they will decide where their product is positioned in those maps and make the signals to the consumer very strong. These strong signals will allow you to place this new drink in the correct position in your map of drinks. So when you are next thirsty, you go into a shop to buy a drink and this new product is there, you will have seen the marketing and can now instantly position it – fizzy, thirst quenching, creamy, etc.

This positioning allows the buyer to make a decision, so if we don't give the consumer a way to position our services, products or whole business within their mind maps we make the buying decision very difficult. They want to know what our business is like, whether it will fulfil their particular needs and what is comparable.

This may well be where dental businesses can improve their marketing, as they often neglect to give strong enough signals of where their business, products and services are positioned in the market. Coupled with that they can give out conflicting signals that confuse the consumer, such as multiple price bands with varying qualities of work all on different service levels.

I understand that offering this wide range of services means we cater for a wider range of people, but personally I think the damage it causes outweighs that benefit.

My opinion is that often customers simply can't use a lab or surgery; this is because the messages that the laboratory or surgery gives out are so mixed and confused that the customer is unable to position them within their mental maps. These businesses make it impossible for a customer to decide to use them, so they don't!

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Mark Oborn is a director of SBO Dental Laboratory in London. He has had many articles published on aesthetics and CAD/CAM dentistry, and has had lectured worldwide on both subjects. Mark's latest venture is the launch of his dental business blog ([www.markoborn.blogspot.com](http://www.markoborn.blogspot.com)).

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