

## How to Create a Target Market Profile

Creating a target market profile and positioning statement is a process that helps business owners to identify and communicate with the prospects that offer the greatest chance of sales success. A target market profile is a concise description of the type of prospect you want to sell to. A positioning statement is a brief summary of the way you want prospects to perceive your product or service.

Define the target market for your products or services as precisely as possible. A target market profile identifies the characteristics of the prospects most likely to purchase from you. Use characteristics such as age, gender, location, income level or education to build the profile. Age or gender are important characteristics if you sell products such as clothing or children's games. Focus on location if your products are only available in certain areas or if they are location-specific, such as hiking or skiing equipment. Income is important if your products carry a premium price.

Profile business customers by a different set of characteristics, including size of business, industry sector and location. Identify the decision-makers in target companies. The decision to purchase your product may involve business, financial or technical personnel as well as senior executives if the purchase represents a significant capital investment. An example of a business target market profile is medium-size companies in the manufacturing sector, based in the Midwest, with a turnover of more than \$2 million.

Research the interests and preferences of your target market to find out what they feel is most important about a product like yours. Approach customers for feedback, asking them about important features and benefits. Consumers might consider factors such as "the product improves my lifestyle," "it saves me money" or "it makes me feel healthier." For business customers, identify the opportunities and problems that face different types of businesses by monitoring customer feedback or reviewing industry surveys. Challenges such as reducing costs, improving quality, speeding up time to market, or improving competitiveness are issues facing many types of business.

Build a more detailed profile of your target audience by capturing information on their interests and requirements on your website. Offer website visitors publications or special offers that they can download after completing a registration form. Provide a page where visitors can create and update their own profiles and request certain types of information from you. Analyze their preferences and record the information they request to build personalized profiles.

Identify the product benefits that represent the greatest value for your customers. Compare the important factors with the performance, features and benefits of your products. If your product aligns with the main customer factors, use those factors as the basis for your positioning statement. Compare your product with competitors' offerings to assess how you can differentiate your product. Relate your differentiation to the most important customer values.

Create a positioning statement for each distinct customer sector. Use a consistent format such as "for this target audience, our product provides these important benefits that our competitors cannot match." Use the positioning statement to create compelling messages to motivate the prospect to buy. Incorporate the key elements of the positioning statement in all your marketing communications so that prospects receive consistent messages at each point of contact with your company. Share with employees target market profiles and positioning statements so that they not only have awareness, but also going forward they are constantly reassessing the criteria used to define the target audience and how elements may influence that audience and what adjustments might need to be considered. It is crucial to the culture of any company that employees are keenly aware of who it is they serve: the customer. Who they work for is the boss.

Source: Ian Linton