A PRACTICAL GROWTH GUIDE

THE POSITIONING POWER AUDIT

Build a Commercial Story That Accelerates Growth

A diagnostic workbook for founders, CEOs, investors, and growth-stage leadership teams to create a stronger commercial story that drives better GTM performance.



By

MICHAEL BAER

Fractional Chief Marketing Officer

TechCXO

techcxo
EXECUTIVES ON DEMAND

CLARIFY YOUR FOCUS

STRENGTHEN YOUR STORY

ALIGN YOUR GO-TO-MARKET

ACCELERATE GROWTH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Growth is a *mandate.*

Every company needs to show momentum, customer growth, better sales performance, and a path to scale. And for early-stage and growth-stage companies, that pressure is even more intense because time, budget, investor patience, and market opportunity are limited.

But too many companies respond to that pressure by moving straight to activity, rather than spending the requisite amount of time ensuring strategic direction and clarity. More content. More outbound. More sales materials. More website changes.

When the strategic foundation is weak, all of that activity becomes fragmented and misaligned, limiting its impact. Marketing and sales efforts become transactional and one-off, rather than building something powerful.

Over time, the company spends more effort, time, and money for less return than it should.

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> Positioning is not just language. It is the foundation that helps sales, marketing, content, website, demand generation, and outreach efforts work with greater focus, consistency, and force.

MICHAEL BAER
Fractional Chief Marketing Officer
TechCXO

NET TAKEAWAYS

- Why positioning drives growth
- Why many companies unknowingly weaken their commercial story
- The seven building blocks of strong positioning
- How to evaluate your own positioning
- Where to strengthen your growth foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, *CONT'D*

This is not just a theory. Research from McKinsey, Harvard Business Review, Forrester, and others has shown that companies with stronger strategic marketing foundations, clearer alignment, and more purposeful growth activity outperform those whose efforts are scattered or disconnected.

The Positioning Power Audit helps founders, CEOs, investors, and revenue growth leaders assess whether the company's commercial story is strong enough to support growth. It helps them evaluate the core strategic choices underneath their activity: who the company is really for, what problem it solves, why that problem matters, what value it enables, why the company is meaningfully suited to solve it, what it believes, what proof supports the promise, and whether the strategy is usable enough to guide execution.

Positioning is not just language. It is the foundation that helps sales, marketing, content, website, demand generation, and outreach work with greater focus, consistency, and force. Without it, growth activity may create motion, but it is less likely to create the momentum, conversion, and confidence the business needs.

THIS AUDIT IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU:

Evaluate whether your positioning is strong enough to support the growth activity you are seeking.

Diagnose which parts of the foundation need the most work: target, problem, value, difference, belief, proof, or activation.

Create a clearer path toward more effective marketing and sales - sharper messaging, stronger sales conversations, more relevant content, better website strategy, and more focused demand generation.

See positioning as a growth foundation – and not just a one-time strategy exercise or a clever tagline.

The goal is *not* to produce prettier language, but to help your growth activity work harder because the strategy underneath it is *stronger*.

Positioning Is Your Hidden *Growth Driver*

When faced with growth challenges, few companies think, "This must be a positioning problem."

Many believe the pipeline isn't progressing quickly enough. Leads aren't converting, sales cycles are lengthening, and while marketing efforts continue, they aren't gaining enough traction. Our sales narrative seems to change from one conversation to the next.

These issues may seem related to sales, marketing, or demand generation. However, they usually point to a deeper issue: the company lacks a clear strategic foundation to support its commercial activities.

This is where positioning comes into play.

Positioning is not merely a marketing idea, a catchy tagline, a homepage headline, or a theoretical exercise. When done effectively, positioning provides the business story that connects what you offer to why potential buyers should care, trust you, and take action.

If positioning is poorly executed or neglected, it creates confusion and undermines differentiation.

This audit is designed to help you evaluate whether your positioning is strong enough to support growth — or whether weak positioning is suppressing the impact of the work you're doing.

It will walk through the core elements of strong positioning, helping you assess where your story is clear, where it may be underdeveloped, and where strengthening it could create greater leverage across your growth efforts.

Why Positioning *Matters to Growth*

Strong positioning offers a company more than a catchy tagline. It establishes a *foundation for growth*.

It clarifies the company's essence, whom it serves, the problem it solves, and why it matters. It showcases how its products and services provide meaningful value, demonstrating the company's uniqueness and building customer trust. Those are not simply messaging inputs. They are strategic decisions that shape where the company focuses its time, money, attention, and effort.

That is part of what gives positioning its power. It creates priority and forces choices. Just as importantly, it clarifies what a company should NOT be doing or spending time on—helping it avoid spreading effort across too many audiences, messages, campaigns, and growth activities that don't build toward the same destination.

When those choices are clear, the rest of the growth engine works with more focus and consistency:

- Sales has a ***stronger story***
- Marketing has ***sharper direction***
- Content has a ***clearer point of view***
- Demand generation has ***more relevance***

When teams focus on a unified narrative, they naturally build momentum and create a solid strategic foundation. Evidence shows that strong positioning and marketing strategies are essential to driving growth. McKinsey's research indicates that companies that consistently emphasize marketing outshine their competitors. Meanwhile, Forrester reveals that strong alignment across customer-facing functions boosts both revenue and profitability. This is a tremendous opportunity for businesses looking to thrive and succeed!

Strong positioning creates alignment, consistency, and purposeful activity. Weak positioning forces everything to work harder.

What *Weak Positioning Costs*

When positioning is weak, the problem rarely stays inside marketing. It shows up across the company and its activities.

Sales explains the value differently from one conversation to the next. The website talks about the company and its product, but does not clearly communicate the value it creates or why it matters. Marketing produces activity in a series of one-off, start-stop efforts without building traction. Content becomes random or formulaic. Outreach lacks a sharp reason to engage. Prospects may understand what the company does, but still not feel compelled to act.

Weak positioning also creates waste. It leads teams to spend time, budget, and attention on efforts that may be active, but not strategic. The result? More campaigns. More content. More outbound. More website edits. More sales materials. But without a strong enough story underneath, those efforts are unlikely to build on each other over time.

That is why this audit is not about judging whether the language is polished.

It is about assessing whether the underlying story is clear, specific, credible, ownable, and useful enough to help the company grow.

> Like getting in the car without knowing where you are going, the company may cover a lot of ground yet still waste time, burn resources, and fail to build momentum in the right direction.

MICHAEL BAER
Fractional Chief Marketing Officer
TechCXO

How to Use *This Audit*

This audit evaluates seven dimensions of positioning strength:

01 TARGET CLARITY
02 PROBLEM CLARITY
03 "SO THAT" VALUE CLARITY
04 OWNABLE DIFFERENCE
05 BELIEF / POINT OF VIEW
06 PROOF / CREDIBILITY
07 ACTIVATION READINESS

Each section includes a short explanation of the concept, why it matters for growth, what weakness looks like, and five scoring statements.

Give yourself 1 point for each statement that is clearly true.

Each section is scored from 0–5. Across seven sections, your total score will range from 0–35.

Use the score as a directional read. It is designed to help you evaluate whether your positioning is amplifying your growth efforts, merely supporting them, or holding them back. More importantly, it will help diagnose which aspects are working and where the best opportunities for improvement are.

THE STEPS

- Read the overview for each dimension
- Score yourself on the five statements
- Add up your score (0–5 per section, 0–35 total)
- Use it to diagnose next steps

01

Target Clarity

Strong positioning starts with a clear, intentional target.

That does not mean the company can only serve one type of customer. But it does mean the story needs a clear hero to build around. The strongest positioning is not built around everyone who could conceivably use the product or service; it is built around the customer with the most urgent need, strongest fit, clearest buying trigger, and greatest likelihood and incentive to act.

This matters because specificity gives positioning its power. A company that tries to speak equally to every possible buyer usually ends up with a story that feels broadly acceptable but not especially compelling. The message becomes generic. Sales has to adjust the story constantly. Marketing spreads efforts across too many audiences. Content lacks a clear reader. Outreach becomes harder because it is not anchored in a specific buyer's needs, pressures, or decision context.

Target clarity is also a resource discipline. Growth-stage companies rarely have unlimited time, budget, or attention. If the company is not clear on who matters most, it wastes effort pursuing the wrong customers, building the wrong messages, and spreading growth activity too thin.

EVIDENCE OF WEAK TARGET CLARITY

- The company describes several possible audiences but does not prioritize one.
- The website could apply to almost any buyer in the category.
- Sales chases all types of opportunities because there is no clear ICP to guide where to focus — or what to disqualify.
- Marketing activity is spread across too many audiences without enough focus.

SCORE YOURSELF

Give yourself 1 point for each statement that is clearly true:

- ☐ We have a clearly defined primary/ideal customer or segment.
- ☐ Our positioning is built around that ideal customer, not every possible buyer.
- ☐ We have documented our primary customer's needs, pains, buying triggers, decision context, and key personas so sales, marketing, and leadership are working from the same understanding.
- ☐ Our website, sales story, and outreach make that customer feel specifically addressed.
- ☐ We are willing to deprioritize less-relevant audiences and opportunities so sales attention, marketing resources, and growth effort stay focused on the customers most likely to matter.

TARGET CLARITY SCORE: _____ / 5

02
Problem Clarity

A product or service only matters because it solves, improves, unlocks, or prevents something for a customer.

That sounds obvious, but many companies often lose sight of it. They become so focused on what they built, how it works, and what features or capabilities it includes that the customer problem becomes secondary. Too often their story starts with the company's offering instead of the customer's need.

Strong positioning reverses that. It defines the problem in the customer's terms — what buyers are struggling with, what is getting in their way, and what is at stake if the problem remains unsolved.

This is not just empathy (although customer empathy is a good starting point). It is commercial relevance. If the problem is not clear, sharp, and real, the solution will not feel urgent. The buyer may understand what the company does, but not why it matters enough to prioritize, evaluate, or act on it. Marketing and selling are not only about pitching your product; they are about demonstrating relevance, understanding, and a clear reason the company exists for the customer.

When the problem is clear, content, nurture, sales conversations, and outreach can all build on a challenge the buyer recognizes and cares about.

EVIDENCE OF WEAK PROBLEM CLARITY

- The company describes itself via product descriptions and performance.
- The website and sales materials lead with the product, platform, process, or service model.
- Sales conversations focus on explaining capabilities, features, attributes.
- Content and nurture efforts feel more promotional than relevant.

SCORE YOURSELF

Give yourself 1 point for each statement that is clearly true:

- ☐ Our positioning clearly identifies the customer problem we solve.
- ☐ The problem is described in the buyer's language, not just our internal or category language.
- ☐ The problem feels specific, urgent, and meaningful enough to act on.
- ☐ We can clearly explain what is at stake if the buyer does not solve the problem.
- ☐ Our story shows understanding of the buyer's needs, pressures, constraints, and desired outcomes.

PROBLEM CLARITY SCORE: _____ / 5

03

"So That" Value Clarity

Connecting the functional benefit to what it enables the customer to achieve.

Even companies that have positioning often end up focusing on the most functional benefit they provide. For example, they simplify a process, improve accuracy, deliver analyses, enhance collaboration across teams, strengthen compliance, etc.

Those benefits can be real. But they are often category-level benefits that describe what the product or service does in rational terms, without connecting to the more meaningful outcomes customers truly desire.

That is where the "so that" test matters.

Strong positioning connects the functional benefit to what it enables the customer to do, achieve, avoid, or become. It creates a "value chain": e.g., your product or service does X, so that the customer can accomplish Y. The first part explains the rational product benefit. The second part makes that benefit matter.

Many companies without it leave value on the table. They stop at the table-stakes promise: faster, easier, more efficient, more streamlined, more integrated. But the stronger story is what those benefits make possible. Better decisions. Faster action. Greater confidence. Work-life balance. A team that can spend less time managing the problem and more time moving the business forward.

Without that "so what" connection, companies end up competing on category benefits and miss the chance to own a bigger, more meaningful promise.

EVIDENCE OF WEAK "SO THAT" VALUE CLARITY

- The value proposition relies heavily on functional benefits like faster, easier, more efficient, more accurate, or more streamlined.
- The company's benefits sound similar to what most competitors in the category could claim.
- The story does not connect product benefits to larger business, operational, personal, or emotional outcomes.

SCORE YOURSELF

Give yourself 1 point for each statement that is clearly true:

- ☐ Our positioning clearly connects functional benefits to larger customer outcomes.
- ☐ We can complete the sentence: "We help customers do X so that they can achieve Y."
- ☐ Our value proposition goes beyond table-stakes category benefits.
- ☐ Our story makes clear what becomes possible for the customer because of what we provide.
- ☐ The promise we make is strong enough to create preference, not just explain functionality.

"SO THAT" VALUE CLARITY SCORE: _____ / 5

04

Ownable Difference

A meaningful and defensible reason to choose you.

Strong positioning should help buyers understand why this company, this approach, or this way of solving the problem is the right fit for them.

That does not mean every company needs to claim it is radically different from everything else in the market. In many categories, companies solve similar problems, offer similar capabilities, and compete in ways that are not dramatically different on the surface. But even then, the story should make clear why the company is more meaningfully suited to the customer's need.

That difference need not be related to its product. It may be the company's point of view, process, people, customer understanding, operating model, or way of approaching the problem that makes their solution more focused, practical, credible, or customer-relevant.

The point is not to claim difference for its own sake. It is to define a form of uniqueness that connects to the value the company provides, makes the story more relevant and credible, and gives the target buyer a clearer reason to believe this approach is the right fit.

This matters because buyers usually have choices. If the positioning does not make the company's difference clear, sales has to over-explain, marketing falls back on generic claims, and buyers may have no clear reason to prefer one option over another.

EVIDENCE OF WEAK OWNABLE DIFFERENCE

- The company has not clearly defined how it is different from the other options buyers may consider.
- The positioning relies on claims that are common across the category.
- The company has not identified which aspects of its approach, model, people, process, expertise, or perspective help create meaningful difference.
- The company cannot clearly explain why its difference matters to the target customer.

SCORE YOURSELF

Give yourself 1 point for each statement that is clearly true:

- ☐ We understand the category and competitive alternatives our buyers are likely to consider.
- ☐ We have clearly identified what makes our company, approach, model, people, process, expertise, or perspective meaningfully different.
- ☐ We can explain why that difference matters to our target customer.
- ☐ Our difference is specific enough that competitors could not easily say the same thing in the same way.
- ☐ Our website, sales story, and marketing materials consistently express that difference.

OWNABLE DIFFERENCE SCORE: _____ / 5

05

Belief / Point of View

A strong belief gives the story purpose, direction, and voice.

Strong positioning should reflect a belief about the customer, the problem, or the better way forward.

This is not the same as differentiation. Difference explains why this company or approach may be the better fit. Belief explains the thinking underneath it — why the company exists, why the problem matters, and why the current way of addressing it may not be good enough.

That belief does not need to be lofty, moral, or contrarian. But it should give the company more than a description of what it sells. It should give the company a reason for doing the work, a point of view on the market, and a clearer argument for why buyers should pay attention.

Without that belief, positioning can become accurate but flat. The company may be able to explain what it does, but not why it does it and what it stands for. Sales gets a description, but not much of an argument. Marketing gets topics, but not much perspective. Content explains the offering but does not give the market a sharper way to think about the problem.

A strong belief gives the story purpose, direction, and voice. It helps the company stand for something specific in the eyes of the customers it is trying to reach.

EVIDENCE OF WEAK BELIEF / POINT OF VIEW

- There is no clear internal point of view guiding how the company talks about the market, the customer, or the change it wants to create.
- The company's founding story is mostly a linear history, rather than a clear trigger, insight, frustration, or belief that led to the business.
- The company can describe what it does, but would struggle to articulate what it believes should be better, different, or possible for its customers.

SCORE YOURSELF

Give yourself 1 point for each statement that is clearly true:

- ☐ We can clearly articulate why the company exists beyond selling its product or service.
- ☐ Our founding story reflects a clear trigger, insight, frustration, or belief that led to the business.
- ☐ Leadership, sales, marketing, and product share a consistent understanding of why our work matters.
- ☐ Our belief gives sales, marketing, content, and leadership a stronger argument to build from.
- ☐ We can clearly explain what we believe should be better, different, or possible for the customers we serve.

BELIEF / POINT OF VIEW SCORE: _____ / 5

06

Proof / Credibility

A strong positioning promise needs support.

A company can have a clear story, a sharp target, a relevant problem, and a meaningful promise. But buyers still need a reason to believe the company can deliver. Without that, positioning can seem good, but still fail to land.

Proof is what turns a claim into something credible. It may come from customer results, case studies, testimonials, data, product performance, market experience, methodology, founder insight, operating expertise, or specific examples. The form matters less than the connection between the promise being made and the evidence or rationale behind it.

This matters because a meaningful promise still asks something of the buyer. It asks them to pay attention, spend time, trust the company, consider a change, and eventually take action. Proof helps overcome the inherent skepticism and perceived risk that stand between awareness and interest, and between interest and action.

The issue is not simply whether the company has proof. It is whether the proof is strong enough and relevant enough to support the promise being made. Many companies promise outcomes buyers want. Fewer make those promises credible enough to overcome skepticism, build trust, and move the buyer toward action.

EVIDENCE OF WEAK PROOF / CREDIBILITY

- The company makes broad claims about outcomes, impact, or performance without specific support or evidence.
- The promise sounds almost too good to be true.
- Available proof points don't support the most important claims.
- Customer stories focus more on activity or implementation than measurable value, change, or outcome.
- Sales conversations rely heavily on assertion, explanation, or founder credibility instead of clear evidence the buyer can evaluate.

SCORE YOURSELF

Give yourself 1 point for each statement that is clearly true:

- ☐ Our positioning is supported by specific evidence tied directly to the promise we are making.
- ☐ We actively look for customer stories, testimonials, data, examples, or outcomes that can strengthen the credibility of our claims.
- ☐ Our customer stories, testimonials, data, examples, or outcomes help buyers believe the promise.
- ☐ Our proof is relevant to the customers, problems, and outcomes at the center of our positioning.
- ☐ We can point to our expertise, experience, or perspective that makes our promise more believable.

PROOF / CREDIBILITY SCORE: _____ / 5

07

Activation Readiness

As important and powerful as it is, positioning should not be viewed as the end product.

As important as it is, positioning should not be viewed as the end product. It is not meant to stay locked inside a strategy document or show up once as a homepage headline. No one sees your positioning strategy. They see and feel the results of it: the sales conversation, the website message, the content and assets, and the way the company talks about the customer and the value it delivers.

That is why activation is not separate from positioning. It is the point of the work. A positioning strategy only becomes valuable when it is clear and structured enough to guide how the company shows up in market.

Activation readiness is the test of whether it can do that job: can sales, marketing, content, the website, and outreach all use it to work better?

If the answer is yes, positioning becomes a growth foundation. It reinforces the same story and builds consistency, trust, and momentum over time. If the answer is no, positioning remains weak. Sales improvises, marketing creates disconnected activity, and every effort has to work harder because the strategy underneath it isn't usable enough to guide execution.

EVIDENCE OF WEAK ACTIVATION READINESS

- Sales, marketing, website, content, and outreach do not appear to be working from the same strategic foundation.
- The strategy is rarely used to shape specific execution work, such as campaign briefs, content plans, sales materials, website updates, or outreach.
- Growth activity is happening, but the connection back to the core positioning is hard to see.

SCORE YOURSELF

Give yourself 1 point for each statement that is clearly true:

- ☐ Our positioning is clear enough for sales, marketing, leadership, and other teams to use without constantly reinterpreting it.
- ☐ Our positioning includes enough structure to guide messaging, website copy, content themes, campaign ideas, sales conversations, and outreach.
- ☐ We make sure our major growth activities reinforce the same customer, problem, value, difference, proof, and reason to believe.
- ☐ Different teams can translate the positioning into their work while still telling a consistent story.
- ☐ Our positioning helps us decide what to say, what to create, where to focus, and what not to do.

ACTIVATION READINESS SCORE: _____ / 5

Scoring Your Audit

Add your scores across the seven areas.

Your score provides a snapshot of your current positioning strength and highlights where to focus next. A higher score indicates a stronger positioning foundation and greater potential for sustainable, predictable growth.

29 – 35

A STRONG POSITIONING FOUNDATION

You have a clear and compelling positioning foundation. Now it's about refinement, consistency, and activation to maximize your impact and accelerate growth.

INSIGHT

Fine-tune your messaging, close any remaining gaps, and ensure your positioning is fully aligned across every channel and customer touchpoint.

21 – 28

FUNCTIONAL, BUT UNDERPOWERED

Your positioning may be good enough to explain the company, but not strong enough to fully sharpen demand, sales, website, and content performance.

INSIGHT

This is where many companies get stuck: the story is accurate, but it is not doing enough work in market.

14 – 20

CREATING GROWTH DRAG

Important parts of the story are likely unclear, generic, unsupported, or hard to activate.

INSIGHT

Your team may be compensating through more activity, more explanation, or more improvisation than should be necessary.

Under 14

HOLDING YOU BACK

Your positioning is probably too weak to support the level of growth activity you are asking it to carry.

INSIGHT

Adding more campaigns, content, outbound, or sales effort may create more motion, but not enough momentum.

No matter your score, there's an opportunity to get clearer, sharper, and more effective. On the following page, you'll find guidance on what your score means and key actions to take in each area.

What to Fix First

Not every company needs the same fix.

The assessment should help you see where the positioning foundation is strongest, where it is weakest, and where the work should begin. All seven areas are connected, so the work may eventually touch each part of the story. But the point is to identify the gaps creating the most drag now, so you can address them in the right sequence.

THE ISSUE		THE FIX
01	IF TARGET CLARITY IS WEAK	Start by sharpening ICP, segmentation, buying triggers, and the criteria for where sales and marketing should focus their time.
02	IF PROBLEM CLARITY IS WEAK	Start with customer insight and a sharper definition of the problem your company exists to solve.
03	IF "SO THAT" VALUE CLARITY IS WEAK	Clarify the connection between the functional benefit you provide and the larger outcome it enables for the customer.
04	IF OWNABLE DIFFERENCE IS WEAK	Define what makes your approach, model, people, process, expertise, or perspective meaningfully different — and why that difference matters to your target buyer.
05	IF BELIEF / POINT OF VIEW IS WEAK	Clarify why the company exists beyond selling its product or service, what it believes about the problem, and what it thinks should be better, different, or possible for customers.
06	IF PROOF / CREDIBILITY IS WEAK	Build the evidence base behind the promise: customer stories, examples, outcomes, data, testimonials, claims support, and case studies that make the story more believable.
07	IF ACTIVATION READINESS IS WEAK	Translate the positioning into a practical message framework that sales, marketing, content, website, demand generation, and outreach can actually use.

The goal is *not* to produce prettier language, but to build a clearer, more useful foundation for growth.

> Strategy gives you direction.
> *Action creates momentum.*

MICHAEL BAER
Fractional Chief Marketing Officer
TechCXO

The goal is not positioning for its own sake. *The goal is a stronger foundation for growth.*

Positioning is one of the most important growth drivers because it defines the commercial foundation everything else depends on. It captures the most important and enduring parts of the company's growth story: who the company is for, what problem it solves, why that problem matters, what value it enables, why the company is meaningfully suited to solve it, what it believes, and why buyers should trust the promise.

Those are not just messaging choices. They are strategic decisions that shape how the company focuses, sells, markets, creates content, builds demand, and shows up in the market.

When that foundation is strong, the growth engine has something clear and consistent to build from.

The next step is yours.



ABOUT MICHAEL BAER

Michael Baer is a fractional Chief Marketing Officer and senior marketing strategist at TechCXO who helps growth-stage B2B, healthcare, health tech, and tech-enabled companies turn scattered marketing, sales, and growth activity into a clearer, more focused GTM growth engine.

He works with founders, CEOs, investors, and leadership teams to build the strategic foundations that make growth activity more effective: positioning, messaging, ICP clarity, sales narrative, GTM strategy, demand generation, content strategy, website strategy, and marketing activation.

WANT TO STRENGTHEN *YOUR* POSITIONING?

Did this audit surface gaps in your positioning, commercial story, or GTM foundation?

Reach out to discuss how to turn the assessment into a clearer positioning strategy, stronger messaging, and a more focused path to growth.

Let's start the conversation.

LEARN MORE →