

Power Positioning for Professional Success

by Christine W. Zust, M.A.



How you position yourself as a professional in the marketplace has tremendous influence on your career and impact on your quality of life. Yet, business people rarely take the time to assess their current position or where they need to be to maximize their efforts.

Power positioning is a strategy that combines communication, networking and marketing techniques to help you gain a competitive edge in the marketplace. Think about this: everything you do positions you.

EVERYTHING.

Your new mantra, then, is: “Everything I do positions me.”

What a powerful statement.

To keep you focused on this concept, post this simple five-word sentence on your bathroom mirror, inside your calendar, next to your telephone at the office, or in your car as you drive to client appointments. Tell yourself every day that everything you do positions you. Use these six criteria to measure your positioning strength:

Communication style.

Language reveals a great deal about you. Think of content and context. What you say and how you say it affects how people perceive you and the messages you convey. The key word in evaluating your verbal and nonverbal styles is awareness.

How do you communicate with others?

Are you open and direct or quiet and thoughtful? Are you a good listener? Can you carry on a conversation with someone you just met?

And, most important, are your verbal and nonverbal cues consistent? Effective communication skills help to establish you as an effective professional.

Networking savvy.

Think of your network as a living organism because, after all, it is made up of human beings! Care for your network of contacts and nurture those contacts the way you would any other living thing. As a professional, networking is by far one of your most valuable tools. Take the time to review your circle of contacts. Understand and appreciate their value.

Work your network. But in doing so, remember to use it but not abuse it. Instead of arrogantly forcing yourself on other people, treat them like they are more important than you. Instead of using the “What’s in it for me?” (WIIFM) approach, use a better philosophy -- the WIIFTOP method, and ask yourself, “What’s in it for the other person?”

Ask yourself, “How can I be of assistance to the other person?” In the business world, we must consciously remind ourselves that we build our network through building relationships, not just exchanging business cards.

Every encounter that you have with another person is not always about you, but the other person. Apply this philosophy, and you will make friends quickly – the kind who will run toward you to see you when you enter the room, not run away from you because you’re too self-centered or self-promoting.

Attitude.

Your attitude is a valuable asset, yet so few professionals concentrate on improving their mental state. Is it because we are so busy? Author Charles Swindell said that the life you live is determined by your attitude, which is 10% of what happens to you and 90% of how you react to it.

How does your outlook influence those around you?

My attitude tip for you is: Always start and end each day in a positive way. It improves your outlook when you get up and greet each day, and it allows you to go to sleep every night with a clean slate, so you will wake up refreshed the next morning. If you are surrounded by negative thinkers in your work environment, then lead by example. When you make other people feel good about themselves, your positive attitude is bound to rub off on other people.

Knowledge base.

Your knowledge base positions you with clients, co-workers and business associates. Knowledge establishes your credibility, and it provides you with a competitive advantage. In today's rapidly changing work environment, life-long learning is a necessity, not an option. As Francis Bacon said, "Knowledge is power." But reframe his quote to read, "Knowledge is power only when it is shared." When you share information with others, and they reciprocate, the learning curve is automatically shortened, and it's a win-win situation.

Professional packaging.

How you package yourself positions you with your clients. We all know that a book cannot always be judged by its cover, but some people will judge you partly on your dress, demeanor and presentation style.

Make sure you are sending the right messages through your appearance. Your appearance is a form of nonverbal communication, and people can tell more about you before you say a word. The gold standard in the workplace, regardless of your position or rank within a company, is still one of good grooming and appropriate dress. Let's face it. Most of us don't want to do business with someone who can't press a shirt or a blouse for a meeting.

Personal style.

The easiest, most cost-effective technique you can incorporate into your professional life is a personal touch, your own personal style. It's the little things that often produce the greatest impact. A hand-written note tells more about your sense of caring than a typed form letter. The follow-up call just to touch base goes a long way, too. What is YOUR signature style? What makes you memorable with other people? Ask a trusted colleague or friend.

Now that you have learned the principles of Power Positioning, don't just let them sit in your file and collect dust. Use them! Apply them to your life every day. As a business professional, you can choose to operate from a position of strength, so why not begin today? By putting these six simple principles into practice, you will enjoy a new position of power in the marketplace.

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