

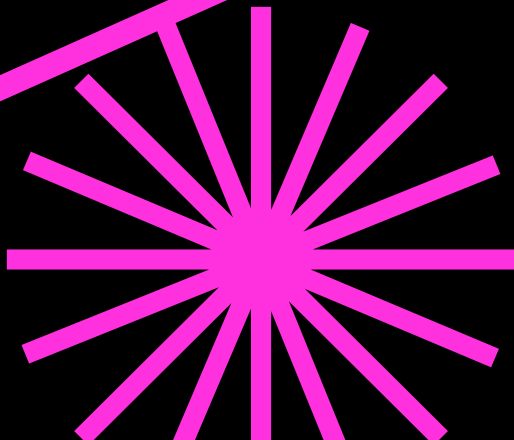
The new B2B brand positioning

Rethinking your most important platform for growth

Your brand should be driving transformative value for you and your buyers. It can teach buyers how to solve problems in new ways, and introduce a whole new group of prospects to your pipeline. And that's just the start.

Read this PJA paper to learn more about:

- Your B2B brand's potential to help you drive growth
- The power of positioning for category change
- How to reimagine brand position as an essential, hard-working marketing platform



Brand is an untapped lever for growth

People love to ask CMOs about their biggest challenges. And across surveys, driving growth is their top priority.

Our B2B clients are trying to drive that growth with small budgets that are broken into a thousand pieces. They are used to leveraging every marketing dollar to drive revenue, recruit staff, or find investors. Every asset – every content piece, nurturing email, and SaaS tool – is working hard.

Every asset except for brand. Brought to life to its fullest potential, your brand can drive transformative value for you and your buyers. It can teach buyers how to solve problems in new ways – and conversely, introduce a whole new group of prospects to your pipeline. For stakeholders both inside and outside the company, it can inform better decisions that helps their career and their companies.

Brand is an unloved, underinvested, and misunderstood asset. And that's costing B2B companies.

For too many B2B companies, brand is a thin construct. It is largely seen as identity: the logo, fonts, colors and typography that visually knit your communications together. This is the minimum viable product version of brand. Necessary, but not sufficient.

So too with brand positioning. For most B2B companies, a position is an amped-up solutions message. A story that limits itself to how your platform, product or pipeline is different and better than the competition does nothing more than to reinforce the status quo. Innovators by definition are upending the status quo. Positioning needs to articulate “why change” before you can convince buyers “why you.”

Classic branding – owning a tangible space in buyer's minds that isn't just about your product – has largely been seen as a B2C strategy, a way for helping commodity driven consumer goods stand out.

But the sea of sameness isn't just a B2C problem. Research shows that B2B buyers see little difference between category vendors. 3,000 buyers across 7 B2B categories were asked, “Do you see a real difference between suppliers and do you value the difference enough to pay for it?” 86% of buyers said no¹. And in a world where B2B marketers are not creating company-level differentiation or value, it's not surprising that 90% of buyers choose a vendor that was on their list before they even started looking².

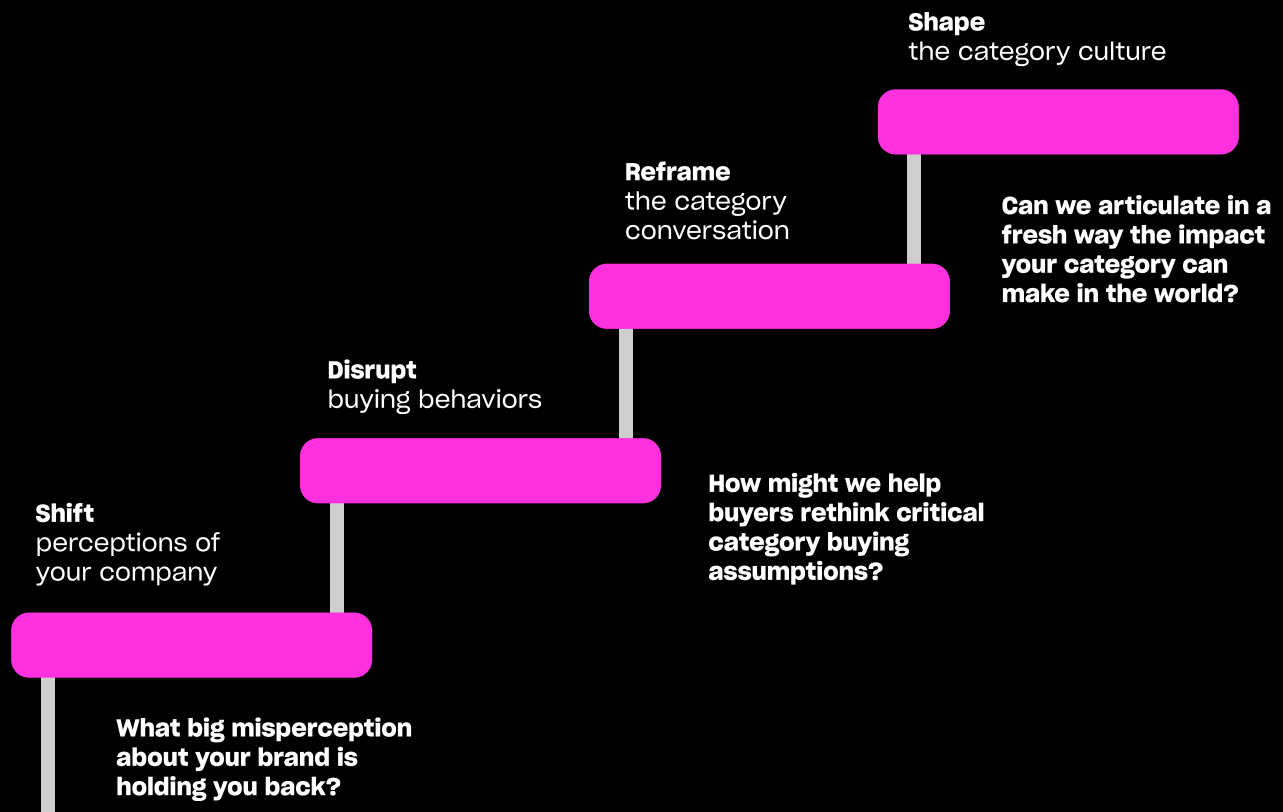
**Your brand position
needs to help you to
articulate “why
change” before you
can convince buyers
“why you.”**

What are you fighting for?
Growth-driving brand positioning leads with category over company, and purpose over product.

A vision for category change

The new brand position defines the level of change or impact you can make in your category. How you're upending the status quo, and why that enables buyers to solve problems in new ways. Based on our experience positioning more than a hundred B2B companies, we have identified four levels of change, from most aspirational (shaping category culture) to most grounded (shifting buyers understanding of you). By identifying their aspiration for change before articulating specific value claims, companies can address the opportunities (or obstacles) that are most important to buyers.

Driving the change that matters
the PJA change ladder



Infused with purpose

Convincing people that you have a new way to solve problems is just the beginning. The stakes for making the wrong choice or betting on a new vendor could be your professional credibility or even your career. Change—choosing a new vendor or adopting a new technology paradigm—is risky. What helps drive belief that you can actually deliver on your product innovation are your legacy and experience (we've done this in the past), vision (we know how to move forward), and culture (you can trust us to follow through on commitments). It's a head-scratcher to us that corporate purpose statements—if they exist—are typically substantially separate from the position. We mine our clients' purpose stack (mission, vision, and values) as key inputs in our discovery, as proof points in positioning, and as a driver of tone and personality in market-facing communications.

Positioning as an essential, hard-working platform

Brand positioning is an applied science. Its purpose is to drive market-facing communications and behavior that drives the change you seek. We deliver a fully-dimensionalized brand that includes three pillars:

1. **Brand as purpose-driven story** – why does the world need you, and what's the change you're bringing?
2. **Brand as thought leadership POV** – what is the status quo that you are changing, and how are you helping buyers rethink it?
3. **Brand as campaign experience** – how are you inviting key stakeholders, employees and buyers to experience your change?

A brand platform brought to life this way is a foundation for standout identity, market-facing campaigns, employee engagement, and event presence.

“You pushed us to a place that was more aspirational...and that level of aspiration shows up everywhere. On the website. It found its way into the S1, our road shows, social media. In our employee orientation. It is my introduction to every presentation.”

–Biotech CEO

You could try this at home... A step-by-step guide for building a breakthrough B2B brand position

Getting to the right position

DISCOVERY. UNEARTHING THE KEY GAPS AND ASSETS.

There is never a lot of time, budget, or patience for discovery. We get there quickly because we've been positioning in B2B since the second Clinton Administration. More importantly, our search for insight is focused on the gaps (unmet buyer needs) and assets (your unique strengths) that matter most. We distill these insights from investor and strategy presentations, stakeholder research, mission statements, through a dozen interviews with your leadership team and key external stakeholders. We also bring a sense of appreciative inquiry to the task. Which is a fancy way of saying we believe that our clients have a lot of the answers already.

COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOP: HONING IN ON THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE.

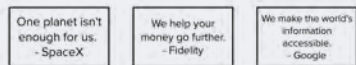
We facilitate a two hour workshop with up to eight of your most important stakeholders. Workshop participants contribute key insights, but also become co-creators of the positioning. Their participation paves the way for consensus and excitement for the final message.

We have a number of exercises to establish level of aspiration and themes. For example:

EXERCISE: SIX-WORD STORIES

Before we do the workshop, we ask the client for ideas on how to tell their brand story, limiting them to just six words. At the workshop, we take their ideas and cluster them by key themes and then lead a discussion about what stands out and which attitudes seem most appropriate.

Some examples taken from notable brands...



...and an example from one of our workshops.

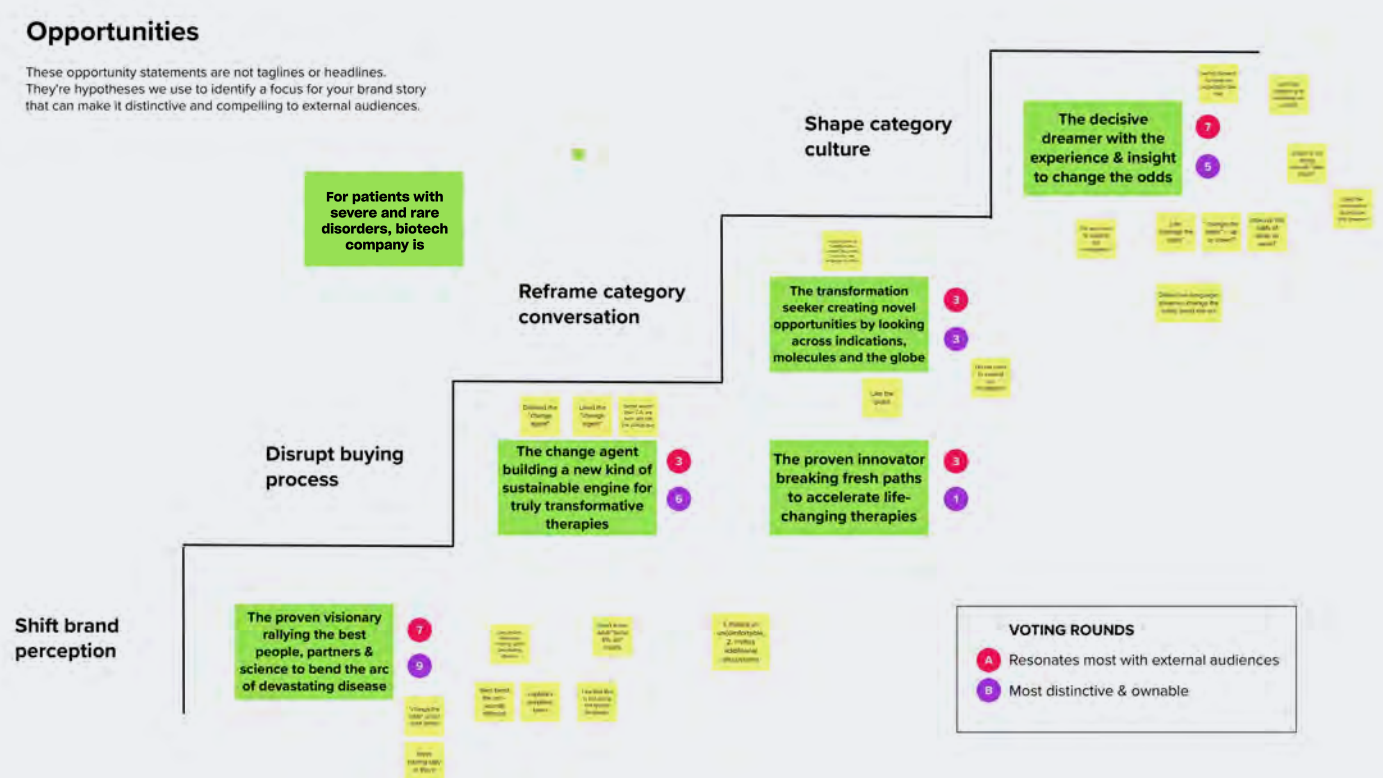


“I loved the six-word stories. It was interesting to force people into these tiny spaces, and see what boils up to the top as most important”
-Cyber security CMO

A step-by-step guide for building a breakthrough B2B brand position

EXERCISE: OPPORTUNITY STATEMENTS

Based on discovery, we bring five opportunity statements – which are essentially territories for messaging – that are arrayed along the change ladder. The key moment in the workshop is voting and discussion of five hypotheses.



"The positioning was critical for unifying the company. Scientists can be brutal... much harder to come together around positioning. It wouldn't have happened if you hadn't brought the executive team on this journey."

-Biotech CEO

A step-by-step guide for building a breakthrough B2B brand position

Positioning platform: the brand foundation

BRAND STORY

Core deliverable is a one-page positioning that articulates your vision for change, and how you can best deliver on it.

We can bend the arc of rare disease toward undreamed outcomes

It takes the right mix of experience and boldness to break new paths to life-changing therapies

It's unacceptable that so many devastating diseases lack adequate treatments, let alone therapies that truly transform patients' lives. At (biotech company), we won't settle for less than making a profound impact on rare disease, and we're rallying the best people, partners and science to do it. We've gathered a proven team of innovators with the fearlessness to create paths forward others haven't tried. We're looking across indications and around the globe to find assets and partners that match our ambition. And we're focusing on therapies that promise to shatter expectations of what's possible. Because it's time to tackle the undone, the too difficult, the inaccessible – and change the odds for rare disease patients, forever.

A big, powerful idea that provokes rethinking and says what we're fighting for

Our brand role – the persona we take on and the change we're driving in the market

Our 100-word story, including our POV on the biggest problem in the market, what we do to solve it, how we solve it uniquely, and what that allows our stakeholders to achieve

Taking your position to the next level:

CEO/FOUNDERS' STATEMENT

Working directly with your CEO/founder, we can develop a manifesto that incorporates the brand position as a market-facing letter or set of principles.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP BRAND AND CAMPAIGN KICKSTARTS

The category gaps, assets, and opportunities uncovered in positioning give us what we need to recommend initial content and campaign ideas. Our kickstart includes thought leadership content brand ideas and 3-5 topics and themes for reframing category conversations, and 2-3 campaign ideas that could inspire development of campaign/experiences.

By outlining these steps, we've tried to demystify what can be a confusing, black-box experience. In that spirit, we're happy to take you through actual positioning examples relevant to your industry, and talk through your specific challenges. You deserve a brand position that is as inspired as your product or pipeline. Let's get started.

For more insights from the creative thinkers at PJA, visit www.agencypja.com or reach out to Greg Straface at gstraface@agencypja.com

1 Promotion to Emotion, CEB/Motista Survey.
2 What B2Bs Need to Know About Their Buyers, Saber Sherrard, Rishi Dave, Mollie Parker MacGregor, HBR, 2022

At PJA, we help you sell your amazing things to the world's toughest buyers.



Ready to talk?
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