THE 25-POINT POSITIONING DIAGNOSTIC CHECKLIST

How Elite Brands Evaluate Their Market Position

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Introduction: The \$2.7M Positioning Gap

Here's what most executives don't realize: poor positioning isn't a branding problem. It's a revenue hemorrhage.

When your market doesn't understand what you do, who you serve, or why you're different, every dollar spent on marketing generates 40-60% less revenue than it should. Sales cycles extend by 3-4 months. Win rates drop by 30%. CAC inflates while LTV contracts.

The math is brutal. For a \$10M company, weak positioning costs approximately \$2.7M annually in lost revenue, extended sales cycles, and wasted marketing spend.

This checklist identifies exactly where your positioning is costing you money.

How to Use This Diagnostic

This is not a theoretical exercise. Each of the 25 checkpoints maps directly to revenue performance. You'll evaluate five critical dimensions:

- 1. Market Clarity Can your market find and recognize you?
- 2. **Value Differentiation** Do they understand why you're different?
- 3. **Messaging Precision** Does your language create conviction?
- 4. Competitive Positioning Are you winning or being commoditized?
- 5. **Revenue Alignment** Is positioning driving measurable growth?

Scoring Instructions

Answer each question honestly. This isn't about aspiration – it's about current reality.

- Yes = 1 point (positioning element present and functioning)
- $N_0 = 0$ points (positioning gap creating revenue drag)

Track your score in each category, then calculate your total. The scoring framework on page 8 will tell you exactly what your number means – and what it's costing you.

One rule: Be ruthlessly honest. Self-deception here costs six figures.

CATEGORY 1: Market Clarity

These 5 checkpoints determine whether your ideal buyers can find you, recognize you, and immediately understand what you do. Market clarity failures add 60-90 days to sales cycles and reduce inbound conversion by 40%.

Checkpoint 1: Specific Market Definition

Can you name your target market in one sentence with zero ambiguity?

▼YES means: You can say "We serve Series B SaaS CTOs scaling engineering teams from 20 to 100" or "We work with \$50M+ manufacturing CEOs preparing for acquisition" – and everyone in your company uses the same definition.

NO means: Your market definition includes words like "businesses," "companies that want growth," or "anyone who needs [your solution]." This vagueness costs you 45% of qualified inbound leads because your marketing can't target and your sales can't qualify.

REVENUE IMPACT: Undefined markets reduce marketing ROI by 50% and double CAC.

Quick Fix: Write one sentence: "We serve [specific role] at [company type/size] who are [specific situation/goal]." If you can't, you have a \$400K+ problem.

Checkpoint 2: Customer Language Match

Do you use the exact words your customers use to describe their problem?

YES means: When prospects read your website, they say "This is exactly what I'm dealing with." Your messaging mirrors how they talk in Slack channels, board meetings, and peer conversations – not how you talk internally.

NO means: You use internal jargon, technical specifications, or generic benefits language. Prospects read your copy and think "I guess this could work?" instead of "This is for me." This disconnect reduces message-to-meeting conversion by 60%.

REVENUE IMPACT: Language mismatch kills 35-50% of top-of-funnel conversions.

Quick Fix: Record 5 sales calls. Note exact phrases prospects use to describe their pain. Replace your marketing copy with their language verbatim.

Checkpoint 3: Problem-First Positioning

Does your homepage lead with the customer's problem, not your solution?

YES means: The first thing visitors see is their problem articulated better than they could articulate it themselves. They immediately think "You get it." Your solution comes second – after you've earned attention through empathy and insight.

NO means: You lead with "We provide [solution]" or "We're the leading [category]." Visitors have to work to figure out if you're relevant. This cognitive friction reduces homepage-to-demo conversion by 40%.

REVENUE IMPACT: Solution-first positioning costs 30% of qualified traffic.

Quick Fix: Rewrite your hero section: [Customer's problem in their words] \rightarrow [Why it matters] \rightarrow [Your unique approach] \rightarrow CTA.

Checkpoint 4: Category Clarity

Can a stranger in your industry identify what category you compete in within 10 seconds?

▼YES means: You're clearly "the [category] for [specific market]" – e.g., "the CRM for real estate teams" or "the compliance platform for fintech." No confusion. No explanation required. Instant mental filing.

NO means: People squint at your site and think "So... are they a platform, a service, a tool, or consulting?" Category confusion extends enterprise sales cycles by 3-4 months while buyers figure out budget allocation, stakeholders, and evaluation criteria.

REVENUE IMPACT: Category ambiguity adds \$120K in extended sales costs per \$1M in revenue.

Quick Fix: Complete this sentence and put it on your homepage: "We're the [category] for [market]." If you're creating a new category, you need 10x more capital and 2 years. Choose wisely.

Checkpoint 5: Instant Recognition Test

If someone saw your website for 5 seconds, could they tell a colleague what you do?

▼ YES means: Your value proposition is so clear that anyone – even outside your industry – could explain "They help [who] with [what problem] by [doing this]." This is the gold standard. It means your positioning is weaponized for word-of-mouth.

NO means: Visitors need to read 3+ paragraphs, watch a video, or click multiple pages to understand your offering. Every second of confusion costs 15% of your traffic. This is the silent killer of organic growth.

REVENUE IMPACT: Poor instant recognition reduces referral velocity by 70% and tanks viral coefficient.

Quick Fix: Show your homepage to someone outside your company for 5 seconds. Ask them to explain what you do. If they can't, rewrite until they can.

CATEGORY 1	SCORE:	/ :	5

If you scored 3 or below, market clarity issues are costing you \$300K-\$800K annually in lost pipeline.

CATEGORY 2: Value Differentiation

These 5 checkpoints reveal whether your market understands why you're different – not just different in features, but different in the outcome you deliver. Weak differentiation triggers price-based buying and reduces win rates by 35%.

Checkpoint 6: Provable Unique Mechanism

Can you explain HOW you deliver results differently in one sentence?

YES means: You have a proprietary methodology, framework, technology, or process that competitors cannot claim. "We use [specific approach] that [creates specific advantage]" – and it's defensible, not marketing fluff.

NO means: Your differentiation is generic: "We're faster, better, more experienced." This is table stakes, not differentiation. When you sound like everyone else, buyers default to price. Your close rate drops 35% and average deal size shrinks 20%.

REVENUE IMPACT: No unique mechanism = commodity positioning = 25% lower pricing power.

Quick Fix: Identify the ONE thing in your process that's genuinely different. Name it. Trademark it if possible. Make it the center of your positioning.

Checkpoint 7: Outcome Specificity

Do you quantify the exact outcome customers get, with numbers?

YES means: You say "Reduce compliance review time by 14 hours per week" or "Increase qualified pipeline by 40% in 90 days" – not "improve efficiency" or "grow faster." Specific outcomes create belief. Vague promises create skepticism.

NO means: Your value prop uses words like "streamline," "optimize," "enhance," "empower." These mean nothing. Prospects cannot evaluate ROI, justify budget, or compare you to alternatives. This extends sales cycles by 2-3 months.

REVENUE IMPACT: Vague outcomes increase deal cycle time by 40% and reduce win rate by 25%.

Quick Fix: Pull data from 10 customers. Calculate median outcome improvement. Replace every vague claim with that number.

Checkpoint 8: Competitor Displacement Strategy

Can you articulate why someone would switch from a competitor to you?

YES means: You know the exact pain point that your competitors fail to solve, and you've built messaging around it. "If you're frustrated with [competitor limitation], we solve it by [your approach]." This is displacement positioning – the fastest path to revenue in mature markets.

NO means: You position against "manual processes" or "doing nothing" instead of named competitors. Reality: 80% of your deals involve competitive displacement. If you can't articulate the switching rationale, your sales team is losing winnable deals.

REVENUE IMPACT: Weak competitive positioning costs 30% of competitive deals (typically your highest-value opportunities).

Quick Fix: Interview 5 customers who switched from a competitor. Identify the pattern. Build messaging around that inflection point.

Checkpoint 9: Feature-to-Benefit Translation

Do you translate every feature into a business outcome?

YES means: You never mention a feature without immediately connecting it to revenue, time saved, risk reduced, or strategic advantage. "Our AI-powered matching engine [feature] reduces your team's sourcing time by 12 hours per week [outcome], freeing them for strategic work."

NO means: Your website lists features and assumes buyers will connect dots. They won't. When you make prospects work to understand value, 50% bounce. The other 50% underestimate your worth and negotiate harder.

REVENUE IMPACT: Feature-heavy positioning reduces deal size by 20% and increases price objections by 60%.

Quick Fix: Audit every feature on your site. Add "which means [business outcome]" after each one. If you can't, delete the feature from your marketing.

Checkpoint 10: Anti-Positioning Defense

Can you explain what you're NOT and who you DON'T serve?

YES means: You proactively disqualify bad-fit prospects with statements like "We're not for early-stage startups" or "If you need a full-service agency, that's not us." This is counterintuitive but critical. Specificity attracts; vagueness repels. Anti-positioning reduces tire-kicker volume by 40% while increasing qualified leads by 25%.

NO means: You try to be everything to everyone. Your sales team wastes 30% of their time on unqualified deals. Your close rate suffers because you're selling to people you can't serve well.

REVENUE IMPACT: Lack of anti-positioning increases CAC by 35% and destroys sales efficiency.

Quick Fix: List your 3 worst customer types. Write explicit "not for you" messaging on your site. Watch qualified pipeline increase.

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If you scored 3 or below, differentiation weakness is costing you 25-35% of deal value and win rate.

CATEGORY 3: Messaging Precision

These 5 checkpoints evaluate whether your words create conviction or confusion. Messaging precision determines time-to-trust. Poor messaging increases "we'll think about it" responses by 3x.

Checkpoint 11: One-Sentence Value Proposition

Can every employee recite your value proposition identically?

YES means: From CEO to newest hire, everyone says the exact same sentence when asked "What does your company do?" This consistency compounds trust across every customer touchpoint – marketing, sales, support, product.

NO means: Ten employees give ten different answers. This inconsistency signals internal confusion, which prospects interpret as unreliability. Misaligned messaging increases buyer hesitation and extends enterprise deals by 6-8 weeks.

REVENUE IMPACT: Messaging inconsistency reduces brand trust scores by 40% and tanks referral conversion.

Quick Fix: Write one mandatory value prop sentence. Train entire team. Make it part of onboarding. Test monthly.

Checkpoint 12: Jargon Elimination Test

Could a smart 8th grader understand your homepage?

YES means: Your copy uses simple, concrete language. No buzzwords. No acronyms without explanation. No insider terminology. Clarity creates speed. Speed creates revenue.

NO means: Your messaging includes words like "synergistic," "leverage," "solutions ecosystem," "next-generation platform." Every jargon word reduces comprehension by 15%. When prospects don't understand, they don't buy.

REVENUE IMPACT: Jargon-heavy copy reduces conversion rates by 30-40% across all funnel stages.

Quick Fix: Run your homepage through Hemingway App. Rewrite anything above 8th-grade reading level. Eliminate every buzzword.

Checkpoint 13: Social Proof Specificity

Do your testimonials include numbers, names, and outcomes?

YES means: You show: "[Full Name], [Title] at [Company]: '[Specific outcome with number] in [timeframe]." Example: "Sarah Chen, VP Sales at Acme Corp: 'We closed 47% more enterprise deals in Q2." This is credible. This creates belief.

X NO means: You use generic quotes like "Great experience! Highly recommend.' – John." Anonymous praise without outcomes is worthless. Prospects assume it's fabricated. Weak social proof reduces conversion by 25%.

REVENUE IMPACT: Generic testimonials have near-zero impact on trust or conversion.

Quick Fix: Email 10 best customers. Ask for outcomes with numbers. Get permission to use full name and company. Replace all generic testimonials.

Checkpoint 14: Clarity Over Cleverness

Is your messaging direct, or does it rely on metaphor and abstraction?

YES means: You say exactly what you mean. "We reduce security compliance costs by 40%" beats "We're your shield in the digital landscape." Direct language converts 60% better than clever language.

X NO means: Your copy tries to be poetic, inspiring, or thought-provoking instead of clear. Clever headlines might win awards, but they lose deals. Every second of cognitive processing is a conversion leak.

REVENUE IMPACT: Clever messaging reduces top-of-funnel conversion by 35%.

Quick Fix: Replace every metaphor and abstraction with a literal statement of benefit.

Checkpoint 15: Objection Preemption

Do you address top 3 buyer objections directly on your website?

YES means: You proactively tackle "Too expensive," "Too complex," "Not sure it'll work for our situation" with data, case studies, and transparent explanations. Buyers appreciate honesty. Preempting objections reduces late-stage drop-off by 30%.

NO means: You avoid objections, hoping they won't come up. They will. And when they surface late in the sales process without preparation, deals stall. Objection avoidance extends deal cycles by 3-4 weeks.

REVENUE IMPACT: Unaddressed objections kill 20% of late-stage deals.

Quick Fix: Ask sales team for top 3 objections. Write FAQ section or objection-handling page. Link in nurture sequences.

CATEGO	RY 3	3 SC	ORE:	/	5

If you scored 3 or below, messaging imprecision is costing you 30% of qualified leads at every stage.

CATEGORY 4: Competitive Positioning

These 5 checkpoints reveal whether you control your competitive narrative or get commoditized. Strong competitive positioning increases win rate by 40% and protects pricing power.

Checkpoint 16: Comparison Page Ownership

Do you have a page directly comparing yourself to top 3 competitors?

▼YES means: You own the comparison narrative with honest, data-driven competitor pages (e.g., "Why customers switch from [Competitor] to us"). 60% of B2B buyers visit competitor comparison sites. If you don't control this narrative, third-party review sites do – and they're incentivized to show you as interchangeable.

NO means: You ignore competitors publicly while prospects privately compare you on G2, Capterra, and generic review sites where you lose narrative control. This costs 15-25% of competitive deals.

REVENUE IMPACT: No comparison pages = 20% lower win rate in competitive situations.

Quick Fix: Create "[Your Brand] vs [Top Competitor]" pages. Be honest about trade-offs. Show where you win. Own the narrative.

Checkpoint 17: Polarizing Positioning

Does your positioning actively repel bad-fit customers?

YES means: You take clear stances that certain buyers will disagree with. "We only work with companies committed to 90-day implementations" or "We don't compete on price." Polarization filters aggressively. Strong POV increases average deal size by 30% by attracting ideal buyers and repelling tire-kickers.

NO means: You use safe, neutral language designed to offend no one. This attracts everyone and converts no one. Wishy-washy positioning increases unqualified pipeline by 40% and wastes sales capacity.

REVENUE IMPACT: Neutral positioning destroys sales efficiency and margins.

Quick Fix: Take 3 controversial stances about how your market should buy, implement, or think about your category. Publish them.

Checkpoint 18: Competitive Win Theme

Can your sales team articulate in one sentence why you win competitive deals?

YES means: There's one consistent reason you displace competitors, and everyone knows it. "We win because our implementation takes 6 weeks instead of 6 months" or "We win because we're the only platform with native [feature]." This clarity accelerates competitive cycles.

NO means: Your team gives different answers, or worse, doesn't know. When sales can't articulate competitive advantage, they default to discounting. Your win rate drops 30% and deal value shrinks 25%.

REVENUE IMPACT: Unclear competitive advantage reduces win rate by 30% in head-to-head situations.

Quick Fix: Analyze last 20 competitive wins. Find the pattern. Train entire team on that narrative.

Checkpoint 19: Category Leadership Signals

Do you publish content, research, or frameworks that define your category?

YES means: You're not just playing in the category – you're defining it. You publish annual industry reports, create frameworks others reference, host category-defining events. This positions you as the incumbent even if you're not. Category leaders command 40% price premiums and win 2x more deals.

NO means: You're a participant, not a leader. Buyers see you as "one of several options" instead of "the standard." Without category leadership signals, you're in permanent competitive vulnerability.

REVENUE IMPACT: Category followers fight for 30-40% lower deal values than category leaders.

Quick Fix: Create one annual research report, benchmark study, or framework that becomes the industry reference point.

Checkpoint 20: Pricing Confidence

Is your pricing published or discussed early in the sales process?

YES means: You're confident enough in your differentiation to be transparent about cost. Pricing confidence signals value confidence. It prequalifies buyers and eliminates 60% of unqualified leads before they reach sales.

NO means: You hide pricing until late in the process, signaling that you're afraid of being compared on price (because you probably should be). This attracts price shoppers and repels value buyers.

REVENUE IMPACT: Pricing opacity increases low-quality pipeline by 50% and extends sales cycles.

Quick Fix: If you can't publish exact pricing, publish ranges or starting points. Make cost expectations clear upfront.

CATEGORY	4 SCORE:	/5

If you scored 3 or below, competitive positioning weakness is costing you 25-40% of competitive deals.

CATEGORY 5: Revenue Alignment

These 5 checkpoints determine whether your positioning actually drives measurable business growth. Revenue alignment is the ultimate validation. Everything else is theory.

Checkpoint 21: Conversion Rate Benchmarking

Do you know your current conversion rates at each funnel stage and how they compare to industry benchmarks?

YES means: You track visitor-to-lead, lead-to-opportunity, opportunity-to-close rates monthly. You know if your positioning is working because the data tells you. Strong positioning delivers top-quartile conversion rates (typically 3-5% visitor-to-lead for B2B).

NO means: You're flying blind. You don't know if positioning is the problem or if it's your product, pricing, or sales execution. Without data, you can't improve. And what you can't measure, you can't fix.

REVENUE IMPACT: Not tracking conversions means you're leaving 30-50% of revenue potential unmeasured and unoptimized.

Quick Fix: Implement basic funnel tracking today. Measure monthly. Compare to industry standards.

Checkpoint 22: Sales Cycle Consistency

Are your sales cycles predictable, or do they vary wildly by deal?

YES means: 80% of deals close within a consistent timeframe (e.g., 60-90 days for enterprise). Predictable cycles indicate clear positioning – buyers understand value quickly, navigate approvals smoothly, and have few surprises. This allows accurate forecasting and efficient scaling.

NO means: Some deals close in 3 weeks, others drag for 9 months. Inconsistency signals positioning confusion. Buyers don't understand what you do, how to evaluate you, or who needs to approve. This chaos destroys forecast accuracy and caps growth.

REVENUE IMPACT: Inconsistent sales cycles inflate operating costs by 40% and limit scaling velocity.

Quick Fix: Analyze last 50 closed deals. Find the outliers. Identify the positioning gaps that caused delays.

Checkpoint 23: Win Rate by Segment

Do you have 30%+ win rates in your defined ICP segment?

▼YES means: When you sell to your ideal customer profile, you win consistently. This proves positioning accuracy – you're targeting the right market with the right message. Top-quartile B2B win rates range from 30-40% in-ICP.

NO means: Your win rate is below 25%, indicating either wrong market targeting or weak positioning. Low win rates mean your sales team is working 3x harder for the same revenue. This isn't a sales problem – it's a positioning problem.

REVENUE IMPACT: Sub-25% win rates mean 40-60% of sales capacity is wasted on unwinnable deals.

Quick Fix: Segment win rates by customer type. Double down on highest-converting segments. Fire the rest.

Checkpoint 24: Referral Velocity

Do 20%+ of customers proactively refer others without incentive?

YES means: Your positioning creates word-of-mouth momentum. Customers understand your value so clearly that they can articulate it to peers. Referrals are the ultimate positioning validation – when customers sell for you, you've achieved positioning excellence.

NO means: Your positioning is too complex or too generic for customers to champion. If they can't explain your value to a colleague in one sentence, your positioning needs work. Low referral rates cap organic growth.

REVENUE IMPACT: No referral engine means 50-80% higher CAC and slower growth velocity.

Quick Fix: Survey customers: "Would you refer us? Why or why not?" Their answers reveal positioning gaps.

Checkpoint 25: Investor/Board Confidence

Can you articulate your positioning in 2 minutes and get an immediate positive reaction?

YES means: When you pitch investors, board members, or potential strategic partners, they "get it" instantly. No confused looks. No "interesting, but..." responses. Clear positioning creates funding velocity, partnership opportunities, and strategic optionality.

X NO means: You get polite nods followed by requests for clarification. This is the canary in the coal mine. If sophisticated buyers can't understand your positioning quickly, your market can't either. Weak positioning caps enterprise value by 30-50%.

REVENUE IMPACT: Poor positioning reduces valuation multiples and limits strategic options during fundraising or exit.

Quick Fix: Record yourself explaining your positioning in 2 minutes. Show it to 5 people outside your industry. If they need clarification, rewrite.

CATEGORY	5	SCORE:	/	5	,

If you scored 3 or below, positioning-revenue misalignment is costing you 40-60% of potential growth.

Your Positioning Score: What It Means

Add your scores from all 5 categories: /25

20-25 Points: Elite Positioning

You're in the top 5% of companies in your market. Your positioning is a revenue accelerator, not a drag. Focus on scaling what's working and defending against competitive encroachment.

Next move: Maintain excellence through quarterly positioning audits. Small drift compounds quickly at scale.

15-19 Points: Strong Foundation, Optimization Needed

You've got the fundamentals right, but you're leaving 20-30% of potential revenue on the table. Specific gaps are creating friction in your funnel, extending sales cycles, or reducing win rates.

Next move: Identify your lowest-scoring category. That's your constraint. Fix it and you'll see 15-25% improvement in related metrics within 90 days.

When to get help: If you've been stuck at this level for 6+ months, you need external perspective. Internal teams often can't see their own blind spots.

10-14 Points: Positioning Gaps Costing Revenue

You're in the danger zone. Your positioning is actively limiting growth. Sales is working 2-3x harder than they should for results. Marketing spend is 40-60% less efficient than it could be. Every quarter at this level costs six figures in lost opportunity.

Next move: Conduct a comprehensive positioning overhaul. This isn't a website refresh problem – it's a strategic problem requiring market research, customer interviews, competitive analysis, and messaging reconstruction.

When to get help: Now. The gap between current state and optimized state represents \$500K-\$2M in annual revenue impact for most \$5M+ companies.

0-9 Points: Critical Positioning Failure

Your positioning is your primary growth constraint. No amount of sales hustle, marketing spend, or product improvement will fix this. You're in a perpetual state of explaining, justifying, and defending your value – which means you're losing.

Urgent reality: Companies at this level are either pre-product-market fit or have built the business without strategic positioning. Every dollar invested in growth is 60% less efficient than it should be.

Next move: Stop all major marketing and sales initiatives until you fix positioning. You're pouring water into a broken bucket. A complete positioning reset should be your #1 priority.

When to get help: Immediately. This level of positioning dysfunction requires experienced external intervention. The cost of staying here for one more quarter exceeds the investment in fixing it by 5-10x.

What To Do Next

If you scored 15+ points: Book a positioning optimization session to identify and fix your 2-3 highest-impact gaps. These are typically 90-day projects with measurable ROI.

If you scored 10-14 points: You need a comprehensive positioning diagnostic. This is a 2-3 week intensive process involving market analysis, customer research, competitive mapping, and messaging reconstruction.

If you scored below 10 points: You need a complete positioning reset – from market definition through messaging architecture to competitive strategy. This is typically a 60-90 day engagement with staged implementation.

About Strategic Positioning Work

I work with CEOs and CMOs at \$5M-\$100M companies where positioning gaps are costing measurable revenue. My engagements follow a diagnostic-first approach:

- 1. **Positioning Diagnostic** (2-3 weeks): Comprehensive audit of current positioning, competitive landscape, customer perception, and revenue data. Deliverable: Complete positioning analysis with prioritized recommendations and ROI projections.
- 2. **Strategic Positioning** (60-90 days): Market definition, differentiation strategy, messaging architecture, competitive positioning, and implementation roadmap. For companies doing a complete positioning reset.
- 3. **Investor-Ready Positioning** (30-45 days): Compressed timeline positioning work for companies preparing for fundraising, acquisition, or major product launches where market narrative is critical.

Typical results: 20-40% improvement in conversion rates, 15-30% reduction in sales cycle length, 25-35% increase in win rates.

Book Your Positioning Diagnostic

If your score revealed gaps that are costing you revenue, let's have a conversation.

I offer a limited number of positioning diagnostic sessions monthly. These are 90-minute working sessions where we:

- Analyze your current positioning against your market
- Identify your top 3 revenue-impacting gaps
- Map the exact cost of those gaps in pipeline, conversion, and deal value
- Outline the 90-day roadmap to fix them

This isn't a sales call. It's a working session. You'll leave with specific, actionable insights whether we work together or not.

To book: [Your scheduling link / contact method]

Troy Assoignon Strategic Positioning Expert

For companies where positioning is the constraint, not capacity.

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