

The Language of Brand Strategy

By Reilly Newman

One of my favorite aspects of a brand is its positioning: the place it earns in the mind of a buyer. It's also one of the most important cornerstones of a healthy brand. A business can deliberately pursue a position in its market. That aim should lean into the strengths of the business and a specific need those strengths can serve. The magic here is that it works on two fronts: it helps the business become more distinct, while giving its true audience a more specific reason to choose it.

But the position you pursue and the positioning you earn are not the same thing. **Strategy is the plan for making that position believable.** Pricing, identity, language, and the experience of doing business with you send the signals. Positioning is the conclusion the market reaches.

All of these elements can work together beautifully, like an orchestra. Strategy gives the players a shared direction. Their performance is what the audience actually hears.

The Words Set the Frame

One instrument in that orchestra is easy to overlook: *language*.

The words we select frame the business and its offerings. They bring certain associations to mind, suggest what deserves attention, and help people decide what kind of experience they are being invited into.

Call something a consultation, an assessment, or a conversation, and you begin to set different expectations before anyone arrives. Those words are useful only if the experience follows through. A casual conversation dressed up as a rigorous assessment can create the wrong expectation just as easily as a thoughtful name can create the right one.

Language, Context, and Caution

The relationship between language and behavior is fascinating. In a **2013 study**, economist Keith Chen reported an association between how languages grammatically distinguish the future from the present and savings behavior. One proposed explanation was that making the future sound more separate could make it feel more distant.

That is an interesting possibility, not proof that grammar determines someone's financial habits. A **follow-up analysis**, coauthored by Chen, found the relationship weakened when accounting for historical and geographic relatedness among languages, and was not significant under the strictest tests.

For a brand, the useful question is closer to home: what does this particular language lead our audience to expect? We can examine that in the words people repeat, the questions they ask, and whether the experience matches the promise.

A Vocabulary of Your Own

Look at the language brands put into everyday use. Disney calls employees **cast members**. Starbucks offers sizes including **Tall, Grande, and Venti**. Apple calls its personal intelligence system **Apple Intelligence**.

These names do more than label. To my ear, “cast member” places a person inside a performance. Starbucks gives the ordering experience a recognizable vocabulary. Apple connects an unfamiliar technology to a familiar brand. Each offers a frame for understanding what is in front of us.

Even a small invitation can change the emphasis. Bentley uses “**Enquire to Buy**”, while Honda offers “**Build & Price**”. One invites an inquiry; the other foregrounds configuration and cost. These are particular touchpoints, not complete explanations of either brand, but the difference in phrasing is worth hearing.

Distinctive language can make an offering easier to recognize without removing it from an existing category. Apple gave us the name iPod, but its **original announcement** also described the product as an MP3 music player. The name created a recognizable identity; the category language helped explain what it was.

This is where brand language becomes useful. It can make something feel more welcoming, more specialized, or more valuable while still making it clear. A vocabulary that requires constant translation may be distinctive, but it can also get in the buyer’s way.

Bring the Orchestra Together

A company serious about its brand chooses the position it wants to earn, then builds a strategy that gives the market reasons to believe it. Language is one of the clearest ways that strategy becomes visible.

Look at your service names, proposals, website, and sales conversations together. Do they invite the same expectations? Can your team explain the offer without slipping into a different story? Can the customer recognize the promise in the experience?

The aim is not to find a clever word and ask it to carry the business. It is to bring the words, decisions, and experience into the same performance. When the orchestra is working together, the audience has a much better chance of hearing what you intended.

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Continue the thinking

Brand Language

Earn the position your business deserves

Strategy, signals, and the market’s conclusion