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The Messaging Mistake That Slows Down Founder Growth



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Photo Courtesy: Dreamers & Doers



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By: Gesche Haas – the founder & CEO of Dreamers & Doers, a highly curated community and PR Hype Machine™ for extraordinary women entrepreneurs.

If you're a founder or leader trying to get the word out about your business, you've probably had this thought at least once: *Marketing feels harder than it should*. It's a tough truth to admit, especially with so many effective tools and platforms available, but it's real. Many founders assume their struggles stem from a lack of channels, content, or visibility. But there's a deeper issue making marketing feel impossible, and it comes down to one word: positioning.

When positioning is vague, marketing must be constantly explained and clarified for audiences. This lengthens sales cycles and pulls teams in different directions. Ultimately, it's also distracting and exhausting for the people on the inside who are just trying to share the amazing work they're doing. No wonder it can feel like a losing game!

Founders who have achieved growth didn't necessarily do *more* marketing, but they *did* clarify what they stood for and who they were for. These brilliant minds from the [Dreamers & Doers](https://www.dreamersdoers.com/) (https://www.dreamersdoers.com/) community are among them, and they have insights to offer others who are ready to refocus on their positioning.

Positioning Starts With Choosing Who You Serve

You've probably heard some of the clichés about how it's impossible to appeal to everyone unless you're ice cream, but they're clichés because they're true. When founders stop trying to make their products and services attractive to the widest possible audience, they can accelerate growth by targeting the *right* prospective customers.

L Leon Virtual Assistance LLC (<https://www.lleonva.co/>) founder Nicole Leon made this switch and has never looked back.

"I stopped marketing everything I *could* do and started clearly articulating who I serve, what problem I solve, and why my support is different," she says. "Once my messaging shifted from 'general VA help' to 'executive-level right-hand support,' I attracted better-fit clients, raised my rates, and closed faster with less explaining."

Monica Rivera had to do some repositioning of marketing itself in order to see similar results. As the founder of YOU WANNA DO WHAT?! (<http://www.youwannadowhat.com/>), she started off treating messaging like a marketing problem when it was actually a matter of leadership.

"Once I stopped trying to keep every option open and instead took a clear stand on who I serve and why, decisions accelerated across the business," she says. "Momentum followed."

Rivera's experience is proof that the right positioning has the power to shape every aspect of a company: decisions, partnerships, priorities, and more. Effective leaders see this big picture and act accordingly.

Peri Finkelstein has done this work as the founder and CEO of Team Peri Foundation (<https://www.teamperi.org/>). "When I first launched my organization, my mission statement was intentionally broad because I didn't want to limit its possibilities," she says. "Once I recognized that this lack of focus was creating confusion, I refined it to be simple, clear, and targeted toward what I aimed to accomplish, while still leaving room for growth. As a result, my vision became easier to communicate, and I was able to align my values and actions more effectively toward tangible impact."

Once founders clarify who they serve, it's time for the next challenge: to make their value unmistakably clear.

Clarity Beats Cleverness Every Time

It's not up to a buyer to unpack a brand's positioning. Instead, they're doing a quick scan for relevance, determining if the product or service being marketed will mean something to them. As a result, clarity should always be the first priority when positioning.

"Today's buyers do not spend time decoding your brilliance," says Maiko Sakai, design strategist of Airtight Concepts Inc. (<https://maikosakai.com/>). "They scan for immediate relevance and move on when it is not obvious. Once I replaced cleverness with clarity and treated positioning as a decision shortcut rather than a branding exercise, traction accelerated. Clarity often feels boring to the creator, but it is a relief to the buyer."

Positioning should be a decision shortcut for buyers who are overwhelmed with options at so many moments throughout the day.

"What I underestimated is how quickly ambiguity kills trust," says Natanya Wachtel, founder and chief strategy officer of The New Solutions Network (<https://newsolutionsnetwork.com/>). "Building inside corporate systems and now independently, I've watched decisions shift hands across generations, and with them, what people are willing to believe."

A case study within nonprofit Superbands (<http://www.superbands.me/>) underscores the importance of clarity over cleverness. Founder and executive director Jessica Sikora remembers the team's decision to transition away from crisis-focused language and positioning.

"Once we repositioned Superbands as an upstream, culture-first platform rooted in music and fandom, our value became clearer," Sikora says. "The shift strengthened partnerships, improved engagement and helped us grow with more focus and stability. When your message reflects how people actually experience culture, marketing becomes less about persuasion and more about alignment."

Prioritizing clear positioning is, of course, better for the customer, but it can also be a clarifying exercise internally.

Clear Positioning Aligns the Entire Business

Positioning is more than just a marketing exercise. It's also an operational one. Victoria Anderson, SVP of cultural strategy and communications at 160over90 (<http://160over90.com/>), witnessed a major impact on the organization after the agency crystallized its marketing language.

"I underestimated just how much time and momentum are lost when positioning isn't crystal clear," she says. "Teams hesitate, partners misinterpret value and growth depends too heavily on individual explanation instead of shared understanding. Once I recognized the gap, I started forcing more clarity upstream. That shift reduced friction, sped up decision-making, and allowed work to scale amidst the limits of bureaucracy."

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