

## Dick Maggione: Start with positioning to win online search

By **Dick Maggione Special** to The Canton Repository

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In the 1970s, Jack Trout and Al Ries first coined the term “**positioning**” for use in the field of marketing.

It made an immediate impact, and nearly a half-century later, the term has become ubiquitous in the business world. The impact was so significant that Ad Age readers voted Trout’s and Ries’ first book, “Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind,” the No. 1 business book of all time.

Today’s column is based on another book, titled “Keyword: Positioning. How Search Proves the Principle of Brand Positioning,” written by Innis Maggione Chief Operating Officer Mark Vandegrift. His book will be released in January.

The principles of positioning were developed as strategic weapons to fight against the growing clutter and competition in the marketplace. During the 50 years since the principles of positioning were developed, competition and clutter has increased exponentially — online and off.

A growing number of businesses depend on leads and sales from online searches. For many of those businesses, online leads and sales represent their leading business generator.

How do online searches and positioning work together? That’s the question Vandegrift’s book answers.

A position is a simple, singular concept.

Positioning is about owning a position in the mind. The position, to be effective, must be something you are passionate about. It must be authentic and something your prospects want. It must be relevant and differentiate you from your competition.

We’ve chronicled many classic examples in this column. Heinz owns thick ketchup. Google owns online search. Tesla owns electric cars. Volvo owns safe cars. Home Depot owns the hardware store for the do-it-yourselfer. Walmart owns low-price department store.

The first brand to get its idea into the prospect’s mind owns that position.

An online search term is also a simple, singular concept.

According to a recent study, 90 percent of all search terms are one to four words in length. Perhaps you've searched terms like safe cars, low-cost razors, electric cars and sensitive teeth toothpaste.

To select a search term, first determine the position you believe you can own in the minds of your customers. Then develop several simple cohesive search terms of two, three and four words based on your position.

Research shows that the top seven positions of search results get 85 percent of the traffic. The goal is to rank high on Google's Search Engine Results Page (SERP), preferably on the first page as close to the top as possible.

There are several activities that can help to achieve this. These activities fall under the headings of Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

### **Google leads the way**

Google is the largest advertising media company in the world by a factor of almost three.

"Google was founded to get information to everybody," said Google co-founder Eric Schmidt. "A by-product of that strategy is that we invented an advertising business that has provided great economics that allows us to build the servers, hire the employees, create value."

Google charges money via "paid search" to put your listing on the top of the first page of the search results. It calls this service AdWords.

The listing result will include a little box with the word "Ad" inside. Consider testing various AdWords. They do work and are most often done in conjunction with organic, or non-paid, search.

Google doesn't charge for organic search. But it will take time, skill and creative talent to succeed in organic search, so some companies hire an outside firm or individual to assist.

The key to success with organic search is relevance. Google will serve up only the search results' listings it believes are pertinent to the searcher's query. Google's No. 1 job as a search engine is to serve up what the searcher wants.

Over the years, Google's search algorithms have become very accurate. In the early days, advertisers would come up with all kinds of tricks and gimmicks to get on Google's first page of search results. Not any more. Google's algorithms are smarter than humans.

Google's search bar works like our minds work.

We think category first, just like Google's search engine. We add a few words to further refine and press enter.

The more relevant the listing, the higher Google will rank the listing. The more relevant the listing, more customers will buy your product or service.

And it all starts with savvy positioning.

*Dick Maggiore is president and CEO of [Innis Maggiore](#), founded in Canton in 1974 and today the nation's leading positioning ad agency, building strong brands for companies in competitive markets here and across the country.*