

Positioning Testing

Background

Success in business is often not about having the best product or service, but about planting the right idea in the customer's mind and keeping it there. Getting "positioning" right is therefore still one of the most important strategies in business. One CSR client, a major insurance carrier, asked us to help construct a powerful positioning statement for one of their core group benefit offerings.

The Approach

Five different positioning statements were crafted, each containing multiple elements to be tested. CSR designed a two-phase study to understand which elements worked well and which did not. As importantly, we learned *why* those elements were seen as positive or negative among key audiences.

Phase 1 In-Person IDIs: In this phase of research, we interviewed employee benefits brokers, human resources decision-makers and CFOs in person at a focus group facility. These interviews, 14 in total, lasted 90 minutes each and were conducted over the course of two days.

Participants reviewed each statement and circled words or phrases that stood out in a positive or negative way, and described what they liked, didn't like and why they felt that way about each statement. They were also asked how important, unique and believable each statement was, how interested they would be in the product that was described, and how much the statement sounded like it was something the client company could provide.

Based on the reactions to the five concepts, we were able to narrow the number of options to test in the next phase, and substantially improve each of those remaining positioning statements.

Phase 2 Telephone IDIs: For this phase, we interviewed the same types of individuals (30 employee benefit brokers, 30 human resources decision-makers and 30 CFOs) over the phone. These interviews included more quantitative questions, but were still primarily qualitative in nature. The three groups were asked essentially the same questions, so that once the responses were codified using CSR's proprietary content coding and analytic tools, the resulting data set allowed comparisons between responses of each group. The quantitative results ensured the client team that final decisions could be made as a result of the study.

Results

CSR developed a “Positive Attention Score” that allowed the client to see which elements contained in each concept gained the most positive feedback. While no one statement stood out as a clear winner, the client used the information about each individual element to construct a positioning statement that harnessed the strengths of several statements. In addition, the report that CSR delivered contained information that continued to inform the client team as it used the new statement and tailored it to various customer segments. According to our client:

“The report was so comprehensive. It was like my bible — I brought it everywhere with me. It was really high value. Their insight is valuable, they’re very bright, dedicated people — quick to pick things up — and innovative, too.”