

RIES POSITIONING STRATEGY SESSIONS

In 1981, Al Ries wrote a book that changed the field of marketing.

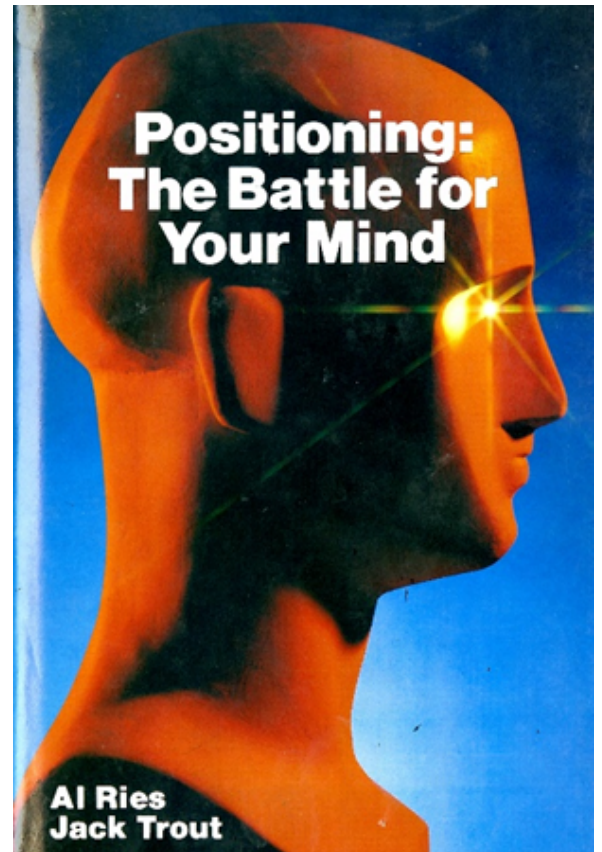
In those days, marketing was considered to be communications.

You studied your product, its features and its competitors and then prepared advertising that explained why your product was better than the competition.

In spite of billions of marketing dollars spent every year, perceptions about leading brands as well as their market shares seldom changed. Little communications were taking place. That insight led to the positioning idea and the book: *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*.

Instead of focusing on the product, Al Ries focused on the mind of the prospect and developed the principles of positioning. The first principle: *Look for an open hole in the mind and then be the first brand to fill it.*

RIES continues under the leadership of Laura Ries as Global Chairwomen. Laura and her team are dedicated to helping your brand find its position in the mind. We conduct our positioning sessions in person or remotely via Zoom. The following is an overview of the key principles we address during our consulting.



First Focus.

Most brands are too broad in scope to fill a hole in the mind. They have too many features and too many benefits. And they appeal to too many different market segments.

What hole in the mind could a brand like Chevrolet fill? A brand which has which has 19 different models, including sedans, trucks, SUVs and sports cars?

Chevrolet would first need to focus its brand, as outlined in our book, *Focus: The Future of Your Company Depends on It*.



BMW focused on “driving” and became the world’s largest-selling luxury-vehicle brand outselling Mercedes-Benz.

Define Your Category

Every brand needs two names: A brand name and a category name.

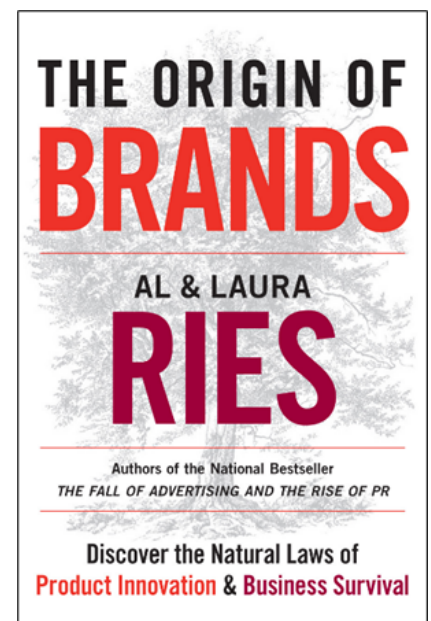
Marketing people often overlook the opportunity to create a new category. Many successful brands have done this:

Chobani . . . *The first Greek yogurt.*

Red Bull . . . *The first energy drink.*

Activia *The first probiotic yogurt.*

In our book, *The Origin of Brands*, we explain how divergence is creating many opportunities to create new categories. The Internet, in particular, has created enormous opportunities.



Visual Hammer.

Visuals are much more powerful than words. The cowboy for Marlboro cigarettes. The contour bottle for Coca-Cola. The straw-in-the-orange for Tropicana.

Visual Hammer, a book by Laura Ries, explains the 10 ways to create a visual that can hammer your verbal concept. Our philosophy is simple: never settle for just a verbal approach. Always create a visual.



Battlecry.

The objective of a visual hammer is to hammer your marketing slogan into prospects' minds. That job is much easier if your slogan is converted into a memorable battlecry, as outlined in

Laura Ries' book, *Battlecry*. Some examples:

- DeBeers: A diamond is forever.
- M&Ms: *Melts in your mouth, not in your hands.*
- FedEx: *When it absolutely, positively, has to be there overnight.*

There are five techniques you can use to create a memorable battlecry: *Rhyme, alliteration, repetition, reversals and double-entendre.*



What else?

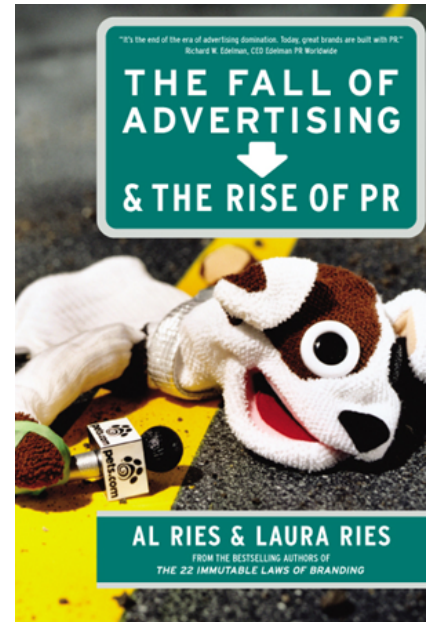
In addition to developing an overall visual/verbal strategy, our consulting sessions include discussions about executing the strategy.

For example, it's usually a mistake to try to put a new idea into prospects' minds with advertising.

Advertising doesn't have the credibility to do that.

Rather, a company should use public relations, or PR to establish the position. PR first, advertising second is what we recommend in our book, *The Fall of Advertising & the Rise of PR*.

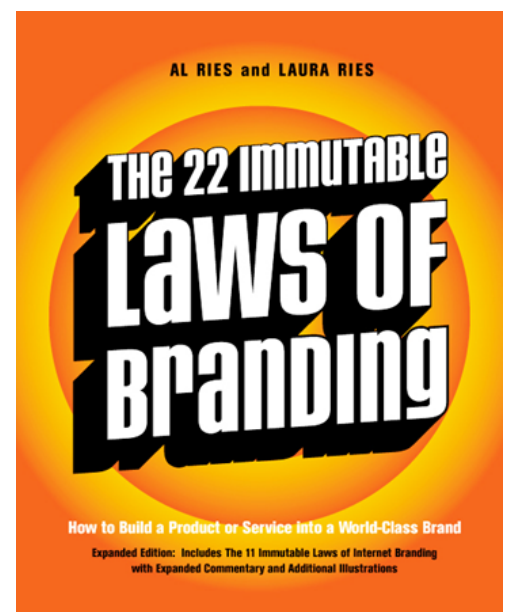
But PR is just one of the ways to execute a new strategy.



Other recommendations.

There are many other ways to build strong brands. Packaging, distribution, pricing, websites, social media.

These and other issues will also be explored during the one-day consulting session. Our branding philosophy is outlined in our book, *The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding*. The book covers such issues as second brands and the shape and color of logotypes.



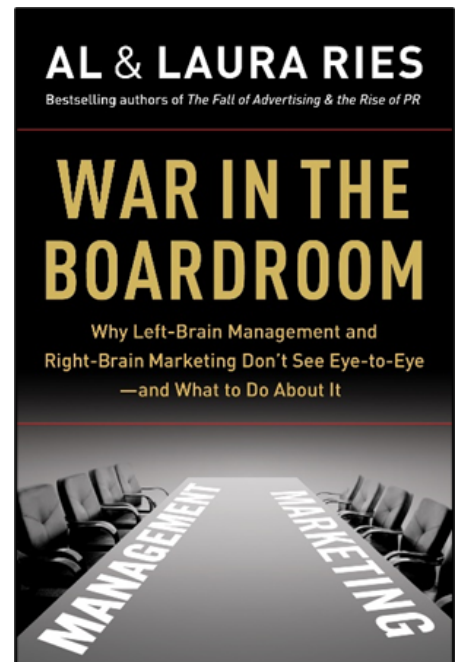
Who should attend?

We suggest the top-management team attend the session. Every company has management people who literally think differently, as explained in our book, *War in the Boardroom*.

There are right brainers (visual, intuitive, holistic) and there are left brainers (verbal, logical, analytical.) In other words, free thinkers and button-down practical types. Both types should attend the consulting session.

One of the purposes of a strategy session is to assure that everyone participates in developing the company's visual/verbal strategy and that everyone enthusiastically supports the strategy that is developed.

If at the end of the sessions if everyone doesn't agree on the proposed strategy, then RIES will have failed in its mission.



Ready to get started with RIES?

email me: laura@ries.com

TYPICAL SESSION OUTLINE

Pre-Session Homework:

1. What was your founding idea - why does your brand exist?
2. What do you see your brand's biggest future opportunity?
3. How would you define your position in the mind right now?
4. Who are your competitors? How are these different from you?
5. Who are your target prospects?
6. What are your offerings, price points, current gross sales?
7. How do prospects find your brand? Referrals, Ads, Social Media, PR etc?

Session #1: Input Session

1. Introduction of the RIES & the Sessions Approach
2. Short intro to the Positioning Thinking World
3. Working through the seven questions together
4. Short summary and conclusions of the session
5. Next Session: Agenda and Time

Session #2: Output Session

1. Positioning Framing
 - a. Market & Mind Insights
 - b. Category & Trend Insights
 - c. Positioning Insights
2. The First Directions
 - a. Category (first definition)
 - b. Positioning (first direction)

- c. Visual Hammer (first ideas)
 - d. Naming/the Branding (if needed)
 - e. Executional Inspiration (first ideas)
3. **Short summary and next session (Agenda/Timing)**

Session #3: Fine-tuning and Report Session

- 1. **Fine-tuning the Report together**
 - a. Category Definition
 - b. Positioning Definition
 - c. Visual Hammer Illustration
 - d. Naming/the Branding (if needed)
 - e. Executional Storyboard
- 2. **Developing a Creative Brief together**
- 3. **Final Questions & Wrap-up**

RIES works both in-person and virtually. The input session is typically virtual.

Session 2&3 can done together in during an in-person session or separately virtually.