The power of brand positioning for pharmaceutical startups

Category: Strategy
written by Stewart Hodgson | 24 October 2024
In any industry, great branding is crucial – but strategic brand positioning for pharmaceutical startups is often particularly essential.

After all, how you position your company in the pharmaceutical industry doesn't only influence how well you can earn the trust of potential consumers. Your pharma brand positioning strategy can also impact your ability to attract the talent, investors, and healthcare providers that will help your business grow.

As a core component of your pharmaceutical startup brand strategy, your approach to positioning determines how you'll communicate your company's value to a wide range of stakeholders.

Strong positioning can give you a crucial competitive advantage in one of the world's most complex, competitive, and dynamic industries.

In this guide, we'll explain how positioning can make or break the success of early-stage pharma brands, and explore the key factors you'll need to consider for a powerful brand positioning strategy.

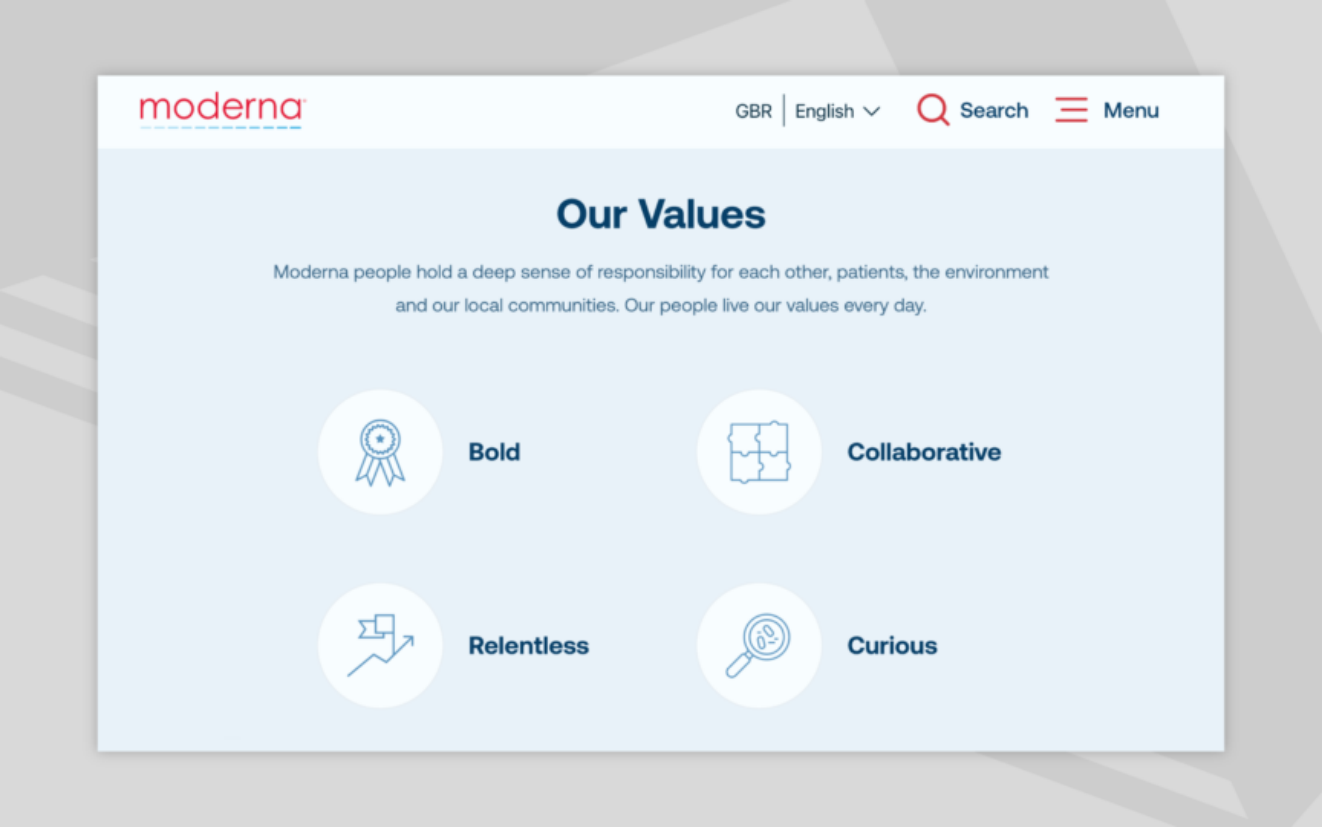
What is brand positioning for pharmaceutical startups?

Brand positioning for pharmaceutical startups is the art of

identifying and consistently conveying the unique value your company offers to stakeholders, such as consumers (patients and healthcare companies), and investors.

You're probably already familiar with the "positioning statements" shared on the websites of leading pharmaceutical companies. These statements usually outline key information about who the company serves, the vision or goal of the organization, and its values.

Here's an example from Moderna:



Effective brand positioning isn't just about creating a "tagline". It's about carving a specific space for your company in the pharmaceutical industry, and forging a genuine connection with your target audience.

Brand positioning shapes how people see your company, defining your approach to life sciences and drug development, and drawing attention to what differentiates you from the competition.

Moderna stands out among other pharmaceutical firms because of

its relentless focus on research and discovery, and its willingness to use cutting-edge technology in the drug development process.

HRA Pharma stands out because of its commitment to making medications more accessible to the masses. The company takes a humanized approach to creating products that consumers feel comfortable asking for over the counter, like the Hana contraceptive pill.



Hana product naming and branding by Fabrik.

In a competitive environment like the pharmaceutical industry, effective positioning is what helps a new pharmaceutical brand earn the attention of target patients and consumers, and inspire support from investors, stakeholders, and even regulatory bodies.

The importance of positioning for pharmaceutical companies

Ultimately, your pharma brand positioning strategy is how you

identify and control how your company, and the products you produce are perceived by your target audience. It’s the first step to building a relationships with potential customers and investors.

With a clear positioning strategy, pharma startups can build an emotional connection with the people who will use their products, and clarify what sets them apart from other organizations.

On a broad scale, effective brand positioning for pharmaceutical companies:

Establishes credibility and trust

As a pharmaceutical company, you’re not just asking your customers to trust you with their money. Patients need to trust your products with their wellbeing and livelihoods. Investors need to trust you with their long-term success. Even healthcare providers need to trust you won’t harm their reputation.

Powerful positioning strategies for life sciences startups and pharmaceutical brands form the foundation required for this trust. They offer insights into why each audience you want to reach in the healthcare industry should have confidence in you.

By drawing attention to elements of your unique value proposition, such as your approach to market research, the methods you take to protect patient safety, and your focus on innovation and regulatory compliance, you can earn trust in a market where credibility is everything.

Differentiates your business

As mentioned above, the pharmaceutical industry is an extremely competitive landscape. The sector has experienced phenomenal growth in the last two decades alone. By 2022, the

pharmaceutical market was worth more than $1.48 trillion and was packed with thousands of competitors.

In this industry, you need more than just a great product to earn a competitive edge. You need to take a unique approach to everything from researching products, to packaging your solutions.

A positioning strategy focused on differentiating factors like patient centricity, and niche expertise helps your business to stand out. This ensures you can more effectively attract the attention of patients, healthcare professionals, talent, and investors.

Supports long-term growth

The right approach to positioning also helps to set your business up for long-term pharmaceutical branding success. Once you've identified your unique position in the market, you have the groundwork for long-term development.

Early positioning decisions will influence how you communicate with potential customers and stakeholders through your marketing efforts. They'll have an impact on your company culture, and how you attract talent to your team.

They can even influence how you invest in new products, and ensure you're using the right distribution channels for new products and solutions. Most importantly, as your brand scales, your positioning strategy will ensure consistency.

Your positioning statement will act as a clear north star you can use whenever you're exploring new pharmaceutical marketing efforts and growth strategies.

Elements of effective brand

positioning for pharma startups

Effective positioning for a pharma company requires a cautious approach. You need to think carefully about how you can convey the practical and emotional benefits of your company to various different groups of stakeholders, and ensure you're adhering to strict compliance standards.

The most important areas to focus on include:

Your unique value proposition

A unique value proposition (UVP) is the cornerstone of powerful brand positioning for pharmaceutical startups. Every brand asset you create for your startup, from your website to your logo, and even the names of your products, should convey what makes you different.

This means identifying what really makes your company different from the competition. Do you want to position your company as a thought leader in a specific niche that other organizations have previously overlooked? Do you take a particularly innovative approach to drug discovery?

Does your approach to ensuring patient safety go above and beyond the expectations set by regulatory bodies? Find your unique value proposition and identify how you're going to draw attention to it in your marketing materials, and brand image.

Understanding the market landscape

A crucial stage in any pharma brand positioning strategy is understanding where your startup fits into the broader pharmaceutical landscape. Even if you're going to serve a specific niche, there will be other competitors out there offering similar solutions to you.

A competitive positioning analysis involves analyzing the

wider market to define the strengths and weaknesses of your competitors. Understanding the current market is how you ensure you’re actually differentiating your company effectively.

For instance, you won’t stand out from the crowd with a focus on fast clinical trials and affordability if countless companies in your space offer the same benefits.

Aligning with stakeholder needs

A unique value proposition and positioning for healthcare companies in the pharmaceutical industry will only help your business grow if it’s beneficial to your target audience. You’ll need to ensure the benefits you’re offering resonate with your intended stakeholders.

One of the reasons strategic positioning for pharma companies can be complex is that there are various “groups” you’ll need to consider. The priorities of the end users or patients that use your product might not be the same as the priorities of investors and healthcare professionals.

You’ll need to think carefully about how you can adjust your positioning statement and messaging strategy to adhere to different segments. For instance, your overall brand positioning strategy might focus on drawing attention to your focus on patient safety.

However, while messaging for patients might emphasize how this focus improves their wellbeing, messaging for investors might look at how your approach makes it easier to gain regulatory approval and potentially boost your sales potential.



Strategies for implementing brand positioning in pharma

The importance of brand positioning for early-stage pharmaceutical companies, coupled with the complexity of implementing the right strategy, often makes working with an expert the best way to ensure success.

A professional branding company with experience in the pharmaceutical space, like Fabrik, will be able to show you how to create a strong positioning strategy based on real-world data and industry insights.

Developing effective brand positioning strategies for biotech and pharma startups is critical to building a distinctive presence in a competitive market.

Usually, the process of developing positioning for pharmaceutical companies will involve:

1. Creating a positioning statement

Although there's more to strategic brand positioning for pharmaceutical companies than creating a distinctive "positioning statement", this resource can be extremely useful. Your brand positioning statement identifies the key elements of your unique identity.

It's a concise, clear statement that defines your target audience, your purpose as a company, your values, and how you're different from the competition. In other words, it clearly answers the question: "Why should people care about your pharmaceutical brand?"

Once you have your positioning statement, you'll be able to use it to guide the key messages in your marketing plan, and how you'll convey your benefits to your audience.

2. Building a differentiation strategy

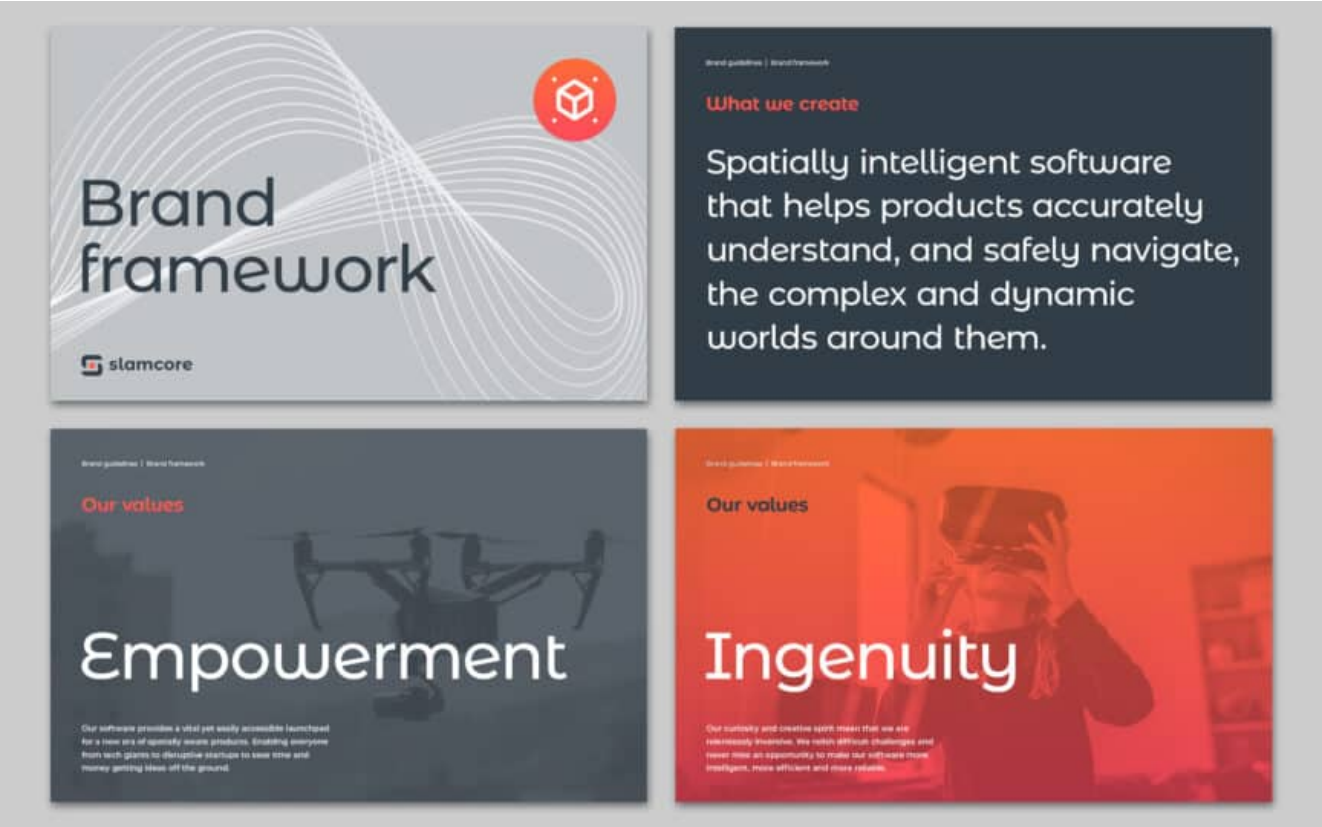
Next, you'll need a clear strategy for brand differentiation for pharma, ensuring you constantly stand out from the competition. In other words, you'll need to think about how you're going to regularly draw attention to what makes your company unique.

This could mean creating content for multiple channels that highlights your thought leadership and knowledge of a specific pharmaceutical niche. It could also mean regularly releasing reports and data that show stakeholders how you're investing in new technology to serve different customer needs.

You'll also need a plan for how you'll continue to separate yourself from other brands as new competitors enter the market. For example, how will you continue to stand out if other drug companies start to create similar solutions?

3. Consistency across channels

Finally, while your brand's positioning may evolve as your product portfolio expands and you learn more about your target market, consistency is still key. You'll need to ensure you're showcasing the same values across all the channels and marketing strategies you use.



Slamcore visual identity and brand guidelines by Fabrik.

Creating in-depth brand guidelines, you can follow when you're showcasing your distinct identity is extremely useful. Make sure your teams know how to represent your brand on social media platforms, at industry events, and in other environments.

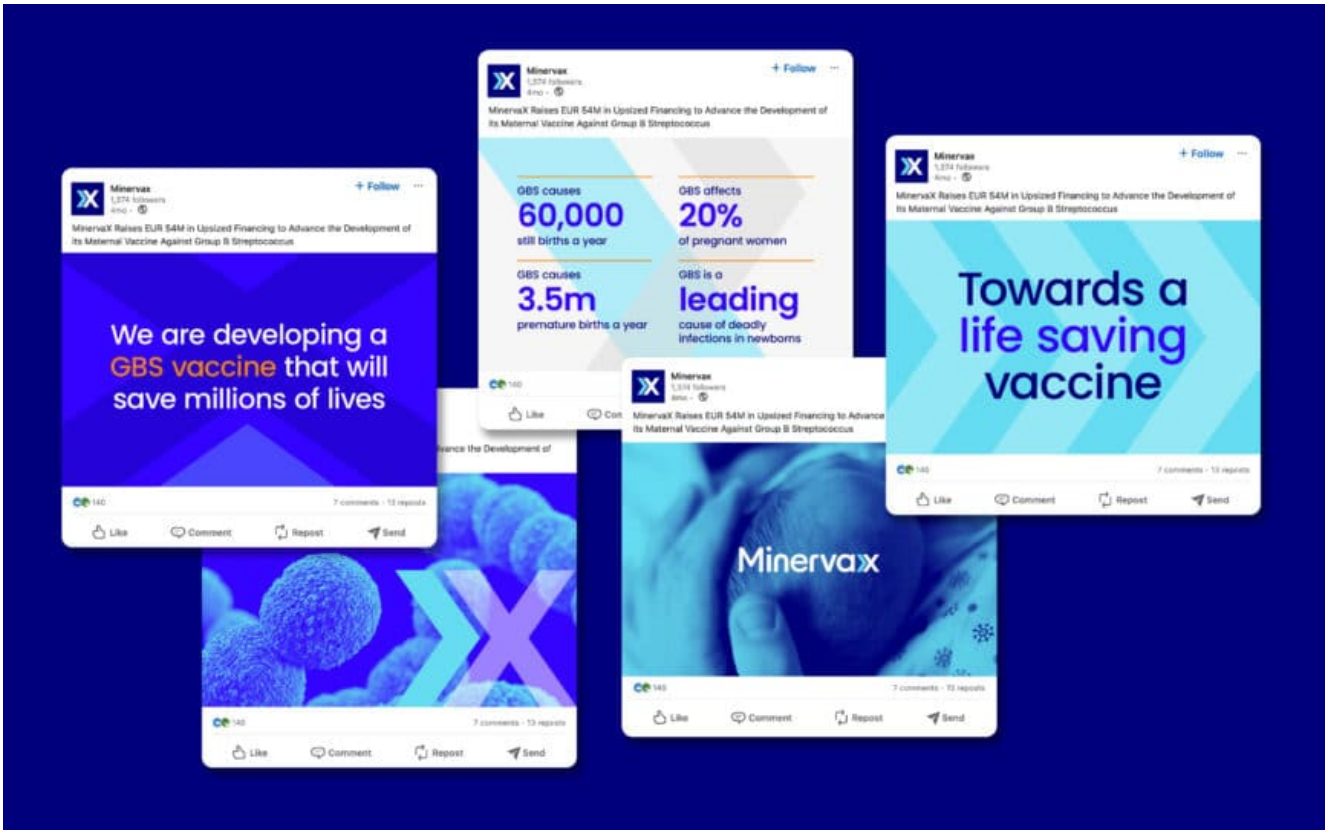
Remember, 68% of global businesses say they believe consistent branding leads to greater revenue. The more consistent you are, the more likely customers and stakeholders are to trust your business.

Case study: A pharmaceutical brand strategy in action

Coming up with an effective pharma brand positioning strategy can be complex, but it pays dividends. When MinervaX commissioned Fabrik to undertake their branding and visual identity strategy, we worked with the company to develop a strong positioning strategy.

We conducted extensive research to find key areas where MinervaX could separate itself from the competition, by focusing on it's unique approach to research, and it's credible background.

We created messaging guidelines that would draw attention to the company's ambitious goals and passion. Plus, we created a visual identity that would help to situate MinervaX as an authoritative, reliable figure in the pharmaceutical space.



MinervaX positioning and visual identity by Fabrik

This Pharma brand positioning strategy has given MinervaX the

tools it needs to attract investors, and stakeholders to its growing organization.

Perfecting brand positioning in pharma

Effective brand positioning for pharmaceutical startups isn't easy. It takes a lot of industry knowledge and work to learn how to create a strong brand position in the pharmaceutical industry. Fortunately, working with the right partner can help.

At Fabrik, we excel at enhancing market positioning in life science, healthcare, and pharmaceutical sectors. We help businesses develop unique value propositions, as well as visual and verbal identities that separate them from the competition.

Contact Fabrik today to learn how we can help you achieve pharmaceutical branding success.

Now read these:
–Top tips for naming a medical company
–Why branding matters for pharma startups
–Fabrik's services for pharma startups