

## Chapter 4

# FRAMING YOUR MESSAGE

*A brand becomes stronger when you narrow its focus.*

—Al Ries

Hardly a day goes by without a new author calling me on the phone, asking me if I will help promote his or her book. I ask one simple question:

What is your book about?

You'd think they'd answer that question easily, but you'd be wrong.

Surprisingly, in most cases, for the next twenty minutes, authors tell me everything *but* what the book is about! They talk about how long they worked on the book, how many pages it has, how they tried to find a publisher, and how a printer ripped them off. But they cannot tell me what the book is about!

You need to be able to tell anyone about the book in a few seconds so they understand immediately. In my seminars, I teach a formula I created and call “The Fool-Proof Positioning Statement.” I’ve taught this formula for nearly 30 years in several countries and in several languages. It always works!

In this chapter, I’ll share my formula for getting focused fast, so you can tell anyone—even your grandmother—about your book in two sentences.

**Two simple sentences comprise this formula. Here’s the first:**

**MY BOOK TITLE is a CATEGORY that helps PRIMARY AUDIENCE achieve PRIMARY BENEFIT.**

For example:

*Write Your Book in a Flash* is a writing-skills book that helps business executives write books quickly.

You’ve probably seen variations of this exercise called an “elevator pitch” or a “positioning statement.” If you have a format you like better, feel free to experiment.

## STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR CATEGORY

One great feature of the Fool-Proof Positioning Statement is that you tell people the exact category into which your book fits, so they can immediately see if they want to read it.

People have a basic need to put things into categories. If you don't tell them what category your book belongs in, they will try to find a category on their own, so they can make sense of it. And let me tell you, people are horrible mind readers! They will not think of what you expect them to think. In fact, you *must* tell them your book is a *book*.

For example, if I said, "*Write Your Book in a Flash* will help thought leaders become more influential," people would have no idea if this was a book, a seminar, a DVD, a coaching program, or a new pop single. Instead, when I tell them that *Write Your Book in a Flash* is a *book* that will help thought leaders become more influential, they know I am talking about a book, not a seminar, or a course, or a lecture.

Your category could be business, careers, stress management, negotiating, fitness, leadership, or customer service.

For example, you could say:

- *Write Your Nonprofit's Strategic Plan Now* is a guide and workbook that helps nonprofit boards create their strategic plan with an easy-to-follow, step-by-step process.
- *I've Been Thinking About* is a business innovation book that helps small business owners find creative solutions.
- *The Connection Challenge* is a leadership book that helps executives create an engaged workforce.

## STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR PRIMARY AUDIENCE

You want to focus on one key market. In fact, marketers want you to focus on *one key buyer*. They call this person an "avatar," a detailed description of your ideal client. That includes demographics, psychographics, fears, and motivations.

Although this exercise is fairly well known among marketers, I first learned it at a seminar hosted by Christian Mickelsen, a coach who teaches coaches. Let me paraphrase what he told us:

"My ideal client is named Judy. She's 44 years old and has two kids. She drives an older model SUV and has spent two thousand dollars on coaching seminars online. She wants to be a coach, but she has trouble asking for the order. When she gets a client, she doesn't charge enough. She wants to help make the world a better place, so she works with people who say they have no money. Her husband says, 'When are you going to make money with this coaching thing?'"

Suddenly, forty middle-aged women burst out laughing. They might not all have been named "Judy," but otherwise they fit the description!

That's pretty specific, wouldn't you agree? As I looked around the room and noted that another person and I were the only men, it became apparent Christian knew his market.

## IDEAL CLIENT WORKSHEET

While many people could benefit from your book, who is your ideal client? Use this worksheet to describe your ideal client:

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Family situation (if appropriate)
- Income
- Education level
- Job title
- Industry sector
- Biggest problem or fear
- Goals
- Values
- What do they read?
- What do they watch?
- Who do they respect?
- What do they do for fun?

Add as much personal or professional data as you want.

### STEP 3: FOCUS ON ONE PRIMARY BENEFIT

Readers buy your book to solve a problem. When you show them why or how they can benefit, they are more likely to buy your book. You can probably think of many reasons people should buy your book. Unfortunately, the brain can hold only a few bits of information before it becomes confused or tunes out. Therefore you need to think of the *one* key benefit that will turn people on.

For example, people might buy this book to:

- Overcome writer's block
- Spread their influence
- Become famous
- Take their business to the next level
- Stand out from the competition

On the back cover, list one killer benefit. When you talk to people one-on-one, you might use a different benefit that speaks to them. You can adapt the message to every prospect. But when you write the back cover, focus.

Use this worksheet to list five benefits or problems that will help your prospective readers overcome:

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Now circle the best one for your back cover.

**STEP 4: WRITE YOUR FOOL-PROOF POSITIONING STATEMENT, FIRST SENTENCE**

Now it is your turn to create your Fool-Proof Positioning Statement! Simply fill in the blank spots on this template.

[Title] is a [category] that helps [primary audience] achieve [primary benefit].			
_____	is	a	_____
that	helps	_____	
achieve	_____		

**NOTE:** Don't overthink this.

Pretend you are talking to your grandmother, who knows nothing about what you do. What would you say to her when she asks you what your book is about?

**STEP 5: SECOND SENTENCE FOOL-PROOF POSITIONING STATEMENT**

The real brilliance of the Fool-Proof Positioning Statement is that it contains *two* sentences, not one. As good as that first sentence is, your listener thinks, "Okay, I know five other books that do

the same thing. Why should I buy *your* book?" That's why I created a second sentence to answer that question.

**Unlike other [category] books, [book title] has/contains/helps people [primary differentiating point].**

For example, the second sentence for this book could be:

- Unlike other writing-skills books, *Write Your Book in a Flash* has exercises that turn ideas into action.
- Unlike other writing-skills books, *Write Your Book in a Flash* was written by an author who has written many books.
- Unlike other writing-skills books, *Write Your Book in a Flash* focuses on creating a highly detailed outline to help you write faster.
- Unlike other writing-skills books, *Write Your Book in a Flash* doesn't bore you to death with lessons about grammar, punctuation, and style.

Yes, it is simple. Most would-be authors complicate the process. They add too many audiences, and they add too many benefits.

People get overwhelmed when they hear or see multiple pieces of information! You must make your book easy to understand.

Now let's do the second sentence. What makes your book different?

Unlike other [book category], [title] has [key differentiating feature].
Unlike other _____, _____ has _____.

List five differentiating features.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Circle the one you like the best.

**STEP 6: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

Use this space to write both sentences in your Fool-Proof Positioning Statement: