

## The Bennett Brauer School of Brand Positioning

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Show me a brand positioning line  
enclosed in quotation marks, and I’ll  
show you Bennett Brauer.

You might not have heard of brand  
but you know them when you see  
them:



The Real Thing. We Try Harder. Just Do It. We’ll Leave The Light On For You.

Sometimes referred to as slogans or taglines, their purpose is to communicate a single, powerful brand message or promise that resonates strongly with prospects and customers.

You might not have heard of Bennett, either, but you’d know him if you saw him. He was a fall-down, gasp-for-air funny guy who wasn’t trying to be funny at all. But the late Chris Farley, who played Bennett ingeniously on Saturday Night Live, certainly was. You remember Chris, too. He was an incredibly talented, big fellow who, no matter what the situation, seemed to look like it was 3 a.m. at a fraternity party and he’d sucked every last drop out of the keg himself.

Bennett provided commentary during SNL’s Weekend Update segment, where he vividly described his poor hygiene, lack of social grace and anger toward viewers who preferred more attractive news commentators. He used finger quotes to emphasize points while delivering his tirades with a lilting, up and down cadence that complemented the downward two-strokes of his fingers.

Bennett illustrates (*insert finger quotes for every quote mark and lower your internal voice while reading the bracketed words*): That’s right, Bennett Brauer here with another commentary. Didn’t think the suits would have me back, perhaps. Well, maybe I’m not “the norm”. I’m not “camera friendly”, I don’t “wear clothes that fit me”, I’m not a “heartbreaker”, I don’t “own a toothbrush”. When I sleep, I “sweat profusely”...

According to my dictionary, “...air quotes are often used to express *satire*, *sarcasm*, *irony* or *euphemism*. In print, scare quotes fill a similar purpose.” Scare quotes are “...quotation marks in print used to emphasize a word or phrase to

indicate its special status, *especially to express doubt about its validity or criticize its use.*”

Call me “crazy”, but those definitions don’t sound like anything you want anywhere near your brand identity. Satire, sarcasm, doubt, criticism...ouch. And do you really want your brand positioning line to be a joke? Didn’t think so. You don’t even want to call a joke to mind, especially one that invokes thoughts of poor hygiene. What are you trying to say? That your company “stinks” and “has green teeth”?

Seriously, your brand and the value it brings to your organization is no laughing matter. David Aaker, author of “Building Strong Brands,” talks about brand equity as “...a set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand’s name and symbol that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm’s customers.”

We’re talking about perceived quality here, one of the four major asset categories in brand equity, along with brand name awareness, brand loyalty and brand associations. According to Aaker, several independent studies have demonstrated that perceived quality drives financial performance.

Using quotation marks around your brand positioning line is a sure sign of small-time. Further, they’re not necessary. Worst of all, in my opinion, they detract from your message and therefore from the power of your brand.

Develop a strong positioning statement and let it stand on its own merit with your logo or organization name. Leave the “jokes” to Bennett.

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