

The Red Letter



I Give You My Words

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How \$200 Can Change the World

This New Year, four kids I know of are seeing new worlds through new windows. Thanks to the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Foundation, they're all working with a tool that is helping them unlock their own creativity, develop their intellects, nurture their imaginations.

The OLPC Foundation, founded by author, computer-aided design pioneer and MIT faculty member Nicholas Negroponte, is working to improve the lives of the world's children, and to improve the world, by providing them laptop computers. The group has developed and is distributing the XO laptop, a child-friendly, durable and intuitive computer that kids worldwide can use to educate themselves and each other.

Through the OLPC Give One, Get One program, my in-laws provided two XOs for children in developing countries like Cambodia, Haiti and Rwanda and obtained two more for their grandkids. My son Martin, 4, and daughter Saela, 6, have had their XOs for less than a week, and they've already used them to paint pictures, visualize sound and supplement a family discussion about the Sphinx in Egypt. We're also talking about how, somewhere in the world, two other kids might be learning about blizzards in the Dakotas with computers just like theirs.

I can only scratch the mega-positive shell of the OLPC story here. To view these innovative computers, or to learn more about OLPC, go to www.laptop.org. See how, for a tax-deductible \$200, you or your organization can put one of these powerful machines into the hands of a child and help them become smarter, more understanding and more productive. Who knows, that child may even grow up to save the world.

You can get it started.

Slippery Positioning

Ask "What is a positioning statement?" and you'll get thousands of answers ranging from straight-forward to incomprehensible.

This definition is as good as any: A memorable phrase that sums up the promise of a brand and reinforces recall of it among your customers and prospects.

Sounds simple, sure, but creating an effective positioning line can be a monumental challenge. Here are just a few things a line should begin to communicate:

- What your business is and what it does
- Who it serves (your market)
- What they need
- What benefits you provide
- Who your competitors are
- What's different and better about your organization
- How you are known now
- How you want to be known

If nothing else, at least make it memorable.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. – Alfred Lord Tennyson

The Good Word

Thanks

No independent contractor is an island. That's why – even as I begin what I hope is a great 2008 – I take a moment to look back at 2007 and utter this month's good word: thanks.

It is short for the more formal, "Thank you," and a shorter

alternative to, "I couldn't do it as well without you." It goes out to those who, directly or indirectly, helped make 2007 a positive and profitable year of effective service and materials for FredComm clients.

- Brad Clemenson, clemenson photography + design
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- Ellen Shafer, Shafer PR
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Thanks, and Happy New Year.