Bringing your competitive positioning to life

Cheat sheet

Your competitive positioning articulates the compelling reason clients and prospects choose your firm over competitors. When you invest in bringing your positioning to life, you'll see it shift from words in a PowerPoint to a strong and powerful statement about how you do business.

How does your positioning come to life?

Your positioning comes to life in your end-to-end client experience - it should be demonstrated in every touchpoint they have with your firm. It also acts as a lens for future business decisions, including HR policies, mergers and acquisitions, service offer development and more. It's a way to ensure business decisions align with the essence and values of your firm.

For clients, your competitive positioning typically comes to life in three ways:

- visually via your brand identity
- through the words you use, like headlines, taglines and messaging
- when clients engage with members of your team.

Why should you invest in bringing your positioning to life?

Once you've agreed on your positioning, it needs to be reflected in every client interaction as well as throughout your marketing collateral. When this is done consistently, it can help deliver the following benefits:

- demonstrates the leadership team's commitment which in turn helps embed the proposition from the top down
- makes it easy for your team to embrace the new positioning while giving them the tools and language they need to communicate with existing clients and prospects consistently
- sends a clear message to your clients and prospects about your position and provides a reason for them to pay attention and engage with your firm, as well as refer friends, family and colleagues
- makes it easier for your professional partners to refer you to their network because they are clear about what you stand for and who you are best suited to work with

- Helps to claim a position for your organisation in the market that is different from your competitors – and sets you apart in the minds of prospects and existing clients when they are talking about you and referring you to friends and family
- Helps you maximise the return on investment in the effort and time you've spent developing your positioning by making it more than just words on a slide.

Your positioning is not just a tagline

In the majority of cases, your positioning will become much more than just an option for a headline on your website or firm brochure.

Your positioning should be an articulation of your brand, the compelling reason clients and prospects choose your firm over competitors. It's developed by considering your ideal prospect, the needs of that prospect and how your firm can meet those needs in a meaningful, differentiated way.

It can manifest in a tagline or headline – but don't forget taglines and headlines are marketing tools. They are externally facing and designed to be catchy and reflect the benefit of choosing your firm – so sometimes your positioning may not be the right choice for a headline or tagline.

If it's not quite suited to a headline, you can work with a copywriter to brainstorm some options, using your positioning as inspiration – with the end result being a headline or tagline for your website, brochures and other marketing collateral.

Top tips for bringing your competitive positioning to life

- **Audit and refresh your collateral:** Your positioning should be evident in every client touchpoint. Your website and other marketing collateral are some of the main ways people come into contact with your firm and your offer. A good way to test this is by doing an audit of your collateral so you can determine if it's effectively communicating your new value proposition – and if it isn't, explore ways to update and refresh it.
- **Train your team**: It's crucial that the promises you make in your marketing collateral seamlessly come to life in the personal experience clients and prospects have with your firm. Ensure the whole team understands the positioning and has the tools to bring it to life.
- **Launch your new positioning**: Once you've made a shift in the way you position your business to clients and prospects, considering a launch - it's a positive excuse to engage with clients and prospects, and you can use it to mark the point in time when you leave the old positioning. and identity behind for good.

Reassessing your visual identity

One way to bring your new positioning to life is with a brand identity – such as a new/updated logo (including the colours, fonts and style of images used in your brochures, website and other collateral).

Consider the following:

- have you updated/revisited your logo and/or your visual identity in the last five years?
- have you reviewed and updated your practice brochure and/or business cards in the last three to five years?
- have you reviewed and updated your website in the last two years?
- Does the messaging and images on your website and practice brochure reflect your new positioning?

If you answered 'no' to any of the questions above, consider updating your logo and/or your visual identity.

Briefing your agency

If you decide to update your logo, visual identity and headlines or copy, you can choose to work with a full-service agency partner, or with a designer and copywriter separately.

For information on how to choose and brief an agency, refer to our '*Working with an Agency*' cheat sheet.

Share both your positioning and messaging pillars with your agency to help them develop a thorough understanding of your business, so they can bring it to life accurately.

Your positioning toolkit

When updating your logo, visual identity, headline and copy, undertake an audit of all your firm's communication collateral so you can scope what needs updating. It makes sense to start with client-facing collateral, but over time be sure to update internal collateral as well.

Prior to launching a new positioning, logo or visual identity, your collateral toolkit should include the following assets, as a minimum:

- website
- email footer
- business cards (if your logo or tagline are changing)
- client-facing collateral (e.g. welcome packs, brochures, emails etc.)
- company and employee LinkedIn profiles
- invoices / receipts.

From the date you decide to launch your new brand, immediately stop using any old collateral. You can update and replace old collateral over time, but once the new brand is in market, the old brand should no longer be used.

Updating your collateral internally

Although an agency can help with your visual design elements, there are some things you'll be able to update quickly using internal resources.

Consider the following:

- do you need to remove and replace an old tagline, headline or old logo?
- where's the best place in the document to highlight your client benefits? Refer back to your messaging pillars for direction on which ones to include
- are there any out-of-date or incorrect facts that need updating?
- as there a simple way you can reorder the content to lead with the client benefits from the very beginning, rather than focusing on your firm?
- is the document easy to update, or would you benefit from getting a professional copywriter involved?

Training your team

Your employees represent your firm and what it stands for – they're your organisation's most valuable asset. They are also at the coalface of all client interactions, so it's worthwhile considering the following training:

1) **Living and delivering the positioning:** Ensure all team members understand the new positioning, know what it means to live the positioning as well as what's expected of them as they deliver against it in their day-to-day client interactions.
2) **Using the positioning tools:** Train the team on how best to use any new tools you've developed, highlight changes to existing tools and ensure they can access them easily. Ask them for feedback once they've used the tools with clients and update any collateral accordingly. Involve them in the audit process and give them a say in what's working and what's not.

Launching your new positioning

If you've made obvious changes to your logo, visual identity, headlines or messaging, it's not a bad idea to consider a launch strategy. A launch can be as simple as an email to your client database announcing the change, or as comprehensive as a celebratory event with clients and staff. It's an opportunity to communicate a positive shift in your organisation, and highlight how your clients and prospects will benefit from the new positioning.

Over the page we've pulled together some examples of VAN members who've effectively brought their positioning to life across their suite of client-facing collateral.

VAN member examples | Morrows

Issue: Morrows had built a strong, successful firm, but had split its focus across too many different audiences – meaning that the uniqueness of its offer was being diluted, and its team was presenting the Morrows offer inconsistently and unclearly.

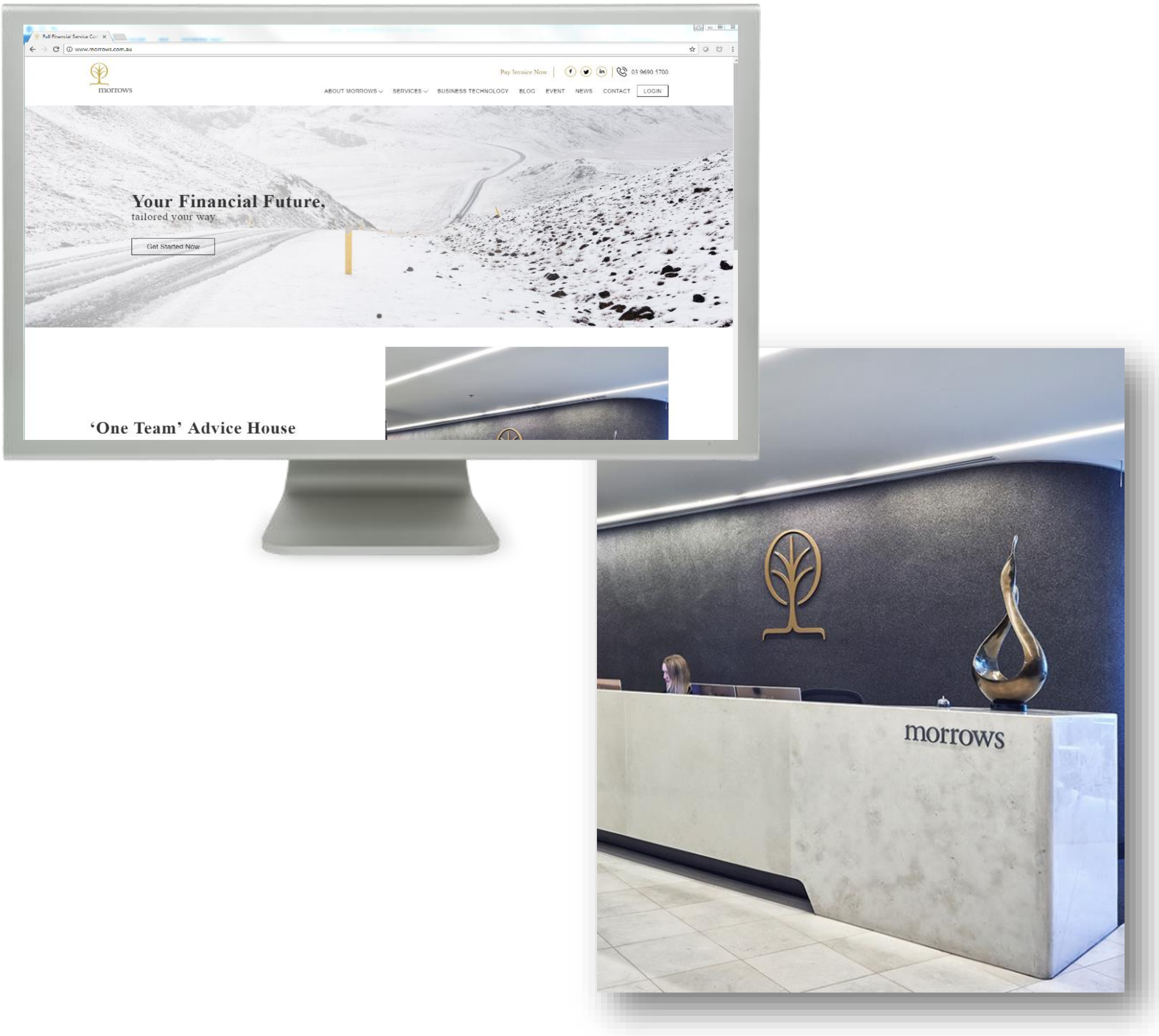
Insight: Working closely with the Morrows team, we uncovered that Morrows works best with two specific audiences – and these two audiences became the focus of the competitive positioning. The Morrows offer focuses not only on a flexible, integrated accounting and wealth offer, but on a personalised coaching partnership aimed to help their target clients make an impact. This insight was used to craft their positioning

Positioning: ‘Your financial future, tailored your way.’

Idea: Morrows used its new competitive positioning as the inspiration for development of a new website, and as the basis for developing its annual marketing strategy. The new website used the positioning statement as a headline, and used the new Morrows key messaging to reinforce the unique benefits Morrows offers its new, tightly defined audiences.

Implementation: The new Morrows website was launched in early 2018. In addition to the website, Morrows also developed new Word, PowerPoint and newsletter (HTML) templates to ensure its team was equipped with the tools to communicate the new brand consistently across all client touchpoints.

New Morrows identity:



VAN member examples | Forsyths

Issue: Forsyths' positioning and identity needed a refresh. There was a lack of specificity around their ideal client, the key benefits Forsyths provided for that client, and how integrated accounting and wealth was a differentiator.

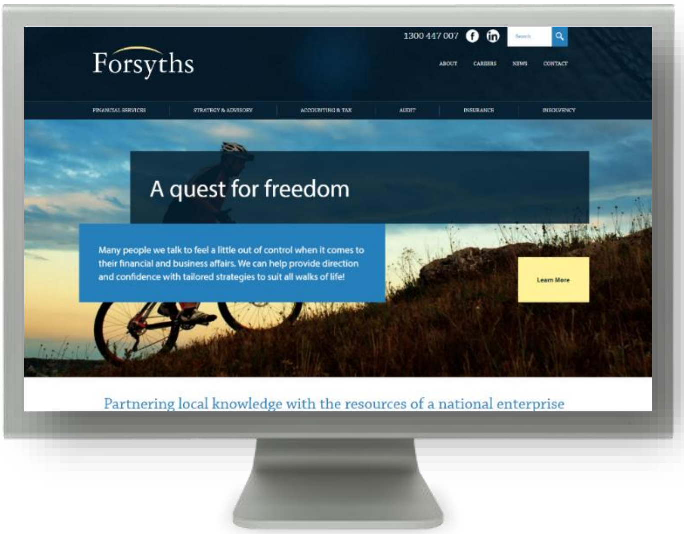
Insight: Working closely with the Forsyths team, we uncovered that Forsyths works with clients to build and maintain relationships by demonstrating genuine interest, empathy and proactivity. In their regional NSW market they have a deep understanding of the business environment and the wider communities that their clients and their families operate in. This insight was used to craft their positioning.

Positioning: 'We take an active interest in your world, because it's ours'.

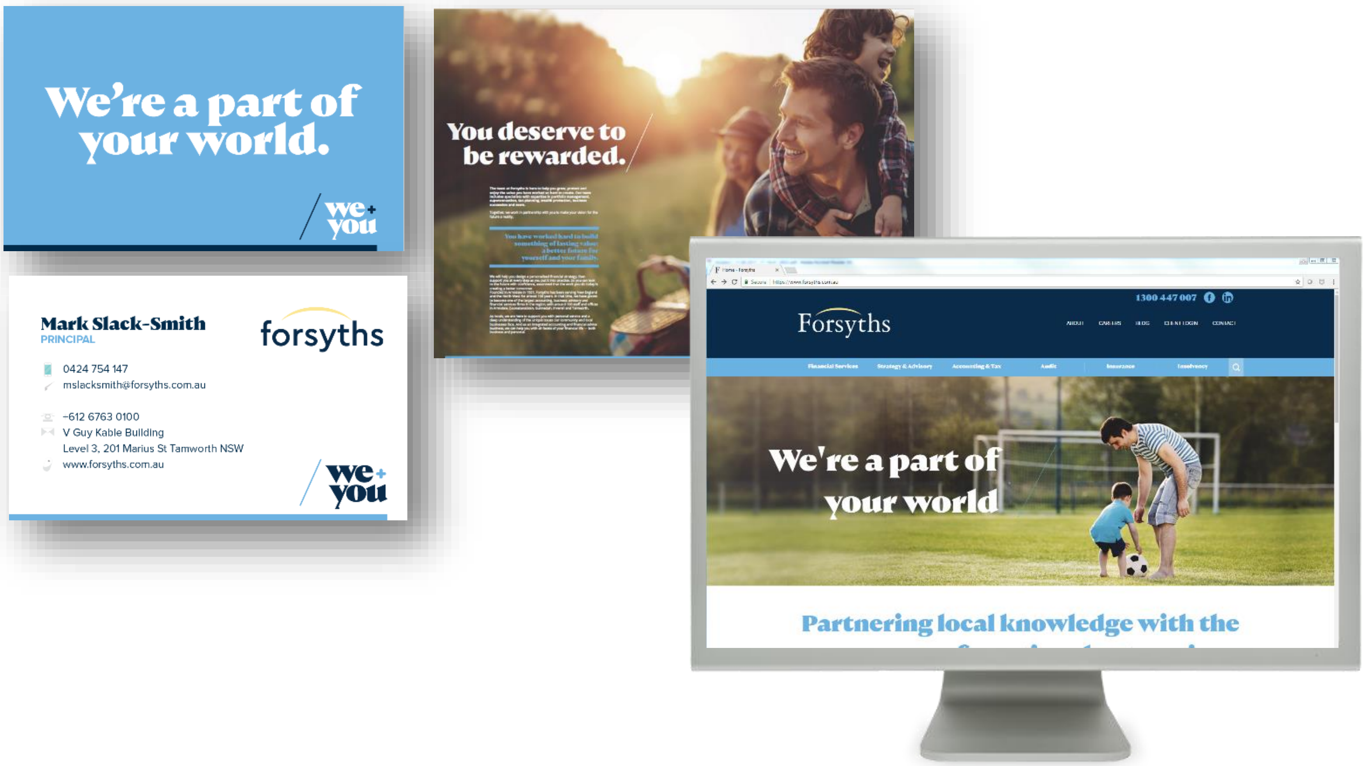
Idea: Forsyths decided to invest in a refresh of its visual identity. The refresh was inspired by the positioning, and included the development of the headline 'We're a part of your world'; and the design device 'we + you'. Examples of how these ideas came to life visually are included below.

Implementation: Once the new design concept was agreed, Forsyths began auditing and updating its collateral to ensure the new identity was applied consistently across all client touchpoints – from business cards and email signatures to their website and practice brochure.

From:



To:



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