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# Product Messaging and Differentiation Primer for 2020



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Published 24 January 2020 - ID G00713956 - 9 min read

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Initiatives: [Product Messaging and Differentiation](#)

Effective messaging helps buyers better navigate a selection process and gravitate toward a vendor's offering. The research in this initiative will help product marketers capture and progress buyers' interest with a focus on vision, clarity, differentiation, proof and compelling stories.

## Scope

This research provides guidance and best practices for creating differentiated positioning, messaging and storylines for a variety of offerings – products, services or any combination therein.

The topics covered in this initiative include:

- **Develop differentiated positioning:** Clarify the strategic parameters of your product: who you target, what needs you address, how you address them, and what makes you different than the alternatives.
- **Devise a portfolio marketing strategy:** Compose a marketing strategy that clarifies the gestalt value of an entire offering with an emphasis on the relationships and interoperability of the included technologies.
- **Create compelling stories:** Engage buyers and channels in a way that demonstrates domain expertise, proves business impact and builds trust.
- **Launch products and services:** Collaborate effectively with internal counterparts and external ecosystems to support the marketing and promotion dimensions of a successful product launch. Coordinate to ensure timeliness, consistency of orchestration and the ability to meet shared launch objectives.

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## Analysis

**Figure 1. Product Messaging and Differentiation Overview**

## Product Messaging and Differentiation



Source: Gartner

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An increasingly dynamic and noisy market, coupled with the technology buyer's fluid approach, means that messaging must be relevant, clear and compelling to capture and retain attention. While features and capabilities remain a high priority, buyers prefer to see quantifiable business outcomes to quickly grasp and understand how a given product can address their needs. (Note: In this document, the term "product" is used to refer to traditional technology products as well as services and other types of offerings that combine products and services.)

Effective messaging must clearly articulate how your product is different from and better than other alternatives. It must demonstrate relevant business value and describe exactly how that is made possible. It should include empirical proof in a variety of ways. Today's busy technology buyers evaluate their options from a growing number of stakeholders (anywhere from seven to 13) and perspectives with information from a number of sources and with very little time. Therefore, product marketers must craft messaging that is direct, substantive and credible.

To ensure that all audiences – including buyers, partners and market influencers – hear and retain key messages, product marketers need to start with positioning that captures their overall focus. Positioning is the cornerstone for messaging, reflected across all types of written and verbal

communication. The messaging must be relevant to key segments, personas and stakeholders, answer the key questions that buyers want addressed, and align to their specific situation. And to have impact, the messaging must be delivered through authentic, compelling stories that communicate the value of the product.

For product marketing teams responsible for large portfolios, which often include acquired products with overlapping capabilities, product marketers must tell a story that reflects the entire collection. Buyers need to understand the relationship among products in the portfolio to know what is best suited to their near-term needs and how they can evolve over time by adopting additional options and capabilities. Market influencers must grasp and be able to articulate the value of the collection.

## Topics

Creating effective messaging, content and communications is foundational for product marketing. Driven by an incessant demand to produce a library of more and varied content, sometimes to support a single use case, many product marketers find they have resorted to a piecemeal bottom-up approach. New messages and assets are created for each ad hoc request without an eye toward an overarching communication strategy. Consequently, product marketers looking to increase awareness and interest in the entire portfolio now ask how they can focus their efforts to drive more demand and conversions. Through best-practice research and guidance, Gartner advises to take a more structured approach to messaging and communications that is rooted in establishing and clearly communicating differentiation. Through best-practice research and guidance, Gartner helps by addressing the most pressing questions facing the role:

- How do I create compelling, memorable messaging that clearly articulates why my product is the best solution?
- How do I craft a story that encompasses my full portfolio without diluting the value of individual products?
- How do I use storytelling to capture attention and prompt buyers to engage?
- How do I create messaging for a product launch that will emphasize the value of the new capabilities such that it is in line with the existing message and brand promise?

Our research centers on the following topics:

### Create Compelling Stories

Buyers seek out content and supporting information that will help them understand what solutions are available to help achieve their objectives. In a dynamic market, with a growing number of options, the attention span of the buyer diminishes, providing a more limited window for technology providers to demonstrate relevance. Companies may suspect that espousing the merits of their products often falls flat, and they strive to create more compelling content. Gartner

recommends using storytelling as a technique to engage prospects while speaking to their interests and addressing their questions.

## Questions Your Peers Are Asking

- How can I spur buyers to action?
- How can I use storytelling to communicate more effectively?
- How do I know what content will have the most impact on buyers?

## Recommended Content

- 🔑 Some recommended content may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.
- [“Tech Go-to-Market: Embrace Storytelling Techniques to Communicate Value Across the B2B Customer Life Cycle”](#)
- [“Understanding Positioning, Messaging and Brand Storytelling for Improved Results”](#)

## Planned Research

- Storytelling beyond OSIR (outcome, situation, impact, resolution) — a focus on audiences, buyer journeys and positioning
- How to create a sense of urgency beyond conventional fear, uncertainty and doubt
- Tailoring a message based on buying team role — how to strike the right level of granularity

## Develop Differentiated Positioning

Technology providers must capture and retain the attention of prospective buyers, communicating the value that can be obtained through their solutions. But in today’s noisy market, where those buyers are continuously bombarded with messages across multiple channels, the window in which to show relevance is small. Consequently, companies struggle to create messaging that resonates and clearly conveys what makes their products and services the best option. To address this pressing need, Gartner recommends a messaging approach that is grounded in positioning and provides the context and frame of reference to understand the value that the solution provides.

## Questions Your Peers Are Asking

- How can I communicate the value that our products provide?
- How can I create compelling and memorable messaging?
- How can I differentiate our positioning from that of our competitors?

## Recommended Content

🔑 Some recommended content may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

- [“Tech Go-to-Market: Positioning Revisited”](#)
- [“Use Situational Messaging to Improve Customer Engagement”](#)
- [“Tech Go-to-Market: 10 Steps for Improved Differentiation”](#)
- [“How to Create the Path From Features to Value”](#)

## Planned Research

- Differentiation that appeals to both business and technical personas
- Options for differentiation in a mature or commoditized technology category
- How to differentiate based on domain expertise

## Devise a Portfolio Marketing Strategy

A growing number of technology providers possess a portfolio of products and services, which may have grown organically, through merger and acquisition (M&A) activity or via partnerships. Each offering may be at different stages of its life cycle, and some may even have overlapping purposes or capabilities. Companies often struggle to tell an overarching story highlighting the value of the portfolio while supporting individual messaging for each product and service. Ultimately, buyers must be presented with which products are best suited to their specific needs. Meanwhile, partners, sales and customer success teams must be able to identify which products to sell to which target audiences when and to spot cross- and upselling opportunities to drive account growth. Gartner research focuses on the considerations and best practices for developing and executing a portfolio marketing strategy.

## Questions Your Peers Are Asking

- How do I communicate the value and relationships of multiple products in a growing portfolio?
- How do I build a story that makes sense of acquired or emerging technologies?
- How do I develop positioning that encompasses the entire portfolio?

## Recommended Content

🔑 Some recommended content may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

- [“3 Core Ingredients to Drive Successful Portfolio Messaging”](#)

- [“Update Solution Positioning to Maximize Differentiation With Acquired Products and Technology”](#)
- [“5 Success Factors of Effective Thought Leadership Marketing”](#)

## Planned Research

- Solution selling a “whole product” – product, services, partners and the ongoing relationship
- Evolving a mature portfolio message with emerging product value
- Updating a portfolio message in the wake of an acquisition

## Launch Products and Services

Product launches are a regular occurrence for technology providers, but as architectures and deployment methods evolve, so must the product launch itself. Although most companies have experience successfully launching new products or services, the launch processes are often dated and don't reflect modern best practices. Gartner research has found that there remains a particular challenge around the collaboration between product marketing and product management. Companies must modernize their product launch process and objectives to increase the likelihood of success.

## Questions Your Peers Are Asking

- How can I orchestrate a successful launch?
- How can I develop messaging focused on the value of new or updated offerings?
- How can I better collaborate with product management to improve launch performance?

## Recommended Content

- 🔑 Some recommended content may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.
- [“3 Keys to Successfully Launching Demand Generation Campaigns for New Products”](#)
- [“Product Marketing and Product Management: Collaboration Is the First Step”](#)
- [“Increase Sales Engagement With New Products by Balancing Seller Benefits, Effort and Risk”](#)
- [“Drive Alignment Between Product Marketing, Product Management and Sales”](#)

## Planned Research

- Increase new product success by sharpening market segment focus
- Key considerations for subbranding and product naming

- How to orchestrate and measure the effectiveness of a product launch

## Suggested First Steps

- [“Tech Marketing Score”](#) – Use this tool to help you evaluate the effectiveness of your marketing operations using objective peer-based performance standards. Then determine where improvements will add value, and establish a plan to advance the organization.
- [“Tech Go-to-Market: 4 Steps to a Differentiated Messaging Foundation”](#) – Learn how to create a structured messaging approach that emphasizes your offering’s strengths and uniqueness.
- [“Tech Go-to-Market: Positioning Revisited”](#) – Capture and communicate product positioning using our proven framework.
- [“Embrace Storytelling Techniques to Communicate Value Across the B2B Customer Life Cycle”](#) – Explore how to capture the attention of buyers and build credibility through stories.
- Attend the Gartner Tech Growth & Innovation Conference 2020 (in the [U.S.](#) and the [U.K.](#)) to gain firsthand insight and pragmatic advice to help you develop and execute your go-to-market strategies.

## Essential Reading

- [“Tech Go-to-Market: 10 Steps for Improved Differentiation”](#) – Follow these steps to uncover and better communicate competitive differentiation.
- [“5 Success Factors of Effective Thought Leadership Marketing”](#) – Differentiate and establish credibility in competitive markets by using these five critical success factors to evaluate readiness and execution for a thought leadership strategy.
- [“How to Create the Path From Features to Value”](#) – Identify both technical benefits and business values for products and services to differentiate and engage buyers.
- [“Lead With Business Outcome Messaging to Capture Buyer Attention and Inspire New Opportunities”](#) – Emphasize business outcomes to clarify messaging and emphasize business relevance.
- [“4 Steps for Vendors to Differentiate Through Organizational Culture”](#) – Leverage your organizational culture by demonstrating how it parlays into stronger offerings, better business practices and, ultimately, customer value and success.
- [“3 Core Ingredients to Drive Successful Portfolio Messaging”](#) – Drive account growth and adoption across your portfolio by positioning an integrated solution through simplified recommendations and value-based messaging.

## Document Revision History

[Product Messaging and Differentiation Primer for 2019 - 7 February 2019](#)

[Product Messaging and Differentiation Primer for 2019 - 7 February 2019](#)

[Build Differentiation Primer for 2018 - 26 July 2018](#)

## Recommended For You

[4 Steps to a Differentiated Messaging Foundation](#)

[How to Create the Path From Features to Value](#)

[3 Core Ingredients to Drive Successful Portfolio Messaging](#)

[Crafting Case Studies to Win Business](#)

[HCI Messaging Must Include Benefits of 'Hybrid Cloud'](#)

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## Additional research

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