



**Global IT services company**  
**Positioning case study: 19.02.09**

**A sense of direction**

This IT services company is a key part of one of the world's largest and strongest engineering, manufacturing and technology companies. With revenue approaching €6 billion per annum, this is a truly global business, with major client contracts across Europe, North America and Asia, and with global delivery capability handling IT outsourcing, technology-based engagements and BPO clients in most significant industry sectors.

The business already benefits from one of the world's strongest and most widely-recognised corporate brands in its sector, but this has traditionally led to a difficulty of another kind. The mission, identity and exact positioning of the IT services organisation has not always been clear to the outside world. Clients, prospects and analysts, alike, have long wanted to know more about the vision, strategic direction and ambitions of the business. And this was not simply a matter of communication and marketing: a clear understanding of key differentiators and direction was essential to the competitive position of the business in a very tough marketplace.

**The task**

Vector was asked to support the project to develop a new corporate positioning for the IT services business, making it entirely compatible with the parent company's strategy, while yet being distinctive and appropriate for the services marketplace. This activity required mobilisation of resources from across the business, with the need for alignment and consensus being fundamental requirements for success.

Positioning is owned by a range of key functions at corporate level, including Corporate Communications, Marketing, Strategy, Portfolio and Sales. All of these leadership groups have a strong and legitimate interest in contributing to and validating the go to market approach, which is defined by positioning. Vector's first requirement was to ensure that the leaders of these functions could come together and perform effectively as a single, integrated team. Then, using research from the marketplace for guidance, it was essential to build a consensus-based outcome to ensure rapid take up across the business.

**The process**

Vector worked with the stakeholders over a period of nearly six months, using its own methodologies for collating market input, establishing team alignment and driving through output that was coherent and compelling, and yet supported by a wide consensus between functions. The key steps were:

**Interviews:** Vector carried out a series of in-depth, structured interviews with leading analyst firms, and briefed in-house resources on conducting structured interviews with a number of external clients and key influencers within the company, including sector, delivery and account management leaders. The subsequent feedback was then analysed and used as a key input to the process.

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**Alignment:** at a series of workshops, Vector brought the functional heads together to foster effective and solid teamwork across the group. This involved agreement on roles and responsibilities, mutual rights and obligations, together with clear ground rules for conducting the policy-development activity.

**Hypotheses:** Vector proposed a series of options to the team and drove through focused review of these ideas, together with additional input from all parts of the business.

**Consensus:** following in-depth exploration of potential ideas, it was possible to reach a position that was right for the company, and that all stakeholders were ready to support. This was taken to business leadership within both the IT services business and then the parent company, for acceptance.

### **Outcomes**

As a result of this focused process, the business, for the first time since it was created through internal merger a few years ago, has been able to agree on a clear statement of its positioning in the market, competitive strengths and differentiators. The potentially priceless advantage of its relationship with the parent company has been used effectively, but the business, itself, has also established a distinctive vision of its own.

Initial analyst reaction was positive, and the result has been an immediate increase in visibility, inclusion on measurement criteria that are used by clients and advisers to decide on whom to approach for tenders, and a growing understanding of what the business stands for in the marketplace.

As the new positioning is rolled-out across the company, so go to market activity will be strengthened and made more consistent from country to country, and the status of the IT services business will improve.

### **Vector's contribution**

Corporate positioning has to be fundamentally an internal process, because a new vision, ambition and general approach to the market requires solid support from all internal stakeholders. You cannot impose a successful positioning from the outside: it has to be organic and grow from within.

This makes the role of Vector in the process particularly sensitive and significant. The task was to ensure that alignment existed between stakeholders, enabling them to act as a focused, effective team. It also required ideas delivery as the basis for discussion and debate, while ensuring that the final outcome was truly owned by the team, itself.

Vector was able to fulfil this role because of its deep knowledge of the business, understanding of the culture in which it was operating, and solid methodologies. The result has been, not just a new set of communication deliverables, but a real advance in collaborative working at the top of the business, itself.

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