

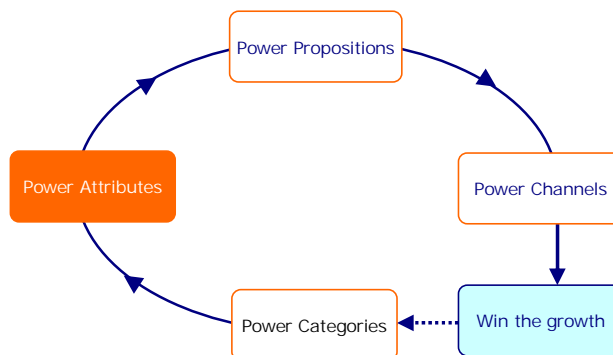


# DIFFERENTIATE

## Power Attributes

Step 2 in the Growth Game

Studying how the game works & what the rules are



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# Power Attributes

## The current situation

Here's a common story...

Customers love you, they buy your products and services, they even recommend them to their friends. Often it gets to the point where the choice has become unconscious.

Then a new entrant or a revitalised competitor starts to get the growth. Hitting plan gets harder, the marketing budget takes the hit, and everyone starts to worry.

What are they doing that we aren't, we ask? How do we regain the initiative? Plans are drawn up. "Proven" activities from the past are strengthened, "small" changes to reduce costs are implemented, ways of copying the competition are identified and the hunt is on for the big idea. But everything we do seems to be reactive.

If this story seems familiar to you then read on. We all know that it is better to be proactive and there is a way to regain the initiative in the market.

...and surprise, surprise, it is all about the customer, or as we prefer to call them, "people".

## Power Attributes

Your new or revitalised competitor has grabbed a space in people's mind. They have got ownership of something that makes them the right choice, and therefore your brand is no longer the best choice. They have created or promoted a product feature, an emotional pull, a rational benefit, or an image association that motivates people to purchase. They have created a Power Attribute

Power Attributes help you understand why people buy and why they don't. Why? has to be the most important of the "5 Ws". It is a mystery why the 5 W's are normally listed as who, what, when, where and (last of all) why. It is all about the why! As an example just think of a trip to the supermarket. Should I go myself or send my daughter? Go now or wait until first thing in the morning? Go to Tesco or the local shop? Walk or take the car? It all depends on why I'm going. Why is the key; the who, what, when and where are just questions of execution or logistics.

Understanding Power Attributes will shape everything you do. They control how much you can charge, they are what you should talk about when selling or advertising, if you "own" a power attribute in the mind of your customers, then they will buy more from you and less from your competitors.

Power Attributes are plural not singular. There is never one "killer" attribute that destroys all competition and results in 100% market share. This is why different brands have a different why? And all can be successful.

Power Attributes are the features, benefits, associations that are important to customers and (more or less) uniquely associated with a brand. For example if you buy a car you are interested in many attributes with complex trade offs in your mind...and not just the colour! Driving experience is clearly an important attribute. Despite the fact that all cars drive well these days BMW have made this a

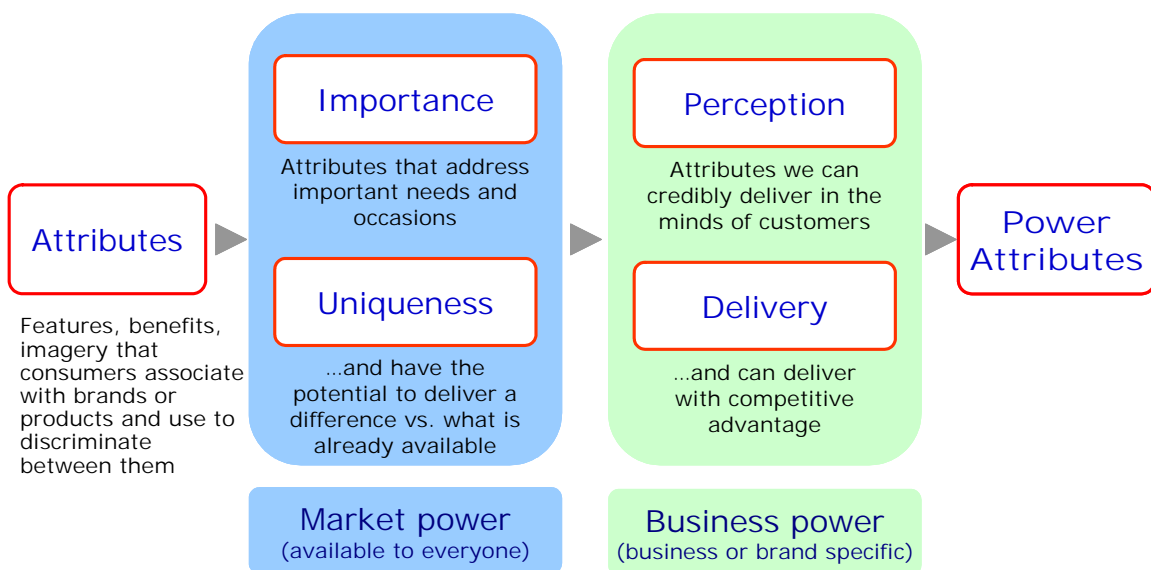
# Power Attributes

Power Attribute for their brand. Likewise safety is important, all cars are safe, yet Volvo have made this their Power Attribute.

Note: "having 4 wheels" is not a Power Attribute as 4 wheels are important but not associated with specific brands. In contrast 3 wheels has unique associations (Del Boy!) but isn't important and so isn't a Power Attribute either. Just being an attribute doesn't make you a Power Attribute.

**Price is not a Power Attribute.** Clearly pricing is a very important decision for the business. But we all know from our own experience that people only make price based choices between competing products and services that fulfil their needs (meet their Power Attributes) equally well. To take an extreme example the decision between a Starbucks coffee and a cup of Nescafe in the office is rarely made on the basis of price.

**Power Attributes are what drives market share.** Current brand share is determined by who owns the category Power Attributes. Market change occurs when the composition and ownership of these attributes changes. This is why it is so often a new entrant that shakes things up. Their whole business proposition has been based on the identification of a Power Attribute that the current players have either ignored or are unaware of. This is why entrepreneurs often create business ideas born of their own frustration that the current market offering isn't "for me".



As an aside, Power Attributes thinking also clarifies why me-too products and other new ventures fail. If a me-too brand can't achieve market share of the Power Attributes in customers' minds then they can't achieve market share of sales. Similarly if they are associated in people's minds with just attributes rather than power attributes there is no market share in that either.

**Power Attributes are more important today than they have ever been.** Customers have more cash, more knowledge and more choice than ever before. This leads to them being more discriminating, and better able to make the trade offs between the attributes of different products and services. A clear example of this is in

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# Power Attributes

the **rocketing** phenomenon where functionally superior products mean that people feel actually feel better about spending significantly more money in a category.

You need to discover the Power Attributes to regain the initiative. If you have read this far and don't have a growth problem then don't give up now. Thinking Power Attributes will keep you ahead and ensure you know how the game is working to get growth in the future.

However, identifying Power Attributes isn't as easy as it seems. Many positioning research techniques and tools on the market today will not identify Power Attributes. Any approach based on modelling or dissecting past behaviour is fundamentally flawed. In the words of the financial services health-warning: past performance does not guarantee future success.

Taking the structured approach outlined in this paper is a forward-looking approach that identifies the Power Attributes today and for the future. To stay ahead it is clearly vital to identify where the opportunities are now; rather than waiting until after someone else has taken the initiative.

## In summary

**Step 1 – Create a list of candidate attributes.** This can be done internally but it is better to involve customers if possible.

**Step 2 – Assess which attributes are powerful:** Importance; uniqueness and credibility are the three key factors to combine in the power assessment

**Step 3 – Identify the Power Attributes for your brand in your market based on this assessment**

Thinking Power Attributes is an important part of winning the Growth Game and driving growth. If you would like to find out more please contact Stacey or Chris on 020 8334 8064 or [PowerAttributes@differentiate-it.co.uk](mailto:PowerAttributes@differentiate-it.co.uk)