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## – PART 1 –

# Background



**T**his book rides on three definitions.

***Conception:*** A mental image held in the mind.

***Conceptioning:*** The act of creating a conception within a human mind.

***Full-force conceptioning:*** The act of using every aspect of your enterprise to create within the mind of your customers and potential customers a set of conceptions that causes these folks to choose to do business with you instead of with your competitors.

Please keep these three definitions in mind.

The term “conceptioning” is a coined word created for use in this book. It doesn’t appear in any dictionary (at the time this book was written). I created the word to define a particular marketing process

that's effective in creating maximum customer loyalty and business success.

Full-force conceptioning derives from the principles of positioning and differentiation set forth by Jack Trout and Al Ries in a series of seminal books spanning three decades (first articulated in 1981 in their flagship book *Positioning*). The difference between the Trout–Ries positioning and differentiation formulae and full-force conceptioning is a difference of degree. Full-force conceptioning goes a step further. It's a special enhanced application of the Trout–Ries formulae — created for driving customer loyalty and repeat sales to the max.

For any business that exists in a competitive arena (which is the arena of most businesses), conceptioning is a vital activity to maximizing success. Here's why.

To build profit over the long term a business must build sales over the long term. To build sales over the long term the business must out-perform its competition at (a) attracting new customers and (b) retaining present customers — that is, building customer loyalty. To achieve both these results the business must create — within the mind of its customers and potential customers — *a more compelling set of positive conceptions than its competition is creating* in those same folks. There's a reason why this is so. The conceptions that a person holds in their mind as pertains to two or more competing products or two or more competing businesses is the main factor that determines *which* product the person chooses to continue buying, or *which* business they choose to continue buying from.

In short, to maximize success over the long term a business must *out-conception* its competition. That is, it must out-perform its competition at creating conceptions that create customer loyalty. “Out-conception” happens to be another coined word. I define it as: the

process of creating more-compelling positive conceptions within the mind of customers and potential customers than what your competition is creating.

The conceptions that are possible for a business to create in a customer's mind can pertain to almost any aspect of the enterprise. However, typically the most compelling conceptions — those that are most effective in creating customer loyalty, or are most effective in attracting and holding customers — pertain to **product** and **company**. That is, they pertain to (a) what the company *produces* or *provides*, and (b) what the company *is* or *stands for*. Full-force conceptioning, as illustrated in the working example used in this book, focuses on these two factors.

## ***Our Working Example***

In this book we disclose our main concept through reference to a working example. This enables the quickest, fullest understanding of the concept. The working example used in this book is *Stanislaus Food Products*. Stanislaus Food Products — or Stanislaus, for short — is a privately-owned tomato packing company headquartered in Modesto, California (which is located in Stanislaus County). It produces a line of canned tomato products — such as, for example, pizza sauce. It markets its products mainly to the restaurant–pizzeria industry.

For this example to make sense you need the following additional information.

## ***Two Types of Tomato Products Manufacture***

Within the tomato packing industry there are two forms of product manufacture: (1) year-round manufacture, which involves a two-stage process and (2) harvest-season manufacture, which involves a

one-stage process. Products resulting from the two-stage process are typically called re-manufactured product, or *re-man* product for short. Products resulting from the one-stage process are typically called *fresh-pack* product. Here's the difference.

**With re-manufactured, or re-man, product** the tomatoes come from the field and are processed into a thick paste, or concentrate. This concentrate is packed into large drums and stored. As needed throughout the year the concentrate is converted into various forms of canned and bottled tomato products (tomato puree, pizza sauce, taco sauce, ketchup, etc.). This is done by diluting the concentrate with water, adding additional ingredients, and then sending it through the canning process, resulting in canned and bottled products that are sent to wholesalers and stores.

Most canned tomato products found in grocery stores are re-man products. You know this by examining the ingredients list on the label. Almost invariably the first item listed will be either “tomato concentrate” or “tomato paste” (two terms for the same thing). For marketing purposes producers often apply a euphemistic description to divert attention from the fact that tomato paste, and not fresh tomatoes, is the actual main ingredient used in making the final product. Two examples of these euphemistic descriptions are: “tomato concentrate made from vine-ripened tomatoes” and “tomato puree (water, tomato paste).”

**With fresh-pack product** the tomatoes come from the field and are processed directly into the final canned tomato products. There is no further, or secondary, processing of the product later in the year.

From a processing standpoint the main difference between re-man and fresh-pack tomato products is this: Re-man product re-

ceives two heating cycles in the course of manufacture; fresh-pack product receives one heating cycle.

From a final-product standpoint, some persons find the fresh-pack product to have a slightly “fresher” taste — which, in the opinion of some folks, is more desirable.

## ***Stanislaus’s Competitive Situation***

Stanislaus Food Products happens to be a packer of fresh-pack tomato product. A number of its competitors happen to be packers of re-man product.

However, at least a couple competitors deal in fresh-pack product. One of these is *Escalon Packers* — a.k.a. Escalon Premier Brands. Escalon is located “down the road” from Stanislaus in Escalon, California, and is a subsidiary of H.J. Heinz Company. Escalon is generally regarded as being one of Stanislaus’s main competitors — perhaps *the* main competitor.

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Most companies don’t define and  
market a specific beneficial  
*difference.*

This is too bad.

Because doing so can make  
all the difference.

### **Conception**

A mental image held in the mind.

### **Conceptioning**

The act of creating a conception within a human mind.

## Full-force Conceptioning



*THE ACT of using every aspect of your enterprise to create within the mind of your customers and potential customers a set of conceptions that causes these folks to choose to do business with you instead of with your competitors.*

## – PART 2 –

# Discovery



**I**t was July 1, 2005. I was reading a conversation in an online pizza industry chat room. There I came upon a thought-provoking exchange of posts.

The conversation began with a question from a person who was about to open a pizzeria. This person was looking for advice on which brand of tomato product to buy for making his pizza sauce. The post was titled: STANISLAUS OR ESCALON?. Following that was this single sentence:

*We are looking at both Stanislaus and Escalon – any input?*

Quickly a reply came through. It was something that would ultimately lead me to an eye-opening discovery ... and the creation of this book. It simply said:

*Used Stanislaus for years & will never change.*

I blinked, read it again, and read it a third time: *Used Stanislaus for years & will never change.*

Will never change???! What incredible loyalty to a brand. This was loyalty to the max.

I then began thinking back on my many years in the pizzeria business, and reflected on the pizzeria industry at large. It was then I realized: This person's will-never-change-from-Stanislaus response was not an exception to the rule — it likely *was* the rule. This person was stating the sentiments of many — if not a majority of — pizzeria owners.

Based on my years in the industry I knew that many pizzeria operators view the products of Stanislaus Food Products to be the premier tomato brands in the industry. And, as a result, they view using Stanislaus products as a requisite for having the best-tasting pizza.

At that moment a thought-provoking question popped into mind: In a blind taste test, how many pizza-eaters would (or could) distinguish between competing tomato product brands *after* the competing brands are each incorporated into a pizza sauce and that sauce is then incorporated and baked into a pizza that includes all the usual toppings? This, of course, is the real-life situation.

This question led to another one: In a real-life situation, how many pizza-eaters would prefer a pizza made with a Stanislaus tomato product over an Escalon tomato product? Still further, how many would prefer a pizza made with a fresh-pack tomato product over one made with a re-manufactured tomato product? I concluded that I didn't know the answer. What's more, I realized that no one else did, either — including all the “expert” tomato product manufacturers and pizza-making aficionados.

Then I was struck with an eye-opening revelation. Over the many years where the fresh-pack tomato producers (namely, Stanislaus) have been claiming, or implying, that pizza sauce made with fresh-pack makes a better sauce than pizza sauce made with re-man, we haven't yet seen a single piece of empirical evidence that (a) validates



the assumption that pizza consumers can detect a difference between fresh-pack sauce vs. re-manufactured sauce on a pizza or, if they can detect a difference, (b) they prefer the “fresh-pack taste” over the “re-man taste.”

Personally, I prefer the taste of fresh-pack tomato product over re-manufactured tomato product when sampled straight from the can. But I’ve learned three simple truths in my years in the pizza business. First, I realize that my personal taste often does not reflect that of others, including that of my customers. Second, I realize that the opinion of a pizza professional regarding what constitutes a great pizza is, as often as not, exactly the opposite of that of the majority of pizza consumers. And, third, I realize that the taste of a pizza ingredient *after* it’s combined with other ingredients and baked into a pizza can be altogether different from the taste before it’s made into a pizza.

All this took me to a final question: Realizing that there’s no empirical evidence that pizza-eaters prefer pizza made with fresh-pack pizza sauce over pizza made with re-man pizza sauce, *what* has Stanislaus done that has enabled it to surmount all competition ... and to create such unwavering, deeply-held, “will-never-change” loyalty among so many pizzeria owners?

I then began an analysis to ferret out the answer to this question. I looked back on the many years of marketing communications of Stanislaus Food Products. This was easy to do as I had a 15-year collection of monthly pizza magazines (*Pizza Today* and *Pizza Marketing Quarterly* a.k.a. *PMQ*). Each of these hundreds of issues contained a 2-page Stanislaus ad. Plus I had a fat file folder containing numerous Stanislaus direct mail pieces, which I had received over a 15-year period. Plus I had spent a decade-and-a-half working as a pizza business consultant. And, also, at one time I owned a pizza company, which as it happened used Stanislaus products.

After analyzing it all — after viewing a 15-year span of Stanislaus marketing in a 30-minute time capsule — a series of stunning realizations occurred. Stanislaus was pursuing a marketing strategy that no other company has, to the best of my knowledge, ever pursued. And, it was pursuing this strategy with deftness and genius. And, this strategy, by all appearances, clearly derived from the principles of positioning and differentiation set forth by Jack Trout and Al Ries (first articulated in their flagship book *Positioning*, and also later by Jack Trout and Steve Rivkin in *Differentiate or Die*). And, finally, it appeared that Stanislaus was not only applying the Trout–Ries marketing formulae but was *going a step beyond*. It was, in effect, creating an enhanced, super-charged version of the Trout–Ries prescription — a version that was super-effective at out-performing the competition at creating customer loyalty.



We now come to the present. This book you’re reading describes a uniquely effective approach to maximizing customer loyalty. For easy reference I’ve given this approach a name: *full-force conceptioning*. The objective of this book is to disclose the dynamics of full-force conceptioning.

To do this I use an exemplary working example. It happens to be Stanislaus Food Products. To illustrate the essential actions involved in full-force conceptioning we examine what this company has done and is still doing (at the time this book was written). This comprises a set of actions that has resulted in one of the most loyal, unwavering customer bases of any company in any industry.

I use the “exemplary example approach” because it enables conveyance of a maximum amount of knowledge in the shortest time — that is, with the shortest, most reader-friendly form of book. Yes, I’ve purposely designed this book to be *short*. I’ve done this so the mar-

keting strategy disclosed herein — full-force conceptioning — can be captured with a minimum of reading time.

It's my conclusion that any enterprise could adapt this strategy to its particular business and industry. And, that if that were done it would result in the type of consumer loyalty and market share ownership that Stanislaus Food Products has achieved and enjoys in its particular industry (which is the tomato products industry that sells to distributors in the restaurant–pizzeria industry).

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Marketing strategy evolves like the stages of a tomato.

First comes **green strategy** — its message in no way influences the mind of the buyer. Its effect is small and fleeting.

Then comes **yellow strategy** — its message slightly influences the mind of the buyer, and sometimes holds promise of doing more. Its effect is slightly greater and longer lasting.

Finally comes **red strategy** — its message significantly influences the mind of the buyer. And, in doing so, it builds substantial *long-term* customer loyalty and sales.

Most companies use a green strategy. Some stumble onto a yellow strategy. Only a few formulate and execute a red strategy. Full-force conceptioning is a red strategy.