

Working with Marty Neumeier's *Onliness* *Statement concept.*

At Cusp Capital we help companies navigate strategic narratives. Leaders need to craft their company's story in line with the sentiments of the time — to win all stakeholders. A clear positioning provides the bedrock upon which a compelling story arch unfolds.

The Onliness Statement (as introduced by Marty Neumeier in his book *Zag*) is the only positioning statement that forces you to concisely formulate the radical differentiation of your company vs. its competitors. This focal point is not only essential for communication; it also defines your strategy. The pen is mightier than the sword. Picking it up to forge your Onliness Statement you may (and likely will) change to truly be radically different.

What is the Onliness Statement

Most minimally, your Onliness Statement takes this form:

Our company is the only [category] that [point of radical differentiation].

And more maximally, it answers the what, how, who, where, why and when of the radical difference at the core of your company:

WHAT: company category.

HOW: point of radical differentiation.

WHO: segments of audience.

WHERE: market geography.

WHY: need.

WHEN : underlying trend.

Or in one sentence:

Our company is the only [what] that [how] for [who] in [where] who want [why] in an era of [when].

To clarify, let's take a look at one of Marty Neumeier's examples. A wine bar chain's Onliness Statement could look like this: Our company is the ONLY chain of wine bars that builds community around education. And zoomed in:

WHAT: the ONLY chain of wine bars
HOW: that builds community around education
WHO: for men and women of drinking age
WHERE: in cities and progressive towns in the U.S.
WHY: who want to learn more about wine
WHEN : in an era of cultural awakening

Or in one sentence: Our company is the ONLY chain of wine bars that builds community around education for men and women of drinking age in cities and progressive towns in the U.S. who want to learn more about wine in an era of cultural awakening.

Why We at Cusp Capital ❤️ the Onliness Statement

We love radical differentiation and clarity. The Onliness Statement marries both and provides a sandbox to test a potential company-investor partnership.

First, radical differentiation. We firmly believe that the best companies meet human needs in fundamentally better ways. Such improvements are only possible when solutions are radically different.

Second, clarity. Only if you truly understand something can you explain it in short, sweet and simple terms. And clarity on positioning, uniqueness is most important for any company. It not only dictates the strategy but upgrades communication with customers, talent and investors to true mutual understanding.

Finally, we have found the onliness statement an ideal sandbox to trial discussion and collaboration. Do you and we at Cusp Capital share a vision of your company? Having discussed the essence of your company together, are we both excited to join forces?

Build Your Own Onliness Statement

The pen may be mightier than the sword, but it does not write itself. Let's spark your narrative and build your onliness statement:

1. Let each member of your leadership team write your onliness statement in long and short formats.
2. Compare. Scrutinize for even the most minute differences in wording. Discuss and merge. Check whether the resulting statement is short, concise, easily understood and does not betray the word "only".
3. One by one, insert the names of your competitors into your draft Onliness Statement. With the name changed, does the statement still hold? If yes, tweak it until it does not.
4. Test your Onliness Statement with trusted recipients of your communication: your customers, talent, investors.
5. Mix and match the above. Iterate. This is not a final statement; it is a process.

We look forward to discussing your Onliness Statement — and to seeing how your company's essence may have evolved during the formulation of it.