



YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION: WHAT, WHY & HOW

WHAT?

In a nutshell, your value proposition is a direct, efficient statement of why someone should choose your product or service over the other options open to them. Those options can include other offerings from companies similar to yours, different ways of solving the problem – you can even compare your services to the customer taking no action. Your Value Proposition is your core promise to your potential customer.

Your value proposition should be 2 to 4 sentences that clearly differentiate your value.

It should:

- Be easily remembered by everyone on your team
- Be easy to use in written and verbal communications
- Solve a problem
- Fill a need

Your value proposition should be expressed in terms of the potential customer's needs. Less about what you want to tell them about your product or service. More about a solution to a real business need.

WHY?

There are so many opportunities that don't present themselves as 20 or 30 minutes to explain all of the features and benefits of your product or service.

- A ride in an elevator (hence the term "elevator pitch")
- A networking event
- A quick introduction
- A print ad
- A preliminary call to set up a meeting

These are just a few of the opportunities for a quick presentation of value in order to take the conversation to the next level. Make sure your whole team is ready with the right words at the right moment.



HOW?

It is a simple process of figuring out what your product or service really offers that is distinct and valuable.

1. Decide who your audience actually is. There may be several different audiences for one product or service and you may need to keep that in mind when developing your value proposition. A landscaping contractor might have slightly different value for a residential customer (maybe full service including design to fit not only their home but the neighborhood); an office park (one stop shopping for lawn maintenance, creating and managing dramatic seasonal beds at key viewpoints, and tree and hedge management); or a government facility (efficient, cost-effective maintenance from a supplier accustomed to, and able to work within their procurement process).
2. Consider how your product or service has value – from the customers' perspective. What are the most important factors in the potential customer's decision-making process?
3. Get clear on how your product or service answers those critical factors. Make sure you know what they want or need and how your product answers that want or need.
4. Talk to your current customers. Ask them what brought them to you and what you can do better. Their answers may help you frame your value proposition.
5. Involve your team. What are they hearing about what you are doing right and what else their customers might want you to provide?
6. Write your value proposition(s) with those specific new customers or customer groups in mind. Tell them why they should choose what you have to offer. There may be slightly different versions, highlighting specific benefits for different customer groups.
7. Be fluent in your customer's business language. Check your value proposition with your team and current customers to see if it rings true ... if the language is authentic for the customer group.

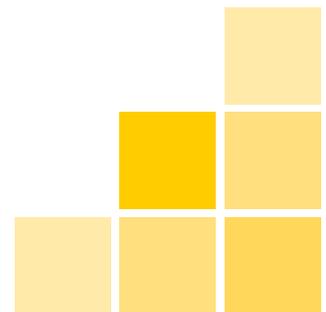
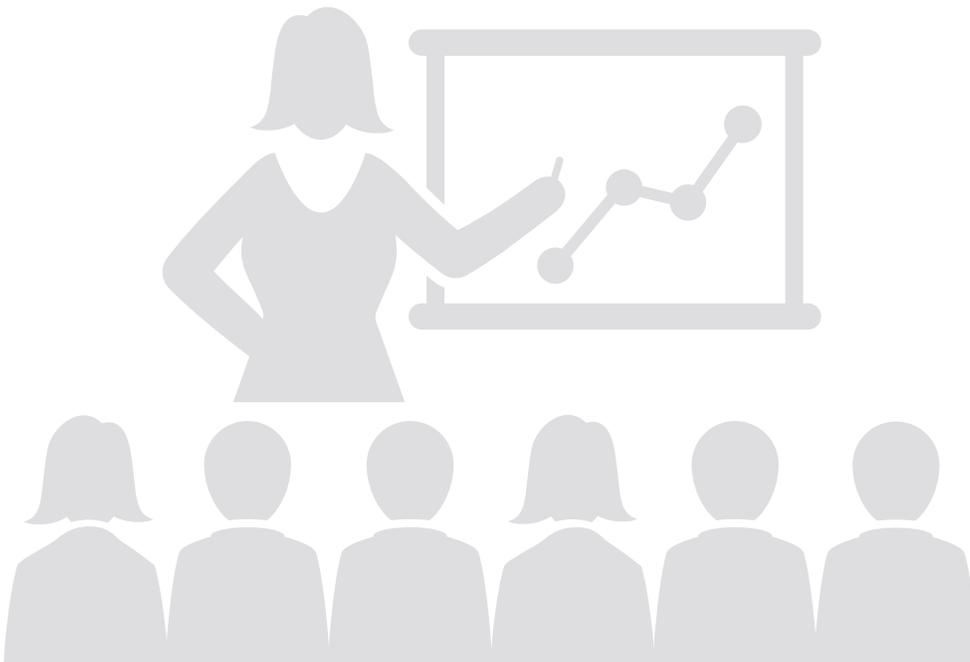
8. Constantly review your value proposition to be sure it is current, laser pointed at your potential client(s), and responsive to market conditions. If your competition has just introduced a new system, you may want to reposition to highlight the tried and true, reliability aspects of your offering. Ask yourself these questions:

- What do my customers and potential customers value in a product or service like mine?
- Does my value proposition demonstrate how we can answer their needs? Solve a problem?

9. Be ready to back up your value proposition with references, certifications – whatever standard of proof your industry respects.

IN THE END

Think of your value proposition as a conversation starter. You want to open with your best values to steer the conversation toward how your product or service can help the prospective customer. And then ... listen. The best value proposition elicits a reply that opens the door for a longer, more finely-tuned response



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