



Your Value Proposition

Get More Consulting Business Faster

Your Value Proposition as a Consultant

Introduction

A value proposition is how you describe what you can do as a consultant for specific clients in your market and why they should hire you instead of someone else. It describes your value:

- In a specific market and often in a specific niche within a market
- For clients who you have identified as the ideal clients who you want to hire you
- In providing a set of services and achieving particular outcomes
- Relative to your competitors

Why do I need a value proposition?

Developing your value proposition is one of the most important steps you need to take when you start consulting. Why? Because it will be the basis of many decisions and actions you will take to get clients and build a sustainable consulting business. Having one allows you to send clear signals in your market to the right prospective clients about your unique value.

For example, when you are developing and executing marketing and outreach strategies, you need to know who you are trying to get as clients so your strategies resonate with them and attract them to you. You need to be able to clearly state what you can do that matches what they are willing to pay for. You need to be able to say how you do can help them solve their problems and achieve their goals. And you need to be able to say why they should hire you instead of one of your competitors.

Answer the questions below to develop your value proposition.

Who?

Start with who you want to serve as a consultant.

What is your target market?

Indicate what specific market you want to sell your services in. This could be a horizontal market. Choose a vertical market if you plan to sell your consulting services to companies, organizations, or people with a specific industry, trade, profession, or group of clients with the same needs. For example, healthcare would be a vertical market. Choose a horizontal market if you plan to sell your services to a broad range of industries, trades, professionals, or clients. For example, corporations would be a horizontal market.

My Target Market:

What is your niche within that market (if you choose one)?

Indicate what specific market you want to sell your services in. A niche is a specific subset of your target market. Many consultants start by selecting a niche within their market to sell their services. Having a niche can make it easier to focus your marketing and outreach efforts and develop messages about you and your services that will be clear to prospective clients. Trying to be all things to all clients can confuse the clients you are trying to attract and may not instill confidence in them that you can achieve the results. That said, selecting a niche at the beginning does not mean you are stuck there forever. You can expand to other niches as you build your business and gain new experience and skills. As examples, hospitals would be a niche for the vertical market of healthcare and organic food distributors would be a niche within the horizontal market of corporations. Regardless of which niche you choose, it should be a niche that matches your expertise.

My Niche:

Which clients do you want to sell your services to?

Describe who your ideal clients are. Ideal clients are who you most want to work within the market and niche you selected. They will be who you are going to spend your time, energy, and resources pursuing. The more you know who they are, what their problems are, and what they care about and want, the easier it will be for you to define what your value is to them. So be as specific as possible when identifying your ideal client because their pain points/problems and what they desire and value will differ based on the specifics of who they are. For example, the problems and desires of Chief Executive Officers of rural hospitals in the United States will be vastly different than paediatricians in mid-sized practices in large urban centers in the United States.

1. My ideal client:

2. My ideal clients' pain points/problems:

3. My ideal client's desires/what they value:

What and How?

Next, define what you can do for your ideal client to help them solve their problems and get what the results they want and how you do it.

Use the table below to describe the:

- Results you can help your ideal clients achieve that solve their problems and produce their desired outcomes.
 - Be as specific as possible. For example, if you can help your ideal clients increase their annual revenue, it is stronger to say you can help them increase it by 10%.
- What services you will offer to help them achieve their desired outcomes.
 - Examples: Financial analysis and strategy, strategic planning, data analysis, facilitation, training, etc.
- How you help them do that.
 - Provide specific examples of the things you do. Be as specific as possible drawing from what you have done in the past to achieve similar results. For example, if you offer training, indicate what you train who to do that leads to the results they want.

<p>Results you can help your ideal clients achieve</p>	<p>What services you will offer to help your ideal clients achieve their desired results</p>	<p>How you help your ideal clients achieve their desired results</p>

Why?

Next, define what makes you the right choice for your ideal clients.

Describe what makes your expertise, skills, or approach unique or better. Describe what would make their experience as your client better than working with someone else. If you have difficulty identifying what differentiates you, think of examples of previous work you did and what you did to contribute to the outcome. Also ask people who have worked with you what they think makes you stand out from other people doing the same work.

Put It All Together

Develop a 1-2 sentence statement about you value.

Although the details will be useful as you engage with prospective clients in your market, it is also helpful to have a succinct statement that quickly and clearly describes your value. Use the following format to develop your statement. If you add a second sentence, it could be to highlight a specific result, such as increasing revenue by a specific percentage, or a unique approach you have to helping them achieve their result or a unique experience they will have with you.

"I help [your ideal clients] to [solve what problem(s) and/or achieve what outcome(s)] by [what you uniquely do]."

Examples

- I help organic food distributors develop solutions to supply chain disruptions by helping them develop flexible partnerships with established farmers.
- I help CEOs of large urban hospitals increase their market share and enhance their financial sustainability by executing acquisition strategies that increase revenue on day one after the acquisition.

Example with a second sentence:

- I help CEOs of large urban hospitals increase their market share and enhance their financial sustainability by executing acquisition strategies that increase revenue on day one after the acquisition. I also help reduce stress and ensure that the hospitals retain their prized talent during the acquisition process.

Also don't be afraid to add some personality to your value statement. Depending on your market, sounding too cheeky or clever could repel clients. However, you don't want your value statement to sound like everyone else's. For example, when I am talking to prospective clients who have groups of people or multiple organizations that are not meeting their goals because they can't seem to make decisions together, my second sentence is "And I cure decision-making disorders that often afflict groups." When I've used that line, I usually get a laugh and then a look of relief. Why? Because I know that the inability to move forward because decisions aren't being made is a major pain point for client groups and I just told them that I get it and can solve it without making them feel embarrassed about what's not working.

My Value Statement:

Test It And Refine It

Test and refine your value statement and proposition.

Before trying your value statement or other details of your value proposition with clients, test it with people in your market who will tell you if it is clear and compelling or not. If they can't easily say back to you who you help do what and how, then refine it until it is clear and memorable.

Also test some of the details that back up the value statement with people in your market. Ask if they think there is a demand¹ for what you do in your market and niche and if your descriptions will resonate with and attract your ideal clients.

¹ It's important to understand that demand is different than need. Your ideal clients may need something—maybe even desperately need it—but if they don't know that and are not willing to pay for it, then they don't have a demand for it. You will get business faster if you focus on where there is already a demand. That way, you don't have to try to convince them that they should want something before you can try to sell it to them.