
Getting Started on Writing About your Company

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Stop Staring at a Blank Screen

IT IS TIME TO MAKE PROGRESS

At smithHOUSE, we work with a lot of small business owners. We love these clients because they are passionate and motivated. Plus they have clarity that only comes from waking up each day knowing that you must create your own destiny.

One issue that we encounter with small business owners is that they have been so consumed with daily operations of their business that they have not taken the time to write clearly about what their company is all about.

Maybe they have a slogan. Maybe they have a quick verbal pitch, but where to go next can be intimidating.

We originally created this resource to use internally with our clients, and now want to share it with you. The answers to these questions are the building blocks that we use to write for print and web: descriptive copy, value propositions, comparative sequences, and reference stories. All this adds up to a simple idea: we tell a company's story in a way that is meaningful to their customers.

Key Concepts

1 *People don't care about your company. They do care that you can solve their problems.*

2 *It's not enough to describe the features of your products and services. These can only be seen as valuable when you first describe the benefits that the features bring to customers.*

3 *People will love you if you help them save time and money.*

4 *Spend less time talking about your company and more time talking about your customer's success because of your company.*

How to Use This Resource

Copy and paste these questions into a new document. Pour some coffee. Turn up your music, and start answering the questions. Skip any questions that don't apply to your company or marketplace. Use your answers as building blocks for your website, your print collateral, and in your verbal communications.

Editing and synthesizing answers it to perfect sentences and paragraphs is not easy, but it's a lot easier than staring at a blank screen.

One of the most powerful tools in marketing is called a “**value proposition.**” Start with your customers. Describe their problems, and how your competitors aren’t solving those problems. Show how your company solves problems and makes life easier. Google it.

My Customer

- Who is my customer / client?
- What are her problems that I can solve with my product or service?
- What is keeping her from saying “yes” to hiring on my company to solve that problem?
- How can I measure the results that I bring?
- Who are clients that have used my product/service and what are their results?

My Competition

- Who else is competing to solve my customer’s problems?
- Who is leading in the market right now? What do they do well? Where are they vulnerable?
- What are substitutes for my products/services? These are not the same as direct competitors. For instance, a coffee place doesn’t just compete with other coffee shops. They compete with smoothie bars and fresh-squeezed juice bars too.

Don’t be afraid to talk about things that might seem negative. For instance, if you have a smaller company, you can make this a benefit to your customer: we are small, which means that you never get pushed through 4 people before you get the support that you need.

My Company

- What makes me different from the competition?
- When my clients think of me, what words do I want them to use to describe me and my company?
- What is special about me, the company’s founder, that makes me uniquely positioned to help people?

Service providers have a unique challenge when describing their company. It is unlike selling a product which can be examined, used, and tested.

When describing your services, it is critical that you use language that your clients understand.

A potential client wants to know that you are on their side no matter what. They want to be assured that you win only when they win.

For example, many people are skeptical of wealth managers because it is unclear if they are being “sold products” so that he can get a commission, or if the manager is doing everything he can to get his clients a high return on their money.

My Services

- What do I do for people? In plain English.
- What is the story behind my company’s name? Does it say anything about how we service clients?
- What are the consequences of a client ignoring their problem and not bringing me on at all?
- How are my incentives aligned with the goals of my client?
- What is the process by which I “sign on” a client? What does the process look like?
- Are there deliverables that my client receives from my company when they sign on? (e.g. “My company trains high school teachers on how to use cloud-based document management. In addition to doing in-service trainings at schools, we distribute convenient ‘how-to guides,’ and we offer phone support.”)
- My client feels like they are taking a risk when they hire my company. What can I do to minimize that risk? How can I comfort them and assure them that they’re making the right decision? Can I offer guarantees? Stories of happy clients?
- Do companies have an in-house alternative to my services? Why is hiring my company more beneficial than having their own people do it?

Nobody feels like they have enough time or money. So why would they waste time with your company? Why would they spend money on something that doesn't help them? Show your potential customers how you actually save them time and money.

My Products

- How does my product save people time and money?
- What is the story behind my company's name? Does it say anything about our products?
- What problems do my products solve for people? -or - What are the benefits of using my products?
- What are the features of my products? Show how these features give the benefits listed above.
- How are my product features superior product features from my competitors?
- What happens if a customer ignores their problem altogether and chooses not to buy my product?
- If a customer buys my product, what is the risk that they feel like they're taking? What can I do to minimize this risk?
- What does someone feel different after using my product?
- What story do I want them to tell after using my product?

Next Steps

Endorsements

- Which of my customers or clients will say kind words about my company?
- Can I provide pro-bono services to a client in order to gain a positive review?
- For my local services, can I give incentive for my customers to review me on Yelp?

You should spend more time talking about your clients than you talking about yourself.

Potential clients can relate more to them than they can to you.

Case Studies

- What clients are better today because they have used my products or services?
- How can I showcase their story on my website? In brochures? When speaking to potential customers?

Authoring Blog Content

- What are people interested in reading that is related to my business?
- Will I commit the time to write compelling blogs?
- What is my “unique voice” that nobody else has?
- What are my experiences that have prepared me to be an expert?
- What are my successes that I can write about that people will respect?