

Standing Out: Using Research to Show What Makes You Special

A practical guide for making your unique value resonate with your ideal prospects.



You Know You're Different. But Do Your Prospects?

You've built something unique. Your clients know it. Your team knows it. But when someone new visits your website — or sees your pitch deck — they might not.

It's not because you aren't different. It's because the difference isn't obvious to the people who don't know you yet. That's frustrating — and it's not unusual.

Let's take a closer look at what's behind it, and how research can help.

The Positioning Problem

Most experts don't wake up thinking, "Our positioning is off."

What they notice is a vague discomfort:

- Prospects don't seem to "get" them right away
- Their content sounds professional... but also kind of interchangeable
- Referrals say "They're great!" — but can't specifically explain why

If any of that feels familiar, you're not alone. We work with a lot of very smart people who feel like they're blending in, even when they know they've built something truly different.

Here are a few questions we often explore with them:

- If a new visitor landed on your homepage, would they immediately understand how you're different from your competitors?
- Could your last few blog posts or LinkedIn updates be pasted onto someone else's site — and still make sense?
- If your referrers are asked what makes your firm different from others, can they confidently provide a compelling answer?

If so, it doesn't mean your positioning is broken. It just means your true difference might not be coming through as clearly as it could.

How Research Helps Clarify and Amplify Your Difference

The most compelling positioning is about what your audience wants to hear and how clearly you reflect it back to them.

When you use audience-focused research, you gain insight into:

- The problems your prospects are actually trying to solve
- The myths or misconceptions they're running into
- The beliefs and decision drivers that matter most in their world

That insight helps you craft a message that's specific, relevant, and yours alone — because it's rooted in what your audience cares about most, and your unique ability to understand and help.

A Real-World Example

Predictive ROI

After conducting two research studies about the power of thought leadership with buyers and how organizations are approaching their thought leadership efforts, Predictive ROI became known as an expert on the topic in the circles their ideal prospects travel in.

The agency used the research to take a new look at their positioning, their messaging, and what makes them a truly unique and effective resource. They fine-tuned their approach across both communications and their strategic product offerings, and turned research into revenue.

Our research helps guide our business forward. We don't have to guess what our clients and prospects want. We don't have to throw spaghetti at the wall hoping that something will stick. Using the results from our study, we've been able to make data-driven decisions that lead to better positioning, a higher level of differentiation, more trust, and a higher close rate with our clients and prospects.

*Hannah Roth
Predictive ROI*

Check in: Is Your Difference Shining Through?

This self-assessment can help you get your bearings.

- We've used research (not just assumptions) to help understand the differences we have that matter to our ideal prospects
- Our homepage clearly reflects the challenges our audience is grappling with
- We've published something that's made someone say, "That's *exactly* how I feel!"
- People know exactly who to refer to us, the challenges they have, and why we're different from our competitors
- Our positioning helps us say "no" to opportunities that aren't a great fit — and to make it clear to prospects whether we're the right firm for them

If you check 4 or 5 → Your difference is showing up clearly and confidently

If you check 2 or 3 → You've got a foundation — sharpening the edges could help

If you check 0 or 1 → There's a real opportunity to clarify what sets you apart

Quick Exercise: Surfacing What Makes You Different

You don't need to overhaul everything. Just try this.

Step 1: Find Your Rant

Think about something in your industry that drives you nuts. A misconception. A lazy assumption. A tired trope that keeps popping up.

Now pair it with a real audience insight

Step 2: Pair It With Real Audience Insight

Now, pair it with something your research or experience tells you is actually affecting your clients. Why can they benefit from thinking about this issue differently? What change can happen if you explain your frustration?

BAM! You've just uncovered a point of view that's rooted in your expertise, tied to what your audience really cares about, and is impossible for your competitors to copy — because it gets you so riled up, and you're not afraid to say so.

Step 3: Share Your Rant, its Relevance, and Your Recommendation

Now, share it — in language that shows your passion. That's differentiation with a pulse. People will notice — because it's real, it's relevant, and it reflects how you *really* think.

That kind of energy and authenticity builds trust. And trust attracts the right people.

How Else Can We Help?

At Audience Audit, we help experts who want to show up with clarity, confidence, and a difference that converts.

One-of-a-kind audience research gives you the insight to do that, with no guesswork.

Let's talk about what original research could unlock for you.

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