

# 03

DOCUMENT TEMPLATE

## Brand Positioning & Messaging

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01

## What this guide helps you create — and who it's for

A messaging brief: the one document that fixes who you're for, what category you're in, the one thing you do differently, and the exact words you'll use to say it — everywhere, the same way. Positioning statement, three value propositions, the three things you always say, and a word list (use these, never these).

**Use this if** the way you describe your company changes depending on who's asking, or if your website, your pitch and your LinkedIn bio sound like three different companies. **Skip it** if you've already nailed the words and watched them land — this guide writes the brief; it doesn't second-guess one that works.

### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- 1 **Read sections 02–04** so you know what positioning actually is — and why most of it says nothing.
- 2 **Open your AI chatbot** — the one you set up in guide 01.
- 3 **Make the three decisions in section 03** — the frame, the wedge, the customer's words. Do this *before* you touch the prompt.
- 4 **Copy the prompt in section 05** into the chatbot. Paste your Founder Context Block where it says to, and fill in the `{curly braces}`.
- 5 **Send it**, then sharpen what comes back using the four moves in section 06 — one at a time.
- 6 **Use the output everywhere.** Headline, pitch, bio, sales email — the point of a messaging brief is that you stop improvising the words.

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02

## Why this document matters

Positioning is the answer to one question in the customer's head: "*what is this, and is it for me?*" If they can't answer it in five seconds, they leave

— and they don't tell you why.

Most founders never write the answer down, so it drifts. The website says one thing, the deck says another, the founder says a third in person. Every version is slightly vague, because vague feels safer than committing. But vague is the problem — it makes the reader do the work of figuring out what you are, and they won't. A messaging brief is you doing that work once, on purpose, so every surface says the same sharp thing.

## If your website, your pitch and your bio sound like three different companies, they are — to the reader.

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The fix isn't a clever tagline. It's three decisions, then a prompt. Section 03.

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03

### The thinking framework — what to settle before you prompt

The prompt writes the brief. It can't make these calls for you.

#### — What's the frame?

Every customer files you against something they already understand — “*oh, it's like a [X], but for [Y].*” That comparison point is your frame. Pick it deliberately: the frame you choose decides what they expect, what counts as “good,” and who your competition is. (“It's a CRM” sets very different expectations from “it's a shared inbox.”)

#### — What's the wedge?

The one thing you do differently that the *right* customer actually cares about — not the longest feature list, the sharpest difference. If the honest version is “we're a bit cheaper / a bit nicer,” you don't have a wedge yet; keep digging. The wedge is what goes in the “unlike...” part of the positioning statement, and it's usually the only part founders leave vague.

## — What words does the customer use?

Not how you describe the problem — how *they* do, in their own words, before they ever heard of you. (“I’m always behind on receipts,” not “suboptimal financial-records hygiene.”) Steal their language. The brief should sound like something a customer would say, not something a company would write.

DECIDE	WEAK DEFAULT	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE
The frame	“a platform”	“it’s a bookkeeper-in-an-app, for businesses too small for one”
The wedge	“we’re more intuitive”	“you photograph a receipt; it’s filed — no data entry, ever”
The customer’s words	“optimise financial workflows”	“I never know if I’m behind on my books”

04

## Common failure modes — what generic output looks like

Ask an AI for “our positioning” with no decisions made, and you get this. None of it is wrong, exactly — it’s just empty:

### × WHAT TO REJECT ON SIGHT

- **Mad-libs positioning.** “We’re the [Airbnb] for [X]” with no substance under it. If swapping the analogy changes nothing, there’s nothing there.
- **Adjective stacking.** “The modern, intuitive, powerful, all-in-one platform.” Each adjective survives being swapped for its opposite, so each means nothing.
- **Positioning against everyone.** “Unlike legacy tools...” — *which* legacy tools? Against everything is against nothing.
- **Your words, not theirs.** Output full of your internal language (“orchestration layer”, “unified workspace”) that no customer has ever said out loud.
- **A mission, not a position.** “We believe everyone deserves...” — lovely, but it doesn’t tell the reader what you are or whether it’s for them.

If you’re getting these, the brief hasn’t decided its frame and wedge. Section 03.

## The prompt template

This is the bit that does the work. You don't need to understand prompting — you just need to do these five things, in order:

### RUNNING THIS PROMPT – STEP BY STEP

- 1 **Copy the entire grey box below** (all of it, top to bottom).
- 2 **Open your AI chatbot** and paste it into the message box. Don't press send yet.
- 3 **Paste your Founder Context Block** where the prompt says `{paste your Founder Context Block here}` — delete that line and put your block in its place. (No Context Block yet? Build one in guide 01.)
- 4 **Replace every `{curly-brace}` bit** with your own answer — your three decisions from section 03 go straight in. If you're unsure of one, leave it; the prompt will ask.
- 5 **Send it.** Then go to section 06 to sharpen what comes back.

### PROMPT TEMPLATE

→ Copy the whole box. Paste your **Founder Context Block** where it says to, then swap everything in `{curly braces}` for your own answers before you send it.

You are helping me write a messaging brief – the document that fixes how we describe this company everywhere, in the same words.

Here is everything you need to know about my company:

`{paste your Founder Context Block here}`

Three things I've decided (use these – don't override them):

- The frame (what the customer compares us to): `{e.g. "a bookkeeper-in-an-app, for businesses too small for one"}`
- The wedge (the one difference the right customer cares about): `{e.g. "photograph a receipt, it's filed – no data entry, ever"}`
- The customer's own words for the problem: `{e.g. "I'm always a bit behind on my books"}`

Produce the brief with exactly these five parts:

1. Positioning statement – one sentence, in this shape:  
"For {target customer} who {situation/need}, {product} is the {frame/category} that {key benefit driven by the wedge} – unlike {a specific alternative they use today: a named competitor, a spreadsheet, a manual process}." Make the "unlike" specific; never "legacy tools" or "other platforms."
2. Three value propositions – each starts with what the customer gets, then names the capability that delivers it. Benefit first, feature second. No more than three.
3. The three things we always say – short, repeatable lines (under ~10 words each) that should show up in the headline, the pitch, the bio, the sales email.
4. Word list – "use these" (5–8 words/phrases, in the customer's language) and "never these" (5–8 words we ban: buzzwords, internal jargon, anything that survives being swapped for its opposite).
5. The one-line – the shortest possible version of the positioning statement, the thing a customer could repeat back after one read.

Rules:

- Write in the customer's language, not ours. If a phrase is something a company writes but a customer would never say out loud, rewrite it.
- Anything in {curly braces} is a slot for me to fill. If I left one blank, ask me for it – don't invent it.

When you're done, tell me the single weakest word in the brief and why it's vague, so I can replace it.

06

## How to iterate when the output is weak

First drafts come back vague in predictable ways. These four moves sharpen them – run them one at a time:

1. **Force the “unlike.”** “Rewrite the positioning statement so the ‘unlike’ names a specific alternative the reader uses today – a named competitor, a spreadsheet, a manual process. No ‘legacy tools.’”
2. **Benefits, not features.** “Every value prop must start with what the customer gets, not what we built. If it starts with a feature, rewrite it.”
3. **Their words.** “Rewrite using only language a customer would actually say. Replace every internal term with the phrase a real user would use.”

4. **Cut to three.** “We can say at most three things consistently. Pick the three; cut the rest. A short message that lands beats a complete one that doesn’t.”

If two passes don’t fix it, the problem is the frame or the wedge, not the prompt — go back to section 03.

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## A worked example

Sam from guide 01, founder of Ledgerwise — here’s the messaging brief, sharpened.

▶ WORKED EXAMPLE — SAM’S POSITIONING, BEFORE AND AFTER

**Frame:** Sam first tried “*AI accounting platform.*” That set the wrong expectations (audit, payroll, the lot) and put Ledgerwise against enterprise tools it can’t beat. He re-framed to “*a bookkeeper-in-an-app — for the businesses too small to afford a real one.*” Now the comparison in the customer’s head is “the bookkeeper I can’t afford,” which is exactly the competitor Ledgerwise can beat.

**Wedge:** not “*easier to use*” — “*you photograph a receipt and it’s filed. No data entry. Ever.*” That’s a difference a sole trader buried in receipts actually feels.

**Their words:** the brief opens with “*You’re always a bit behind on your books, and you only find out how far when the tax deadline shows up.*” — not a sentence a company writes; a sentence a customer says.

**Positioning statement:** “*For UK sole traders and micro-businesses too small for an accountant, Ledgerwise is the bookkeeper-in-an-app that turns a photographed receipt into a filed return — unlike the spreadsheet you’re behind on, or the £200-a-month bookkeeper you can’t justify.*”

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08

## Edge cases — and when to go deeper

A few situations need more than the template:

- **You’re repositioning, not positioning.** You have customers who already think of you a certain way. Don’t ignore that — the brief has to bridge from where they think you are to where you’re going, or you’ll confuse the people who already get you.

- **You sell to two very different buyers.** Then you have two messaging briefs — the words that land with a solo founder don't land with a procurement team. Make both; never one brief stretched to cover both.
- **You've got the position but not the voice.** The brief is sharp but it doesn't sound like you. That's a different exercise — pinning down how you actually talk:

→ WHEN YOU NEED TO GO DEEPER

**Founder Voice Extraction** — Turn the way you actually talk into a reusable voice spec your LLM can write in — so output stops sounding like a press release.

[n-access.co.uk/playbook/founder-voice-extraction](https://n-access.co.uk/playbook/founder-voice-extraction)

- **The words need a look to match.** Positioning lives in colour, type and layout as much as language. To generate a visual identity that fits the brief:

→ WHEN YOU NEED TO GO DEEPER

**Claude Visual System** — A repeatable prompt chain for generating an on-brand visual identity — colour, type, layout rules — without a designer.

[n-access.co.uk/playbook/claude-visual-system](https://n-access.co.uk/playbook/claude-visual-system)

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09

## What to read next

- **04 · Go-to-Market Plan** — turns “who you're for” into a plan for actually reaching them.
- **05 · Content Strategy** — your position decides what you're allowed to talk about; this turns it into a publishing plan.
- **08 · Sales & Landing-Page Copy** — where the positioning statement becomes the headline a stranger reads first.

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## The Founder's Playbook

A library of short operator guides for founders building with AI — not prompt-pack content, an actual method. Each guide is free, each routes you to deeper blueprints when you need them, and each assumes one thing: that you've built your **Founder Context Block** (that's guide 01).

*The Founder's Playbook* · [n-access.co.uk/playbook](https://n-access.co.uk/playbook)