

THE ALL-WAY-IN APPROACH

The 7 Questions Every Founder Should Answer Before They Build a Website

You already paid for a site that still can't sell.

Answer seven questions in writing. Leave with a one-page Positioning Brief — so your site can sell, not just look finished.

How to use this guide

This is a printable workbook — not a slide deck. Read it in order. Write in the spaces. Print it if you can.

Answer all seven questions in writing. Not in your head. Your answers become a one-page Positioning Brief — the document you hand a designer, a developer, or yourself before a single page gets built.

01 • TEACH

Each question opens with what most people do, why it fails, and what to do instead — then clear steps.

02 • WRITE

Right after each teaching block you'll find a **Print & Fill worksheet** with lined fields. Fill it before you move on.

03 • BRIEF

Transfer your answers into the Appendix Positioning Brief. Keep that one page visible while you build or brief anyone else.

The real problem

You refreshed the analytics at 2 a.m. and stared at the numbers.

Pretty site. Empty form. Zero sales.

The problem wasn't the design. You built before you had anything to sell — not before you had a product, before you had a *position*. A clear answer to who this is for, what problem it solves, and why a stranger should hand you money instead of closing the tab.

Design can be fixed in an afternoon. A missing brief costs you months of rewrite loops, revision calls, and the quiet dread of a site that looks fine and does nothing.

The stall gets sold to you as "you just need a professional site." That is not the fix. Clarity is the fix.

82%

NFIB 2025 — members with a website (n=521)

19%

of those with a site accepted payments through it

That gap does not close with a better color palette. It closes before you touch a builder.

This is not laziness that got you here. Nobody hands you a brief before they hand you a builder login. Now you'll write one.

I build and I coach. The process here is the same one behind live products I've shipped.

Who Exactly Is This For?

Name one person you can find ten of.

WHAT MOST PEOPLE DO

They write "SMEs," "entrepreneurs," or "anyone who wants quality." They mean well. They're trying not to leave money on the table by narrowing too soon.

What they get is a site that speaks to everyone and reaches no one. Vague copy. A hero section that could belong to any of a thousand competitors. A value proposition that sounds like a mission statement from a company that doesn't exist yet.

WHY IT FAILS

A website is not a billboard on a highway. It is a conversation. Conversations require a specific person on the other end. When you write for everyone, you write with the warmth and specificity of a terms-of-service agreement.

DO THIS INSTEAD

Name one person. Not a demographic. A person. Give them a job title, a situation, a specific frustration. Then ask: can I find ten of these people in a week? Not a thousand. Ten. If you can find ten, you have a real audience. If you can't, you have a category.

STEPS

Think of the best customer you've served — or the one you most want to serve.

Write down what they do for work or what situation they're in right now.

Write down what they're trying to accomplish.

Write down what keeps failing when they try to do it without you.

Read it back. If it could describe fifty different types of people, narrow it.

Mistakes to avoid

"SMEs" is not an answer. It is a census category.

"Everyone online" means your site will be optimized for no one in particular.

"People who want quality" describes a preference, not a person.

If your answer could appear on a competitor's site without changing a word, it is not specific enough. Go again.

Q1 — Write it down

Name one person you can find ten of. Fill every line.

01

PRINT & FILL • WORKSHEET

Who exactly is this for?

JOB / SITUATION

WHAT THEY'RE TRYING TO DO

WHAT KEEPS FAILING

Write by hand. If it could sit on a competitor site unchanged — go again.

What Problem Do You Own?

One problem. Their words. Not your features.

WHAT MOST PEOPLE DO

They list what they offer. Five services. Three product lines. A suite of solutions. They describe their capabilities in the language of a company brochure and call it positioning.

The site reads like a menu with no prices and no reason to order.

WHY IT FAILS

Your visitor does not arrive thinking about your features. They arrive thinking about their problem. If your site does not speak to that problem — in the words they actually use when they're frustrated, not the words you use in internal meetings — they leave. Fast.

Owning five problems is the same as owning none. You become a generalist. Generalists compete on price. That is a race you do not want to run.

DO THIS INSTEAD

Pick one problem. The problem your best customer was already paying attention to — or already paying someone else to solve — before they found you. Describe it in their language. Not "inefficient workflow management." Whatever they say to a colleague at the end of a bad day.

STEPS

Write down the problem your customer has before they meet you.

Write it the way they would say it out loud — frustrated, plain, direct.

Write down what it costs them to leave that problem unsolved. Time, money, reputation, sleep. Be specific.

Check: is this one problem, or did you sneak in three? Cut until it's one.

Mistakes to avoid

Listing features is not naming a problem. "We offer end-to-end solutions" tells them nothing about what hurts.

Owning five problems signals that you haven't decided what you're actually for.

Using your internal language instead of theirs creates distance exactly where you need trust.

Q2 — Write it down

One problem. Their words. Not your features.

02

PRINT & FILL • WORKSHEET

What problem do you own?

PROBLEM IN THEIR WORDS

WHAT IT COSTS TO LEAVE IT UNSOLVED

Write by hand. If it could sit on a competitor site unchanged — go again.

What's the offer in one line?

Clarity is the first job of your website.

Most founders cannot say what they sell in one breath. They list. They hedge. They write a homepage that reads like a brochure for a company that does everything for everyone — which means it does nothing for anyone.

WHAT MOST PEOPLE DO

They paste their service menu onto the homepage. Consulting. Strategy. Workshops. Done-for-you. Done-with-you. Retainers. One-off projects. Twelve line items, zero hierarchy. The visitor reads it and thinks: *okay, but what do you actually do for me?* Then they leave.

WHY IT FAILS

A menu is not an offer. A menu is a list of possibilities. Possibilities do not convert. Specificity converts. Twelve services make the question harder to answer, not easier.

DO THIS INSTEAD

Pick the one offer closest to money right now. Not your dream offer. Your entry offer — the thing someone can say yes to this week. Then write the line:

I help [who] get [result] through [mechanism].

One sentence. If you cannot write it in one sentence, you do not have an offer yet. You have a collection of ideas.

When I built handmework.com, the offer had to be immediate and obvious — here is the product, here is what it does, here is how you get it. No ambiguity.

STEPS

Write your one-line offer using the formula above.

Read it aloud. If you stumble, rewrite it.

Ask someone outside your industry to repeat back what you do. If they cannot, the line is not clear yet.

Remove every service from your homepage that is not that offer.

Mistakes

Listing every service you have ever delivered

Writing the offer for your ego instead of their problem

Treating "we do strategy, execution, and consulting" as a sentence

Skipping the entry offer because the dream offer sounds more impressive

Q3 — Write it down

One line. Entry offer. Dream offer.



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What's the offer in one line?

MY OFFER IN ONE LINE

I help ____ get ____ through ____.

ENTRY OFFER (WHAT THEY BUY FIRST)

DREAM OFFER (WHAT THEY BUY EVENTUALLY)

Write by hand. If it could sit on a competitor site unchanged — go again.

What makes you different from the familiar option?

Not competitors — what your prospect is doing right now.

WHAT MOST PEOPLE DO

They write "we deliver quality work with passion and cutting-edge AI solutions at an affordable price." That sentence says nothing. Every competitor wrote the same sentence.

WHY IT FAILS

"Better" is not a position. Your prospect is not comparing you to another vendor. They are comparing you to their current default — a DIY builder, an abandoned brochure site, social posts, or doing nothing.

DO THIS INSTEAD

Unlike _____, I _____ because _____.

Not "unlike agencies, we care more." Try: *Unlike a DIY builder, I build the architecture around your checkout path, not around a template someone else designed for a different business.*

STEPS

Write down what your prospect is doing instead of hiring you.

Name the specific problem that approach creates for them.

Write one sentence: Unlike [familiar option], I [what you do] because [structural reason].

Test it. If someone could say the same sentence about a competitor, rewrite it.

Mistakes

- Using "quality," "passion," "affordable," or "AI" as differentiators
- Comparing yourself to competitors instead of the default behavior
- Writing a claim any vendor in your category could copy
- Confusing features with structural differences

Q4 — Write it down

Name the familiar option. Then the structural difference.



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Different from the familiar option

THEIR FAMILIAR OPTION

THE PROBLEM IT CREATES

MY DIFFERENTIATION SENTENCE

Unlike _____, I _____ because _____.

What's the ONE action the site must drive?

One. Not five. Not three with a "primary" buried in the middle.

WHAT MOST PEOPLE DO

They put a contact form, a newsletter signup, a social follow button, a "learn more" link, a download, and a booking widget on the same page. Then they wonder why no one does anything.

WHY IT FAILS

Every additional action you ask for reduces the chance they take any action at all. When the path forks, people pause. When people pause on a website, they leave. "Learn more" is not a goal. It is a delay.

DO THIS INSTEAD

Pick one action. Call, checkout, book, WhatsApp — one. Then design every page around making that action the obvious next step. Decide what happens after they take it.

When I built elenvara.com, the path was singular: land, understand, buy. No detours.

Baymard Institute meta-analysis of 50 studies: average documented cart abandonment **70.22%** (lists page updated 2025-09-22). Among non-browsing abandon reasons, extra costs — shipping, tax, fees — account for **40%** of exits. That is damage after the cart. Every competing button on the page is friction before it.

STEPS

Write down every CTA currently on your site.

Cross out every one that is not the primary action.

Define what happens immediately after they take the primary action.

Make that sequence visible to the visitor before they click.

Mistakes

Five competing buttons at equal visual weight

"Learn more" as the destination

No defined sequence after the action

Hiding the primary CTA below the fold while leading with navigation

Q5 — Write it down

One primary action. One sequence after.

05

PRINT & FILL · WORKSHEET

ONE action the site must drive

PRIMARY ACTION

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THEY TAKE IT

EVERY OTHER CTA I AM REMOVING

Write by hand. If it could sit on a competitor site unchanged — go again.

What proof do you already have?

You don't need a polished case study deck. You need evidence.

The kind a skeptical stranger can look at and think, *someone actually did this*. That's it.

Even ugly proof counts. A screenshot of a live site. A photo of the product in someone's hands. A short message from a client that says "this worked." None of that requires a testimonial video with cinematic lighting.

A photo of the work beats a paragraph of adjectives every time. Showing wins.

LIVE PROCESS PROOF

handmework.com — a live product, built from the ground up.

elenvara.com — another live product. Not a concept. Not a mockup.

These aren't promises. They're evidence of a process that produces real things.

MISTAKES

Waiting for perfect. They want the full case study, the revenue graph, the glowing name. So they wait. And while they wait, their site sits there with nothing.

Inventing numbers. Don't. A fabricated result poisons everything around it. If you get caught — and you will — no real proof you ever show will be trusted again.

Proof Inventory

Go through what you actually have. Rank it honestly. Write your notes in the blank column.

06

PRINT & FILL • PROOF TABLE

PROOF TYPE	STRENGTH	MY NOTES / URL / QUOTE
Live URL of completed work	Strong	
Process photo / screenshot	Strong	
Short written testimonial (even informal)	Strong	
Before-and-after of the work itself	Usable	
Positive email or DM (with permission)	Usable	
Your own documented process or method	Usable	
Formal case study with metrics	Later	
Video testimonial	Later	

Start with what's in the Strong and Usable columns. Build from there.

What should you build first?

Not everything. Not yet.

Founders with no site want a full site immediately. Founders with a broken site want to rebuild the whole thing. Both impulses are wrong.

You need the minimum that lets a qualified stranger go from curious to convinced to contacting you. Four pages. Maybe five.

BUILD THIS MONTH

Home — who you help, what you do, one clear next step.

About / Proof — your story, your credentials, your evidence. Not a biography. A case for why you.

Offer or Shop path — what they can buy, book, or explore. One path. Not six.

Contact or Book — one form. One calendar link. No maze.

PARK UNTIL LATER

The blog with twelve categories.

The animated hero section that takes four seconds to load.

The twelve service pages for services you haven't sold yet.

The podcast page.

The resources tab with nothing in it.

Later is not never. Later is when the core is working.

The mistake that kills momentum

Rebuilding everything when one stage is broken. If people land and don't click through, fix Home. If they click but don't contact, fix Offer. If they reach out but don't convert, that's a sales conversation problem — not a website problem. Diagnose the broken stage. Fix that stage.

Build Plan

Fill this in before you talk to anyone about design or development.



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What should you build first?

MUST-HAVE PAGES THIS MONTH

1.

2.

3.

4.

PARKED UNTIL LATER

Write by hand. If it could sit on a competitor site unchanged — go again.

Your one-page brief — and what you do with it

You now have a one-page brief. Not a presentation. Not a strategy document. One page. The Appendix is the template. Fill it out. By hand if you have to.

That brief does one thing: it lets you walk into a conversation with a designer or developer and give direction instead of guessing out loud. Builders build what they're told. If you don't tell them clearly, they fill the gaps with their own assumptions. You pay for those assumptions.

So. Do this now.

Here's how I can help:

NO. 1

Brand Demo Sprint

A short, paid engagement. You see the work before you commit to anything larger. You decide with your eyes open, not on faith.

→ cephastope.com

NO. 2

Brand Positioning Intensive

Lock in who you are and who you're for before a dollar goes to pages. Soft positioning means everything built on top of it is soft.

NO. 3

All-Way-In Brand Package

The digital foundation built, and the reasoning behind it transferred. For founders who want the work done and want to understand what was done and why.

"I'll think about it" is already the most expensive line in this business. Every week the site stays broken, or unbuilt, or unclear, is a week of traffic that leaves without converting.

Not typical. Not a promise. If we are not a fit, I will say so.

Smaller ask: send me your one-line offer — the answer to Question 3 — at cephas@cephastope.com.

One line. That single reply tells me more about where you are than a thirty-minute call.

One-Page Positioning Brief

Print this. Fill it by hand if you have to. Keep it visible.

WHO (FIND 10 OF THEM)

PROBLEM THEY ALREADY FEEL

OFFER IN ONE LINE

UNLIKE _____ BECAUSE _____

ONE SITE ACTION + WHAT HAPPENS AFTER

PROOF I ALREADY HAVE

BUILD FIRST (THIS MONTH)

PARK

CEPHAS TOPE

THE ALL-WAY-IN APPROACH

Build the foundation. Own the position.

I build and I coach — so a product or idea
becomes a fully positioned unique brand.

cephas@cephastope.com

Proof sites: handmework.com · elenvara.com

BOOK A DISCOVERY CALL