EVIDENCE-GRADE GTM INSIGHT FOR FOUNDER-LED B2B

The Sagentix Signal

ISSUE #2 · 2026-05-26 · VALUE PROPOSITION

Your value proposition dies when three rivals say the same thing

Canada's management, scientific, and technical consulting sector holds 131,671 firms. Of those, 106,128 have zero employees, and 81.6% of the ones that do employ people are micro-shops under five people (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2025). Your buyer is staring at a wall of look-alikes, and cannot tell you apart.

The conventional read is that this is a branding problem. It is not. A B2B buying committee now reaches a decision through six to ten stakeholders, each arriving at the table with four to five independent pieces of information (Gartner, 2025a). They are not short on data. They are short on a way to separate you from everyone else who sounds like you. Gartner's 2025 sales survey found that 74% of B2B buyer teams demonstrate "unhealthy conflict" during the decision process (Gartner, 2025). That conflict is not a buying problem. It is a value proposition problem. When every vendor describes itself as "AI-powered, real-time, proactive, comprehensive," the buyer's brain flattens the category into one blurred logo.

The sharper question is not "how do we say our features better?" It is: what fact can a prospect verify in 30 seconds that no rival can claim with a straight face? The answer determines whether your value proposition is load-bearing or decorative. Most teams never ask it, and ship another round of homepage copy instead.

Feature parity is a messaging symptom, not a product cause

When every vendor in a category uses the same vocabulary, the vocabulary stops doing work. A buyer evaluating five vendors who all claim "AI-powered proactive detection" defaults to brand recognition, price, or a prior relationship. None of those three favor a growth-stage challenger.

That 74% unhealthy-conflict figure maps directly onto interchangeable messaging: when every claim reads the same, procurement, finance, and the technical evaluator each fill in their own meaning, and the committee splinters.

The instinct to fix this by promising a better experience is itself a trap. A 2025 study in the *Journal of Business Research* shows B2B firms differentiate not by "more experience for everyone" but by matching one of three value propositions to the customer's real goal — relieving (efficiency), enabling (which drives organizational differentiation), or enriching (relationship) (Wirtz et al., 2025). A specific job, served better than anyone else can prove, is the differentiator.

So the fix is structural, not cosmetic. A value proposition is only as strong as the specific, verifiable fact a buyer can test in under a minute. "We reduce onboarding from 90 days to 14, proven on three named reference customers" is a value proposition. "Our platform accelerates customer time-to-value" is wall decoration. The first can be checked against a signed reference. The second dissolves on contact with the next vendor's deck. A differentiator that survives a reference call is real. A differentiator that only survives inside your own marketing brief is a hypothesis in costume.

> **DECISION RULE:**
>
> For every claim on your homepage, write the exact sentence a reference customer would repeat back. If the customer cannot say it in 12 words, rewrite it.

Jobs-to-be-Done is an evidence protocol, not a vocabulary

Most teams have adopted jobs to be done as a buzzword, not a method. A jobs-to-be-done statement is not "our buyer wants better visibility." It is: when [trigger], the buyer needs to [specific job], so they can [measurable outcome], without [specific failure mode]. The unit of analysis is the job, not the buyer.

Clayton Christensen's formulation argued that a buyer hires a product to make progress on a specific functional, emotional, and social job blocked by a specific trigger. The payoff is concrete: when one firm redesigned around the real job its buyer was hiring for rather than the product's features, it raised prices by \$3,500 and grew 25% in a year its industry fell 49% (Christensen et al., 2016). The protocol has four anchors: trigger, job, outcome, and hiring criteria. Most B2B teams build the map with the job and skip the trigger. Without the trigger you cannot predict pipeline velocity, because urgency comes from the trigger, not the job. A buyer who wants a better outcome will wait six months. A buyer with a board meeting in 30 days signs next week.

The Value Proposition Canvas makes the same point operational: you map a separate profile of jobs, pains, and gains for each role on the buying committee, not one generic buyer (Osterwalder et al., 2014). Map each differentiator (D1 through D12, if you use a structured stack) against a specific job, a specific trigger, and a specific measurable outcome. Columns that stay empty are not pending work. They are evidence that the differentiator was decorative from the start.

Proof of value is built before the first call, not during it

Proof-of-value architecture is the connective tissue between your value proposition canvas and your sales conversation. It is the asset a buyer can hand to a skeptical CFO without editing. Sagentix's methodology treats proof of value as a pre-built artifact per differentiator, not a deliverable assembled mid-pipeline (Sagentix GTM Methodology, 2026).

The reason this matters is a pattern we see repeat across our engagement portfolio. Across founder-led B2B GTM engagements, the most *differentiating* claims tend to carry the least buyer-ready proof, while the best-evidenced claims are often mere table stakes. When we inventory a founder's differentiators — typically around a dozen — a recurring share map to no proof asset at the evidence tier the buyer actually scores on, and a meaningful fraction of the rest turn out to be qualifiers the buyer treats as gates to clear rather than reasons to choose. The proposition rarely fails because the differentiators are not real. It fails because the strongest ones are not yet provable in the buyer's own scoring language, so the durable fix is to separate qualifiers from tiebreakers and sequence a prioritized proof backlog that lifts the sharpest claims to a buyer-acceptable evidence tier before outreach begins (Sagentix Cross-Engagement Benchmark, 2026).

A proof-of-value asset answers three questions on one page: what outcome did a comparable buyer achieve, what was measured, and what is the verifiable source. No "up to." No "as much as." A named use case, a signed metric, a timestamp. If your team cannot produce this asset for your top three differentiators this week, those differentiators are placeholders waiting for a buyer to test them.

> **DECISION RULE:**
>
> Grade each differentiator before your next pipeline review: verifiable in 30 seconds (A), verifiable via reference call (B), verifiable only after a six-week pilot (C). Any C-grade claim stays out of the deck until it earns a B.

Do this this week: pull your homepage, one-pager, and last three decks, and sort every claim into three columns — verifiable in 30 seconds, verifiable by reference call, or unverifiable. If the unverifiable column is longest, your value proposition is failing the buyer's first filter before your sales team enters the room. A differentiator without an outcome is a placeholder; a value proposition without a test is decoration. Fix the verifiability layer first, and the messaging follows.

The Second Signal

Jobs-to-be-Done maps the committee, not the champion

The most common misuse of jobs to be done is to treat it as a rephrasing exercise. A team takes its existing feature list, prepends "our buyer needs to," and declares the result a jobs-to-be-done map. That is not discovery. That is a feature list with a new label. The buyer pain you surface that way will belong to your champion and no one else in the room.

Buyer-committee data sharpens the problem. Each of those six-to-ten stakeholders increasingly weights independent, third-party research over the vendor's own material (Gartner, 2023). Each is hiring the product for a different job and weighing a different gain. The procurement officer's problem statement is not the champion's. The finance approver's gain metric is not the technical evaluator's. A value proposition that speaks to one job, usually the champion's, collapses the moment procurement, finance, or the technical reviewer asks their own question. That is where the 74% conflict lives.

The remedy is not a longer messaging deck. It is a differentiator-to-job matrix: every differentiator mapped to the stakeholder whose job it serves, with a named outcome, a named failure mode, and a named proof asset. Gartner's own model of the buying journey lists six jobs a committee works through in parallel, each tied to a distinct problem statement and information need (Gartner, 2025a). When the finance approver asks "why this vendor?" the answer is not your homepage headline. It is the row of the matrix that maps your differentiator to their job. Without that matrix, your value proposition works for the champion and fails the committee. The deal stalls not because the product is weaker, but because the canvas was mapped for one person in a room of eight.

From the Field

Four dispatches reinforce one thesis: a value proposition survives only when the evidence behind it is specific, named, and outcome-linked.

- **We Have the Best Product. We Just Can't Explain Why.** A founder with measurably better technical performance was losing five of seven competitive deals because his team described the product with the exact vocabulary his top four rivals used verbatim. The piece unpacks why Corporate Visions' "telling details" research, grounded in specific verifiable facts, beats every flavor of parity messaging in tested buyer studies. Read it if your last three win/loss interviews surfaced the phrase "they all sound the same."
- **How Technical Credibility Wins Complex B2B Deals** The argument: professional credentials function as trust compression. A buyer filters a long list of generalist providers into a shortlist in under 30 seconds by scanning for domain proof the website cannot supply. The lesson for any founder-led category is that your value proposition competes with a 30-second credibility filter before the buyer reads a word of your copy. Prose alone cannot win that filter.
- **727+ Consulting IP Artifacts: What That Actually Means** Most firms have a shared drive. A methodology platform has discrete, reusable artifacts, each with defined inputs, outputs, quality checks, and provenance. The piece details why a value proposition built from tested components (job-to-justifier bridges, differentiator stacks, value proposition canvas workflows) survives diligence, while one assembled from a whiteboard session does not. Structural rigor beats eloquence at the procurement table.
- **From Market Intelligence to Evidence Discipline: The 10 Phases of a Complete GTM Strategy** A complete go-to-market build is a 10-phase system where each phase feeds the next. Phase 02 (Value Proposition Design) uses a 12-differentiator stack, jobs-to-be-done mapping, and a value proposition canvas anchored in Phase 01 market evidence. The piece is the clearest explanation of why founders who skip to messaging without market intelligence produce a proposition that fails the committee's first question.

The same pattern is now being accelerated by a force outside the buying room.

What We're Watching

The value-proposition signal worth tracking is what AI comparison tools do to parity claims. As answer-engines summarize and rank vendors side by side, generic language collapses into one indistinguishable row: The Economist reports answer-engines absorbing the very queries that once sent buyers to compare sources directly (The Economist, 2025). The same flattening is coming for any value proposition a competitor, or a model, can restate in one line. If a buyer can get your pitch summarized alongside four rivals in a single AI-generated comparison, "AI-powered, real-time, comprehensive" is now a liability, not a claim, because the model repeats it for everyone.

Set against a category with 131,671 firms and no dominant incumbent (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2025), the implication is direct. The value propositions that hold their premium are the ones an answer-engine cannot flatten: a named outcome, a signed metric, a proof asset tied to a specific job. Everything a model can paraphrase without loss is already priced to zero. The founders who move their proof into verifiable form buy pipeline; the ones who wait buy a summary that reads exactly like everyone else's.

Work With Us

If every line on your homepage could appear on three competitor websites, the repair starts upstream of copy. Phase 1 Market Intelligence is a 5-to-7-day engagement at CA\$4,500 that produces the evidence layer your value proposition has to stand on, with a money-back guarantee if the evidence does not hold. Reply "Phase 1" or book at sagentix.ca/contact.

— Stephane Raby CMC · CISSP · P.Eng. · 25+ Years · Executive MBA

References

- Christensen, C. M., Hall, T., Dillon, K., & Duncan, D. S. (2016, September–October). Know your customers' "jobs to be done." *Harvard Business Review, 94*(9), 54–62. https://hbr.org/2016/09/know-your-customers-jobs-to-be-done
- Gartner. (2023, June 8). *Gartner marketing survey finds B2B buyers value third-party interactions more than digital supplier interactions* [Press release]. Gartner, Inc. https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2023-06-08-gartner-marketing-survey-finds-b2b-buyers-value-third-party-interactions-more-than-digital-supplier-interactions

- Gartner. (2025). *Gartner sales survey finds 74% of B2B buyer teams demonstrate "unhealthy conflict" during the decision process* [Press release]. Gartner, Inc. https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2025-05-07-gartner-sales-survey-finds-74-percent-of-b2b-buyer-teams-demonstrate-unhealthy-conflict-during-the-decision-process
- Gartner. (2025a). *The B2B buying journey: Key stages and how to optimize them*. Gartner, Inc. https://www.gartner.com/en/sales/insights/b2b-buying-journey
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. (2025). *Management, scientific and technical consulting services (NAICS 5416): Businesses* [Canadian Industry Statistics; data source: Statistics Canada]. Government of Canada. https://ised-isde.canada.ca/app/ixb/cis/businesses-entreprises/5416
- Osterwalder, A., Pigneur, Y., Bernarda, G., & Smith, A. (2014). *Value proposition design: How to create products and services customers want*. Wiley. https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Value+Proposition+Design%3A+How+to+Create+Products+and+Services+Customers+Want-p-9781118968055
- Sagentix Cross-Engagement Benchmark. (2026). *Value proposition proof-asset patterns across founder-led B2B engagements* [Anonymized cross-engagement analysis]. Sagentix Advisors.
- Sagentix GTM Methodology. (2026). *Evidence-first positioning framework* [Internal methodology]. Sagentix Advisors.
- The Economist. (2025, July 17). *To survive the AI age, the web needs a new business model*. The Economist. https://www.economist.com/leaders/2025/07/17/to-survive-the-ai-age-the-web-needs-a-new-business-model
- Wirtz, J., Kowalkowski, C., Jaakkola, E., Holmlund, M., Ulaga, W., & Ahmed, T. (2025). Customer experience management in B2B markets: CXM value propositions and archetypical CXM strategies. *Journal of Business Research, 189*, 115165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.115165