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How to build a message customers actually want to hear

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The Seven-Step Client-Centric Proposition

Sequence **matters**. Fail to go in order, and persuasion weakens.

Story pitch

Most companies still sell the wrong way.

They start with *We do this. We're great at that.*

But customers don't care what you do. They care about what they can **become** with your help.

Twenty-five years ago, I built product-marketing frameworks based on the logic of Roman rhetoric.

Today, consulting experts teach the same principle. Stop the “we-we-we show.” Empathy first. Ego last.

Here's a modern synthesis that turns any service or packaged offer into a clear, credible, and persuasive story.

This is not a random checklist.

The steps follow the order in which people actually form decisions.

First comes recognition. Then understanding.

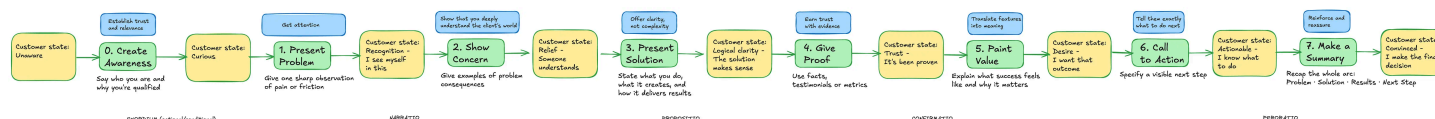
Only after that does proof matter. Value comes next.

Action and commitment come last.

Change the order, and persuasion weakens or collapses.

It is well-proven for

- professional services, such as consulting
- digital service products, such as IT and SaaS
- financial service products, such as leasing
- goods and physical products
- complex solutions, like telecom networks or heavy vehicle fleets.



The seven steps

0. Introduction. Exordium

Purpose: Establish trust and relevance.

In a short pitch, skip it. It is implicit.

In a longer format, keep it minimal.

Say who you are and *why* you're qualified to speak.

Example:

"I help insurance firms turn scattered process data into measurable efficiency gains."

Tip for a pitch deck or landing page: Use a strong headline image. Your introduction can be just the title, a one-liner, and a visual cue.

Before people listen to *what* you say, they subconsciously assess *who* is speaking and *why it matters to them*.

This step establishes credibility and context, even when it is implicit.

1. Customer problem. Narratio (first part, hook)

Purpose: Get attention.

Start with one sharp observation of pain or friction.

Example:

“Our customers usually struggle with late deliveries.”

Keep it short. One paragraph or one slide.

Recognition creates attention.

People engage when they recognize themselves in a situation.

Without this step, the audience has no reason to keep listening.

2. Customer concerns. Narratio (last part, depth)

Purpose: Show that you deeply understand the client's world.

Give examples of the consequences of the problem.

“Retail chains often misjudge daily demand, leading to write-offs, empty shelves, and frustrated customers.”

Keep it short. One paragraph or one slide.

Empathy creates relief.

Stating the problem creates attention.

Explaining its consequences creates trust.

Many messages fail because they stop at recognition and never reach empathy.

3. Your solution. Proposition

Purpose: Offer clarity, not complexity.

State what you do, what it creates, and how it delivers results.

“We integrate live inventory data with predictive models that forecast sales with 90 percent accuracy.”

If the solution is technical, add a short “How it works” section. No more than eight sentences.

No buzzwords. No mystery.

Only after the audience feels understood are they ready to hear a solution.

Presenting a solution too early triggers resistance rather than interest.

4. Proof. Confirmatio (first part, logos)

Purpose: Earn trust with evidence.

Use facts, numbers, and short case examples.

“A European supermarket chain cut stockouts by 12 percent within six months.”

Include testimonials or metrics, not adjectives.

Proof answers a rational question: *Is this actually true?*

Without proof, even a good solution sounds like opinion or marketing.

5. Value. Confirmatio (last part, pathos)

Purpose: Translate features into meaning.

Explain what success *feels like* and why it matters.

“You spend less time firefighting and more time optimizing profit margins.”

This is your value painting.

It turns logic into desire.

Proof establishes credibility.

Value creates motivation.

Many offers stop after proof and then wonder why customers do not act.

6. Action. Peroratio (first part, call)

Purpose: Tell the customer exactly what to do next.

“Book a 30-minute diagnostic.”

“Start a pilot project.”

“Download the assessment template.”

Be specific. Every offer needs a visible next step.

Even convinced customers hesitate when the next step is unclear.

Clarity reduces friction and turns intent into movement.

7. Summary. Peroratio (last part, closure)

Purpose: Reinforce and reassure.

Recap the whole arc. Problem · Solution · Results · Next Step.

Use one short paragraph, a facts box, or a checklist.

If the reader is not yet convinced, this is where the final decision is made.

Final decisions are rarely made at the emotional peak.

They are made during reflection.

This step reinforces confidence and reduces perceived risk.

A note for complex or technical offers

To reach different learning styles and personality types, especially technical and process-oriented audiences, steps 3–5 should answer the following questions:

Why should I buy this product?

For what purpose should I buy it? What are the beneficiary features, practical advantages, and concrete results it creates?

How does the product work? How does it deliver its results?

How else could I use this product? Consider alternative or innovative use cases.

Some additional tips

If you have a long presentation with several products, repeat steps 1–5 for each item.

Many people forget steps 5 and 6. That is where the sale happens, so they are essential.

Appropriate and well-chosen images, such as photographs or simple illustrations, can be emotionally crucial for the message to land.

Why it works

This seven-step arc follows the **cognitive and emotional journey of persuasion** discovered 2,000 years ago and is repeatedly confirmed in modern consulting psychology.

1. *Recognition*. I see myself in this.
2. *Relief*. Someone understands.
3. *Logic*. The solution makes sense.
4. *Trust*. It's been proven.
5. *Desire*. I want that outcome.

6. *Action*. I know what to do.

7. *Commitment*. I make the final decision.

Skip any step, and persuasion collapses.

Empathy → Clarity → Proof → Value → Action → Commitment

When to use it

- ✓ Consulting and professional service offers
- ✓ SaaS and B2B solution pages
- ✓ Client presentation decks
- ✓ One-page sales sheets
- ✓ Product marketing material
- ✓ Customer- and sales-focused product descriptions
- ✓ Websites for sole proprietors
- ✓ Video or TV commercials, where the same emotional flow applies

Avoid it only in purely technical documentation, where neutrality outweighs persuasion.

Final thought

Marketing has not changed much in 2,000 years. Only the tools have.
What matters is sequence.

Say the right things, in the right order, and your message sells itself.

About the author

Gunnar Östberg is a management and IT consultant and writer focused on business process design, AI strategy, and organizational transformation. He draws on 40 years of experience bridging engineering, consulting, and digital innovation.

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