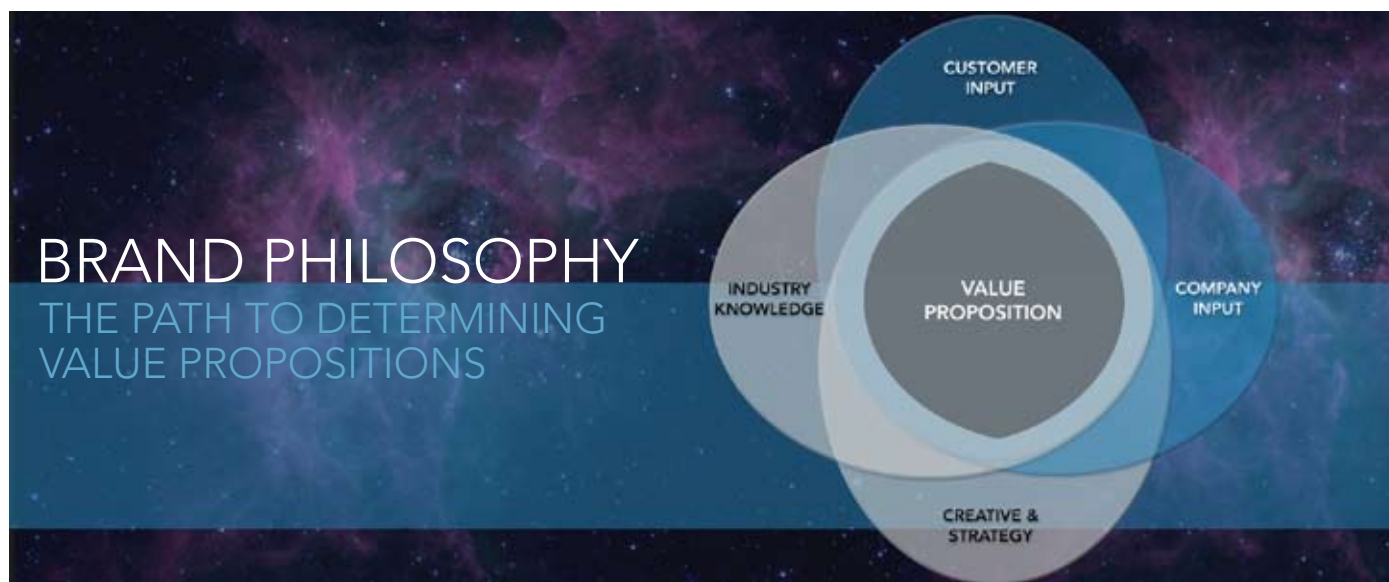


The Path To Determining Value Propositions

A WHITEPAPER BY: [GREG TOZIAN](#), CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER AND [ARVE OVERLAND](#), CEO/CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER



“Dare to stand out. You must gather a crowd to deliver a message. Speak. Have one identity, but be different. Be consistently recognized as one brand. Your brand is a company asset. If you don’t define your brand image somebody else will do it for you. Know your brand and its value. Protect, amplify and communicate your brand. Align everything in relation to your brand to make it stronger. To lead you must be different. Inspire and start trends. Revolutionize your industry. Brands live or die on image.”

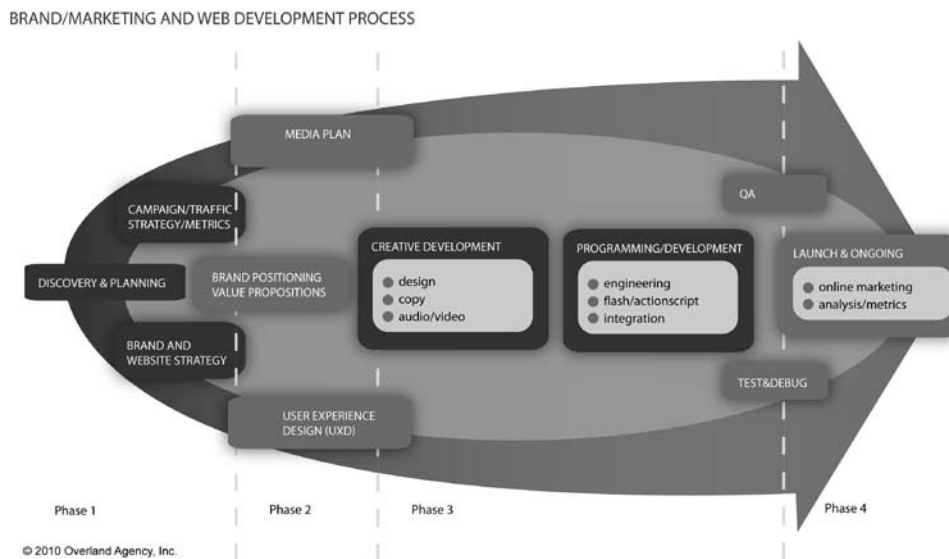
(from the Overland Agency Official Brand Philosophy)

Since 2001, The Overland Agency has launched well over 100 brand - and web-related initiatives focused on revitalizing and strengthening companies, helping them sell more of their services and products, and helping them meet their growth goals.

Our agency was founded on the principle that there must be a complete integration of the brand identity — the voice of the company, and accurately executed value propositions — and the corporate Internet presence.

We have seen firsthand, repeatedly, that companies with the vision to successfully wed their brand inexorably with a truly effective online marketing strategy enjoy distinct advantages that usually take the form of higher customer conversion rates, lead generation and better returns on investment.

Part of the equation, in a brand project, web project, or combined brand/web initiative is to determine accurate value propositions as part of what we call the Discovery and User Experience Phases of our proven Brand, Marketing and Web Development Process [Fig. 1].



In fact, the steps that we go through in crafting a truly effective brand positioning and value proposition creation exercise are virtually identical to the steps taken to create conversion-driving user experiences through information architecture, wireframes and user interface design for an optimal web presence. Additionally, this is the the path for creating a best-practices-marketing strategy that accurately articulates the value of the brand for target audiences and industries.

In all three instances, crafting value propositions with conversion driving proof points, designing an optimal commercial website, and creating a marketing strategy with an executable plan, we must understand:

- who the company is (the products and services/values and goals)
- what the company offers that others don't or can't
- which industries are targeted; what motivates them and what are their needs
- who are the accurate customer personas within those industries for the company's products and services
- what are each of these customers', potential customers', and web visitors' actual unmet wants and needs (real feedback from personas is required here)
- what tangible benefits/business results can your proposition claim that align precisely with the types of things your personas really want and need
- what competitors claim as their value propositions for the same personas
- how your value proposition can share your success stories with prospects to prove your claims
- what are your value proposition's differentiators vis-a-vis competitors
- how the value proposition arrived at can be creatively served to be optimally persuasive and drive action that is beneficial for the target and your company

Some value propositions properly take into account the needs of vendor partners and company employees, as well. Regardless, inherent in the amount of data that we outline above as things we must know to create sound value propositions are a multi-pronged approach to the Discovery Phase, aided by creative and strategic input in ideation/proposition creation.

Our Value Proposition Model

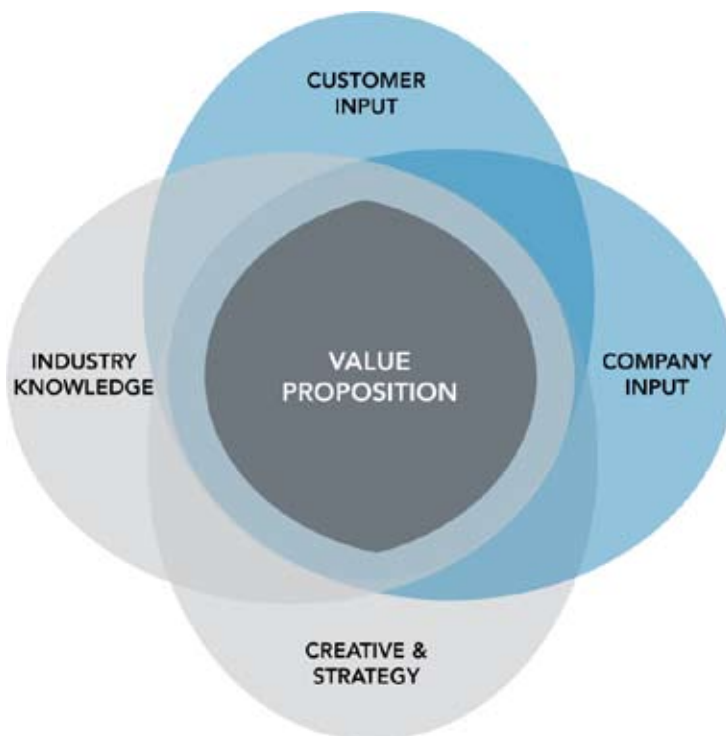


Fig. 2: In the diagram to the left, you can see that it is not enough for a company to have industry knowledge and input from customers as the catalyst for a company to extract a differentiating value proposition. To create value propositions that work — that will drive desired target behaviors — you must employ informed, creative strategies that add direction to the value proposition. In other words, without sufficient strategy behind the value proposition creation, the proposition is unlikely to drive the direction you want your business to take.

Creativity imbuing a sound strategy is the deciding factor between a truly differentiating, strong value proposition and a weak one.

On an additional note, while it's widely recognized that you cannot create effective value propositions without active input from customers and potential customers, we have also found that an objective, third party interviewer is more effective at eliciting actionable data from a customer interviewee than a company insider. Invariably, a disinterested questioner can both earn faster interviewee trust as a fact-finder, and avoid company-centric biases, in ferreting out customer perceptions and desires. (Of course, it is imperative that the questioner is thoroughly briefed on the above-bullet-pointed company-centric and industry information before interviewing customers and potentials.)

An additional nuance that must be observed in creating value propositions for companies that are in “complex” industries, selling often times to multiple business verticals, and multiple users, buyers, influencers and decision makers, is to properly segment the company’s propositions by these industries and their inherent personas.

Segmentation of Industries and Their Personas

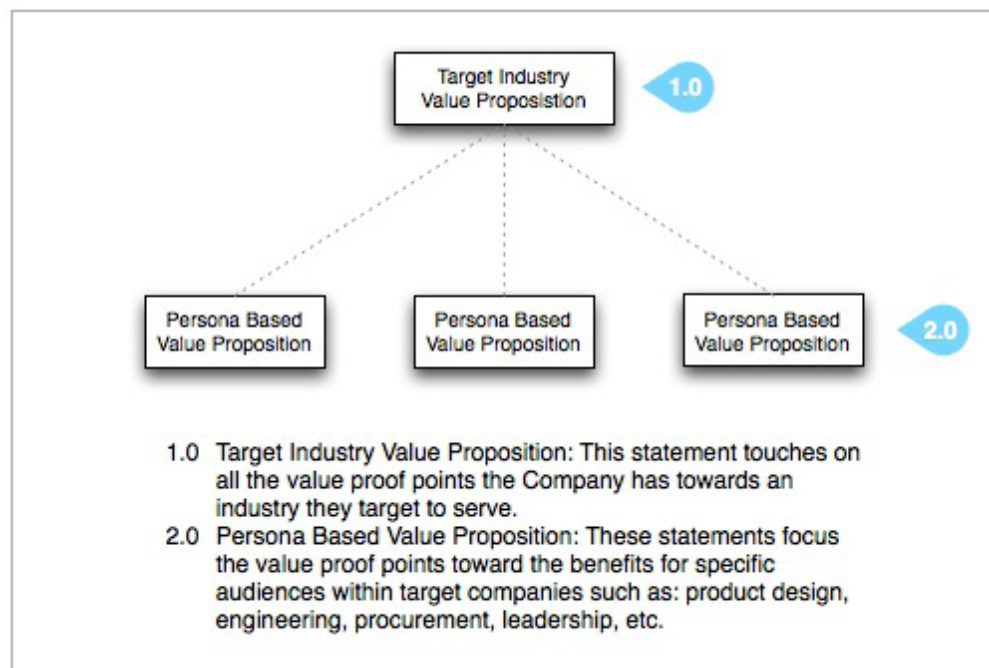


Fig. 3: In this diagram, each industry served by the company must be viewed as a unique target that is imbued with its own special wants/needs, and so, its own special value propositions which will offer demonstrable solutions for those needs. Additionally, within each industry, there are proof points that will resonate specifically with each of the personas within the identified industry, whether (as the diagram states) the person being proposed the value is a product designer, engineer, procurement professional, or executive decision maker.

The value of accurate interviews, and proper segmentation of industries and their ideal-persona targets is a strong directional focus for arriving at truly actionable value propositions. But, again, we stress that it is in the creative application of a sound strategy that is informed by the information extracted from the Discovery Process that ultimately differentiate strong value propositions from weak ones.

The benefits of strong, properly formulated value propositions — which subsequently underlie the strategic/creative creation, building, and launch of an optimal web presence are many, including:

- More, and higher quality leads
- Greater customer retention
- Increased market share in targeted market segments
- Greater revenues

These benefits for the company are logical, since they started as part of a value proposition creation exercise that looked hardest at what matters most in selling: not what your company needs to accomplish, but what your customers and potential customers need. That is the heart and soul of a strong value proposition.

About the Overland Agency

The Overland Agency is an award-winning Portland, Oregon-based brand marketing and interactive agency with deep capabilities in web design and development that combines high-level strategic consulting with smart, passionate creative execution. The agency serves as an online integrated marketing partner: an ad agency, web development shop, search-optimization consultancy, and brand specialists within one company. Clients include adidas, Mutual of Omaha Insurance, Extensis, Lightspeed Technologies, Stash Tea, and Volt Information Sciences. The agency also does pro bono work for such groups as the Oregon Council of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. [More information is available at www.overlandagency.com.](http://www.overlandagency.com)

About the Authors

Greg Tozian, VP Strategic Planning

Greg made the transition to advertising from international newspaper and magazine reporting in 1989. Since that time he has been the creative lead and senior writer on successful national and international campaigns for clients selling high-technology (hardware & software), fitness equipment and apparel, foreign and domestic automobiles, food and drink, insurance, cosmetics, and many other products and services. He joined the Overland Agency in its first year, 2001, and has focused since that time on interactive strategies. Greg has also written half a dozen books on subjects that include innovative business solutions, Fidel Castro's documentary photographers, fiction, religious architecture, Hawaiian shirts, and 20th Century popular music.

Arve Overland, CEO + Chief Creative Officer

Arve has been on the leading edge of the marketing industry's use of web technologies since the birth of businesses on the Internet. His double expertise (advertising/marketing strategies and interactive innovation) make him a frequent specialist-consultant to major corporations, even beyond our own strong regular client base. Arve's advertising industry experience includes serving national and international clients in such major industries as manufacturing, technology, financial services, and retail. He has a passion for brand building, marketing, and visual and user experience design. Arve writes with Greg a monthly column for the Portland Business Journal with executable advice for business' to improve their online performance. Away from work he prefers to spend time with his family and play team sports and music with friends.