FORTE PLAYBOOK

The Message-Market Fit System

It may not be a product problem. It may be a messaging problem, where you speak engineering and your buyers speak business outcomes.

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THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH

The vendor language trap

You say something that sounds impressive. The customer thinks: what does that even mean? You lose the deal and never find out why.

THE TEST

If your customer cannot repeat back what you do, in their own words, after reading your homepage, the messaging is not landing. Fix that before you conclude the product is the problem.

Four steps out of it

1. **Interview five recent customers**
   Thirty minutes each. Record them. You are collecting language, not validation.
2. **Extract their exact phrases**
   Transcribe, then highlight every phrase they used that you would not have written yourself.
3. **Build the translation table**
   Your language on the left, their language on the right, and where each one gets used.
4. **Audit everything**
   Homepage, LinkedIn bio, pitch deck, sales emails, case studies. Replace vendor language with customer language.

STEP 1

The five questions, asked exactly like this

1. What problem were you trying to solve when you found us?
2. How did you describe that problem to your own team?
3. What were you doing before us?
4. Why did you choose us specifically?
5. How would you describe us to a peer?

Question two is easy to skip. Keep it. How they described the problem internally is the language that has to appear in your outbound, because that is the language that got budget approved.

What comes back

Listen for answers like these. They are illustrations written for this guide, not quotes from real customers. **They knew our world inside out. These people have done this at scale before. The team understood our constraints immediately.** None of those are features. Each one is a reason to buy.

> DO NOT SKIP THE RECORDING
>
> You will not remember the phrasing, and the phrasing is the entire point. Paraphrasing a customer turns their language back into yours.

STEP 3

The translation table

Three columns. What you currently say, what the customer actually says, and where the customer version belongs. The rows are illustrations written for this guide, not real customer quotes.

Your language	Customer language	Where to use it
End-to-end platform	One supplier instead of three	Pitch deck
Modular architecture	You can start small and add later	Website
Continuous monitoring	You find out before it becomes a problem	Sales calls
Enterprise-grade	It will not fall over when you grow	Objection handling

The words that sound impressive and mean nothing

Comprehensive. End-to-end. Turnkey. Each one is a placeholder where a specific claim should be.

BRUTAL SPECIFICITY, TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

Before. We provide end-to-end solutions.

After. When you buy us you stop paying three separate suppliers to do one job.

Before. A comprehensive compliance solution.

After. We handle the three regulations your buyers get audited on, so you are not the reason a shipment gets held.

Five levels, five different messages

You cannot use the same message for someone who has never heard of your category and someone comparing you to two competitors.

Level	What they know	What to say	The ask
1. Unaware	Do not know they have the problem	Educate on the problem itself	Take the checklist
2. Problem aware	Feel it, do not know solutions exist	Introduce the category	See how others solved it
3. Solution aware	Researching options	Why your approach is different	Take a fifteen-minute diagnostic
4. Product aware	Comparing alternatives	Specific differentiation and proof	See pricing
5. Most aware	Ready, needs a reason to act now	Urgency and risk reversal	Book a demo and start

The content mapping exercise

Audit what you have already published against the five levels. As a rough starting heuristic, not a measured benchmark, aim for about **40% at levels 1 and 2**, **30% at level 3**, **20% at level 4** and **10% at level 5**.

If everything you publish sits at levels 3 and 4, nothing speaks to buyers who do not yet know they have the problem, and nothing gives a ready buyer a reason to act now.

Two checks you can run today

CHECK ONE

Read your homepage to someone outside your industry. If they cannot repeat what you do in one sentence, it is too complex.

CHECK TWO

Read your LinkedIn headline to a twelve-year-old. If they ask what that means, it is too jargony.

Six weeks, start to a first signal

Week	What happens
1	Interview five customers, record and transcribe
2	Extract phrases, build the translation table
3	Audit every marketing asset against it
4	Rewrite homepage, LinkedIn and pitch deck
5	Test the new messaging in ten outbound messages
6	Compare replies per message delivered, before against after, over equal windows

How to tell whether the new language is working

Check	What to look at
Reply rate	Replies per message delivered, old message against new, over equal windows and the same sender. Ten messages are a first read, not proof
Reply quality	Positive replies and booked calls, counted separately from all replies
Calls and replies	Whether prospects still ask what you do, or repeat the customer phrases from your translation table
Close rate	Over at least one full sales cycle, once enough deals have closed to compare

The bet is that the customer's words beat the vendor's. Check it on your own numbers. Write down the before numbers first and change one thing at a time. If the list, offer or sender changed too, the language is not the only possible cause. With a small sample or a long sales cycle, treat early results as a signal, not proof.

Stop trying to sound impressive. Start trying to be understood.

FORTE GROWTH

We build and run your go to market and marketing, from strategy to sales.

Positioning and messaging, the content engine, outbound infrastructure, CRM, automations and AI workflows, and the sales process. We build it, run it and keep improving it, then hand it to your team or keep running it fractionally. You own all of it.

Message-market fit is easy to leave until after the tooling and the list, but more tooling or volume only sends the same message to more people. Check the message first.

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