

Advantage Map: four decisions

MODEL

BUILT ON

Advantage Map

Blue Ocean Strategy (W. Chan Kim, R. Mauborgne)

Goal This template shows where your business looks the same as everyone else to a client. It helps you choose what to give up so you can give the client clearly more where it matters to them. You finish with one thing you stop doing and one move for 30 days.

In 15 minutes. (our estimate, not measured) To be honest: in 15 minutes you get a working decision based on hypotheses, not on conversations with clients. The three conversations of the full version take extra time, counted in days.

1. (2 min) Write what the client wants to get done, in their words (A). Choose one competitor, the most common.
2. (3 min) List five things the choice comes down to, the way a client would say them. Price comes first (B).
3. (4 min) Rate the competitor and yourself today from 1 to 5. For each rating, write where it comes from, or "hypothesis" (B).
4. (3 min) Choose one "remove" and one "raise" or "create." Write which "remove" pays for the other (D).
5. (3 min) Write one line: "I decide that ... Who ... By when ... I will check ...", with one thing you stop doing (G). Add: "this is a hypothesis, I will test it in three conversations."

Instructions (full version) (estimate: about 50 minutes at your desk, not measured; the three conversations in step 5 take extra time)

1. Write down what the client wants to get done, in their words. Choose three alternatives: the most common competitor, another way to get the same thing, and "they do it themselves or do nothing".
2. List 8 things the choice comes down to, the way a client would say them. Price always comes first.
3. Rate each alternative and yourself from 1 to 5 (for price, 5 means the most expensive). For each rating, note where it comes from; with no source, write "hypothesis".
4. Fill in the four decisions. Every "raise" and "create" must name the "remove" or "reduce" that pays for it. Set the target rating and check the three tests.
5. Before you change anything, talk to three people: a client, someone who didn't buy, and someone who does it themselves. Ask about their last real decision, not their opinion.

Template fields

A. What the client wants to get done (in their words): _____

B. The map (ratings from 1 to 5)

Factor in the client's words	Competitor	Another way	DIY / nothing	Us today	Us, target	How I know
1. Price						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						

C. Reading (check what applies): ☐ I differ from one alternative by at most 1 point almost everywhere · ☐ I score high everywhere, but it doesn't show in the margin · ☐ I promise a lot on one thing and neglect what it depends on · ☐ the factor names are our jargon

D. Four decisions

REMOVE: what everyone offers and the client wouldn't notice	RAISE: where the client settles for a compromise (paid for by: ...)
REDUCE: what we give more of than the client uses	CREATE: what no one offers yet (paid for by: ...)

E. Three tests: ☐ focus: top rating on at most 3 factors · ☐ difference: at least 2 points apart from each alternative on at least 2 factors · ☐ a tagline of up to 12 words that is true today: _____

F. Three conversations: who (client / didn't buy / does it themselves), what it changed on the map: _____

G. Decision: we stop doing _____ from _____ · one move for 30 days _____ · who _____ · map review in 90 days: _____

Fictional example (the firm and the numbers are fictional, for this template)

An accounting firm, 9 people, working for small service businesses.

A. "I want peace of mind about taxes and to know how much I can pay myself."

Factor	Firm B	Online accounting	DIY + a friend	Us today	Us, target	How I know
1. Price	3	1	1	3	3	price lists
2. They reply fast	2	3	1	2	5	2 client complaints
3. I know what the price includes	2	4	5	2	5	hypothesis
4. Meetings at the office	4	1	1	4	1	our schedule
5. A thick report every month	4	2	1	4	2	Firm B's website
6. They warn me before I sign something	2	1	1	2	4	hypothesis
7. They remind me of deadlines	2	4	1	2	4	the online app
8. They help if there's an audit	4	1	1	4	4	contracts

C. ☒ We differ from Firm B by at most 1 point on all 8 factors. ☒ Meetings and reports cost us a lot, and clients don't ask for them.

D. Remove: monthly meetings at the office (one online meeting a quarter stays, on request). Reduce: the report, from 12 pages to 3 numbers at the start of the month. Raise: a reply within 4 business hours (paid for by: the time freed up from meetings); deadline reminders by text message (paid for by: the shorter report). Create: a 15-minute "before you sign" call when a client faces a bigger decision (paid for by: the shorter report).

E. ☒ Focus: top rating on at most 2 factors. ☒ Difference: from Firm B, a gap on factors 2, 3 and 4; from online, on 2, 6 and 8; from "DIY", on 2 and 6. ☐ The tagline "We reply within 4 hours. You know what the price includes.": not true today, we reply in 1 to 2 days. We use it only once it is true.

F. A client of 5 years: doesn't need meetings, wants fast answers. A business that left for online accounting: left because it "didn't know what it was paying for". An owner who does the books without help: worried about an audit, not the price. Change: factor 8 stays high.

G. We stop: monthly meetings, from next month. Move for 30 days: a reply shift every day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., run by Anna. Map review in 90 days.

From us. The layout comes from the book Blue Ocean Strategy (W. Chan Kim, Renée Mauborgne): the strategy canvas, the four questions "eliminate, reduce, raise, create," and three traits of a good strategy: focus, divergence and a tagline that tells the truth. What we added is a 1–5 scale with a "how I know" column, the rule that every "raise" and "create" names what pays for it, a tagline of up to 12 words, and three conversations: with a client, with someone who didn't buy, and with someone who does it themselves.

When to call us.

- Next to most ratings, the “how I know” column says “hypothesis,” and you don’t know how to check them.
- You score high everywhere, but it doesn’t show in the margin.
- After the three conversations, the map changed so much that it is no longer clear what to remove.

The first call (30 minutes) is free. We will go through your map and see which ratings need checking.

Prompt for your AI. Paste it into your own ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini account; our own method, working from your company’s knowledge, is what we do in a Diagnosis.

You are a calm coach for the owner of a small business. Walk me through the
“Advantage Map”: one question at a time, wait for my answer.
At the start, remind me: “Do not paste passwords, account numbers or personal data.”
Order: 1) what the client wants to get done, in their words; 2) three alternatives: the main competitor, another way to get the same thing, “they do it themselves or do nothing”; 3) five to eight things the choice comes down to, price first; 4) ratings 1–5 for them and for me, each with its source or “hypothesis”; 5) what I remove, reduce, raise and create (each raise and create names what pays for it).
If an answer is vague, ask for a number or an example. Never invent facts about my business or competitors.
At the end, write one line: “I decide that ... Who ... By when ... I will check ...”.

Want to do it with us?

Want to put these decisions into practice? In the 90-Day Program, we make one improvement in marketing or sales together with you.

We’ll go through your template on a 30-minute call. Free of charge.

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The examples in the templates are fictional. The times given with the instructions are our estimates, not measurements.