

STAND OUT START UP

THE FOUNDER'S GUIDE TO
**IRRESISTIBLE
MARKETING**
THAT FUELS GROWTH

ALLYSON LETTERI

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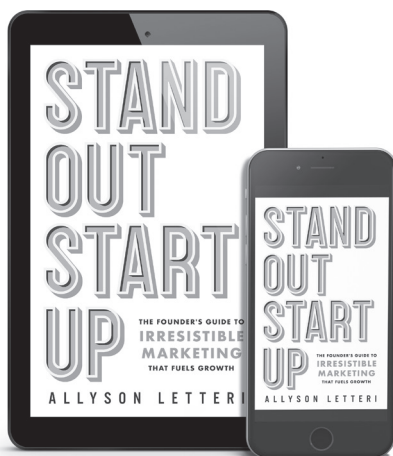
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BONUS

STANDOUT STARTUP TOOLKIT

This book is filled with step-by-step guidance and useful templates so you can create an effective messaging and content strategy. Download a free toolkit with the templates and worksheets from *Standout Startup*, ready for you to complete. It's the fastest way to take action and get results.

allysonletteri.com/toolkit



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INTRODUCTION

MESSAGING IS AN ESSENTIAL FOUNDER SKILL SET

You've launched an innovative product that will change your customers' lives for the better. But now you need great product messaging. Without it, getting traction with customers is going to be slow—or even impossible.

You probably already know this. I've worked with many tech startup founders who, after we start to dig into their marketing strategy and goals, say it's a challenge to get their ideal customers interested in their product. They need to know how to make their startup's product stand out to unlock user growth.

Effective product messaging is the backbone of a successful marketing strategy. No matter how well your product delivers results, if you can't explain who it's for, what it does, and why it's better than the alternatives, you won't attract and retain customers.

"I'm losing potential customers every day because our messaging is wrong," the cofounder of a Series A climate tech startup told me in frustration. "My business development team doesn't know how to explain the value of our product. Their pitch is all wrong, and I'm overwhelmed trying to fix it." Her company's growth had

stalled, and the team needed a way to explain to prospects why their product was a better choice than legacy solutions.

Another founder winced as he shared, “Our target audience just doesn’t get it.” His seed stage fintech startup was struggling to grow app downloads. “Our product is so clearly superior to everything else on the market. But something about how we’re describing the app just isn’t connecting. Choosing us should be a no-brainer for people who want the best financial returns, but they’re not signing up.”

Other times, leaders tell me their messaging can’t keep pace with their product updates. In the early days leading up to launch, their startup created a website, developed emails, and built a sales deck. But this collateral quickly became outdated as their product changed. Their marketing messages no longer explain the value of their ever-improving product. The result? Customer conversion plateaus—or tanks.

In other cases, opportunity knocks, and a startup has the chance to expand into a new customer segment. The founder knows that their product can appeal to a broader or different audience. But the startup needs to reposition what they’re selling to grow beyond its niche. They need updated value propositions to attract a new set of customers. Oftentimes the team gets stuck when trying to find the right way to describe their product to this unique customer segment.

It’s no surprise that when founders sense that their messaging is weak, they feel like the rest of their marketing is confusing or chaotic. They also don’t know what content to create, because they’re not sure what their ideal customers need to know to buy and engage with their product. Founders can feel paralyzed, especially if they don’t have a marketing team yet to figure all of this out.

But here’s the good news: There’s a clear process you can use to get unstuck, create powerful product messaging, and develop content that drives growth. And it doesn’t require you to be a

marketer. That's exactly what you'll learn how to do with this book. This guide reveals how to make your startup standout and use marketing to engage your ideal customers.

WHY DO YOU NEED POWERFUL PRODUCT MESSAGING?

During my 15 years working as a marketing leader at high-growth Silicon Valley startups, I led teams to develop and launch effective go-to-market strategies. In each of these companies, a central part of our work was creating effective product messaging and then high-converting content for every step of the customer journey. I now work as a marketing advisor to early stage tech startup leaders, and refreshing these startups' messaging is almost always a pivotal part of our work. After that, we can develop a much more effective (and efficient) content and growth marketing strategy.

As a startup founder, you're the company's first product marketer. You're the one creating the messaging for your initial website, new sales process, and early investor pitches. You're constantly on the hook to explain what's so great about your product and how it's unique so that you can close sales and get funding.

It's helpful that the customer insights you need to guide a product roadmap, acquire initial customers, and find product-market fit (PMF) overlap with the information you need to define effective messaging. These are interrelated, high-stakes processes for a startup. The work that goes into developing personas, positioning, brand personality, and messaging (all of which you'll learn how to do in this book) is so core to a startup's product and growth strategy that it's a miss to consider it simply "marketing" work. It's some of the most strategic work a startup founder and their team can do to get traction.

Effective product messaging converts prospects and engages customers. It helps your startup:

- ◆ **Attract the right customers:** Your ideal customers will quickly recognize that your product is for them, that it can solve a problem they're facing, and that it's better than the alternative solutions out there.
- ◆ **Increase sales:** The right messaging demonstrates how your product delivers the exact results your persona is looking for and motivates them to take the next step to sign up or buy.
- ◆ **Improve retention:** Great messaging ensures customers understand how your product works, actively use key features, and get the results they expect. This increases customer retention.
- ◆ **Unlock content strategy:** You'll adapt key messages to content for each stage of the customer journey, so your ideal customer connects with your product, has information to make decisions, and takes action in each stage.
- ◆ **Align your team:** Your entire team will be equipped with your most compelling messages for their own initiatives so your customer touch points will become more cohesive and optimized to convert.
- ◆ **Build strategic confidence:** With clarity on your ideal customer, positioning, messaging, and content strategy, you'll have greater confidence that you can effectively attract, convert, and retain customers.

Great product messaging will accelerate your company's growth because it helps you reach the right people, effectively convert them into customers, and deliver the results you promised. Knowing how to create this messaging is an incredibly useful skill set to master for any founder, as well as anyone in marketing, sales, or product development. Through the process you follow in this book, you'll foster team alignment, accelerate user growth, increase retention, and improve customer satisfaction. This ultimately leads to revenue growth, too.

HOW TO CREATE POWERFUL PRODUCT MESSAGING

What does it take to create powerful product messaging? I'll guide you through the steps to capture insights about your ideal customers, your competitors, and your category. Then, you'll create a product messaging framework, which will unlock your ability to create an effective content strategy and channel plans. Together, these elements comprise a large part of your go-to-market strategy, which enables you to launch and grow your business with a specific group of customers.

Standout Startup is divided into three parts. First, you'll define your 3 Ps—persona, positioning, and personality—to develop the insights you need to create effective messaging. In part 2, you'll use the 3 Ps to create a strong product messaging framework that includes a unique selling proposition, value propositions, and proof points. Then in part 3, you'll create a content strategy that drives conversion and growth at each stage of the customer journey.

As we move through the book, I'll share step-by-step guidance and templates you can use to complete each part of the process. You'll walk away clear on your positioning and confident about your brand personality. You'll be ready to refresh your website, emails,

and sales script with high-converting messaging. And to pull it all together, you'll have a content engine that fuels each of your key channels and offers customers exactly what they need to choose and use your product. **This book is your marketing accelerator.**

One last thing before we dive in: To show you how all of the pieces fit together, here's an overview of what you'll learn in each chapter. You'll also find recommendations at the end of each chapter, called "Standout Strategies," that capture your must-know next steps.

PART 1: DEFINE YOUR 3 PS TO UNLOCK MESSAGING

1. **Identify your 3 Ps.** Learn the importance of the 3 Ps—persona, positioning, and personality—and why they're essential to creating effective messaging. Find out when you'll need to refresh your 3 Ps and messaging as your product, customers, and competitors evolve.
2. **Decide who you're talking to.** Identify your ideal customer, who's the person that you want to motivate and influence with your messaging. You'll create a persona of this customer, which becomes the filter for all of your messaging decisions. If you sell products to businesses, you'll first create an ideal customer profile (ICP) for the companies that are the best fit for your product, *then* you'll identify your buying committee and create personas.
3. **Capture your persona.** Build a persona with insights that enable you to create powerful messaging. You'll capture your ideal customer's pains, gains, shifts, motivators, and

blockers. These factors help you understand what your ideal customer values so you can create messages that resonate and build trust.

4. **Understand the competition.** Create a shortlist of the other solutions your persona considers when deciding how to solve their pain points. You'll create a competitive map and identify each product's differentiators. Then you'll summarize what makes each of these solutions a desirable choice while also identifying what makes your product superior.
5. **Fill in gaps with research.** Conduct research to develop the additional insights you need to complete your personas and competitive map. Learn a range of effective research techniques you can use to gain the empathy needed to create strong product positioning.
6. **Define your positioning.** Determine the best way to position your product so that customers understand why it's different and better than the range of alternative solutions. Decide how you need to shift perceptions about your product so your persona recognizes that it's the best fit for their needs. Finally, capture your positioning in a unique selling proposition (USP).
7. **Create your personality.** Define a brand character that is unique and appealing to your ideal audience, which will also make your product stand out. Run a workshop filled with brand discovery exercises to define your brand attributes. Then create a tone of voice that enables you to build affinity and communicate consistently with your persona.

PART 2:
DEVELOP POWERFUL PRODUCT MESSAGING

8. **Develop strong value propositions.** Create value propositions that describe the most compelling benefits your product offers. Learn the criteria for effective value propositions that highlight the results your product delivers and entice your persona to buy.
9. **Support with proof points.** Validate your value propositions with proof points that build trust and desire. Learn the types of proof points that establish the most credibility with your ideal customer, and determine what customer stories and information will motivate them to select your product.
10. **Test your messages.** Get customer feedback on your USP, value props, and proof points before you finalize your messaging. Learn effective ways to do research that will help you refine your messages. Then run tests to see what messages drive the highest engagement and conversion with your ideal customers.
11. **Develop your product narrative.** Use your product messaging framework to develop a powerful story that converts customers on your website and in your sales pitch. Create a narrative that will hook your ideal customers, demonstrate the results your product delivers, highlight your differentiators, and share a clear call to action.
12. **Refine your company messages.** Revisit your company's vision, mission, and values, and align them with your updated 3 Ps and product messaging. Make tweaks to

better express your startup's greater purpose in the world and its promise to your ideal customers.

- 13. Build your project plan and team.** Find out how to plan and execute this messaging work in six two-week-long sprints. Learn the templates and activities to complete in each sprint so your team can develop, test, and refine your product messaging in just one quarter. Determine the right people to tap on your team to lead and participate in this work.

PART 3:

CREATE A CONTENT STRATEGY THAT DRIVES GROWTH

- 14. Prioritize content to fuel the customer journey.** Learn about the five phases of the customer journey and the content your ideal customers need in each phase. Then prioritize your top marketing goals and decide what types of content to create to motivate your customers and achieve these results.
- 15. Create your core content plan.** Learn an efficient process to create and launch core content each month to execute your marketing strategy. Find out the value of creating fewer, intentional pieces of content that fuel multiple channels. Then see how to identify timely and relevant content themes that engage your persona.
- 16. Choose engaging topics and hooks.** Create irresistible hooks and topics for your content that will catch the attention of and engage your ideal customers. Learn a strategic framework for crafting captivating hooks so you have plenty of options as you adapt content to each channel.

17. **Optimize your owned channel experience.** Create a strong “nurture” and “convert” experience in your owned channels as you roll out your new messaging and content. Learn ways to adapt your core content to create a strong conversion experience.
18. **Fuel acquisition with core content.** Build an effective “attract” strategy to reach your ideal customers through earned, social, and paid channels. Find out how to repurpose your core content to fuel a wide range of acquisition channels.
19. **Drive retention with customer marketing.** Create content for the “onboard” and “engage” phases of your customer journey that encourages customers to actively use your product. Learn the types of content and campaigns that can help your customers get results and become loyal users, driving customer retention and referrals.
20. **Celebrate your growth.** Cheers! You’ve created major changes in your business that will fuel sustainable customer growth. Revisit the main updates you’ll make to your messaging and content strategy. Recognize that by creating a better customer experience, you’ll accelerate growth, too. Celebrate with your team and track your success.

In short, this book gives you the tools and guidance you need to make your startup stand out. I wrote *Standout Startup* to speed up success for startup founders and teams who work tirelessly to scale world-changing products. My goal is to make it easier for you to impact the lives of customers who need you the most. You’ll start by defining your 3 Ps, so flip to chapter 1 to begin.

CREATE STRONG MESSAGING. FUEL USER GROWTH. ACCELERATE REVENUE.

Learn the powerful process that top VC-backed startups use to create an effective marketing strategy. This step-by-step guide gives tech startup leaders an exact roadmap to develop positioning, product messaging, and content that converts. *Standout Startup* offers an essential marketing toolkit drawn from Allyson Letteri's experience as a Silicon Valley marketing executive and startup advisor, including:

- The 3 Ps every startup needs to unlock effective messaging: personas, positioning, and personality.
- Four techniques to create standout product positioning.
- How to define an inimitable brand personality that your ideal customers love.
- The secrets to crafting compelling value propositions that sell your product.
- The most effective types of content to increase conversion in each phase of the customer journey.

Standout Startup presents a proven process to build a sustainable user and revenue growth engine. And it all starts with powerful product messaging that makes your **startup stand out**.



ALLYSON LETTERI is a marketing leader and startup advisor who helps early stage startups launch winning go-to-market strategies. She's built marketing teams from scratch to scale at fast-growing tech companies and now works with founders and VCs to accelerate their startups' growth. She lives in San Francisco.



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