



# FOUR MUST-READ CHAPTERS

Highlights from  
Re-Designing the Agency  
Value Model

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- 03 2 Agency Archetypes
- 08 3 Case Studies Summarised
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The following briefly highlights the key chapters in the VoxComm Guidance Paper: "**Re-Designing the Agency Value Model**". IT IS NOT THE FULL PAPER.

VoxComm, the global voice for agencies, commissioned Brian Kessman, Lodestar Agency Consulting, to author a Guidance Paper for the industry, with a foreword from Tim Williams, Ignition Consulting Group, both of whom have helped agencies around the world to redefine their model towards being distinctly scalable. The paper, "Re-Designing the New Agency Model", was published in March this year and continues to be the seminal paper for the industry at this critical juncture in its evolution.

The Paper contains comprehensive guidance as to why and how the industry can make the huge transformation into delivering value based propositions.

Importantly too, the paper uses case studies from around the world, that illustrates how early adopters to the new model are defining value beyond time and execution, and creating a more sustainable and future-proofed pricing model.

For those of you who wish to quickly absorb the highlights of the Paper and understand how to navigate the 70+ pages of invaluable advice, the following few pages will be of huge help. We recommend you work through the following pages while having the full Paper open as well in case you wish to delve further into the topics touched on.

If you have any further questions in relation to the content in this or the Guidance Paper itself, please reach out to [info@voxcomm.com](mailto:info@voxcomm.com)



# HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

This guide is written for agency CEOs, CFOs, and leadership teams. It's a system-level change that touches strategy, offerings, delivery, pricing, and client relationships.

Since every agency is at a different point in its evolution, this guide is designed to meet agencies where they are today, and serves as a resource as their models evolve. As such, some sections may be more timely and immediately useful than others.

## What The Guide Covers

At a high level, this guide addresses four interconnected questions:

- 1 Why legacy agency models are breaking down.
- 2 How agency leaders should think about their model and its impact on performance.
- 3 What scalable, value-led models look like in practice.
- 4 How to redesign your own model.

## How to Use The Guide

Answer the questions below to decide where to begin:

**Does your agency feel busy while margins remain stubbornly low?** Start with Sections 1 (When Your Model Works Against You) and 2 (Mapping Your Model) to understand how your current model may be working against you and where your firm sits on the Agency Model Map.

**Have you moved beyond hourly billing but still feel constrained?** Begin with Sections 2 (Mapping Your Model), 4 (How to Pivot) to see why pricing often plateaus, and how to unlock scalability.

**Do clients value your expertise but don't pay appropriately for it?** Focus on Sections 2 (Mapping Your Model), 4 (How to Pivot), 5 (How to Price), and 7 (How to Navigate), then review the case studies most similar to your firm.

**Are you already productizing, using AI, or experimenting with new models?** Start with Sections 3 (Case Studies), 5 (How to Price), and 6 (How to Plan) to strengthen monetization and scalability.

**Do you want actionable next steps?** Read Sections 2 (Mapping Your Model), 6 (How to Plan), and 8 (Online Tools to Apply This Guide to Your Firm), then use the diagnostic to identify the single constraint that matters most for your agency right now.

**Do you want a comprehensive understanding of how strategy, offerings, delivery, pricing, and client relationships work as a system?** Read the guide cover to cover.

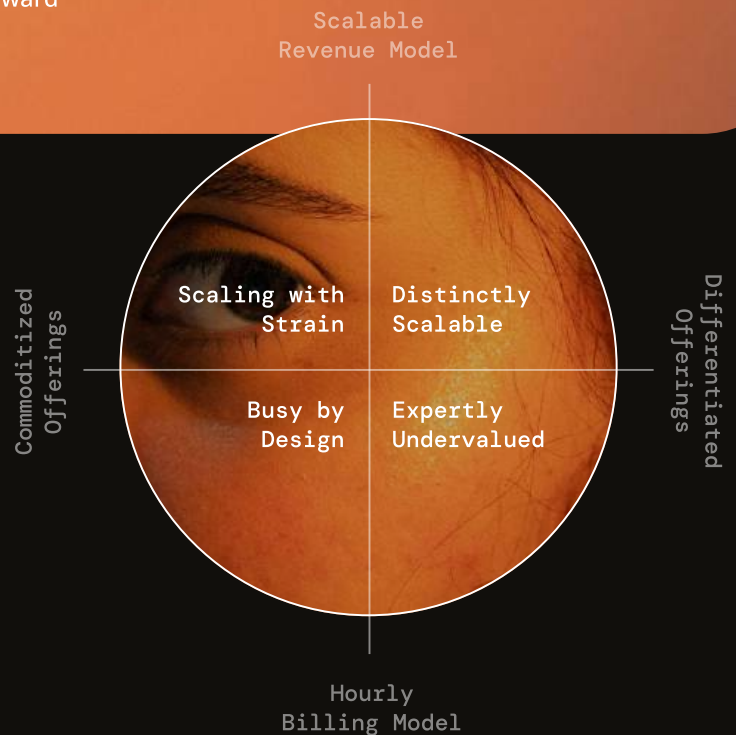


# AGENCY ARCHETYPES

Before an agency can move forward, it needs to know where it is today and what's holding it back. This framework helps establish that, and puts the agency on a path toward differentiated, scalable, high-margin growth.

## THE AGENCY MODEL MAP™

In our work, one principle proves central to agency success: how well a firm defines its value will determine how profitably that value can be captured. The Agency Model Map makes this visible by measuring two interdependent dimensions that shape financial performance and resilience:



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### The Four Archetypes

- 1 Busy by Design
- 2 Scaling with Strain
- 3 Expertly Undervalued
- 4 Distinctly Scalable

Each archetype reflects a mindset and a stage of progress in the journey toward a new revenue model. As you read, consider which stage your agency is at or nearing. Note that these are not rankings, but rather descriptions of the patterns shaping current performance.

- 1 **Value Definition (X axis)** - How clearly and credibly does the firm define its uniqueness and the outcomes it can own?
- 2 **Value Capture (Y axis)** - How effectively does the firm monetize those outcomes through offer structures and IP that decouple revenue from labor and align pricing with impact.

We've plotted recurring patterns of change within agencies as firms move away from billable hours toward different revenue models. When viewed through the two dimensions of the Model Map, four archetypes emerge. Each offers leaders a shared language to diagnose their firm's position and surface their constraints, while charting a path toward a more scalable model.





## BUSY BY DESIGN

Where most firms begin

### The value narrative

Access, responsiveness, and quality of client service—traits that sustain relationships but position the firm as a dependable vendor, not a strategic partner.

### Common mindset

"We can do it all. It's why clients hire us and how we grow revenue."

### Primary risk

Productivity improves, profitability doesn't.

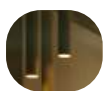
These firms are built on a model that rewards activity, not value.

They offer broad capabilities and custom scopes, often describing themselves as "full-service" or "integrated," but lack a distinct focus or defensible niche. Breadth of service substitutes for differentiation, forcing them to compete on responsiveness and price.

Revenue grows by hiring and maximizing utilization. AI and automation make delivery faster but rarely change the economics. When used only for efficiency, they reinforce the same cost-based logic that limits pricing power.

Every efficiency gain lowers delivery cost but also invites procurement and price-driven buyers to negotiate lower rates and fewer hours for the same work.

Leadership teams often see strong top-line growth and busy teams but thin margins. Growth compounds complexity faster than profit, requiring senior leaders to manage the business model rather than scale it.



## SCALING WITH STRAIN

New pricing, same growth challenges

### The value narrative

Reliability, efficiency, and partnership—qualities that deepen trust but reinforce a reactive supplier posture rather than a source of strategic value.

### Common mindset

"We're changing, but it's exhausting."

### Primary risk

Operational evolution without economic evolution and a revenue plateau.

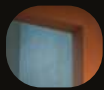
These firms have modernized how they price but not how they define value or design for scalable revenue and profit.

Their positioning remains broad and capability-led, so differentiation and pricing power stay weak. Fixed-fee scopes and some performance-based pay may replace hourly billing, but the core economics are still based on time. Offerings are still custom, framed as services, and designed for efficiency, not to create higher-margin offerings.

Over time, growth often plateaus as benefits from internal efficiency begin to taper, increasing reliance on new business to drive incremental revenue. But because offerings still look similar across firms, procurement pressure persists and price-driven buyers stay in control.

On the surface, these firms appear stable: processes improve, teams perform, and revenue becomes predictable. Yet coordination costs rise with growth, and teams absorb the strain through heavier workloads.





## EXPERTLY UNDERVALUED

Focused growth, same revenue challenges

### The value narrative

Expertise and specialized experience—credible but framed as services and capabilities, positioning the firm as an advisor for hire, not a partner accountable for results.

### Common mindset

“We’re known for our thinking, but clients don’t pay what it’s truly worth.”

### Primary risk

Strategic credibility without capturing the full economic value of their expertise.

These firms have achieved a focused business strategy but haven’t yet matured their revenue model.

They’ve positioned themselves around category expertise and/or specialized areas of service, earning credibility in the marketplace and trust with clients. But their offerings are still framed as custom services beneath their specialization, making them comparable to peer firms and still perceived as “service providers.”

Pricing and delivery occur through custom scopes and billable hours, keeping fees negotiable and margins thin. Revenue depends heavily on senior leaders and subject matter experts whose judgment drives client value, but whose limited capacity constrains scale.

The model relies on experience more than systems, resulting in linear growth and leadership fatigue.

AI and automation improve efficiency but aren’t yet embedded in products, tools, or IP that enhance differentiation or can be monetized for recurring revenue.

The business feels stable but demanding. Reputation fuels a steady pipeline, yet profit remains inconsistent. Growth often comes at the cost of leadership bandwidth, and teams rely on senior oversight to win and deliver work.





## DISTINCTLY SCALABLE

Fully evolved firms

This is the goal

### The value narrative

A growth partner accountable for results.

### Common mindset

"We scale our expertise and value, not headcount or effort."

### Primary risk

Profitable, defensible growth that compounds over time.

Distinctly Scalable firms scale their expertise and value, not headcount and effort.

They focus on solving specific, high-value client problems, often for a clear category or service niche. And they have intentionally divested from lower-value, price-sensitive offerings to concentrate their resources toward higher-margin work. That focus builds pattern recognition, repeatable offerings and scalable, differentiated solutions—often productized or AI-enabled—that deliver consistent results.

They align their pricing with their impact through fixed fees, subscriptions, licensing, or performance structures. Revenue grows without adding headcount, turning efficiency into margin and margin into enterprise value.

AI and intellectual property are embedded within offerings, increasing speed, reliability, and defensibility. These firms enjoy higher revenue per FTE, stronger recurring revenue, and profit growth.

Operationally, the business runs on well-documented systems rather than dependence on key individuals. Their scalability enhances opportunity instead of complexity and frees leadership to focus on innovation and value creation.

## Why is "Distinctly Scalable" the goal?

Firms that scale expertise and value rather than headcount and effort build stronger economic engines.

By concentrating their business on specific, high-value client problems, they cultivate pattern recognition that turns experience into repeatable solutions. This consistency (a) improves results with greater predictability, (b) builds a more defensible market position, (c) reduces risk when using outcome-based pricing, and (d) makes the firm a more compelling option for clients.

Repeatability also enables automation. AI delivers the greatest returns when applied to defined, repeatable workflows. When a firm codifies its approach, AI amplifies speed, accuracy, and quality, translating into faster time-to-value for clients, strengthening the firm's value narrative and margins.

Strategically, repeatability gives the agency more influence by placing it in the expert seat.

## What to Do with This Map

Identify which pattern best reflects your firm, pinpoint where your model is hindering your performance, and determine the greatest impact on your enterprise value.

If you're unsure where your firm sits, a brief self-assessment later in this guide will help you locate your position on the map and quantify how your model behaves today.

For now, the case studies that follow illustrate what Distinctly Scalable firms look like.



# THE 4 AGENCY ARCHETYPES

of the agency  
model map

Archetype	Model Characteristics	Economic + Leadership Reality	Value Narrative + Mindset	Primary Risk / Reward
Busy by Design	Built on activity, not value. Broad capabilities and custom scopes substitute for differentiation. Often “full-service” or “integrated.” Competes on responsiveness and price.	Growth driven by headcount and utilization. Efficiency lowers both cost and perceived value. AI accelerates delivery but reinforces cost-based logic. Busy teams, thin margins, and complexity that scales faster than profit.	<i>Access, responsiveness, and quality of service</i> —positions the firm as a dependable vendor.  <b>Mindset:</b> “We can do it all. It’s why clients hire us and how we grow revenue.”	<b>Risk:</b> Productivity improves, profitability doesn’t.
Scaling with Strain	Fixed-fee pricing, but underlying model unchanged. Broad, capability-led positioning. Custom offerings optimized for efficiency, not margin.	Revenue grows through workload, not leverage. Procurement pressure persists; processes improve but coordination costs rise faster than profit. Stable revenue masks operational strain and team fatigue.	<i>Reliability, efficiency, and partnership</i> —deepens trust but reinforces supplier posture.  <b>Mindset:</b> “We’re changing, but it’s exhausting.”	<b>Risk:</b> Operational evolution without economic evolution.
Expertly Under-valued	Clear expertise and category focus. Services framed as custom rather than structured solutions. Perceived as a specialized vendor, not a partner.	Time-based pricing limits margin. Growth depends on senior talent. Systems are underdeveloped. AI used for efficiency, not differentiation or IP. Feels stable but demanding; profit inconsistent and scale constrained by leadership bandwidth.	<i>Expertise and experience</i> —positions the firm as an advisor for hire.  <b>Mindset:</b> “We’re known for our thinking, but clients don’t pay what it’s worth.”	<b>Risk:</b> Strategic credibility without capturing the full economic value.
Distinctly Scalable	Rebuilt around scaling expertise and outcomes, not effort. Focused on high-value problems within a defined niche. Divested low-value offerings; built repeatable, often AI-enabled solutions.	Pricing aligns with impact—fixed, subscription, or performance models. Revenue decoupled from headcount; efficiency drives margin and valuation. Systems, not individuals, enable scale; growth increases opportunity, not complexity.	<i>Outcomes, impact, and proprietary advantage</i> —positions the firm as a growth partner accountable for results.  <b>Mindset:</b> “We scale expertise and value, not headcount or effort.”	<b>Reward:</b> Profitable, defensible growth that compounds.



# CASE STUDIES SUMMARISED

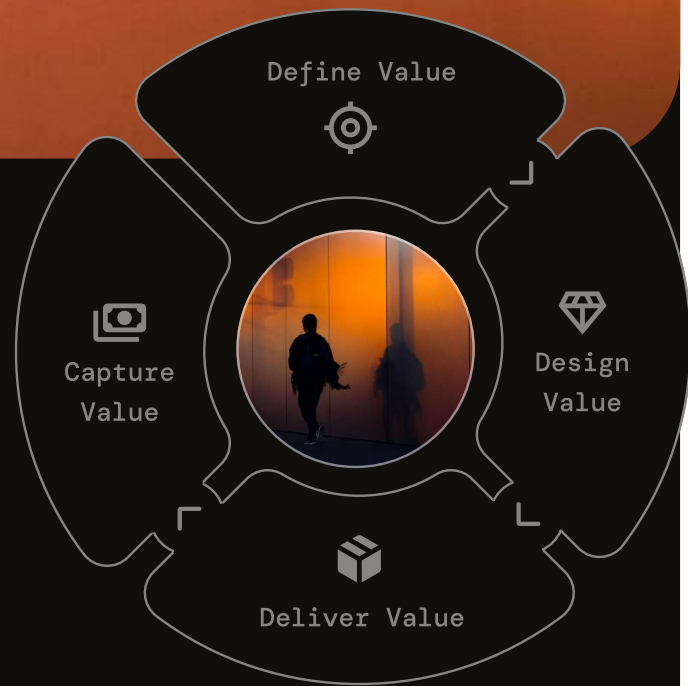
The Distinctly Scalable firms profiled in this section all began from a different set of circumstances but arrived at a similar conclusion: growth increasingly depends on how effectively a firm aligns its value proposition, offerings, delivery model, and pricing with its ability to produce measurable outcomes.

Across the cases that follow, we've distilled each agency's transformation accordingly, as four dimensions of value:

## The Agency Value Model™

These four dimensions of value—Defining, Designing, Delivering, and Capturing Value—form the foundation of the Agency Value Model.

The Model provides the architecture for how value is created inside a firm, how it moves through the business, and how effectively it is ultimately monetized.



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## How to Read the Case Studies

The firms in these case studies were selected to show how agency value models are changing across regions, disciplines, and levels of maturity.

### DEFINING VALUE

Sharpening the agency's value proposition to align with what clients are truly buying. Moving conversations from services and deliverables to business outcomes, anchoring value—and ultimately price—to impact rather than effort.

### DESIGNING VALUE

Codifying agency expertise into structured, repeatable solutions, programs, and products that leverage frameworks and data assets. Standardizing highest-value work, differentiating offerings, and separating revenue from headcount.

### DELIVERING VALUE

Embedding technology and automation into delivery—sometimes extending directly into clients' own environments—to increase quality, speed, and proof of results. Equally important, equipping agency teams to communicate, sell, and deliver the firm's unique value with consistency.

### CAPTURING VALUE

Reimagining how the agency's value is monetized through new revenue structures such as subscriptions, licensing intellectual property, and performance-based components, where attribution supports it.



# CASE SUMMARIES

Case Study	Summary	Primary Changes Across Their Value Model
<p>FIG</p> <p>Rebuilding the Economics of Creative Work</p>	<p>This case examines how an independent mid-sized creative agency headquartered in New York uncovered hidden financial risk inside long-term client relationships. Learn how FIG separated pricing from staffing, clarified scope assumptions, and rebuilt internal pricing controls. They are a practical example of how agencies can change their economics through governance and pricing discipline.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anchored the firm's value in strategic judgment and creative decision-making tied to client outcomes.</li> <li>2. Rebuilt scopes as defined workstreams with explicit assumptions to make changes in value visible early.</li> <li>3. Shifted project management toward governing scope, assumptions, and delivery against agreed client outcomes.</li> <li>4. Implemented value-led pricing on retainers, separating price from staffing and using time only as an internal check.</li> </ol>
<p>72andSunny</p> <p>Moving Beyond Hours to Protect Margin</p>	<p>This case shows how a global creative advertising and marketing agency headquartered in Los Angeles addressed margin erosion caused by hours-based pricing. Learn how 72andSunny stopped pricing based on staffing and time and moved toward fixed-fee, value-based work, supported by new delivery and governance practices. They are an example of how agencies can protect profitability as AI compresses effort.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Established a Value Council to redesign how value is defined, priced, and defended across the business.</li> <li>2. Clarified accountability around defined outcomes and outputs rather than roles or time allocations.</li> <li>3. Reorganized work from deliverables into modular, productized offerings.</li> <li>4. Shifted delivery management from utilization tracking to capacity planning aligned to outcomes.</li> <li>5. Monetized their value using fixed-fee, value-led pricing.</li> </ol>
<p>We.Communications</p> <p>Aligning Value Before Changing Pricing</p>	<p>This case shows how an independent global communications firm headquartered in Bellevue, Washington, recognized the need to focus its definition of value before changing pricing or contracts. Learn how We. used governance, shared language, and productized solutions to move toward output- and outcome-based work. We. illustrates how focus and alignment makes commercial change possible.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clarified the firm's value around helping clients navigate complexity and achieve defined business outcomes.</li> <li>2. Established a Value Council to align leadership, finance, operations, and client teams around a shared definition of value and centralize pricing decisions.</li> <li>3. Consolidated a broad service mix into a portfolio of standardized, productized solutions delivered globally.</li> </ol>
<p>VCCP</p> <p>Reclaiming Pricing Control from Procurement</p>	<p>This case explores how a London-based global creative agency uses "value creation" to transform pricing conversations. By prioritizing commercial impact before defining scope, VCCP aligns early stage value with commercial terms—proving this collaborative model works even for global organizations at scale.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Established centralized value governance to support consistent commercial decision-making before scope and pricing were set.</li> <li>2. Introduced a structured front-end value definition phase to quantify business impact before scope.</li> <li>3. Reinforced existing methodology with new products that lend themselves to alternative commercial models.</li> <li>4. Tested value-based and outcome-weighted pricing models alongside retainers.</li> </ol>



Case Study	Summary	Primary Changes Across Their Value Model
<b>Bond Brand Loyalty</b> <b>Designing a Value Model for Enterprise Complexity</b>	<p>This case shows how an independent global agency headquartered in Toronto responded to growing enterprise complexity by redefining its role around outcomes, not execution. Learn how Bond Brand Loyalty combined repeatable strategic approaches with tailored delivery and built measurement capabilities to support value-led conversations with CMOs and CFOs. They are an example of how agencies can be accountable for results when coordination—not production—is what determines success.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positioned the firm as accountable for customer growth and loyalty outcomes across the enterprise.</li> <li>2. Built repeatable strategic frameworks and productized solutions to support consistent delivery and value measurement at scale.</li> <li>3. Integrated creative, data, and technology into unified delivery teams aligned to outcomes.</li> <li>4. Anchored value-led pricing conversations in ROMI and ROXI measurement (Return on Marketing and Return on Experience Investment).</li> </ol>
<b>Time Under Tension</b> <b>A Value Model Designed for Uncertainty</b>	<p>This case shows how a small generative AI experience agency headquartered in Sydney built fixed-price offerings for organizations with uncertain needs. See how the firm recognized recurring patterns and designed repeatable solutions to engage clients before problems were fully defined, reducing delivery risk. They are an example of how specialized agencies can apply their expertise upstream, where value is highest.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Defined its value around helping organizations determine which AI outcomes matter before requirements were fully defined.</li> <li>2. Designed fixed-price, productized AI sprints to address recurring client needs.</li> <li>3. Separated advisory work from experimental delivery using time-boxed execution models.</li> <li>4. Set prices based on demonstrated value and market demand rather than effort estimates or ROI forecasts.</li> </ol>
<b>BOND</b> <b>Turning AI Into a Value Operating System</b>	<p>This case shows how a mid-sized brand consultancy headquartered in Helsinki built a proprietary AI operating system to scale how it thinks and works. Learn how BOND used that system to standardize its approach to strategy and creativity, shifting conversations away from scope and efficiency toward what was possible for the brand. They illustrate how AI can be used to change the way clients perceive both the value of AI and the firm behind it.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identified recurring client situations and formalized them into named, productized offerings.</li> <li>2. Built a proprietary AI operating system to scale research, strategy, and creative outcomes.</li> <li>3. Enabled earlier client engagement through live, collaborative working environments.</li> <li>4. Extended monetization of its expertise through licensing and managed-service pricing models.</li> </ol>
<b>Monks</b> <b>Redesigning Value for the AI Era</b>	<p>This case shows how a global digital-first marketing, technology, and consulting company headquartered in London responded when leadership concluded that AI would reshape the entire business, not just delivery. Learn how Monks simplified its offering into a single subscription that combines people, technology, and continuous improvement. They are an example of an agency that redesigns its value model end to end.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Defined its business around enabling AI-driven outcomes across marketing and operations.</li> <li>2. Packaged expertise, automation, and technology into a single productized subscription (Talent + Machine).</li> <li>3. Rebuilt delivery around integrated human+AI workflows designed for scale.</li> <li>4. Applied subscription-based, value-led pricing with ongoing efficiency and improvements built in.</li> </ol>

# ONLINE TOOLS TO APPLY THIS GUIDE TO YOUR FIRM

The diagnostic tools below are designed to help leadership teams apply the frameworks in this guide to their own firm. The Value Model Diagnostic clarifies where their value model is constrained today.

The Positioning Clarity Audit assesses whether their positioning comes through clearly to prospective clients or appears generic and undifferentiated.

The interactive Pricing Pathways tool guides them through monetization configurations that align pricing with solution types and business impact.

## The Value Model Diagnostic

*Identify the Value Model Constraint That Matters Most to Your Firm*

Understand where your firm sits on the Agency Model Map and what to do next.

The diagnostic examines how value is currently

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| 1 Defined   | 2 Designed |
| 3 Delivered | 4 Captured |

The result maps the firm to one of four recurring economic patterns—Busy by Design, Scaling with Strain, Expertly Undervalued, or Distinctly Scalable—while isolating the specific constraint limiting performance.

For executive teams, the diagnostic creates shared language and alignment around a roadmap for change.

Complete the diagnostic here:

<https://bit.ly/value-model-diagnostic>

## Positioning Clarity Audit

*Assess Whether Your Website Clearly Communicates Your Firm's Value and Differentiation*

Understand how your positioning comes through to prospective clients and where messaging undermines perceived value.

The audit examines whether your website clearly communicates

- The specific client problems the firm is uniquely qualified to solve
- The outcomes the agency delivers and owns
- Why those outcomes matter to the client's business

The result reveals whether the agency is experienced as a differentiated partner accountable for outcomes or perceived as a capable but interchangeable service provider.

For executive teams, the audit identifies gaps between strategic intent and market perception—clarifying what needs to change for the value model to be understood, trusted, and defensible.

Run the audit here: <https://bit.ly/positioning-clarity-audit>

