

Personal Value Proposition

As you develop and refine your vision for your next season, it is important to have effective tools that will help you clearly communicate your goals to others. A personal value proposition (PVP) serves this purpose. Many professionals are familiar with the idea of a business value proposition or elevator pitch, but far fewer consider applying the same concept to themselves when pursuing a new career path or life endeavor.

A PVP is a concise statement (2–3 sentences) that outlines the specific skills you offer and what impact you have on an organization. It clearly translates your distinctive value into results without relying on others to connect the dots. In 2011, Bill Barnett explored the concept of PVP in a now widely cited article for the Harvard Business Review. As he explains it, your PVP is at the heart of your next season goals and influences your exploration. It also details why someone should choose you rather than anyone else. The PVP is not used as part of your resume or bio. Rather, it informs the creation of both and is a thought exercise that helps you connect your strengths to your goals.

When defining your PVP, it is important to first think about the problems you want to solve—remember this is *your time to choose what you want to offer* in this first next season. Articulate what you bring to the table, what you love to do, and what makes you unique. Consider the arc of your entire career and what has stayed true throughout. Don't discount softer skills or personal passions if they align with your next season's goals. Consider the time you would like to commit (interval, project, ad hoc, scheduled) and the resources necessary to carry out the work you envision.

- What strengths or skills are you planning to offer in your next season?
- Mentorship? Relationship building? Strategic oversight?

Even more than a statement of what you do or would like to do, your PVP should address what problems you can help an organization solve or goals you can help them achieve. Ask yourself, *What do I bring and what does that mean to my target audience?* Many companies and organizations have similar pain points such as sales growth, market penetration, corporate culture, infrastructure planning—thoughtfully consider where and how you want to make your mark.

There is a powerful difference between simply stating what you do and sharing a carefully constructed PVP.

For example, it may feel comfortable to say:

“I’m a manufacturing and technology executive with a Fortune 50 company.”

But if you told them:

“I accelerate innovation and disrupt industry using my expertise in materials engineering, manufacturing, and technology. I embrace challenges and lead by inspiring my teams to push the boundaries and reimagine products to achieve market differentiation.”

You have done the mental heavy lifting for them—making the connection between who you are and what you can do for them or someone they know.

Another example:

“I am the leader of global communications for a US-based multinational consumer goods corporation.”

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“I unleash the creative genius in others to conceive and execute big ideas that build brands, enhance reputations, and strengthen causes. I foster a learning culture that increases innovation and creativity to raise the PR capability of organizations and elevate impact.”

Building your personal value proposition is not just an exercise in discernment—it is giving voice to what you will give the world. To develop a powerful PVP, you will need to ask yourself many questions and be as specific as possible in your responses. Bill Barnett laid out the four steps below to help individuals create a detailed and effective PVP. Take a moment to brainstorm your thoughts below, thinking through what makes you unique.

Identify your target:

What problem(s) do I solve, and who would benefit? Also think about what role you would like to have (full-time employee, board member, consultant, etc.).

Identify your strengths:

Clarify the strengths and talents that make you unique AND that you want to use in your engagements going forward.

Relate your strengths to your target:

Align your strengths with the problems you want to solve. This will help others connect you to specific engagements and understand why you are the right person for the opportunity.

Offer evidence and a success story:

People—including your target—will remember stories long after they've forgotten facts and figures. A success story that highlights one of your personal achievements serves as tangible proof of your talents and capabilities.

My personal value proposition:

Once you have created your PVP, it will serve you in many ways. In addition to bringing personal clarity, it will be used to inform your networking efforts. **As you brainstorm and organize your contacts, consider how you answered the previous questions and think through: Who is doing something that interests me?** What groups should I approach? In which industries? Are there not-for-profit organizations that would benefit from my skills?

Your PVP provides a snapshot of your experience combined with information that helps the people you interact with quickly recognize how you would be valuable to them, their colleagues, and network. It allows them to leave the conversation understanding your strengths and able to easily share your value with others. These conversations will reap valuable information about the roles in which you are interested so that you can further refine your understanding of the pain points within—and connect your strengths to how you can be part of the solution. This feedback loop is important in understanding the market for your goals and make it easier for the decision makers to choose you.

Your PVP also has a major influence on the development of your professional materials. With a clear vision of your target audience and the problems you help solve, MyNextSeason can apply that lens to enhance your resume, executive biography, and additional materials. It helps shed light on which skills to bring forward and which experiences to highlight, exemplifying the kind of work you hope to continue doing.

Lastly, commit to reevaluating your PVP regularly. It should be a statement that continuously evolves. Incorporate meaningful feedback, adjust your target as you learn about different opportunities, engagements, or pain points, and be sure that as your goals naturally change over time, your PVP reflects your desires for your current season.

Building Your Personal Value Proposition

When defining your personal value proposition for board work, it is important to consider on the type of board desired - brainstorm the impact you will make, the pain points you can address, how do you envision your role on a board? Articulate what you bring to the table and what makes you unique. Building your personal value proposition is not just an exercise in discernment—it will shape your branding materials, facilitates productive conversations with colleagues/connections and enables them to easily share your value proposition with others.

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET: Public, private, PE/VC, Start-up, Industry?

IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS: Clarify the skills, expertise and experience that make you unique AND that highlight the value you will bring to board engagements.

RELATE YOUR STRENGTHS TO YOUR TARGET: This will help others connect you to specific engagements and understand why you are the right person for the opportunity.

OFFER EVIDENCE AND A SUCCESS STORY: People—including your target—will remember stories long after they've forgotten facts and figures; a success story that highlights your impact serves as tangible proof of your expertise and capabilities.