

DIFFERENTIATION

Differentiation is a critical element of tech consulting marketing success. When you are like everyone else, the competition is limitless. When you are like no one else, the competition is irrelevant.

This worksheet helps you envision the opportunities you have to differentiate your firm. It provides examples of various

differentiation opportunities. Some of the opportunities are internal (relying on the firm), and others are external (relying on clients and technology).

The goal of the exercise is to identify the differentiation opportunities so those can be discussed and explored.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Read each opportunity.
- Indicate if this opportunity describes You (using Y or N)
- Indicate if this opportunity could be You (using Y or N)
- Rate the perceived difficulty to achieve using a scale of (1) easy to (10) highly improbable.

DIFFERENTIATION OPPORTUNITIES:

	Is This You?	Can it be You?	Difficult 1-10
<p>Differentiation based on one or more industry thought leaders. Having the industry's most accepted and sought after expert can provide differentiation. Having many recognized experts is even better.</p>			
<p>Differentiation based on staff education, experience, or credentials. Are all of your developers PhDs in AI or Data Analytics? Does that matter to your ideal customer? This differentiation has to be meaningful and relevant to the client. Does an SFDC credential mean something to your client, and are you the only firm with that credential? If not, the credential does not provide differentiation.</p>			
<p>Differentiation based on size. Stating "we are the largest...fill in the blank." has some value when it is combined with at least one relevant "blank." Headcount alone provides little evidence or intrigued but stating "we are the largest Health Cloud consultancy in ATL" may. This supports the idea of "carve out a niche and dominate it."</p>			
<p>Differentiation based on offering a particular service. Is the service you provide rare and hard to find? For example, conversion from an internally developed or outdated and obscure CRM to Salesforce? Good, it could lead to differentiation. Caution: the unique service offering space can quickly become crowded—examples: HIPAA and Sarbanes-Oxley compliance.</p>			

NOTES

DIFFERENTIATION

DIFFERENTIATION OPPORTUNITIES:

Differentiation based on an exclusive or unique technology or process.

Is your solution an entirely different way of approaching and solving the problem? Does it offer a unique benefit to the client? If so, it could be the basis for differentiation.

Differentiation based on a geographic focus.

While geographic orientation is diminishing, it still has some weight. Local experts may be more valuable than experts from somewhere else. Lean hard into local communities and face-to-face interaction to build geographic differentiation. The impact of geographic focus is multiplied when paired with technology, industry, or size. It can be exponential when geography is combined with all three.

Differentiation based on the relationship of a technology partner.

Leveraging the partner channel is advantageous if you reach the highest levels of the structure. Most channel programs are hierarchical, with highly populated low tiers and thinly populated high tiers. Working the technology partner channel is usually a long-term strategy requiring commitment and investment. Unfortunately, another firm may decide they want to commit more and invest more, jeopardizing your status.

Differentiation based on one vertical or industry.

This is the easiest differentiator. Clients value the specialist in their industry. But, since it's easiest, you may only achieve partial differentiation. (i.e., Financial Services isn't a full differentiation as there are many firms in this focus area.)

Differentiation based on serving a specific role within your client's organization.

This role-based specialization is often combined with an industry focus. If you have CTO level experience within their industry (i.e., Healthcare) and relevant technology offers, other CTOs will relate.

Differentiation based on your client portfolio.

You are the company you keep, and keeping a list of highly respected companies as clients has great value. If you seek to build a portfolio of recognized industry leaders or technology innovators, you can achieve a differentiator.

Is This You?

Can it be You?

Difficult 1-10

NOTES

DIFFERENTIATION

DIFFERENTIATION OPPORTUNITIES:

Differentiation based on solving a significant business challenge.

Your clients may be facing the same challenge but be in different industries or sub-sections. Demonstrating HIPAA compliance is shared by many kinds of healthcare organizations. For example, hospitals, field medical staff, and diagnostic equipment suppliers all share the same business challenge: compliance, but are in different healthcare industry subsections.

Differentiation based on a substantial accomplishment.

Firms can build an authority brand based on a substantial accomplishment, i.e., bringing IP to the market, propelling a high-profile client to new heights, etc. This creates a quality reputation and can be used within an industry. This type of achievement builds favorable history.

Differentiation based on delivering an impactful or highly valuable result.

Rather than concentrate on a single problem (application development), concentrate on delivering a result. For example, don't simply build an application around process automation; deliver a solution to increase worker productivity by 10%, reducing cost and adding to profitability. The result could include a process automation application but goes beyond the application and immediate users. Coordination across many business units to deliver a result requires great vision and C-level acceptance and sponsorship. Firms that are asked to lead these digital transformations and high-profile organizational changes are highly respected and paid.

Is This You?

Can it be You?

Difficult 1-10

NOTES