

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

What if your ideal clients already wanted to buy from you – even before YOU knew THEIR name?

All of the information below is taken from or based on The Win Without Pitching Manifesto, by Blair Enns

Most accountancy firm owners already know, deep down, that being a generalist is holding them back. It shows up in the awkward pitches, the constant price comparisons, and the clients who don't really value what you do.

In *The Win Without Pitching Manifesto*, Blair Enns puts a name to that problem and offers a way out. Simple in theory, tough in practice.

The way out is **expert positioning**: choosing to be the obvious answer to a very specific problem for a very specific kind of client. It's not something you 'grow into'. It's a decision that you make and then back up with consistent action.

These tools can help you do exactly that. They turn the idea into habits, frameworks, and daily moves that you can apply. Go through it step by step and use the exercises. The people who get results treat this as an ongoing practice, not as a one-off project.

But before any of that, there's one question to ask yourself. It's the question at the core of Enns' thinking, and it's what separates the firms that make this shift from the ones that stay stuck.

What would you call yourself if you weren't afraid to be specific?

CONTENTS:

- 1. The one 'BREAKTHROUGH QUESTION' you must ask to help yourself...**
- 2. The expert positioning framework – how accounting firm leaders can build deep expertise in the minds of their business owner clients**
- 3. Choose your positioning axis – the 5 ways to specialise**
- 4. How to visibly build your expertise...**
- 5. Your weekly habits and 90-day action plan – putting expert positioning into practice...**
- 6. The books and other resources**

STOP thinking that being a generalist is the safest and easiest option

START positioning yourself as an expert

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

1. The one 'BREAKTHROUGH QUESTION' you must ask to help yourself...

"Positioning is not a discovery. You don't wait for a niche to emerge organically over the years. You choose one. Deliberately. And then you go and build it."

– Blair Enns, *The Win Without Pitching Manifesto*

What would you call yourself if you weren't afraid to be specific?

This question matters because expert positioning is rarely a knowledge problem. Most firm owners already know enough to specialise. They already have a cluster of clients they most enjoy serving. They already have a specialism they feel quietly proud of. What stops them is fear – the fear of turning others away, of missing out, of claiming something they're not yet certain they've fully earned.

The answer to the above question – the specific, honest, slightly-nervous-making answer – is usually the start of your positioning statement.

The sentence that makes you slightly nervous to commit to is usually the right one. Conviction is a competitive advantage. Ambiguity is invisible.

How to use this question:

Step 1 – Find 20 minutes to be quiet. Write your answer without editing. Don't show anyone yet.

Step 2 – Turn it into a full sentence: 'We are the only firm that [*specific thing*] for [*specific client*].'

Step 3 – Write five versions. Make each one more specific than the last.

Step 4 – The version that makes you slightly uncomfortable is usually the most powerful. That is your starting point.

2. The expert positioning framework – how accounting firm leaders can create the perception of deep expertise in the minds of business owner clients

"Expertise is the only valid basis for differentiating ourselves... Not personality. Not process. Not price."

– Blair Enns, *The Win Without Pitching Manifesto*

Blair Enns' core argument, developed through *The Win Without Pitching Manifesto* and *Pricing Creativity*, is that the expert practitioner must fundamentally reverse the typical buyer-seller dynamic. Instead of pursuing clients and pitching for work, the expert attracts clients through demonstrated depth and then leads the engagement from a position of authority – much like a specialist consultant rather than a supplier.

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

What follows is his thinking mapped onto a practical six-step sequence, translated specifically for accounting firm leaders working with business owner clients.

Step 1: Narrow and name your expertise

Enns is emphatic that the deepest level of perceived expertise is specificity. A generalist is pleasant to work with; a specialist is sought out. The first step is for the firm, or the individual leader within it, to stake a clear claim.

Not: “We work with owner-managed businesses.”

But: “We work with manufacturing businesses turning over £2-20M who are preparing for a management buyout or external sale.”

For Accounting Leaders

This means resisting the gravitational pull of the full-service offering in initial positioning conversations. When a business owner hears something precise that maps onto their situation, their internal response is “they know my world”, and that is the beginning of trust.

Step 2: Lead with a point of view, not a capability statement

Enns argues that experts don’t open with “here’s what we do”. They open with a considered perspective on the client’s world – what is changing, what the risks are, and what most people in their position get wrong.

He calls this having a **point of view (POV)**, and it is the engine of thought leadership.

For Accounting Leaders

Before discussing services, a partner meeting with a business owner should include observations such as:

“Most founders at your stage are underestimating the tax efficiency gap between how they’re currently structured and what a buyer will expect to see in three years.”

That’s a POV. It immediately signals that you understand their context at a strategic level – not just their compliance needs.

Step 3: Diagnose before you prescribe

This is perhaps Enns’ most powerful idea. He uses the **doctor analogy** deliberately: a good physician asks searching questions before recommending treatment. Any doctor who prescribed without diagnosing would be struck off. Yet most professional service firms arrive at a first meeting already mentally constructing their proposal.

The diagnostic conversation is structured around questions that reveal depth, not questions that gather information for a quote. The distinction matters enormously to the business owner sitting across the table.

For Accounting Leaders

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

Questions such as: “What does your current finance function tell you about your cash conversion cycle, and how confident are you in that picture?”

...do two things simultaneously: they bring to the surface genuinely useful diagnostic information, and they demonstrate that you think at a level most advisers don’t reach. Enns calls this **diagnosing in public**: the quality of your questions is itself the proof of expertise.

Step 4: The three conversations in sequence

Enns identifies three conversations that must happen in the right order in any new client relationship. Many firms conflate them or skip one entirely, which undermines the expert dynamic.

- **The fit conversation**

This establishes whether the client’s situation sits inside your area of genuine expertise. Crucially, Enns insists that the expert must be willing to disqualify, to say, credibly, “I’m not sure we’re the right firm for this.” That willingness is itself a signal of confidence and selectivity that most advisers never project.

- **The money conversation**

This happens before the work is scoped in detail. Enns argues strongly that talking about budget and value expectations early is a mark of professionalism, not awkwardness. It prevents the situation where a beautifully crafted proposal lands with a client who has a fundamentally different sense of what the engagement is worth.

- **The process conversation**

This is where the expert explains how they work – on their terms, not the client’s. The expert leads the engagement. This subtly but powerfully reframes your firm’s relationship to the client from that of a supplier to that of an advisor.

For Accounting Leaders

Business owners are accustomed to their accountant following their lead. When a firm leader instead says, “Before we talk about what you need, let me explain how we approach this kind of work and why we do it that way,” the framing shifts. The business owner begins to orient themselves around the firm’s process rather than driving it themselves.

Step 5: Resist the pitch and replace it with a recommendation

Enns wrote an entire manifesto on this single point. Pitching, preparing speculative work, and competing on ideas before being appointed is an act of subordination. The expert doesn’t audition; they are selected. The pitch is replaced by a **recommendation**: here is what I have observed, here is my diagnosis, here is what I would recommend, and here is why.

For Accounting Leaders

The recommendation format – *situation, diagnosis, proposed approach, and rationale* – reads completely differently from a standard engagement letter or capability brochure. It signals that the firm

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

has already done the thinking, and the business owner is invited to engage with a considered professional view, not with a menu of services with fees attached.

Step 6: Price the value, not the hours

Once the expert dynamic is established and the client is oriented toward you as the specialist, the conversation about price should be anchored to **the value of the outcome**, not to the cost of the inputs. Enns describes this as winning on value before winning on price: the business owner should understand what the advice is worth to them before a number is mentioned.

For Accounting Leaders

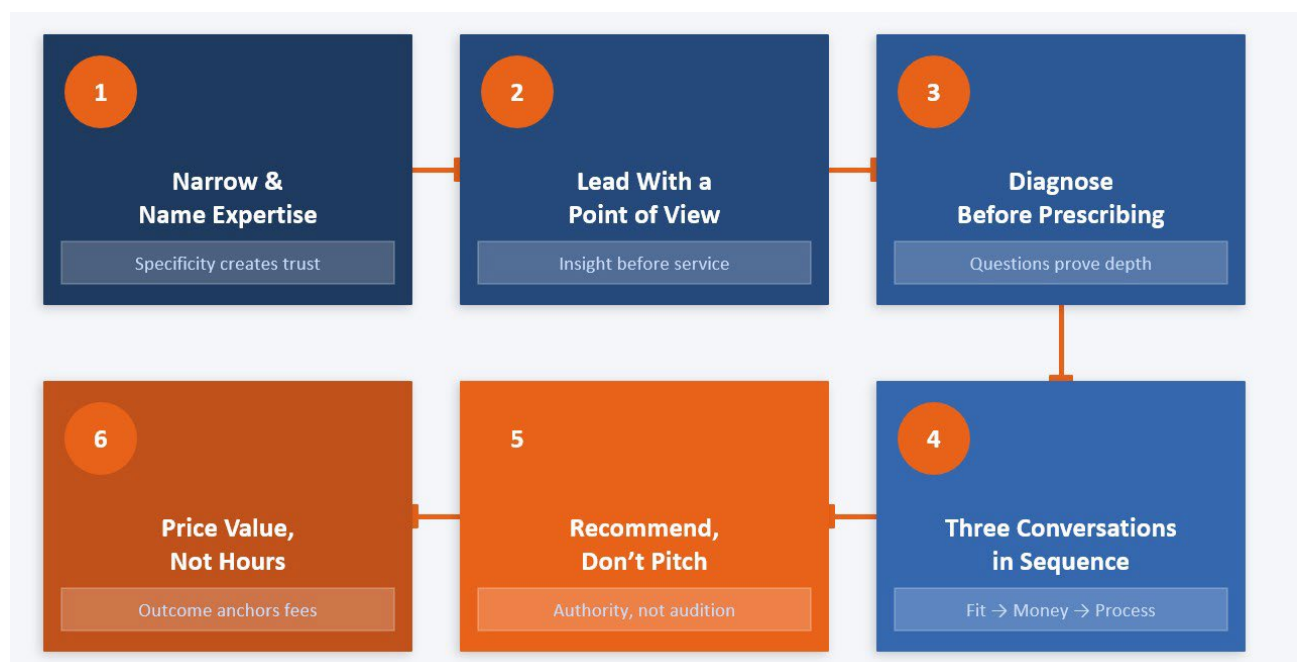
If a business owner understands that your restructuring advice could save them £150k in tax on a sale in three years, the context for a £15k advisory fee is completely different than if the fee arrives without that framing. This requires the firm leader to be willing to surface and discuss value explicitly, which is uncomfortable for many accountants trained in 'cost plus fee' structures.

The Underlying Architecture

What ties all six steps together is a single principle which Enns returns to repeatedly: **the expert is not for everyone – and says so.**

Selectivity, specificity, and the willingness to lead rather than follow are what create the perception of deep expertise in a client's mind. For accounting firm leaders, whose default professional posture is often one of careful service and deference, Enns is essentially asking for a significant identity shift, closer, in fact, to the shift from *technician to leader* that underpins much of the best leadership development work in the profession.

The six-step sequence is a practical roadmap for making that shift visible and credible in every client conversation.



Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

3. Choose your positioning axis – the 5 ways to specialise

"We will specialise. Not we will discover our specialism in time. A decision. Made today."

- Blair Enns, *The Win Without Pitching Manifesto*

Blair Enns identifies five distinct axes on which a firm can position itself. Most firms try to be everything to everyone. The expert picks one or combines two or three and builds on it.

The table below maps each axis, what it means, and how it looks in practice.

| Positioning axis | What it means | Example |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| By Sector / Vertical | You serve one industry. You know the language, the pressures, the cycles. Clients immediately feel understood. | <i>Accountant who only works with healthcare businesses</i> |
| By Problem / Transformation | You solve one specific, recurring problem brilliantly. Clients search for solutions, not suppliers. | <i>Consultant who turns enquiries into loyal repeat clients</i> |
| By Client Type / Stage | You serve one type of buyer at a specific life stage or business stage. | <i>Advisor for family businesses navigating succession</i> |
| By Geography + Specialism | Geography filters your market, combined with a specialism to create authority. | <i>The go-to firm for hospitality businesses in the North West</i> |
| By Combination (Strongest) | Sector + Problem + Stage. Very few can claim this. Almost impossible to compete with. | <i>Accountant for food and drink brands in their first five years</i> |

How to choose your axis: the three questions

1. Where are your best existing clients already clustered?

Look at your client list. Group them by sector, size, type, or problem. Where do you already have three, five, or eight in the same space? That cluster is the beginning of your natural position.

2. Where do you already have real, hard-won insight, even if you haven't named it?

The firm that has served fifteen clients in the same sector for over ten years knows more than they realise. Seasonal pressures. Common pitfalls. The language of that world. You already have expertise. The question is whether you're willing to claim it.

3. Where could you most credibly be 'the only'?

Not the best. The only. 'The only firm that handles commercial property dilapidation disputes for independent retail landlords.' When a client reads that, they think, "This is the person I need."

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

Write five versions of this sentence. Make each one more specific:

1. *We are the only firm that* _____ *for* _____.
2. *We are the only firm that* _____ *for* _____.
3. *We are the only firm that* _____ *for* _____.
4. *We are the only firm that* _____ *for* _____.

Think about the last one:

5. *We are the only firm that* _____ *for* _____
[most specific — the one that makes you slightly nervous].

4. Four ways to visibly build your expertise...

"Positioning is a decision. Not a discovery."

- Blair Enns, *The Win Without Pitching Manifesto*

Claiming your position is the start. Building the visible expertise to back it up is what converts a claim into authority.

Enns identifies four specific, practical ways to do this.

You don't need to do all four at once.

The recommendation is to start with one, execute it consistently, and add the next when the first becomes a habit.

Publishing:

Write about the specific challenges your target clients face. Not just generic tips, but specific, opinionated content about the pressures your ideal clients are navigating right now.

- Write one 500-800-word article per week on a sector-specific topic.
- Publish on LinkedIn, on your website, and in the sector's key newsletter or journal.
- Take a clear point of view. Agreeing with everything is invisible.
- One article that makes a business owner think 'they really get us' is worth a thousand promotional posts.

Speaking:

Find the events where your target clients gather. Show up and share a perspective, not a sales pitch. The expert speaking at the industry breakfast isn't selling; they're demonstrating.

- Identify the three or four sector events your ideal clients attend each year.
- Start by attending. Volunteer to introduce speakers. Then pitch for a 15-minute slot.
- Your talk should teach something genuinely useful, not be a thinly veiled pitch.
- One speaking opportunity generates referrals for months.

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

Research:

Run a survey, compile benchmarks.

Produce a 'state of the sector' report. Data is authority.

The firm that owns the data becomes the firm others reference and eventually call.

- Survey 30–50 businesses in your niche on a pressing challenge they share.
- Write a short report (4–8 pages) with the findings and your interpretation.
- Distribute via email, LinkedIn, and sector associations.
- Repeat annually to build a body of longitudinal data.

A point of view:

What do you believe that most competitors in your market don't?

That belief, stated clearly and argued well, is rarer and more valuable than any credential.

- Write your one-page manifesto for your chosen sector.
- What is broken in how businesses in your niche are served? What do you do differently, and why?
- Share it on your website under a heading like 'Our Belief' or 'What We Stand For'.
- This is your intellectual property; it attracts clients who share your worldview.

Enns's rule: Pick one of the four. Write 500 words on the sector-specific topic you know best. Publish it. That is the first brick. Habits compound. One brick a week becomes a wall within 12 months.

5. Your weekly habits and 90-day action plan – putting expert positioning into practice...

"The specialist's knowledge compounds. The more clients you serve in a specific sector, the more patterns you see, the better your advice becomes, and the more trustworthy and valuable you become. Each client makes the next one easier to win."

— Blair Enns, *The Win Without Pitching Manifesto*

Expert positioning is not a project with a start date and an end date. It is a practice and a set of habits that, done consistently, compound into authority, reputation, and inbound demand. The firms that successfully make the shift are the ones that build positioning activity into their week, not their wishlist.

Enns suggests that just 30 minutes a week, invested consistently and without fail, is enough to achieve a measurable shift within 12 months. The table below gives you a structured rhythm to follow.

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

| Habit | Frequency | Example |
|---|----------------|---|
| Publish one piece of niche content | Weekly | Blog post, LinkedIn article, newsletter |
| Engage with one sector community | Weekly | Comment, forum, association group |
| Reach out to one potential referrer | Fortnightly | Introduce yourself as the specialist |
| Attend one sector event or webinar | Monthly | Listen and network; don't pitch |
| Review and update your positioning sentence | Quarterly | Sharpen it as your expertise deepens |
| Produce a sector insight or data piece | Quarterly | Survey, benchmark, trend report |
| Speak at one sector event | Every 6 months | Association, conference, online panel |

Then use the planner below to commit to your first 90 days of positioning activity. Tick off each action as you complete it. Share this with your team so they can hold you to it.

| Action | When | Done ✓ |
|--|------------|--------------------------|
| Write your expert intention sentence | Week 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Audit your current client base and identify clusters | Week 1–2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Choose your positioning axis | Week 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Identify the sector events where your ideal client gathers | Week 2–3 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Write and publish your first niche content piece | Week 3–4 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Join one sector association or community | Week 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Set up a LinkedIn content rhythm (weekly posts) | Month 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Brief your team on the new positioning | Month 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Attend your first sector event | Month 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Commission or run a piece of sector research | Month 4–6 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Seek a speaking slot at a sector event | Month 6–12 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

The Virtuous Cycle:

Serve your niche.

Learn more.

Become better at serving it.

Attract more clients.

Charge more.

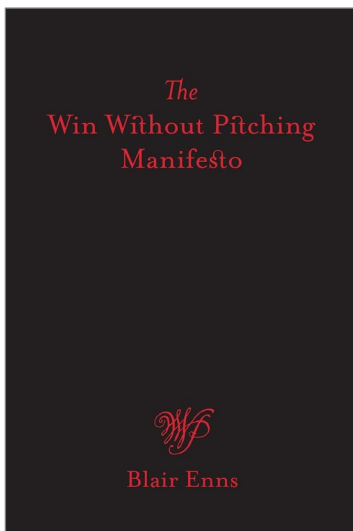
Each client makes the next one easier to win.

Each year, the compound interest of deep expertise widens your advantage over every generalist in your market.

REMEMBER: The expert is the prize, not the contestant.

When you are genuinely positioned as the expert, clients call you. They arrive having already decided they want to work with you. The conversation does not begin with 'tell me about your services', but 'how do we start?'

6. The books and other resources



The Win Without Pitching Manifesto, by Blair Enns, is a sharp, contrarian take on how creative and service businesses win work. Instead of chasing clients through pitches and proposals, Enns argues for a complete shift: specialise, position yourself as an expert, and lead the relationship on your terms. The book is structured as a set of bold “proclamations” that challenge deeply ingrained habits, such as giving away thinking for free or competing on price, and replaces them with a more disciplined, expert-led approach. It’s short, direct, and often uncomfortable, but that’s the point: it pushes you to rethink how you sell, whom you serve, and how much control you actually have in your business.

[Click here to access the book.](#)

What people said about the book:

“Enn’s ideas have been widely adopted in agency and consulting leadership thinking. His “death to the pitch” philosophy positions him as a respected authority in creative business strategy rather than a traditional marketer.” – Forbes

“This book should be read by every creative who sells their work and every creative agency leader. Blair is shaking the agency world up and bringing us into the 21st century. If you want to be paid more and have less competition, then take heed of the principles explained in this book. Fantastic book and easy to read.” – HBR

Bitesize Business Breakthrough



...in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

Expertise Builds Value

Support tools and resources

If you want to hear more about what Blair Enns has to say on expert positioning, then please watch the 'Consulting Success' podcast.

In this conversation, he shares:

- His counterintuitive decision to stop chasing scale and instead re-engineer his business for simplicity and fulfilment.
- His entire sales system.
- The Four Conversations framework, designed to help experts stop acting like salespeople and start showing up as the discerning, in-demand advisors they are.
- The single biggest mistake experts make in sales.
- Why moving 'down market' is a trap.
- How to close deals without ever pitching.

Watch the video below:

