AIEBOOKGENERATOR.AI EDITION

The Independent Consultant's Offer Map

A practical way to explain custom work without flattening it

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CHAPTER 1

Name the decision behind the request

A prospect rarely arrives with a clean description of the problem. They ask for a workshop, a strategy, a new website, or "some help with positioning." The requested deliverable is visible. The decision underneath it is usually not.

That hidden decision is where a useful offer starts.

Imagine a consultant who helps small professional firms improve client onboarding. A prospect asks for an onboarding playbook. It would be easy to price a document, count the pages, and begin writing. But the firm may actually be stuck on a harder question: which promises should every new client hear, and which parts of delivery can each account lead adapt?

The playbook is one possible output. The decision is about consistency and discretion.

Listen for the moment after the deliverable

Ask what should become easier once the work is complete. A vague answer such as "onboarding will be better" is not enough. Stay with the practical scene.

- What should a new client understand by the end of week one?
- Which decision is the team making differently?
- What currently gets repeated, delayed, or corrected?

- Who needs to trust the result before it can be used?

The answers give the engagement a center. They also reveal whether the requested deliverable can carry the weight placed on it.

Write a boundary before a promise

A strong boundary does not make an offer sound smaller. It tells the buyer where your judgment is concentrated.

For the onboarding example, the consultant might write: "I help the leadership team define the non-negotiable client experience and turn it into a working sequence for the first 30 days. I do not implement the firm's CRM or train every account lead."

That sentence leaves room for custom work while removing two expensive assumptions.

Try the same move with your own service:

> *I help [specific group] decide [specific decision] so they can [observable change]. The engagement includes [core work] and does not include [adjacent work].*

The wording is not website copy yet. It is an operating constraint. If you cannot fill it in without stacking several unrelated outcomes together, your offer may contain more than one decision.

Keep the buyer's language, then sharpen it

You do not need to repeat a prospect's phrasing word for word. You do need to preserve what they recognize. "Design a governance model" may be accurate inside your practice and useless in the first conversation. "Decide who can change the onboarding sequence without creating five versions" gives the buyer a scene they have probably lived.

Collect the phrases people use when they describe the mess. Then translate them into a decision that can be completed. The offer map begins with that pair: the familiar problem on one side and the decision you are equipped to guide on the other.

CHAPTER 2

Build the four-part map

Once the central decision is clear, map the engagement on one page. Four boxes are enough: starting condition, decision path, evidence, and handoff.

This is not a funnel diagram. It is a compact explanation of how your judgment enters the work.

1. Starting condition

Describe the situation that makes the engagement timely. Use evidence the buyer can recognize before hiring you.

For the onboarding consultant, the starting condition might include three symptoms: clients receive different instructions from different account leads, kickoff meetings keep reopening questions already covered in sales, and nobody owns the first 30 days as a whole.

Avoid turning this box into a list of every pain your work could touch. Two or three connected symptoms make a stronger entry point than twelve generic frustrations.

2. Decision path

Name the sequence of decisions, not the calendar of meetings. The same work can take four weeks or eight weeks, but the reasoning usually has a stable order.

1. Choose the promises that every client should experience.
2. Identify the moments where variation is useful.
3. Assign ownership for each message and action.

4. Test the sequence against two recent client cases.

This list tells a prospect what participation will feel like. It also helps you spot a request that skips a necessary decision.

3. Evidence

What will count as a sound decision? Evidence may include customer interviews, support tickets, delivery records, observed meetings, an audit of current materials, or a controlled pilot. The point is not to make the engagement look academic. It is to show that recommendations will have something firmer underneath them than preference.

Separate supplied evidence from evidence you will collect. If a buyer must provide six months of support logs before the first workshop, say so. A hidden dependency becomes a delay later.

4. Handoff

Finish the map with the state the client can maintain without you. A set of files is not a handoff by itself.

The onboarding consultant might leave a 30-day sequence, message templates, ownership notes, and a review ritual for future changes. The leadership team should know how to update the system without quietly undoing the decisions that made it coherent.

Read the map for gaps

Put the four boxes side by side and ask:

- Does every step respond to the starting condition?
- Is each promised output supported by a decision or evidence source?

- Can the client maintain the result after the engagement?
- Have I named work that depends on another specialist?

If one box is crowded while another is vague, resist polishing the wording. The imbalance is useful. It is showing you where the offer still relies on intuition that has not been made visible.

CHAPTER 3

Work a realistic example

Consider Nora, a fictional operations consultant who works with boutique agencies. Her clients keep asking for "better project management." Nora has delivered software recommendations, process audits, team workshops, and reporting templates. The work is useful, but every proposal feels newly invented.

She starts by reviewing five recent engagements. In four of them, the visible request was a tool or process. The deeper decision was the same: how should work move when a client changes priorities after the team has already committed its week?

That observation gives Nora a narrower offer without forcing every agency into one process.

Nora's first map

Starting condition: Project plans are treated as fixed until an urgent request appears. Then work moves through private messages, the team absorbs the change, and delivery dates become unreliable.

Decision path: Define what qualifies as a priority change; decide who can accept it; make the tradeoff visible; test the rule against three recent changes.

Evidence: Current planning boards, change requests from the last 60 days, short interviews with one account lead and two delivery leads, and observation of one weekly planning meeting.

Handoff:A priority-change rule, a visible tradeoff template, owner responsibilities, and a two-week pilot review.

The map is specific, but it does not prescribe a particular project management platform. Nora can work with the client's existing tools unless the evidence shows that the tools themselves block the decision.

What she removes

Nora's old proposal included a broad technology audit, a library of meeting templates, and optional manager training. Those pieces were not wrong. They simply competed with the central decision.

She moves the technology audit into a separate diagnostic option. She keeps one planning meeting template because it supports the pilot. Manager training becomes a possible follow-on engagement after the new rule has been tested.

Removing work gives the core engagement a better chance to succeed. It also makes follow-on work easier to discuss honestly. Nora no longer needs to pack every capability into the first sale.

What remains custom

The decision sequence is stable. The evidence and implementation are not.

One agency may need to involve a founder in every priority change above a revenue threshold. Another may give account leads more discretion but require them to name the work that will move. Nora can adapt the rule because the offer is organized around a decision, not a fixed template.

That is the useful tension in a consulting offer: enough structure for a buyer to understand, enough judgment for the work to respond to reality.

Test the example out loud

Nora explains the offer to a trusted peer without showing the map. Her peer can answer four questions afterward: who it is for, what decision it resolves, what the client must contribute, and what remains when Nora leaves.

If your listener remembers only the deliverables, return to the first box. If they remember a large promise but cannot describe the path, tighten the middle. A map earns its place when another person can retell the logic without borrowing your exact words.

CHAPTER 4

Use the map in a sales conversation

An offer map is not a script to read at a prospect. It is a way to keep the conversation from collapsing into a list of deliverables too early.

Begin with the starting condition. Ask the prospect which parts are familiar and where your picture is wrong. Their corrections matter more than a polished introduction.

Move through the map as questions

The four boxes can become a natural sequence:

1. What changed that makes this worth solving now?
2. Which decision keeps getting reopened?
3. What evidence is already available?
4. Who must be able to maintain the result?

You may discover that the prospect is not ready for the full engagement. Perhaps the evidence is scattered, the decision owner is absent, or two leaders want different outcomes. That is not a failed call. It is useful qualification.

Price the responsibility, not the page count

The map helps you see what you are taking responsibility for. A short recommendation can carry significant responsibility when it depends on sensitive interviews, contested tradeoffs, or a decision with expensive consequences. A large set of templates can be lower risk when the client has already made the hard choices.

Price still depends on your market, experience, capacity, and business model. The map does not produce a universal number. It does stop you from treating every output as if effort were the only thing a client is buying.

Keep a visible change rule

Custom work changes. Decide in advance how the map will change with it.

When a prospect asks for an added workshop, connect the request to the decision path. Does the workshop replace another evidence source, support an existing decision, or introduce a new outcome? The answer tells you whether to adjust the plan, revise scope, or create a separate piece of work.

A simple change note can record:

- the new request;
- the decision it supports;
- the effect on timing, responsibility, and price;
- what will be removed or moved if capacity is fixed.

This keeps flexibility from becoming silent expansion.

Let the map improve after delivery

After the engagement, compare the map with what happened. Which evidence changed the direction? Which step was unnecessary? Where did the client need more support at handoff?

Do not turn one project into a rigid doctrine. Look for patterns across several projects. The map should become more accurate, not more crowded.

The next useful version may have fewer words than the first. If a buyer can see their situation, understand the decision, and judge the path without a long explanation, the map is doing its job.