How to open a homepage-building the hero section

Creating interest by opening with an answer to a question the visitor has yet to ask

Gates. **Relevance: primary.** Credibility: secondary. Proof: secondary. Safety: no. Access: secondary.

A homepage opens by naming a condition the visitor recognizes. The firm comes fourth. Reverse that order and the page spends its first screen answering a question nobody arrived with.

Questions this guide answers

- What should our homepage say before it starts talking about our firm?
- What should come before our positioning and credentials on a homepage?
- How can we test whether a first-time visitor understands our homepage?

The symptom

The site got rebuilt last year.

Better looking, faster, cleaner on a phone, photography that cost real money, and a build that ran a few months longer than anybody planned. The old one was embarrassing and this one isn't. The rebuild fixed everything a rebuild can fix.

The enquiries didn't change.

Nobody says that out loud, because thirty people signed off and the thing works. Traffic may even be up. What lands in the inbox looks like what landed before: same volume, same mix, same share of people asking for something the firm doesn't sell.

Your next client is searching right now. Only one of you knows it.

Why it keeps happening

A homepage gets written by the people who know the firm best, which is exactly why it opens with the firm.

Every internal reviewer already knows the answer to *is this about me*. They've known it for years... so nobody in the room notices the question was never asked. The draft reads fine to all of them. It reads fine because each of them arrives holding context the visitor doesn't have.

We've made that mistake on our own site. Not once, and not early on either. The page that finally worked opened on a condition rather than a credential, and the only thing that changed was which sentence went first.

Then the page goes to consensus. The partner in the second practice group wants their work represented. Recruiting needs the culture line. A managing partner strikes the sentence that felt too narrow, and the strike is defensible, since the firm does more than that one thing. Every edit is reasonable by itself. Together they widen the opening until it covers everything and locates nothing.

Consensus produces breadth. Breadth is the enemy of the first screen.

Many established firms stumble right here. They carry real experience, then wrap it in language so broad that the buyer can't locate the relevant piece inside the specific situation.

What the buyer is doing at the Relevance gate

Deciding whether to keep reading. That's the whole of it, and it takes a few seconds.

The visitor arrived carrying a situation and they're scanning for it. History, values, and an integrated multidisciplinary approach give them nothing to match against, so they leave without ever forming a view on whether the firm is any good. The Credibility question never opened. The market can't value what it can't see.

There's a second reader now, and it doesn't scroll. A 2025 G2 survey of 1,169 B2B buyers put vendor websites third as an influence on shortlists, behind generative AI chatbots at the top and review sites second. That's self-reported influence collected by a company that runs a review platform, and it should be read that way. The structural point survives the caveat anyway: the page's first reader is often a crawler, and what circulates afterwards is a paraphrase assembled largely from sources the firm doesn't own. A homepage written for brand impression gives that paraphrase nothing specific to carry. A firm that reads as generic to a human reads as nothing at all to a machine.

Don't start with AI parsing. A generic firm doesn't become distinct just because its pages read neatly to a machine. That's the professional-services version of dressing for the scanner instead of the meeting. Start with the problem, then build evidence showing a true understanding.

The correction

Rebuild the top of the page against a fixed order, and treat the order as a constraint rather than a suggestion.

This is the working order I recommend for a page that has to earn a stranger's attention. A visitor who already knows the firm and wants to talk should still be able to find the contact route without working through the whole argument.

Audience recognition. Problem framing. Why-now context. Firm positioning. Method or approach. Credibility indicators. Proof preview. Next step.

The firm appears fourth. That ordering does real work, because the first three steps earn the attention that positioning then spends. Move positioning to the top and everything after it's being read by somebody who hasn't yet decided the page is about them.

Then make the first screen do one job. Name a condition the visitor recognizes, in language they'd use, before the page names the firm. One condition. The temptation is to name four so no practice group goes unrepresented, and four conditions read the same as none.

Fix the next step while you're in there. It matches the visitor's readiness. Early visitors get a resource, an insight, or an explanation. Later ones get a consultation. Offering a consultation to a first-time visitor asks for more than the reader has agreed to, which is what most homepage buttons do, at the exact moment the reader is still deciding whether the page is worth another ten seconds.

The site should read as one controlled argument rather than a collection of pages. A designer working page by page will produce compositions that each look right on their own and never accumulate into anything, and the homepage is where that shows first. Distance gets closed on the page long before anyone schedules a call.

Before and after

Before. *Founded in 1994, the firm delivers integrated solutions across audit, tax, and advisory. Our people-first culture and commitment to excellence have earned the trust of clients nationwide.*

After. *You're being asked to sell a plant carrying two years of deferred maintenance, and the diligence starts in eleven weeks. Most of what that costs gets decided before the buyer's team arrives. Start with the checklist we give sellers in the first thirty days.*

What backfires

Trading one generic opening for another. A problem statement can be every bit as broad as a positioning statement, and *businesses today face unprecedented complexity* is worse than the boilerplate it replaced, because now the page is vague and pleased with itself.

Run this on your own material

Read your homepage aloud to one person who fits the buyer you're after. A client you're friendly with. A former colleague sitting in the seat you sell to. Stop at the end of the first screen, before you get to the part you're proud of.

Then ask one question: what problem does this firm solve?

If they answer by describing what the firm sells, the opening failed. If they answer by describing something they're dealing with, it worked. Don't set it up, don't coach, and don't defend the page when the answer comes back wrong.

There's a separate test in the library that counts sentences across the three pages a prospect is most likely to land on. This one is faster and harder to argue with, because you have to sit there and hear the answer.

Signals you've cleared it

Advance when a first-time reader can restate the problem before they can name your service lines. When enquiries start arriving with the situation already described in the sender's own words. When

somebody says the page felt like it was written for them, which is a low bar that most professional-services sites don't clear. When the first call opens at how you work rather than at what do you do.

Hold when the opening still requires the visitor to translate. Hold when the first screen names four conditions to keep four practice groups happy, which is the consensus edit reappearing after the rebuild. Hold when traffic improved and the mix of enquiries didn't, since the page is being found and not recognized. Hold too when the only next step offered is a consultation.

Where this connects

Engagement Success in an AI World · Proximity is No Longer Measured in Miles, on becoming the firm closest to the problem.

Research Library · Entry 15, AI-mediated discovery.

Next move · Relevance clearing opens Credibility. Go to *How to introduce your team*.