

# COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE MAPPING

## WORKSHEET

### STRATEGIC POSITIONING TOOL

Understand Competitors, Alternatives, and Strategic Positioning

7 SECTIONS

VISUAL MAP

STRATEGY TOOL

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## Introduction

Every startup competes with something. Founders who believe they have no competitors are usually describing their own awareness of the space — not their customer's reality. Customers always have alternatives, even if those alternatives are imperfect, expensive, or inconvenient.

### Competition exists across four categories:

<b>DIRECT</b>	Other businesses solving the exact same problem for the same customer.
<b>INDIRECT</b>	Solutions that address a related need or compete for the same budget.
<b>SUBSTITUTE</b>	Different approaches that achieve the same outcome for the customer.
<b>DO NOTHING</b>	The customer chooses inaction — often your most common real competitor.

**What this worksheet helps you build:** A structured view of who you are competing with, how you are different, where the market is underserved, and what risks need to be managed. Complete it before finalizing your positioning, pitch, or go-to-market strategy.

## SECTION 1

## Problem Context

Anchor the competitive analysis in the problem being solved. Every competitor assessment should be viewed through the customer's lens — not the founder's product roadmap.

**What problem are you solving?**

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**Who is the primary customer experiencing this problem?**

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**What triggers the customer to look for a solution? (Event, pain point, deadline, cost threshold)**

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**How do customers currently solve this problem — what are their most common go-to alternatives today?**

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## SECTION 2

## Competitor Identification

List every competitor you have identified — direct, indirect, substitute, and DIY/internal solutions. Assign each a letter label (A–H). These letters will be referenced in Sections 3 and 4.

#	COMPETITOR NAME	TYPE	CUSTOMER SEGMENT	CORE OFFERING	NOTES
A		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute <input type="checkbox"/> DIY / Internal			
B		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute <input type="checkbox"/> DIY / Internal			
C		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute <input type="checkbox"/> DIY / Internal			
D		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute <input type="checkbox"/> DIY / Internal			
E		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute <input type="checkbox"/> DIY / Internal			
F		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute <input type="checkbox"/> DIY / Internal			
G		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute <input type="checkbox"/> DIY / Internal			
H		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute <input type="checkbox"/> DIY / Internal			

*Research tip: Search competitor reviews on G2, Capterra, Reddit, and App Store listings to understand what customers say they are replacing. That language reveals the real competitive set.*

**SECTION 3**

## Competitor Feature Comparison

Compare your solution against your top three competitors across key capabilities. Be objective — genuine gaps are more valuable than flattering comparisons.

<b>COMPETITOR REFERENCE:</b>	A = _____	B = _____	C = _____
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FEATURE / CAPABILITY	YOUR SOLUTION	COMPETITOR A	COMPETITOR B	COMPETITOR C	NOTES
<b>Core Product Features</b>					
<b>Ease of Use / UX Quality</b>					
<b>Pricing Model</b>					
<b>Customer Support</b>					
<b>Distribution / Sales Channels</b>					
<b>Customization Options</b>					
<b>Speed of Implementation</b>					

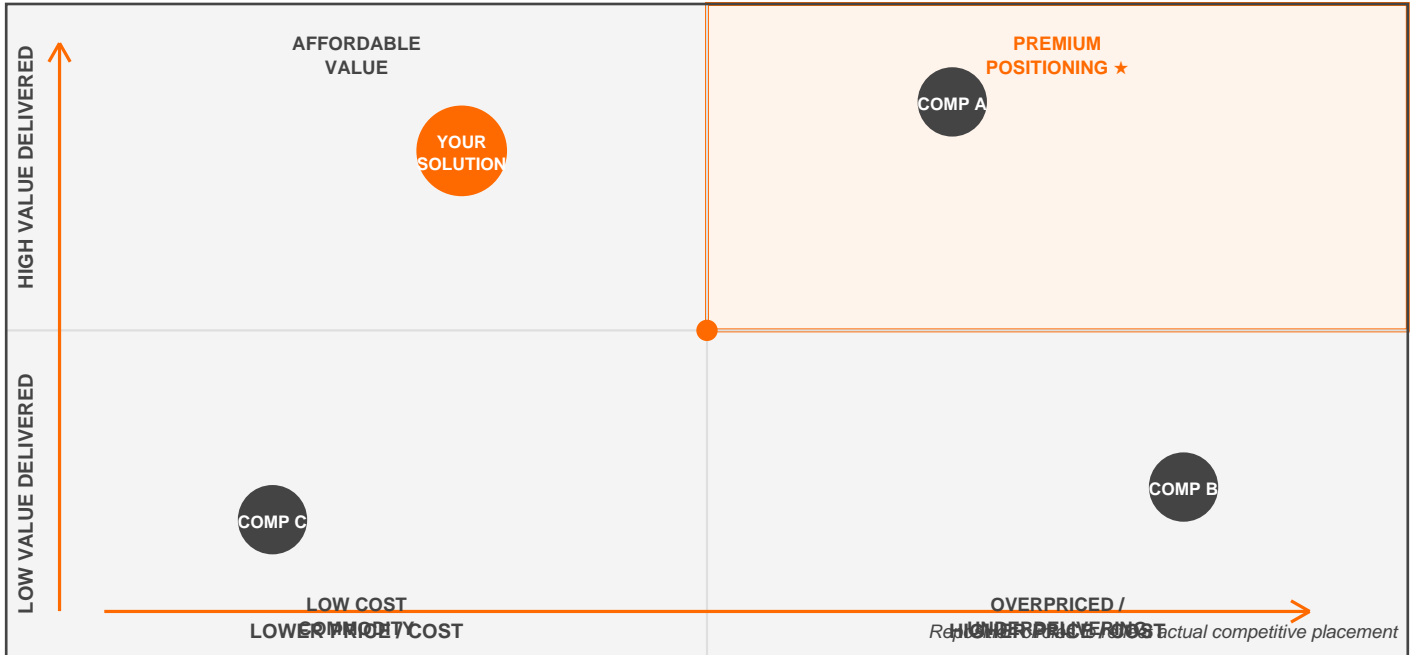
*Rating guide: ✓✓ = Strong · ✓ = Adequate · ■ = Weak · X = Missing / None. Consistent patterns across columns reveal where differentiation is possible.*

**SECTION 4**

# Competitive Positioning Map

Plot each competitor on the map using their letter label. Your solution should ideally occupy white space — a position that competitors have not claimed.

**How to read this map:** The best strategic position is where value delivered is high and the market is either underserved or overpriced. If your solution sits in the same quadrant as a dominant competitor, ask: what differentiation will win that customer?



● YOUR SOLUTION    ● COMPETITOR A-H    ■ TARGET QUADRANT (High Value / Accessible Price)

**Where does your solution sit — and does that position align with where your target customers are looking for a solution?**

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## SECTION 5

## Differentiation Analysis

Meaningful differentiation creates customer value and is difficult for competitors to replicate. Identify your strongest points of difference — and the proof that supports each claim.

DIFFERENTIATION FACTOR	HOW OUR SOLUTION IS DIFFERENT	CUSTOMER BENEFIT	EVIDENCE / PROOF
Core Product Features			
Technology Advantage			
Speed / Convenience			
Pricing Model			
Customer Experience / UX			
Distribution Strategy			
Domain Expertise / Credibility			

**Differentiation durability test:** If a well-funded competitor could replicate your advantage within 6 months, it is a feature — not a moat. The most durable differentiation comes from network effects, proprietary data, regulatory position, brand trust, or deeply embedded workflows.

**SECTION 6**

## Competitive Risks

Every competitive position carries risk. Identifying threats before they materialize allows you to build defenses proactively — not reactively.

COMPETITIVE RISK	POTENTIAL IMPACT	MITIGATION STRATEGY	NOTES
<b>Competitor Price Competition</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High		
<b>Brand Recognition Advantage</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High		
<b>Customer Switching Costs / Lock-in</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High		
<b>Technological Disruption</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High		
<b>New Entrant / Well-Funded Copycat</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High		
<b>Channel or Distribution Control</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High		
<b>Regulatory or Partnership Advantage</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Med <input type="checkbox"/> High		

Which of these risks is most likely to emerge in the next 12 months — and what early signal would indicate it is happening?

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SECTION 7

## Strategic Opportunity Gaps

Strategic gaps are positions in the market where customer needs exist but no current solution fully addresses them. These gaps represent your most durable positioning and growth opportunities.

**Where are competitors strongest? What do they consistently deliver well?**

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**Where are competitors weakest? What do customers most frequently complain about?**

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**Where does your solution create unique value that no competitor currently offers?**

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**What gap in the market appears underserved — and why have competitors failed to address it?**

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# Competitive Strategy Reflection

Crystallize your competitive thinking into three strategic conclusions. These answers should directly inform how you position, message, and differentiate your solution in the market.

## What is the single most important way your solution is different?

*State it in one sentence a customer — not a founder — would understand and care about.*

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## Which competitor represents the biggest threat — and why?

*Consider their resources, market position, distribution, and customer loyalty.*

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## What strategic advantage can you build that would be difficult to replicate?

*Think beyond features: data, relationships, workflow embedding, brand, or network effects.*

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Founder Signature

Date

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**Steven Mitts · Digital Startup Playbook · Premium Founder Framework**

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