

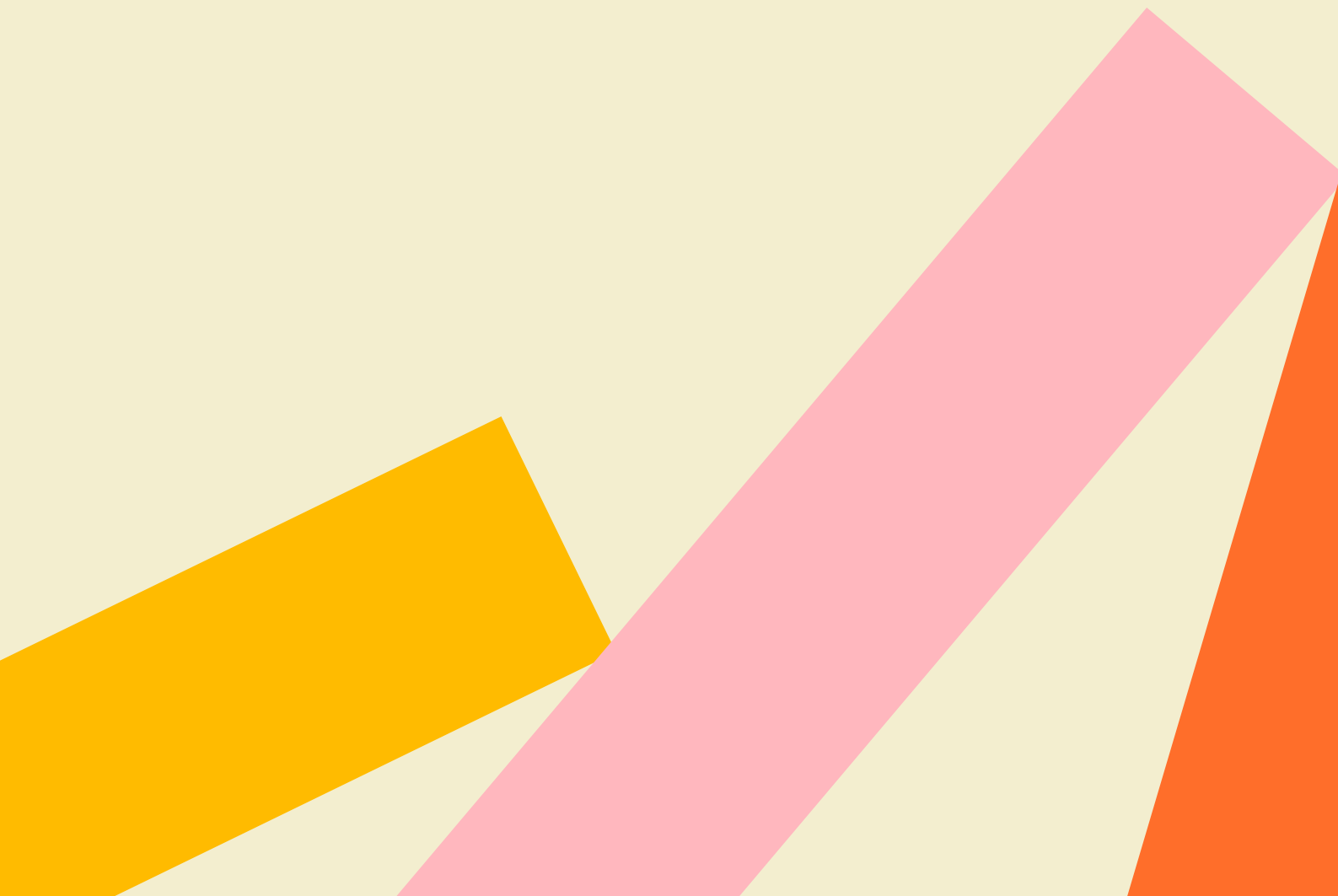
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**fronteer**

# HOW TO DESIGN WINNING PROPOSITIONS

Unlocking 16 years of experience in  
creating propositions that work



# COLOFON

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## ABOUT FRONTEER

We are a diverse team of connectors, strategists, designers and support staff, excited to contribute to progress. Our approach combines the structured creativity of Design Thinking, the holistic approach of Systems Thinking, with the bottom-line impact focus of Entrepreneurial thinking.

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# YOU CAN ONLY MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION ONCE – WHY GREAT PROPOSITIONS MATTER

In today's dynamic and competitive market, creating impactful propositions is no longer optional, it's essential. As customer expectations rise and industries evolve, a well-designed proposition can set a business apart. It inspires loyalty, drives innovation, and delivers lasting value for both customers and organisations. But what makes a proposition truly successful? And how can businesses adapt to the demands of a rapidly changing world?

## ABOUT THIS WHITEPAPER & FRONTEER

This whitepaper shares 16 years of insights and expertise from Fronteer. It explores the principles and strategies that have shaped impactful propositions, offering a practical roadmap for organisations seeking to stand out.

At Fronteer, we specialise in research, strategy, innovation, and coalition-building. For over 16 years, we've partnered with organisations like **KLM, Heineken, Bugaboo, and Philips** to craft propositions that redefine industries. Co-creation is at the heart of what we do, bringing together diverse perspectives, customers, partners, and experts, to create solutions that resonate

## WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- **Key characteristics of successful propositions:** What makes a proposition stand out and deliver impact?
- **Common pitfalls:** Why do many propositions fail, and how can organisations overcome these obstacles?
- **Fronteer's approach:** Insights into the methods and tools that have driven our successes.
- **Future trends:** A look at the emerging forces shaping proposition development in the next decade.

## LET'S GET STARTED

Through case studies, actionable insights, and future trends, this whitepaper equips you with the tools to design propositions that work and **set great things in motion.**

**"GREAT PROPOSITIONS START WITH UNDERSTANDING, THRIVE WITH CO-CREATION, AND SUCCEED THROUGH VALIDATION."**



# THREE COMMON PITFALLS WHEN DESIGNING PROPOSITIONS

Designing a successful proposition requires insight, creativity, and a disciplined approach, yet even the most experienced organisations can fall into common traps. Over 16 years of working with diverse clients, Fronteer has identified three pitfalls that often undermine the potential of otherwise strong ideas. Recognising and addressing these challenges is essential to building propositions that truly resonate and succeed.

## 1. FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE PRODUCT INSTEAD OF THE CUSTOMER

One of the most frequent missteps is a product-first mindset, where teams fall in love with their own idea and lose focus on the customer. This often leads to propositions that solve non-existent problems or fail to address genuine customer needs. Successful propositions start with deep customer insights, focusing on their pains, gains, and aspirations. By staying obsessed with the customer, organisations can design products and services that customers really want.

## 2. TRYING TO PLEASE EVERYONE

In an attempt to capture as much market-share as possible, often too broad an audience is targeted. This approach dilutes the proposition's appeal, leaving it vague and unfocused. Instead, successful propositions are laser-focused, crafted for specific, well-defined target groups. By understanding the unique needs and desires of a carved-out audience, organisations can excite and engage them in a way that generic propositions cannot

## 3. AVOIDING FEEDBACK AND TESTING

Many organisations hesitate to expose their ideas to criticism, delaying testing and iteration until it's too late. This "test avoidance" mindset can lead to costly missteps, as assumptions remain unvalidated. The most successful propositions embrace early and frequent validation, using real-world feedback to refine and improve. This iterative process helps teams avoid major pitfalls and ensures the final proposition is robust and well-aligned with customer needs.

**"TEST EARLY, REFINE OFTEN, SUCCEED FASTER."**

## OVERCOMING THESE PITFALLS

By avoiding these common traps, organisations can unlock the true potential of their propositions. Start with the customer, focus sharply on your target audience, and welcome criticism as an opportunity to learn and adapt. These principles lie at the heart of Fronteer's approach to proposition design, helping businesses create solutions that stand out, and deliver impact. In the next chapter we will guide you through our toolbox for successful proposition design.

**"GREAT PROPOSITIONS START WITH UNDERSTANDING YOUR CUSTOMER."**



# WHAT MAKES A PROPOSITION SUCCESSFUL, AND WHAT DOESN'T?

Crafting a successful proposition is both an art and a science. At its core, a proposition must solve real customer problems, drive measurable impact, and align seamlessly with a brand's purpose. Yet, even with the best intentions, organisations often stumble upon barriers that hinder their efforts. By understanding what makes a proposition successful, and recognising common pitfalls, organisations can create offerings that resonate and thrive.

## THE ELEMENTS OF A WINNING PROPOSITION

A successful proposition is more than a compelling idea, it's a solution that delivers tangible value and long-term impact. It must check five key boxes:

1. **Relevance:** It solves a genuine problem or fulfils a pressing need
2. **Differentiation:** It stands out from competitors by offering unique value
3. **Clarity:** It communicates its purpose and benefits simply and effectively
4. **Scalability:** It has the potential to grow and evolve with market dynamics
5. **Sustainability:** It aligns with societal and environmental priorities, building trust and loyalty

## BARRIERS TO BREAKTHROUGHS

Promising propositions often fail when organisations face common hurdles, such as shallow audience insights, disconnected teams, or poor differentiation in crowded markets. Short-sightedness prioritises quick wins over lasting value, while fear of bold ideas leads to uninspired, forgettable solutions. Overcoming these barriers is crucial to unlocking a proposition's true potential.

**"SUCCESS LIES IN CREATING PROPOSITIONS THAT ARE MORE THAN JUST PRODUCTS OR SERVICES."**

## THE SECRET TO STAYING AHEAD

Success lies in creating propositions that are more than just products or services, they are experiences, solutions, and movements. The journey to a winning proposition begins with understanding your audience, choosing the right customer segment, and embracing the courage to test and ask feedback.



# OUR TOOLBOX FOR SUCCESSFUL PROPOSITION DESIGN

Crafting a winning proposition requires a structured yet flexible approach that balances creativity with strategic precision. At Fronteer, our Design Thinking-based toolbox focuses on understanding needs, fostering co-creation, and driving innovation. Over 16 years, we've refined this framework to ensure every proposition delivers impact and aligns with business objectives. Through these tools lasting propositions were developed such as Heineken Extra Cold Beer, KPN Compleet, and the KLM Crown Lounge.

Our toolbox consists of three phases: Frame, Design, and Strategy, each playing a vital role in shaping propositions that are relevant, innovative, scalable, and sustainable.

## FRAME: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

This phase focusses on building a deep understanding of the target audience and the environment in which they operate. We uncover critical insights about customer needs, market dynamics, and stakeholder relationships. Tools like focus groups and Umfeld analysis allow us to explore external influences and trends, creating a complete picture that informs the next steps.

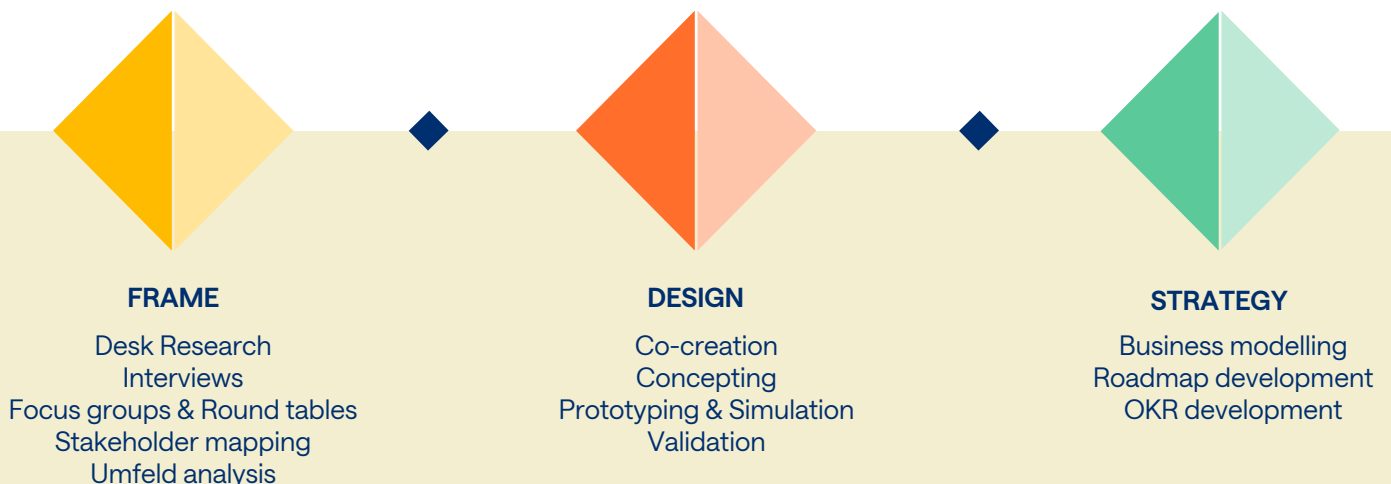
## DESIGN: CREATING HUMAN-CENTERED SOLUTIONS

This phase is where ideas come to life. In co-creation we bring diverse perspectives together to generate innovative concepts. These ideas are refined through prototyping and validation, ensuring they are both feasible and desirable. This iterative approach allows us to test solutions early and often, making adjustments based on real-world feedback to ensure the final proposition resonates with its audience.

## STRATEGY: ALIGNMENT WITH BUSINESS GOALS

The final phase translates ideas into actionable plans. Business modelling defines value delivery, roadmap development sets the implementation path, and OKRs measure success. This ensures propositions are innovative, scalable, and impactful.

By blending qualitative and quantitative insights, co-creation, and rigorous validation, we develop propositions that solve real problems and stand out in the market.



# SOME OF FRONTIER'S MOST INSPIRING CASES

## KLM – THE CROWN LOUNGE, A DESTINATION IN ITS OWN RIGHT

How do you transform an airport lounge into a memorable destination that transcends its functional purpose? That was the challenge for KLM's Crown Lounge. By reimagining the lounge as a city with distinct neighbourhoods, we created an immersive experience catering to travellers with diverse needs, preferences, and time zones. From quiet zones for relaxation to vibrant areas for networking, each space was designed with a clear purpose. The result? A groundbreaking concept that not only elevated the travel experience but also reinforced KLM's brand as an innovator in premium travel services.



## BUGABOO – EXPANDING THE SUCCESSFUL RANGE OF STROLLERS

Bugaboo, an icon in the world of strollers, sought to grow its market presence without compromising its brand identity. Our challenge was to explore untapped opportunities within the stroller market while staying true to Bugaboo's innovative ethos. Through co-creation sessions with Bugaboo users we uncovered diverse preferences, from sleek and minimalist designs to sturdy, all-terrain options. This insight led to the development of a broader portfolio that addressed these varied needs, driving growth and strengthening customer loyalty.



## SCHWEPPE'S – HOW TO WIN IN THE PREMIUM SEGMENT ACROSS EUROPE

With the rise of Fever Tree, the premium mixer market was heating up. Schweppes faced the challenge of retaining its leadership while appealing to an increasingly critical audience. Through global co-creation sessions with lead consumers, bartenders, and industry experts, we redefined Schweppes' brand positioning with the launch of the "Schweppes Selection." This line was tailored to the premium market, blending tradition with modernity. By aligning with mixologists and showcasing versatility in cocktails, Schweppes reclaimed its place at the forefront of the premium segment, reinforcing its legacy as a sophisticated and timeless brand.



# SOME OF FRONTEER'S MOST INSPIRING CASES

## PHILIPS – WE ARE DIFFERENT: A BRAND TOOL FOR PHILIPS LUMEA

Hair removal is personal, and Philips Lumea wanted a brand story that resonated with women's diverse routines, skin tones, and hair types. We co-created a narrative that celebrated individuality and choice. The result was "We Are Different," a brand tool that not only highlighted Lumea's IPL technology but also empowered women to embrace their unique beauty journeys. Through compelling storytelling and visual campaigns, Philips Lumea communicated inclusivity and innovation, redefining its position in the beauty tech market.



## KPN – INTRODUCING KPN COMPLEET

How do you create bundled services that feel tailor-made rather than one-size-fits-all? For KPN, the challenge was to craft a proposition that balanced affordability with customization. We developed KPN Compleet, a package offering flexibility and value, allowing customers to mix and match services to suit their lifestyles. By focusing on customer insights and seamless integration, we not only fuelled growth but also set a new standard for service in the telecom industry. This innovative approach earned KPN an internal marketing award and a reputation for putting the customer first.



## HEINEKEN INTERNATIONAL – PROPOSITION STRATEGY FOR HEINEKEN EXTRA COLD

We created a global proposition strategy for Heineken Extra Cold (HEC), focusing on climate-specific opportunities and consumer preferences. Positioned as a premium, refreshing complement to regular Heineken, HEC employed tailored strategies for hot, warm, and cold regions to enhance brand differentiation and market appeal. As of 2024, HEC remains a vital part of Heineken's premium portfolio, offering a unique 0°C serving experience that continues to drive growth. HEC is part of Heineken's premium beer selection, which achieved a 4.5% volume growth in 2024, driven by the company's continued investment in its premium offerings.





# THE FUTURE OF PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

## IMPACTFUL TRENDS IN THE COMING 5-10 YEARS

The world of business is evolving at an unprecedented pace, influenced by rapidly advancing technologies, shifting consumer expectations, and pressing global challenges. To stay competitive and relevant, organisations must anticipate and embrace these changes in how they design and deliver propositions. Over the next 5–10 years, we believe that the following trends will shape the future of proposition development.

### 1. COLLABORATION AND ECOSYSTEM THINKING

The challenges organisations face today are too complex to tackle alone. The future of propositions lies in partnerships and ecosystems, where multiple stakeholders, such as companies, governments, NGOs, and consumers, collaborate to create shared value.

**EXAMPLE:** Apple's App Store ecosystem allows independent developers to thrive while enhancing the value of its core products.

→ **KEY ACTION:** Identify potential partners in your industry and build propositions that leverage shared resources and expertise to deliver greater impact.

### 2. SUSTAINABILITY AS A NON-NEGOTIABLE

Sustainability is no longer optional, it's expected. Customers, investors, and regulators now demand that companies focus on environmental and social impact.

Businesses that don't show clear efforts toward sustainability risk losing relevance and customers. Future propositions must include circular economy practices, reduce environmental harm, and provide measurable sustainability results.

**EXAMPLE:** Patagonia has gained loyal customers by focusing on repairability, resale, and recycling while promoting environmental change.

→ **KEY ACTION:** Make sustainability a core part of your offerings with clear metrics and commitments that matter to stakeholders.

### 3. UNCERTAINTY AND A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

The world is unpredictable, so businesses need flexible propositions that adapt to change. From pandemics to economic shifts, staying relevant means being agile and resilient. A modular approach to proposition design allows businesses to respond quickly to market feedback and evolving conditions.

**EXAMPLE:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, many restaurants successfully pivoted to delivery services, integrating new business models almost overnight.

→ **KEY ACTIONS:** Embrace a test-and-learn approach, iterating on propositions based on validation insights and feedback.



#### 4. PRECISION TARGETING AND MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

Finding the right target audience has become a cornerstone of successful propositions. Organisations must move beyond broad demographic categories to deeply understand the unique needs, behaviours, and values of smaller, more engaged customer segments. This shift toward precision targeting enables organisations to connect meaningfully with those who truly value their offerings.

**EXAMPLE:** Tony's Chocolonely, a purpose-driven chocolate brand, targets ethically conscious consumers who value fair trade and sustainability. By combining bold messaging with engaging storytelling about its mission to make all chocolate 100% slave-free

→ **KEY ACTION:** Use customer insights and co-creation methods to identify and engage the right customer segments, focusing on those with the highest potential for loyalty and advocacy.

#### OUR VISION ON THE FUTURE OF PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

At Fronteer, we believe that the key to leading in proposition development lies in continually evolving our approach to meet the demands of an ever-changing world. Over the next decade, we aim to strengthen our approach by focusing on the following areas:

#### CO-CREATION AS THE CORNERSTONE

Co-creation has always been central to our philosophy, and we will double down on engaging diverse stakeholders to craft propositions that resonate deeply and deliver lasting impact. By fostering open dialogue and leveraging a wide range of perspectives, we ensure our propositions are inclusive, relevant, and grounded in real-world insights.

#### CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY

We envision a world where every proposition contribute to the values of sustainability and positive societal impact. Fronteer will continue to guide organisations in creating offerings that not only meet market needs but also contribute to a better future. By embedding environmental and social considerations into every project, we aim to set a new standard for purpose-driven propositions.

#### FOCUS ON ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES

The world is unpredictable, and successful propositions must be designed to evolve. Fronteer will emphasise creating modular and adaptive strategies that allow organisations to pivot and grow in response to changing market dynamics. This focus on flexibility ensures that propositions remain relevant and valuable, even in uncertain or rapidly shifting environments.

**Let's co-create impactful propositions that truly resonate with your audience. Together, we set great things in motion**



## ABOUT FRONTEER

We are a diverse team of connectors, strategists, designers and support staff, excited to contribute to progress. Our approach combines the structured creativity of Design Thinking, the holistic approach of Systems Thinking, with the bottom-line impact focus of Entrepreneurial thinking.

# SET GREAT THINGS IN MOTION

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