



Moncur

**Find Your X Factor.
Fix Your Message.
Stop Blending In.**

AEC Brand Differentiation Workbook

This isn't a feel-good exercise.

It's a diagnostic tool for AEC firms serious about standing out in a market where everyone claims the same three things.

Set aside 20–30 minutes and answer honestly. The firms that get the most out of this are the ones willing to admit what's not working.

Work through it in order — the assessment on the next page will tell you exactly where your biggest opportunities are.

What You'll Walk Away With

1

A clear-eyed picture of where your marketing stands today

2

A one-sentence X Factor statement you can actually use

3

A 4 P's audit that surfaces exactly where your differentiation is leaking out

THE HONEST SELF-ASSESSMENT

Where does your marketing *actually* stand?

Answer each question honestly. Not where you wish you were — where you actually are. The gaps you identify here are the most valuable thing in this workbook.

POSITIONING & DIFFERENTIATION

Can you articulate what makes your firm different in one sentence?	YES	PARTLY	NO
Would every leader at your firm say the same thing about the company? The brand?	YES	PARTLY	NO
If you removed your logo from your website, would anyone outside of your company know it's yours?	YES	PARTLY	NO
Are your differentiators specific enough to be proven with data — not just claimed?	YES	PARTLY	NO
Do your best clients share a common characteristic that points to your niche?	YES	PARTLY	NO

DIGITAL FOUNDATION

Has your website had a meaningful strategic update in the past 12 months?	YES	PARTLY	NO
Does your homepage communicate who you are and why someone should care in five seconds?	YES	PARTLY	NO
Is your site, and its features, actually usable on a phone? (Check right now if you're not sure.)	YES	PARTLY	NO
Are you easily found when a prospect searches for your services in your market? Try doing a Google search for “[your primary service] in [your location(s)]” and see what the results are.	YES	PARTLY	NO

MARKETING EXECUTION

Do you publish new content to your website and social channels on a consistent schedule — not just when someone has time? **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Is marketing integrated with business development/sales, or do they operate in silos? **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Can you point to at least one lead or opportunity that came from marketing in the past 6 months? And back that up with data? **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Do you have the internal capacity to execute what you want to accomplish — or are you spread too thin? **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

MEASUREMENT

Do you know your proposal win rate? Has it changed in the past two years? **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Are you proactively tracking any marketing metrics consistently — not just when someone asks? **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

READ YOUR RESULTS.

MOSTLY “YES”

Your foundation is solid.

Use the following pages to sharpen your message and stress-test your differentiation.

MIX OF “YES” AND “PARTLY”

You have the instincts but not the system.

The next pages will show you where to focus.

MIX OF “PARTLY” AND “NO”

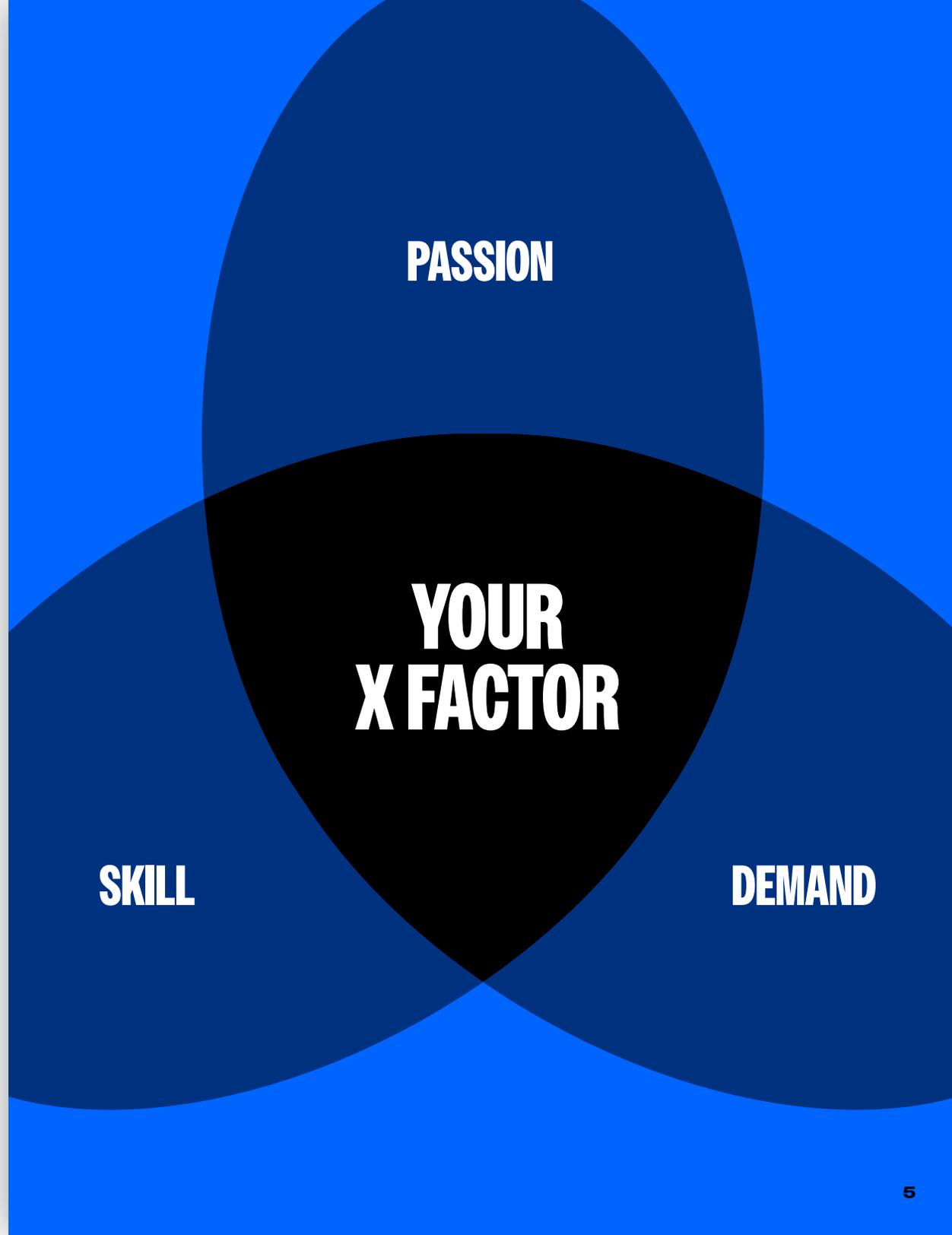
You’re not alone — this is where most AEC firms start.

The next two pages give you a clear path forward.

FIND YOUR X FACTOR.

**The one thing that makes
you the obvious choice.**

Your differentiator isn't invented in a brainstorm. It's discovered at the intersection of three things your firm already has. The goal of this exercise is to name it clearly enough that the right clients can find you — and remember you.



PASSION

What energizes your team?

Not what you can do — what do you want to do? What types of projects make your best people light up?

What project types or client challenges energize your team most?

What work would your best people choose, even if the options were wide open?

What does your firm care about that most competitors don't?

SKILL

Where are you genuinely better?

Not where you're competent — where do you have battle scars, pattern recognition, and hard-won lessons others haven't earned yet? Skill requires evidence.

Where do clients consistently say “we've never seen a firm do it that way”?

What have you figured out the hard way that other firms are still learning?

What can you point to — completed projects, measurable outcomes — that proves this?

DEMAND

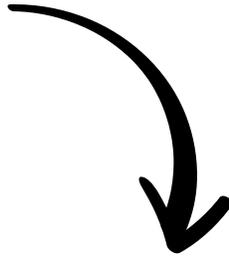
Where is the market need?

Passion and skill don't matter if nobody's buying. Is there a real market that needs what you do?

What client challenge keeps showing up in your best relationships?

Is the market for this work growing, stable, or shrinking?

PASSION + SKILL + DEMAND



YOUR X FACTOR.

Where do all three categories overlap?

Write it in one sentence.

It should be specific enough that a competitor couldn't claim it.

MY FIRM'S X FACTOR IS:

QUICK TEST

*Could a competitor say
the exact same thing?*

If yes, go deeper. The
right answer usually lives
one or two layers below
the obvious one.

THE 4 P's AUDIT

**Does your differentiation
actually show up in
your marketing?**

Most AEC firms have genuine differentiators buried in their capabilities — they just never make it into their marketing. Pull up your website, your last proposal, and your LinkedIn company page before you start.

- 1** Position
- 2** Process
- 3** Professionals
- 4** Portfolio

POSITION

What does the client actually walk away with?

*Most firms describe what they do. Few describe what the client gets.
Shift from capability to outcome.*

What specific benefit does a client receive from working with you that they can't get elsewhere?

Look at your top five clients. What do they have in common — by challenge, growth stage, or situation?

Quick check: What does your homepage describe?

Capabilities → Opportunity to improve

Client Outcomes → You're ahead of the curve

PROCESS

Is your methodology worth owning?

Standard phases say nothing about how you think or why your approach produces better results.

What do your project managers do that clients say they've never seen before?

What steps do you take that other firms consistently skip?

If you gave your approach a name that implied a specific outcome, what would it be?

Quick check: What do your proposals describe?

Generic Phases → Opportunity to improve

Methodology We Own → You're ahead of the curve

PROFESSIONALS

Do your bios reveal how your people think?

Clients aren't buying credentials. They're buying judgment, perspective, and a specific way of approaching problems.

What does your best PM know from experience that someone with the same resume wouldn't?

What perspective does your team bring that shapes how you approach problems?

Quick check: What do your team bios reveal?

Credentials → Opportunity to improve

Perspective → You're ahead of the curve

PORTFOLIO

Do your project descriptions report specs or tell stories?

Square footage documents what was built. Effective portfolio messaging connects deliverables to business outcomes.

For your last three projects, what was different about the client's business after the project?

What would have happened if the project had failed — or if they'd chosen a different firm?

Quick check: What do your project descriptions report?

Specs → Opportunity to improve

Stories → You're ahead of the curve

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE



The firms that grow fastest aren't always outspending the competition.

They're amplifying a focused, credible message instead of a generic one.

When you're ready to turn these answers into a messaging framework that works across your website, proposals, and business development — that's the work Moncur does.

thinkmoncur.com

