THE CLEANTECH FOUNDER'S
Marketing Readiness Assessment
Is Your Story Ready to Scale?

A Self-Assessment Tool by

CLEAN UP MARKETING

Make your story as powerful as your science.

How to Use This Assessment

Step 1: Find Your Stage

This assessment is organized by company stage. Start with the section that matches where you are today:

Pre-Seed → Section 2: Message Foundation
Seed / Series A → Sections 3 & 4: Message Clarity + Message Traction
Series B+ → Section 5: Market Leadership

Step 2: Score Each Item

For each checklist item, mark one box:

☐ **YES =** We have this fully in place (Score: 1 point)

☐ **NO =** We don't have this yet (Score: 0 points)

☐ **Needs Work =** We have something, but it's incomplete or inconsistent (Score: 0.5 points)

Step 3: Calculate Your Section Score

Add up your points for each section and find your percentage:

Section	Total Items	Your Score
Section 2: Message Foundation	17 items	___ / 17 = ___%
Section 3: Message Clarity	8 items	___ / 8 = ___%
Section 4: Message Traction	33 items	___ / 33 = ___%
Section 5: Market Leadership	16 items	___ / 16 = ___%

Step 4: Interpret Your Results

For each section you completed, here's what your percentage score means:

Section	Rating	What It Means
80-100%	Ready to Scale	Strong foundation. Focus on optimization and moving to the next stage.
50-79%	Gaps to Address	Good progress, but key gaps could slow your momentum. Prioritize "No" items.
0-49%	Foundation Needed	Significant work needed before scaling. Start with the basics in this section.

Step 5: Prioritize Your Next Steps

Based on your scores:

1. **Focus on your current stage first.** Don't skip ahead — each stage builds on the previous.
2. **Address "No" items before "Needs Work" items.** Missing pieces hurt more than incomplete ones.
3. **Look for patterns.** If multiple items in one subsection are weak, tackle that area holistically.
4. **Revisit quarterly.** As you grow, your needs change. Re-assess every 3 months.

Pro Tip: Have 2-3 team members complete this assessment independently, then compare answers. Differences reveal where your messaging isn't aligned.

Introduction

You didn't get into cleantech to become a marketer. You got into it to change the world. But here's the uncomfortable truth: your technology won't save the planet if no one understands what it does.

Many founders assume that breakthrough technology sells itself—that investors will flock to their idea and customers will line up like it's the next iPhone. If only.

The cleantech graveyard is full of brilliant innovations that couldn't tell their story. Transparent solar windows. Virtual power plants. Indoor vertical farms. Technically impressive. Commercially dead. Not because the science failed—but because the story did.

Your technology isn't your differentiator. Your story is.

The Story Behind The Brand

Apple doesn't sell computers. It sells identity. Remember the 'Mac vs. PC' ads? One guy was cool, creative, effortless. The other was a bumbling suit. Apple insulted 90% of the market—and their customers loved it. Why? Because buying a Mac told the world: 'I'm not like everyone else.'

Apple doesn't just make computers, and it doesn't compete on price. It doesn't have to because of the story it tells users about themselves.

Trader Joe's and Volvo work the same way. Moms buy Volvos to signal 'I prioritize my children's safety.' Trader Joe's shoppers feel sophisticated because they buy curated, quirky products in a no-frills store. Both audiences know cheaper options exist. They don't care.

Neither of these brands tries to appeal to mass audiences. In fact, they go out of their way not to because they know solving a problem for a specific audience builds loyalty and staying power.

The Brand Must Solve Your Audience's Problem

Brand stories are long lasting, and they have to solve a problem that transcends a product. If a brand is overly productized or features based, it ceases to be a brand.

Blockbuster built a brand around convenience—until streaming made them inconvenient. Kodak owned photography—until smartphones put cameras in every pocket. When the problem you solve disappears, so does your brand.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, during COVID, most grocery stores had to adapt to remote, online shopping. Trader Joe's doesn't work with apps like Instacart because their shoppers love the experience of shopping there, i.e., the story Trader Joe's shoppers tell themselves made the store immune to trends.

The Story Isn't About You

Here's the most common mistake we see cleantech founders make: positioning themselves as the hero. 'We're solving climate change.' 'Our technology will save the planet.' It sounds inspiring. But it's backwards.

A foundational philosophy of all marketing is that the story you are telling is about your audience.

Nike never leads with foam density or rubber compounds. They lead with aspiration. Air Jordans don't sell because of the materials—they sell because they tell young athletes: 'You can fly.'

While perhaps not as splashy as a pair of red "Jordans," the same principle applies to B2B cleantech companies. If you stay focused on the problem you solve for a specific audience and show empathy for their frustrations and aspirations, they will be much more likely to become your loyal customer.

Message Foundation Readiness
Pre-Seed Stage

At this stage, you need materials that make your story as powerful as your science—and open doors to grants, investors, and early partners.

Unique Value Proposition

I can explain the problem we solve in one sentence.　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

Explain: _____

I can identify our top targeted audience.　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

Explain: _____

I can identify my audience's top pain point.　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

Explain: _____

I can explain why previous solutions haven't worked in one sentence.　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

Explain: _____

Market Positioning

Market Positioning　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

I can articulate our memorable advantage over competitors.　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

I can describe what we offer that competitors can't (without saying "better," "faster," or "cheaper").　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

Investor/Accelerator/Grant Readiness

I know our Total Addressable Market (TAM).　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

I know our Serviceable Addressable Market (SAM).　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

I know our Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM).　　Needs Work ☐　Yes ☐　No ☐

Website (First 10 Seconds)

Our homepage identifies our target audience.   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Our homepage explains the problem we solve.   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Our homepage has a prominent Call-To-Action.   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Investor Deck

We have a pitch deck with all essential slides
(problem, solution, market, team, financials, ask).   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

One-Page Spec Sheet

We have a one-page document with branding,
solutions- based story, audience, proof points,   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐
and contact info.

Section 2 Score: _____ / 17 items = _____%

Message Clarity Readiness

Seed / Series A Stage

Team Alignment

	Needs Work	Yes	No
C-Suite/Staff can identify our top target audience.	☐	☐	☐
C-Suite/Staff use the same words to describe the problem we solve.	☐	☐	☐
C-Suite/Staff use the same language to describe the status quo.	☐	☐	☐
C-Suite/Staff use the same words to describe our unique value proposition.	☐	☐	☐
C-Suite/Staff use the same words to describe our mission, vision, and values.	☐	☐	☐
C-Suite/Staff can explain our differentiation without "better, faster, cheaper."	☐	☐	☐
C-Suite/Staff can cite our key three proof points.	☐	☐	☐
We have a Message Playbook for new staff.	☐	☐	☐

Red Flags: Signs Your Messaging Needs Work

Check any that apply:

Different team members describe your company differently	☐
Investors ask 'So what do you actually do?' after your pitch	☐
Your website bounce rate is over 70%	☐
You're competing on 'better, faster, cheaper'	☐
Your pitch deck is over 15 slides	☐
You can't explain your value prop without jargon	☐

If you checked 2 or more, message clarity should be your top priority.

Section 3 Score: _____ / 8 items = _____%

Message Traction Readiness
Seed / Series A Stage

Website (15 items)

	Needs Work	Yes	No
Key audience & problem identified in first 10 seconds	☐	☐	☐
Written demographics & psychographics of audience	☐	☐	☐
Homepage explains how our solution improves audience's life	☐	☐	☐
Prominent CTA to capture contact information	☐	☐	☐
Website traffic growing month over month	☐	☐	☐
Email subscribers growing month over month	☐	☐	☐
Copy is SEO optimized	☐	☐	☐
Thought leadership content added regularly	☐	☐	☐
New contacts funnel automated	☐	☐	☐
Load speed optimized for mobile	☐	☐	☐
Team page with consistent design & professional bios	☐	☐	☐
Homepage focuses on people, not just products	☐	☐	☐
Downloadable content to capture leads	☐	☐	☐
Links to active social media	☐	☐	☐
Investor & partner logos displayed	☐	☐	☐

Social Media (9 items)

	Needs Work	Yes	No
Branded LinkedIn company page	☐	☐	☐
Monthly invites to new contacts to follow page	☐	☐	☐
Weekly content posting with editorial calendar	☐	☐	☐
Audience-focused content	☐	☐	☐

Content supports business development goals   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Multi-media content (carousels, video)   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Branded YouTube channel   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Explainer video   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Live video from events   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Email (6 items)

Branded newsletter template   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Personalized contact database   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Branded and regularly-scheduled newsletters designed for engagement   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Ability to embed video   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Analytics tracking   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Newsletter shared to LinkedIn   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Section 4 Score: _____ / 33 items = _____%

Overall (7 items)

Written marketing plan with GTM strategy & budget   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Sales & marketing teams message alignment   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Scalable CRM system to track leads   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Regular education & sales email marketing   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Branded sales sheets   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Brand guidelines document   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Messaging matrix for team consistency   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Website (6 items)

Job posting system   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

White paper downloads   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Explainer video   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Investor & partner logos   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Consistent traffic growth   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Monthly analytics reports   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

SEO (2 items)

Google PPC ads for target keywords   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Improving organic search rankings   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Message Discipline (1 item)

Message playbook for all new staff   Needs Work ☐   Yes ☐   No ☐

Section 5 Score: _____ / 16 items = _____%

Your Results & Next Steps

Transfer Your Scores

Section	Your Score	Percentage	Rating
Section 2: Message Foundation	___ / 17	___%	🔵☐ 🟡☐ 🔵☐
Section 3: Message Clarity	___ / 8	___%	🔵☐ 🟡☐ 🔵☐
Section 4: Message Traction	___ / 33	___%	🔵☐ 🟡☐ 🔵☐
Section 5: Market Leadership	___ / 16	___%	🔵☐ 🟡☐ 🔵☐

What's Your Priority?

Based on your scores, your top priority section is:

_____

Ready to close the gaps? Schedule a free 15-minute consultation to discuss your results and create an action plan.

Schedule Your Free Consultation

cleanupmarketing.com/contact-us

Or download our **Message Discovery Workbook** to start clarifying your story today.

CLEAN UP MARKETING

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