

# Sprouts AI – Identifying ICP, Category Strategy and Positioning

*Representative PMM work sample recreated from the project to demonstrate my strategic approach while respecting confidentiality.*

## Overview

Sprouts AI is an AI-powered recruiting platform designed to automate the hiring workflow from job creation to offer management. As an early-stage startup, the company faced two critical challenges:

- No clearly defined Ideal Customer Profile (ICP)
- No differentiated positioning against established ATS platforms and emerging AI recruiting tools

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# 1. Customer Research Summary

## Objective

Understand hiring workflows, buying criteria, perceptions of AI, and identify where Sprouts AI could create the greatest value.

## Research Conducted

- Interviewed 42+ recruiting leaders and talent acquisition professionals across SMB, Mid-Market, and Enterprise organizations.
- Conducted competitive research across traditional ATS platforms, modern recruiting software, and emerging AI-native recruiting startups.

## Key Findings

Research Area	Key Insight
Hiring Workflow	Recruiting teams relied on multiple disconnected tools throughout the hiring process.
Buying Criteria	Buyers prioritized workflow efficiency, ease of use, and business outcomes over AI features.
AI Perception	Existing AI tools sounded impressive but still required significant manual coordination.
Biggest Pain Point	Recruiters wanted less manual work, not more AI features.

## 2. Competitive Landscape

### Objective

Evaluate the recruiting technology landscape to identify whitespace and define a differentiated market position.

Category	Representative Players	Market Position	Opportunity
Applicant Tracking Systems	Greenhouse, Workday	System of record for recruiting	Limited workflow automation
Modern Recruiting Platforms	Ashby	Improve recruiter productivity	Recruiters still coordinate the hiring process
AI Recruiting Solutions	Juicebox and emerging AI startups	Automate individual recruiting tasks	Fragmented point solutions
<b>Sprouts AI</b>	<b>Agentic Recruiting Platform</b>	<b>Automates the end-to-end hiring workflow</b>	<b>Workflow ownership rather than task automation</b>

### Strategic Insight

Most competitors automated individual recruiting tasks.

Sprouts AI had the opportunity to differentiate by owning the entire hiring workflow while keeping recruiters in control of hiring decisions.

### 3. Ideal Customer Profile (ICP)

#### Objective

Identify the customer segment with the strongest product-market fit.

Customer Segment	Observation	Decision
Enterprise	Complex buying cycles and established recruiting processes	Not Primary ICP
Mid-Market	Moderate recruiting maturity and mixed AI adoption	Secondary Opportunity
High-Growth Technology Companies	Lean recruiting teams, hiring urgency, and openness to AI	Primary ICP

#### Final ICP

- Technology companies (10–100 employees)
- Lean recruiting teams
- High-growth hiring environments
- Early adopters of AI technology

## 4. Market Opportunity

### Objective

Identify an underserved opportunity where Sprouts AI could differentiate.

### Market Evolution

Customer interviews and competitive analysis revealed that most recruiting solutions focused on improving individual tasks rather than transforming the hiring process.

This led to a simple framework for mapping the evolution of recruiting technology:

Stage	Focus
Manual	Recruiters manage every stage of hiring manually.
Assisted	ATS platforms organize recruiting activities.
Augmented	AI accelerates individual recruiting tasks.
Agentic	AI executes the recruiting workflow while recruiters own hiring decisions.

### Strategic Opportunity

Rather than positioning Sprouts AI as another AI recruiting tool, we identified an opportunity to define a new category around workflow ownership. This became the foundation for our ICP, positioning, and go-to-market strategy.

## 5. Positioning & Messaging Framework

### Positioning Exploration

Position Tested	Customer Feedback
AI Recruiting Assistant	Familiar but difficult to differentiate
AI Recruiting Automation	Better, but still perceived as another AI tool
Agentic Recruiting Platform	Strongest resonance by focusing on workflow ownership rather than task automation

### Final Positioning Statement

*Sprouts AI helps recruiting teams automate the end-to-end hiring workflow using AI agents, eliminating fragmented tools and manual coordination so teams can hire faster without increasing headcount.*

### Messaging Pillars

Pillar	Customer Value
Complete Workflows	Eliminate fragmented recruiting tools with one end-to-end workflow.
Grounded in Your Data	AI understands company-specific hiring context.
AI Agents Execute	Recruiters focus on hiring decisions while AI handles execution.
Scale Hiring	Hire faster without increasing headcount or adding more software.