

Business Coaching Report - Commercial Development of Aquaculture Services for Natural Lakes

1. Coaching context

The entrepreneurial idea starts from a strong personal interest in aquaculture but deliberately broadens the purpose beyond fish production. The proposed direction is to develop aquaculture-related services that help lake owners, public authorities, restoration projects, and responsible producers manage fish populations while protecting water quality, biodiversity, and aquatic habitats. Possible elements include low-impact production systems, responsible stocking, water-quality monitoring, biodiversity-friendly feeding practices, habitat restoration, and integration of aquaculture operations with environmental monitoring.

2. Recommended commercial opportunity

The recommended first offer is an Aquaculture Management Assessment for one lake, fishery, aquaculture site, or restoration project. Instead of starting with capital-intensive infrastructure, the venture would begin by selling expertise, monitoring, and an actionable management plan. It lowers entry costs, creates direct contact with customers, and generates the field evidence needed to design more advanced solutions later.

The assessment would combine a limited set of practical activities: review of the customer's objectives; baseline water-quality and habitat observations; evaluation of existing or planned stocking and feeding practices; identification of ecological pressure points; recommendations for lower-impact operating practices; and a monitoring plan that links fish management with indicators of lake condition. Where appropriate, the service could also coordinate specialist partners for laboratory analysis, biodiversity surveys, or engineering interventions.

3. Minimum viable service

The first version should remain intentionally simple. It should not attempt to provide every possible aquaculture technology or ecological intervention. A minimum viable service could contain five modules:

- ❖ Site and stakeholder diagnosis: lake use, fish-management objectives, ecological constraints and restoration priorities.
- ❖ Baseline assessment: selected water-quality indicators, fish-management practices and habitat observations.
- ❖ Responsible stocking and feeding review: species choice, stocking logic, feeding intensity and potential ecological trade-offs.
- ❖ Nature-positive action plan: practical changes to reduce pressure on water quality and habitats and support biodiversity objectives.
- ❖ Monitoring protocol: a small set of indicators and review points showing whether the intervention is moving in the desired direction.

4. Priority customers and their purchasing logic

Potential customer	Main problem	What they could buy	Priority
Lake / basin authorities	Need to reconcile fish management, recreation, restoration and ecological status	Assessment, monitoring plan, responsible stocking guidance	Very high
Lake restoration projects	Need practical measures that connect ecological recovery with sustainable local use	Fish-management and habitat-restoration work package	Very high
Aquaculture / fishery operators near natural lakes	Need to reduce environmental risk and demonstrate responsible practices	Low-impact operating assessment and recurring monitoring	High
Municipalities / protected areas	Need safe, credible and visible lake-management actions	Pilot project, environmental performance reporting	High
Tourism and recreational fisheries	Need healthy fish populations and credible environmental quality	Advisory package linked to responsible recreational use	Medium

The first sales effort should concentrate on lake authorities and restoration project operators because they face the clearest combination of ecological responsibility, stakeholder pressure, and need for documented decisions. Aquaculture operators are an important second segment, especially where environmental compliance, community acceptance, or proximity to sensitive water bodies creates a strong incentive to improve practices.

5. Differentiation from conventional aquaculture activities

The venture should avoid competing directly with established aquaculture businesses on fish, feed, cages, equipment, or production volume. Its strongest differentiation is the integration of aquaculture knowledge with lake restoration logic. The customer should understand that the service is designed to optimise the relationship between fish-related economic activity and ecosystem condition.

A conventional aquaculture proposition often begins with production: how to increase survival, growth, or yield. The proposed venture would begin with ecological compatibility: what level and form of fish-related activity can a specific lake support, what risks should be monitored, and how could operations be adapted when environmental indicators change? It creates a distinctive position that can be described as nature-positive aquaculture management or restoration-compatible aquaculture services.

Three elements will make the positioning defensible. First, recommendations should be based on a combination of operational aquaculture data and lake-condition indicators rather than production metrics alone. Second, each customer engagement should end with decision-ready recommendations and measurable follow-up indicators. Third, partnerships with ecologists, laboratories, lake managers, and restoration specialists can provide credibility in areas where a young venture should not claim expertise it does not yet possess.

6. Revenue model and commercial architecture

A service-based model is preferable at the beginning because it allows the entrepreneur to learn from customers before investing in proprietary infrastructure. The most realistic commercial architecture is a combination of project fees and recurring monitoring services.

Revenue mechanism	Use in the first stage	Coaching assessment
Paid assessment / project contract	Baseline diagnosis, stocking review, restoration-compatible management plan	Best entry offer
Recurring monitoring agreement	Seasonal or annual follow-up of water, habitat and fish-management indicators	Best path to recurring revenue
Implementation support	Support for habitat measures, operating changes, or responsible stocking plans	Useful add-on
Partnered technical services	Laboratory tests, specialised ecology surveys, engineering or sensor deployment	Build through partners
Training / workshops	Responsible aquaculture practices for local operators or lake stakeholders	Secondary revenue stream

Pricing should initially be based on the scope and value of the decision support rather than on individual monitoring activities. Variables such as lake size, number of monitoring locations, field visits, laboratory requirements, number of stakeholder groups, and reporting frequency can be used to create transparent packages. A small pilot package should be easy to approve, while an annual package should provide continuity and create a recurring relationship with the customer.

Coaching requested by: Cyril Manga (Romanian demo-site)

Business coach: Alexandru Capatina

Signature:



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