

Your Unique Selling Position

By Cathy Taylor

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Most business people have heard the term Unique Selling Position (USP) bandied about, often when the subject of sales or marketing comes up. Very few understand what it really is, what its significance is on your ability to sell, and most important, how to create one. It's tricky and not something you learn overnight, but it is critical to the success of your business.

Start talking about differentiation and you can't help but think of the ideas written about extensively: position your company in a way that makes you different from the competition in the mind of the prospect and customer. It's all about how they perceive your message.

Here's another exceptional way to look at it that may help you. Ask yourself, what is my offer?

What are you giving in return for this prospect's time and money? Is the offer compelling enough to interest someone in spending their hard-earned dollars and even more precious moments? If your offer isn't strong and something they perceive themselves to need, they won't buy.

That might sound somewhat simplistic, but it's true – with the caveat that the higher the price of your product or service is, the more unique you have to be. And, you have to communicate it repeatedly throughout the sales process.

Mission

Do you remember the ah-ha moment when you decided you could start a business of your own or rejuvenate an existing one? At this point, you probably began to develop a strategy. Chances are reviewing that moment will give you insights into your USP.

- What is the purpose of your company?
- What products and/or services do you provide and to whom?
- Why are you the best company to provide these products and services?
- What made you think you could do it better than anyone else?
- What need in your industry is not being filled and how does your company offer a creative solution?

Frame It

Here's one of the best ways to make yourself different from the competition and achieve more sales: frame your message so your prospects are eager to hear what you have to say. How do you do that? Know who they are and what their specific needs are, and then present your solution in a way that clearly answers all of their questions and makes them jump at the chance to buy from you.

Framing means to paint a clear picture of what you want them to think and visualize while you are talking about your offer. It should be so irresistible that people are begging to buy from you or work with you when you're done.

There are probably only a few reasons why you won't make a sale:

1. They don't really need what you are selling. This should be an easy one to avoid if you are doing your market research and targeting the correct demographics.
2. They are price sensitive or just can't afford what you are selling. If you are selling a low-ticket item, move on because there's plenty more prospects. If what you're selling involves a huge budget and long cycle of fulfillment, you can't afford to haggle much with price. Many studies have proven that highly desirable products cannot be given away, but as soon as you attach a price to them that allows the prospect to perceive value in the product and provider, you'll make a lot more sales.
3. They don't trust you. It's all about relationships from day one.

Relationship Building

One of the most powerful tools that companies often do not use at all, or use too late in the process, is a testimonial. In your print promotions as well as on your web site, one of the first things prospects should see is a glowing testimonial with the option to read more of them. The headline should be something like "Just look at what our satisfied customers have to say about us." Nothing sells like a good recommendation and you can't have too many of them.

Why should your prospects believe you when they are skeptical of so many others? The answer lies in the relationship you build from the initial contact. When you bond with someone and show that you understand what their problem is, they begin to feel like they have been "heard." This is a powerful psychological advantage. You continue by explaining how you have the exact solution they need, and they begin to warm up to you and a mutual, win-win relationship forms. It's also your job to sustain it.

Common USP Pitfalls

The same mistakes are often made when defining your unique selling position. Most play it too safe and try to please everyone and end up selling to no one. Successful business owners are innovators and they take risks. Experiment, evaluate and evolve into something even more unique on an ongoing basis.

Another mistake is that your marketing communications fail to reflect your uniqueness. Companies will try to emulate other successful branding campaigns. There is nothing unique about that. Don't stop looking at what your competition is doing, just don't copy it. Remember, unique is what you're going for.

Do your advertising vehicles sound the same as everyone else's? Your ad copy messaging must also reflect your USP. Even if you don't have the millions of dollars large corporations can afford to spend, you can still carve a niche for your firm that resonates with your target audience and makes

them feel good about doing business with you.

Does your sales process cover all the steps from initial contact through close with your USP reflected throughout? Draw up a plan of what a typical sales cycle should look like, what marketing tools should be used at what levels, and be sure to leave room for flexibility and creativity on the part of your sales rep. Don't forget to use the darn thing.

An accomplished unique selling position is what builds your brand. Branding is what marketers use to capture the mind share of their target audience. It's what helps people think of your company and call you when they realize they need your product or services. Remember the last time you drank "the real thing?"

To paraphrase a great slogan, "Build your USP and they will come."

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