



21 Clarifying your unique selling proposition

What is a unique selling proposition?

A USP is something that distinguishes you from all your competitors in your local marketplace. It is what makes you so unique that it motivates people to choose you over anyone else. Your USP is a way of stating your unique advantage.

Here are some examples of the USPs of some well known successful businesses, their clever differentiating USPs have helped to propel their respective companies to success.

Domino's Pizza – *Fresh hot pizza in 30 minutes or less*

Norwich Union Direct – *We quote you happy*

Federal Express – *When it absolutely, positively has to be there*

Why is it important?

It is a competitive marketplace for any small business owner and with many people offering similar products and services you need to do your best to differentiate yourself from the others.

There are many typical statements that businesses make about themselves, open *Yellow Pages* and read some of the adverts in your section. Everybody offers a professional service, quality products and value for money.

Are you saying the same or something different? To stand out you will need to be saying something that is unique and different.

Your challenge

Your challenge is to identify and communicate your uniqueness and feel completely comfortable when you do. That means you've got to clarify what you do or can start doing for your customers that delivers a result or an advantage that's superior or different from the competition.

This needs to form part of everything you do. You don't just say it, you need to live it, to demonstrate it and to show it. That means whatever you stand for, you do.

Take your time, as your USP is not likely to be the first thing you think of. This needs some careful consideration.

What makes a USP successful?

Your USP should answer the most fundamental question that every buyer needs to know: ‘Why should I buy from you?’

Your USP should communicate the most powerful benefit or advantage you offer to your prospects or customers above your competitors. You must determine what they’re not getting from anyone else or what will solve their major fears or frustrations – and offer it to them!

Each of these benefits must be:

- Specific and real.
- Measurable (time, quality or quantity).
- Achievable and provable.
- Relevant to your customers’ needs and objectives in a positive way.
- Time bound if appropriate.
- Honest and ethical.

USP DEVELOPMENT – SPECIAL RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- ▶ Find out what the main problems or frustrations typical customers have with a product or service similar to yours. Ask people.
- ▶ Think about what is special and unique about your business. Make a list.
- ▶ Read your testimonials – what positive feedback have you had from your customers?
- ▶ What do your satisfied customers repeatedly praise you for?
- ▶ Check out your competitors’ advertising. Note down the promises they are making.
- ▶ Note down what you could offer that is different from the competition.
- ▶ Match what you can do particularly well with what problems people want solving.
- ▶ Choose a selection of benefits that you could promote that would make your business stand out from the crowd.
- ▶ Pick out one or two things that you could make specific and measurable. It may be the speed at which you deliver, the quality you produce, the results you are sure you can deliver. Make sure it passes the SMART test (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound).
- ▶ Test these USPs in your advertising and monitor the response.

Sample small business USPs

Here are some examples of how two companies worked out their potential USPs.

They started with the problems potential customers have and then defined what they wanted instead. USPs easily come to mind as a result of working through this simple process.

Example 1 – website design company

Problem – website design companies can be confusing in their over-technical long-winded explanations which can be hard for non-technical small business owners to understand. They just want to focus on making a success of their marketing and get the job done.

What customers want – quick and easy to understand in the first instance – a marketing focus as opposed to a technical one.

USP – A quick, easy, attractive website in a week

USP – The website company that understands small business marketing

Example 2 – Building company

Problem – building companies can be very slow with quotes and proposals following initial visits, and many customers fear that quoted prices can spiral out of control once the job is started. There always seems to be something extra that pops up and/or jobs that tend to take longer than estimated.

What customers want – knowledge that the quote will arrive soon after the initial visit enabling decisions to be made. That there is some security in the price quoted and the time estimated to complete the job.

USP – Only three days from visit to quote

USP – The price quoted is the price you pay

USP – We fulfil the completion deadlines we agree

How to use your USP

Once you have put some careful thought into your USP and you have developed it, you will need to integrate it into everything that you do.

Your USP needs to be found in your advertisement headlines, your body copy, in your *Yellow Pages* adverts. It must find its way to your website home page and be repeated throughout. Your business stationery can even mention of it. When you make a sales presentation or chat at a networking event your USP should always find its way into the conversation. You can never wear it out. If it is good and it works you should shout it from the roof tops.

***Think USP and find your special something
that customers value most***