

Mentoring Module

DEFINING & APPLYING YOUR USP

I am sure that there have been occasions when you have been asked to: ‘say cheese’ by someone with a camera. And you say it, followed by muttering through your gritted teeth, while your face becomes rigid in a fixed smile: ‘C’mon, hurry up – take the picture – c’monnnnn.’



Finally you hear the click of the lens and relax waiting to see the picture, which of course looks cheesy – just like all the other cheesy pictures you have seen before: artificial, posed and, well, not really you at all.

It is neither unique nor has the photo captured the real you. But the camera doesn’t lie – it simply took the image in front of it: A picture of you not being yourself – because you froze. And that is what happens with most businesses when asked by potential customers what sets them apart – they momentarily freeze, before saying something cheesy and artificial that is indistinct and unappealing, and certainly does not share the key elements that differentiates them: Their Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

The best way to get your business noticed and differentiated is by defining and applying your USP. A concept first developed to explain a pattern among successful marketing campaigns 70 years ago, it essentially articulates and communicates why customers must buy because they will receive a specific benefit. Here are some pioneering classic USP’s that were invented:

Head & Shoulders: *‘You get rid of dandruff’*

‘Melts in your mouth, not in your hand’ attributed to Maltesers, Minstrals and M&M’s.

Domino’s Pizza: *‘You get fresh, hot pizza delivered to your door in 30 minutes or less – or it’s free’*

FedEx: *‘When your package absolutely, positively has to get there overnight’*

Each one revolutionized their industry by inventing their uniqueness and harnessing it throughout every marketing campaign. All have stood the test of time.

You have to invent the uniqueness that differentiates your business. And you have to make certain that it is true. If, for example, having washed your hair with Head & Shoulders before answering the door to receive a late FedEx delivery driver who had been munching M&M’s, then you would neither be pleased if your

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shoulders were covered in dandruff while answering the door, nor being passed a chocolate covered parcel that you had urgently needed the day before.

Your USP must state your unique proposition and deliver on it. That is the promise that will make your business the success it has the potential to be. Most business owners do not have a USP. They have a ‘buy from us’ cheesy statement that does not promise value, benefit or service. Whenever a business that has developed a USP believes that it is actually not possible to deliver on it; then it must create another one to build its business on: as long as it is unique and it can be delivered upon. So how do you create your USP?

Your USP is the very nucleus that you build your business success and your professional reputation around, so it has to be able to be both articulated precisely and communicated concisely. Then whenever customers are seeking the type of products or services you offer, your USP brings their attention to your business.

Review your business like a sovereign surveying their kingdom.

1. What do your subjects wish from you more than anything else?
2. Why do your subjects love you?
3. Why are they content to keep you as their monarch?
4. What niche is it that you focus on?
5. Which gap requires filling that you can do better than others?
6. What distinguishes you from all the rest offering similar products or services?
7. What makes you special in the eyes of your customers?

Thinking on paper, write down what you believe summarizes your USP. You may easily fill a page as you consider all the elements, but continue to strike out the padding and all the generalities until you are left with just the specifics. It may well be that your competitors have almost identical offerings, but are they announcing it? And what is it that you can add to make it unique. Then get it down to its bare essence.

For example, the Lawyer that specializes in conveyances may state: *Residential Conveyances for a flat fee of £500. No hassle for you and no hidden costs.* Another example: *English Country Gardens will tend to your plants and manicure your lawns every week in summer and every month in winter for just £15 a week billed quarterly.*

Clearly your USP will not appeal to everyone – and that is the main point. Because you are only seeking to appeal to those customers from your niche of the market you are targeting. That is why in developing your USP you must identify the market niche that your USP is specifically targeting. Are you seeking out affluent clients or bargain seekers? Because when you do try to reach both, then you will fall between the two.

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How can you know for certain that your USP is the right one for capturing the hearts and minds of your customers? When you get sales, contact the customer, remind them of your USP and ask if it influenced their purchasing decision. And confirm to them that your USP will always be there for them in the future. And because people need reminding of the benefits you provide them, inform your customer why you adopted it and why it is such a benefit. In doing so you are giving your customer the opportunity to appreciate why you are doing what you are for them.

This is important as it makes the customer feel valued, confirms their decision to buy from you, makes them feel good about their purchase and prompts them to readily agree to recommend you when you follow up in due course asking for referrals. In doing this you enhance your customers' perception of your USP.

When you have determined your USP, introduce it to your people – and make it a condition of their employment. If your people are not prepared to stand by it then they are not the right people for you. Integrate your USP in every contact with dissatisfied customers as well.

When you lose a customer instruct your people to follow up courteously by restating your USP and enquire if the USP has not been lived up to. If it has not been and it is the reason the customer wanted a refund, or left, then apologize and express your disappointment for not fulfilling their expectations as per your USP. Then ask the dissatisfied customer for another chance.



And here comes the main point. Your USP is not about you, your business or your profession. It is all about your customer or your client. They are the ones that build your reputation and success. When you take the time to define your USP you are already ahead of your competitors. When you apply it in every element of your business, you are on the way to achieving the results you have always wanted.

To help in developing your own USP let's take apart one of the most successful: Domino's Pizza

Benefit: FRESH - You do not want old, stale pizza, you want it just cooked.

Benefit: HOT - You don't want to have to warm it up – you want it just right and ready to eat.

What it is: PIZZA - Says exactly what you are getting.

Service: DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR - The convenience of the service – so you do not have to even leave home.

Promise: IN 30 MINUTES OR LESS - Gives you a clear expectation.

Guarantee: OR IT'S FREE - the guarantee to back up the promise.

'You get fresh, hot pizza delivered to your door in 30 minutes or less – or it's free'

A great USP making Dominos take and hold the number 1 position in the pizza market.

Yet, The USP makes no claim to be the best pizza, the number one pizza, the best value, the most delicious, or the most healthy. It simply fulfils the pain need of: We're hungry and we can't be bothered to cook.

Apply the USP's same basic elements to your own...

- 1. Benefit, Benefit**
- 2. What it is**
- 3. Service**
- 4. Promise**
- 5. Guarantee**

Don't expect to develop the perfect USP overnight. Invest time and thought, but when you have it, then your business will really, really, really benefit from applying it.



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