

What is your Unique Selling Proposition?

Written by Steve Marr

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Most business leaders chug along, offering a product or service with varying degrees of success. They are missing one of the most important factors in their success: their USP (unique selling proposition). Look through the phone book, newspaper ads, or online listings. Usually, you have a sea of competition, which means that customers have a choice every day as to where and how they will spend their money. The key question you need to answer is: “Why should customers spend money with me? What am I offering that is unique and different from others?”

The answer to that is your USP. The Lord gave us an example of a unique selling proposition: “...for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” Acts 4:12 NASB). Christ is the only name. Hundreds of religions compete for attention, but Christ is uniquely the only answer. The Lord also spoke about a pearl merchant who, “upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matthew 13:46 NASB). A clear understanding of our USP will give us the clarity to distinguish our business from our competition.

We can't be everything to everyone, but we can be special and unique to some. This answers the question, “What distinguishes you from all the other businesses after peoples time and money?” Here is one example: me. I endeavor to bring Scripture directly to a wide variety of practical business issues in writing and consulting. The marketplace has thousands of consultants and hundreds of business writers, all offering their options and insights. I have accumulated 79 pages of Scriptural references that apply to practical business issues. For me, this is my unique selling proposition.

All business owners must determine their unique selling proposition. People can help clarify, challenge, or validate the USP, but the ownership belongs to the leader alone. The unique selling proposition needs to be 25 words or less, be part of your mission statement, and be understandable to you, your employees, and customers. The statement is your way of clarifying to yourself (and more importantly, to the marketplace) what you do better than others. The USP is what brings you business.

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Look at the pizza industry. Even a small city may have a hundred or more choices. How could you create a USP amid all the clutter? Your USP may be your location, your toppings, your staff, your heritage, your building, your décor, your clientele, or some other element that is unique. If location happens to be your USP, then target specific neighborhoods, stressing your locality. Poor quality will keep people away, but you need to understand that you won't be competing directly with customers who want the high-end pizzas. Another pizza place may create a neighborhood experience with sit down service and ambience, which sends the message, "Come here for a high quality experience ... we are more than just a pizza place ... we make your evening." This is their USP. Domino's initiated a delivery guarantee, "Delivered in 30 minutes or it's free." The USP was speed and dependability of delivery — you would get your pizza fast and on time. Domino's has altered the guarantee a bit, but still works to get your pizza to you in 30 minutes.

When you are clear on your unique selling proposition, communicate that USP clearly and consistently to your staff and customers. For example, pizza customers wanting the lowest price may not care if they wait an hour. One plumbing and heating contractor offers 24-hour emergency service. When you call the 24-hour number, you get a person who takes your call and keeps you on hold for a few minutes while a service person is located to respond to your call. Then you are told when the person will arrive. The USP is that you don't get an answering machine when you need immediate assistance. While this system requires a commitment to execute, loyal customers like this service ... and no one else in town offers 24-hour service.

When you develop, understand, and then communicate your USP, you will become that fine pearl that Christ referred to, the pearl that others will want and pass up all competitors in the crowded marketplace to get. Then you can see your business grow.

You can hear my speaking presentation on the subject on this link:

<http://www.stevemarr.org/index.php/webinars>

Steve Marr, Your Christian Business Coach

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