



Define your Unique Selling Proposition

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Differentiating your business is challenging especially when there are many rivals and the market for your products and services appears to be growing moderately. Standing apart from others, in a favourable light of course, becomes critical as it affords important advantages, mostly in the form of less marketing and selling effort, which indirectly translates to cost advantages.

Your “unique selling proposition” (USP) demonstrates unequivocally that you are better than your competition because you offer a superior value to your customers. If well-constructed and distinctive, it becomes memorable and could influence buying behaviour in favour of you. It also ensures consistency between your marketing message, promotion and distribution approach. If properly internalized, it guides the behaviour of your personnel.

But your USP must be original and authentic, otherwise it will diminish marketing effectiveness and ultimately business performance. A disingenuous proposition results in increased effort to combat critics, redirecting effort and resources away from those activities that could be spent on attracting and garnering customer loyalty.

Is your USP different from your brand?

Your USP, your brand and your marketing slogan are not all one and the same. The USP articulates how (e.g. speed of delivery, quality, price, satisfaction, etc.) you intend to stand apart from others; the originality of your proposition — essentially making a promise or pledge that customers will receive value supersedes others.

Your Brand puts a face to this USP, an image, and creates the impression of what your company stands for, namely your USP. The Brand portrays how a company wishes to be perceived and is consistent with the message, the USP, to the customer.

Your marketing slogan, or jingle, is a crisp statement that is intended to be memorable, e.g. Alka Seltzer’s “Pop. Pop. Fizz. Fizz. Oh what a relief it is.” Notably, no real distinction is offered here.

So what is your USP?

Here are examples of USPs to get you started: ¹

- **JetBlue Airline** focused on providing service that would **make a difference** to customers’ experiences: direct TV and XM radio, better seating and legroom, great snacks and higher end service at lower end pricing.
- **Dutch Boy Paints** redesigned its paint cans to reduce painting headaches —making them lighter, easier to open, less messy to pour, stackable.

¹ www.fizzle.co/sparkline, 10 examples of killer unique selling propositions-on-the-web; www.sales.about.com, Unique Selling Proposition Examples; www.digitalsparkmarketing.com, unique-selling-proposition-examples; www.interactive-marketinginc.com, unique-selling-proposition.html

- **Toms Shoes** caters to a customer’s desire to be charitable by promising to give a new pair of shoes to a child in need with every pair customer purchase.
- **Federal Express** promises to delivery all its packages, nationally, overnight.

A quick review shows some important aspects of these statements:

- They are not marketing slogans, but rather make a genuine offer or promise.
- They effectively solve an important problem for customers.
- They create distinction from competitors.
- They make a pledge that guarantees provision of value that is important to customers.

Testing the authenticity of your USP.

Market research, competitor practices, customer surveys, best practice studies, and so on, are prerequisites to defining a business’ USP. Presumably, this hard work has also been coupled with an honest, thorough SWOT analysis.²

Is your USP any good?	Yes	No
Will your competitors find it difficult to replicate your USP without making a substantial investment?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your USP genuinely address a customer need or problem?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your USP recognizable and memorable?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your USP meet the needs of a majority of your target market?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you confidently confirm your customer purchases your product/service because of your USP?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would your customer advocate on your behalf because of your USP?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you quantify the value of your proposition compared to your competitors?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you offering a USP that is truly achievable?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you actually deliver on your pledge to your customer?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you confidently stand behind, and guarantee your USP?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Testing the validity of your USP is an important step before defining the detailed marketing, promotional and selling strategies you execute. And of course, an internal an internal assessment of whether you have the capacity to deliver on your unique promise effectively is critical.



Reaching for success requires setting ambitious targets, creating the awareness to determine what you need to get there, and then setting a course to realize those goals. Define your goals, chart a course forward and make sure you are accountable for the outcomes. Please contact us to find out about the types of business plans we have created. Please contact us to learn about our engagements.

² A structured planning evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a business.