



## Seven steps to a great unique selling proposition (USP)

*With Peter Chapman & Gary Morton*

### ***Is your unique selling proposition (USP), unique?***

- A unique selling proposition (USP) is the unique message you send to potential and existing customers that defines your value promise.
- It should be a uniquely crafted and packaged message that creates product interest, differentiates from others, minimizes the impact of price competition, and increases the opportunity to make the sale.
- Price is what people pay, but value is what they get in return for spending their money. So if you want a better bottom line, you need a great USP that connects your value offer with your target customer.
- A USP can be a great product differentiator the hook on which to hang your marketing strategy.
- A great USP sets you apart from the competition in a crowded marketplace and can give your business and products a powerful and unique competitive advantage.

**U**nique- is what separates you from the competition and all the other choices the customer has available to them.

**S**elling- is all of the initiatives undertaken to convince the customer to exchange their money for your product.

**P**roposition- presenting the value promise and offer in a way the customer expects it to be delivered.

*Example: A successful and classic value proposition (slightly paraphrased) is the postal service promise; "through rain, snow, sleet, or hail, the postal service shall deliver the mail." This USP offers high value comfort to the customer; they know that no matter what, their mail is going to be delivered, as promised.*

#### **A Strong USP:**

- outlines the superior benefits of your product or service;
- has a promise of the value to be delivered;
- is presented in a way so that the target customer absolutely believes they will receive what is promised;
- summarizes and headlines your story; it grabs the customer's attention and stops them in their tracks to take another look;
- solves a pressing problem for a particular customer segment or group;
- offers a compelling undisputable argument; why your product is different and superior to all other choices the customer has; and
- compels the customer to take the next step with you.

At the core of every powerful USP is something that gives you a competitive advantage; that others don't, won't, or can't do. But something you uniquely can!

*Example: Enterprise Car Rental: "Pick Enterprise. We'll pick you up." When other car companies don't pick up the rental car customer; whom do you think the customer calls?*

A great USP keeps you focused on what you do best, whom you do it for, and it keeps you out of the trap of trying to please and market to everyone. When you attempt to sell to everyone, you inevitably water down your message, make your product a generic commodity and end up not inspiring anyone to buy.

Think about it, how can you have the highest quality product possible and at the same time offer the lowest price? It is impossible to be all things, to all customers, so don't try. Customers can see through your false promises.

If your product doesn't stand for something unique, then there's no differentiator or added benefit, and the customer will easily be seduced by the promises of your competitors. A USP is the bait on the hook you go customer fishing with, and it states a message that should permeate through everything you do.

You must be sure to walk your USP talk.

## Crafting Your Awesome USP

A strong USP is at the core of every successful marketing strategy, it's the foundation on which to grow your business and product sales, and ultimately build a stronger bottom line.

The following are the seven milestone steps to a great USP.



### **USP Step #1** - Target a Customer Segment:

Powerful USP marketing messages are targeted to specific segments or group of customers. You can't be everything to everyone. It is the job of the USP to convince the target customer that your product(s) are their only and best choice.

*Q: Who is your ideal target customer? (Describe in detail exactly who they are and then learn everything about them you can, demographics, and psychographics.)*

*Q: What are the customer's needs, wants, problems and challenges? (Your USP must address these customer issues and concerns to be effective.)*

*Q: What exact or special problems are you going to solve, what pain are you going to take away?*

*(E.g.: Federal Express: "When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight.")*



## **USP Step #2 - Create an Unfair Advantage:**

The basic strategy of a USP is to create an unfair advantage that will make you shine over the competition. It's a key differentiating message.

*Q: What are the particular traits required in order for you and your product(s) to be remembered by your target customer? What do you do really well?*

*Q: What is your obvious superior advantage over your competition?*

*Q: Why should the customer do business with you instead of all the other choices they have? (What can your product do for them that others cannot?)*



### **USP Step #3 – Customer Benefits**

Product quality is a given in today's marketplace; without quality you aren't even in the game. Features define a product; benefits define the value(s) the customer will receive. Benefits are qualifiers that will help screen potential customers, saving you time by only attracting the type of customers you want, and repelling the ones you don't.

*Q: What are the unique benefits associated with your product(s) and your business?*

*Q: How does the customer benefit from using your product(s)?*

*Q: Are the benefits enough to make them want to buy?*

*Q: Will your benefits attract the people you want to do business with and repel those you don't?*



## **USP Step #4 – Uniqueness & Differentiators**

A strong USP creates urgency with the customer to act now. Being different is a better differentiator than trying to be the best. Offer something different, something that cannot be found anywhere else.

*Q: What are the differentiating factors your business and product(s) offer?*

*(E.g.: This could include your unique knowledge, skills and experience, systems and processes, your offer, your story, or distribution logistics.)*

*Q: On what key values does your business make a stand? What are you known for?*



## **USP Step #5 –Your Claims**

Your USP makes claims about your business your products and how you will treat the customer. Remember to walk your USP claim talk.

*Q: What specific value(s) are you going to promise to the customer?*

*Q: How do you make the promise (claim) appeal to your target segment of customers?  
(Narrow the focus.)*

*Q: What guarantee, what offer can you make, that no one else can?*



## **USP Step #6 – Create Your USP**

Now use your answers to questions 1 through 5, condensing it all in to one brief short USP sentence message. Try a few drafts then refine it down to a final USP.

Draft USP #1:

Draft USP #2:

Draft USP #3:

Now you will need to test your draft USP to see who and if anyone cares. (Compare it to your competitor's USPs.)

*Q: How does it rate? Does it solve a pressing customer problem, challenge or pain?*

*Q: Does it answer, why a prospect customer should buy your product? (Rate the customer pull, credibility, and satisfaction with the offer.)*

*Q: Does it stop them in their tracks and inspire action?*

*Q: Did the customer get it? (If they didn't, it's back to the USP drawing board for another try.)*

When it works and you are satisfied with the results, finalize your USP in a brief and succinct message. *(Ten words or less if possible.)*

**Finalize Your USP Draft:**



## USP Step #7 - Make Your USP the Company Message

Integrate your USP into all your marketing materials and make it part of your business culture. Every one in the company should know it off by heart. Use it to hammer home your marketing message with your target customers.

Here are some examples of great USPs:

- Swannndri a New Zealand Rural Clothing Company: "We have to make a good garment. Most of our customers have guns."
- Saddleback Leather: "They'll fight over it, when you're dead."
- Federal Express: "When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight."
- Dominos Pizza: "Pizza delivered in 30 minutes or it's free"
- Avis: "Were number two. We try harder."
- Enterprise: "Pick Enterprise. We'll pick you up."
- Toms Shoes: "With every pair you purchase, TOMS will give a pair of new shoes to a child in need. One for One."
- M&M's Chocolate: "The milk chocolate melts in your mouth, not your hand."
- DeBeers: "A diamond is forever."
- Buckley's Cough Syrup: "It Tastes Awful. And It Works."
- Geico: "15 minutes could save you 15% on your car insurance."

## Summary Checklist

Check off each milestone as achieved will ensure you have achieved every step of the SKUfood Pricing for Profit Success Map. This will ensure the best and quickest USP results and more success to your bottom line.

Milestone	Checklist	√
1	I have defined my idea target customer segment.	
2	Created a differentiating message around my superior advantage over the competition.	
3	I can define the benefits the target customer will receive as a result of my product.	
4	My product has a uniqueness not found anywhere else.	
5	Our guarantee backs up our customer promises.	
6	Created a USP, tested it, and refined it based on feedback.	
7	The USP is integrated into every part of our business culture.	
8 (Bonus)	My USP successfully captures in a succinct short sentence, the benefits and superior advantages of my product to the target customer in a way they want it presented.	

Congratulations, on achieving all seven "USP" Success MAP milestones.

Gary Morton      [gary@SKUFOOD.com](mailto:gary@SKUFOOD.com)      (902) 670-3992

Peter Chapman      [peter@SKUFOOD.com](mailto:peter@SKUFOOD.com)      (902) 489-2900

[www.SKUFOOD.com](http://www.SKUFOOD.com)

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