



Unique Selling Proposition worksheet for small business owners

Get yourself a piece of paper, open a new document, use your office whiteboard or a chart, but get something to record your ideas on. And get your employees, friends, family, partners, or anyone else you know involved in brainstorming on this process.

No judgments to begin with. The only bad idea is the one somebody censors before they even say it. And entertain the crazy ideas. Delivering pizzas in thirty minutes or it's free probably sounded crazy to Tom Monahan's banker. But the results speak for themselves.

1. At the core of any Unique Selling Proposition is a *high Return On Investment offer*. In other words, *the substance*. What does the client or customer get for their money that is so compelling that it's almost irresistible? They get a car? They get a copier? They get their computer cleaned? They get a seminar on feeling good about themselves? You'll organize their office?

Big woopy-doo. They can get that anywhere. From any of your competitors. Any time they want. With an offer like that, you might as well compete on price because there's nothing exciting or compelling going on.

FedEx guarantees overnight delivery. Guarantees it. What can you guarantee? Dominoes guaranteed 'fresh, hot pizza in thirty minutes or it's free'. What we are looking for here is a, 'I will cut my belly open with a Ginsu knife and splay my guts on your doorstep if I don't deliver it' promise.

This is not your touchstone or slogan. This is just the bones-basic, rock-solid, no matter what, guaranteed offer or promise that will be at the core of everything your business does:

2. Now, we need a slogan or compelling brand-identifying statement that's easy to remember, attention getting, and absolutely gets your promise across in one sentence. Forget about being cutesy, funny, or 'subtle'.

You have 3-5 seconds to get people's attention, especially on a website. Or in a commercial; or in an advertisement. Or, for that matter, when you meet someone. By the time you finish shaking hands, they've probably already decided whether you are someone they want to do business with. Everything after that is a formality.



Here are a few really good ones (some of which you've heard me mention before – and some you'll recognize if you're old enough) that will get your creative juices flowing:

- “Fresh, hot pizza in thirty minutes or it's free”
 - “When it absolutely, positively, has to be there overnight”
 - “Be all you can be”
 - “We report. You decide.”
 - “Fanatical support”
 - “48 hour parts service anywhere in the world – or Caterpillar pays”
 - “We will honor the lowest price you can find for up to 60 days after your purchase”
 - “Ten years trouble free operation”
 - “If you're not satisfied for any reason we'll take it back without a receipt – no questions asked”
 - “The 100 Percent Solution”
 - “Before/After” (Merle Norman Cosmetics didn't have a ‘slogan’ per se. But if a woman saw an ad in a magazine simply showing a woman before and after using Merle Norman Cosmetics, she didn't need any catchy slogan – the USP was inherent)
 - “Have one for free” (Debbie Fields built a thousand store empire by giving away free cookies to passersby)
3. The third and last important factor is: *How do you establish believability?* Yeah, you can make all kinds of amazing promises or claims and have a brilliant slogan to back it up. But will people believe it? Not without some kind of substance to prove it.



It was relatively easy for Mrs. Fields to establish credibility (once she thought of it). Passersby ate a free cookie and the next thing they knew, they were in the store buying a little bag of heaven.

In some of the other cases, such as Caterpillar Tractor, they had to make good on their promise if they didn't make the 48 hour deadline. Same with Dominoes Pizza. Word gets around. "Yeah, I personally know someone who got his pizza free." "Yep, Cat missed the deadline and I got my part free. I would have preferred to get it on time but they didn't bat an eye about the promise. They did right by me."

Merle Norman Cosmetics brilliantly combined the high ROI offer, slogan, and proof in their photo ads. People tend to believe their eyes. And that's the kind of 'real' visual impact fancy graphics and Flash videos can't give you.

There are many ways to create believability. Here are a few: High-profile endorsements (expensive but effective; do you have a local celebrity client?), a list of high-profile customers, your professional qualifications (degrees, awards, important positions), logical explanations for your amazing offer (I overbought and have to get rid of stock; I don't use TV ads like my competitors so I can afford to give you a better deal; we can make this incredible service offer because we know you'll never need it).

4. Now you must tie it all together. Remember, none of these three things will work without the other two being an integral part of your business. All three must be implemented as part of your marketing plan *at the same time*.

This won't be a painless or free process. It will require a revamp of your business, your marketing materials, and how you operate your business. If you have employees, it may require getting them trained to implement this. And you may have to trust them to get excited and really jump in with both feet. Or replace them.

But if you really utilize this process, it will pay for itself so fast that you won't care how much it cost. You'll be too busy running to the bank.

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