

Your Key Differentiator

By Howard Jacobson

Your Key Differentiator answers the customer's pressing question:

“Why should I buy from you as opposed to all my other options, including doing nothing?”

You're in business because you want to provide your unique value to people. How do you differ from all the other people in your field?

Better service?

Lower price?

Better selection?

Higher end?

Greater convenience?

Speedier delivery?

Better warranty?

Longer hours?

Exclusive source?

More socially conscious?

More fun?

Hippest?

Without an articulated Key Differentiator, your message in the marketplace is, “Buy from me for no good reason. Buy from me because I need the money.”

Examples of specific, measurable Key Differentiators:

- Fresh, hot pizza, delivered in 30 minutes or less, guaranteed.
- No-hassle, no questions asked, money-back guarantee forever.
- Get your car washed and your clothes dry-cleaned while you eat in our restaurant.
- My telephones give you all the power of a fancy office system – for thousands of dollars less.
- On-time printing, no excuses.
- If I can't sell your house in 3 months, I'll buy it – at our listing price!
- We'll have a plumber at your house within 30 minutes of your call – night or day.
- Our soap is hand-made in small batches, using the rarest and most expensive oils and fragrances in the world. That's why you pay \$38 a bar.

Does your USP:

- address the customer's point of view?
- relate benefits, not process?
- make specific claims?
- identify your best customers?
- sound like you?
- tell the truth?
- say something positive?
- push emotional buttons?
- make people go, “Wow, how do you do that?”

Avoid statements like “Good service, good selection, fair prices, honest dealings, great value.”

Why? They're too general, everyone says them, and all customers expect them. These will get a yawn and a “So what” from your market.

Key Differentiator Generating Helpers

1. The “You know how...” lead-in (from Terry Dean, internet marketing guru)

Complete the sentences:

You know how...

Well, what I do is....

2. Answer the key business question:

What do my clients or customers get as a result of what I sell?

3. Fill in the blanks:

We are the only _____ that does _____ for _____.

4. Fill in the blank:

I am the only one people can get _____ from in my industry.

5. Fill in the problem blank:

I help people who _____ (name the problem).

Key Differentiator Homework

1. Ask your best customers a few of the following questions (from Debra Valle, regular marketing guru):

- When you approach me for guidance or input, what do you expect to occur?
- What kinds of issues do you count on me to solve for you?
- What would you say is my special gift or talent?
- What would you say to someone else in describing what to expect from me?
- In a word or two, how do you expect to feel following an interaction with me?
- What's your sense of how I might be excluding potential clients or opportunities?
- Why might someone choose NOT to purchase my product or service?
- What measures could I take to create more opportunities or a stronger identity or image?

You will learn:

- What you stand for
- Your "promise" in the marketplace
- The difference you make
- The value you bring to your chosen audience

2. Compare your key differentiator to what your customers say about you.

- What do you want to change about your key differentiator to more accurately reflect your business?
- What do you want to change about how you do business to live up to your USP?

3. Email or fax your key differentiator to me within 45 days for a free critique: howie@howieconnect.com (609) 671-9492

Howard Jacobson, as principal and founder of **howieconnect**, helps businesses attract and serve clients profitably and joyfully. He can be reached at (609) 883-2661, and howie@howieconnect.com.

For more marketing resources, visit his website at www.howieconnect.com.