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# Differentiation With Standardization

*How to use CIMS as your Unique Selling Proposition.*

When prospective customers ask you why they should choose to do business with you, what is your reply?

Do you have a Unique Selling Proposition (USP)?

In other words, what is the factor that makes your business different from and better than that of your competition?

“Great customer service” and “A history of doing business in the cleaning industry for more than a century” do nothing for customers today.

The cleaning business — now more than ever — is focused on finding the best service for the lowest price.

The key is demonstrating that your business can offer something that is much more valuable than just the smallest price tag.

What ISSA's Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) brings to businesses is a unique and appealing value that's meant to be passed along to customers.

You could say it's a CIMS-certified business' USP.

If you're not sure how to use CIMS to differentiate your business, just think like your customers.

#### ■ Put yourself in your customers' shoes

You know what your business has to offer, but do your services meet your customers' needs?

Is your customer struggling with high turnover, complaints, lack of training or budget concerns?

You might want to highlight the fact that CIMS helps organizations get a handle on workloading, tracking and managing feedback, implementing quality training programs and managing budgets.

CIMS understands your customers' pain points and helps you provide solutions before you even set foot in the door.

#### ■ Know what customers see in your competition

Find out what your best competitors do well and what they lack.

Most likely, CIMS will cover what the competition does well and also take care of what they're missing.

With its five principles focused on management best practices — quality systems; service delivery; human resources; health, safety and environmental stewardship; and management commitment — CIMS covers every aspect of running a well-managed, best-in-class cleaning organization.

Moreover, as a certified organization, you have everything documented; not many organizations can say the same.

#### ■ Determine what sets you apart

Only businesses that hold the CIMS certification can say that

an independent third-party has performed an assessment of their systems, processes and policies, agreeing that they have instituted the management framework required by CIMS and developed by cleaning industry customers.

Having CIMS certification not only sets businesses apart; it meets customers' demands based on industry research.

Your USP should be your clearest, most specific promise to your customers.

Meant to be used on all marketing materials, including advertisements, mailers and brochures, it does not need to be longer than a sentence.

When it comes to describing CIMS to customers, however, you'll need to do so with more than a sentence.

Plan, write and memorize a 60-second elevator speech, one that compellingly states the purpose and benefits of the Standard.

***CIMS understands your customers' pain points and helps you provide solutions before you even set foot in the door.***

Your elevator speech should be a short, concise, carefully planned summary of your CIMS selling proposition.

It should be as easy to understand in the time it takes to go from the top floor to the first floor in an elevator, and vice versa.

You may or may not meet your next customer in an elevator, but no matter where you are, you only have a few precious minutes to make an impact.

Focus on your customer's biggest pain points, the solutions your business can provide and the proof — CIMS, the Standard developed by ISSA, the leading cleaning trade association worldwide, through a true consensus-based process that brought together representatives of the cleaning, facilities management and purchasing communities. *CM*

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