

Differentiation Defined

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Email the CP editors



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When a property manager asks why your company should be chosen, what is your answer? Touting the fact that you've been in the cleaning business for more than 25 years is not going to cut it. Proclaiming that your company has "the best customer service" is meaningless. There are hundreds of building service contractors that can say the same things, and if every BSC is the same, the only thing that would matter to the customer is price.

Successful, leading businesses offer more than competitive prices. They offer a service that is unique and appealing to the customer and sets their business apart from competitors. Then they communicate and market their differentiators in one clear statement called a unique selling proposition (USP). Crafting your company's USP can dramatically improve the positioning and marketability of your company as long as it fills a need in the market and is communicated properly.

When developing your company's USP, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- What are the three biggest benefits my business provides to customers?
- What aspect(s) of my business is/are totally unique?
- What do I provide that no other competitor does?
- Does my business fill a gap or relieve a pain point within the industry?

Once you've come up with some clear differentiators, eliminate the generalities to come up with the clearest, most specific promise to your customers. Your USP need not be longer than a sentence. Integrate your USP into every marketing aspect of your business, including display advertising, direct mail and field sales.

When it comes to describing your USP to customers, you should be able to express your proposition to a property manager in 60 seconds, compellingly stating the benefits and explaining examples. I recommend writing and memorizing an "elevator speech."

An elevator speech is short, concise, carefully planned summary of your USP that is 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.

It is best not to "wing it" when delivering an elevator speech. Write a script that briefly describes the company, the market, the competition and your competitive advantage — your USP. Have your sales team memorize and practice the script, and set an example by knowing it yourself.

Developing and marketing a USP is worthless unless you honor it. If you promise a 24-hour emergency hotline or a money-back guarantee to customers, make sure you provide those things.

Finally, when your competitors catch onto what you're doing and start duplicating you, don't be surprised. That just means it's time to revise your USP so you can continue to hold your company's competitive edge. 