



MORE Powerful Marketing Minutes
50 New Ways to Develop Market Leadership

Book Excerpt **Chapter 23**

USP Times Two

One of the fundamental concepts taught in all marketing programs is the premise of the USP – Unique Selling Proposition. While this concept has served marketers well in the past, it's time to expand the meaning, and use, of the USP acronym.

In order to gain a competitive marketing advantage, you now need to have two USPs: a Unique Selling Proposition and a Unique Service Proposition, one that clearly sets you apart from competitors and provides you with a clear point of differentiation.

Examples might be:

- faster
- more efficient
- sweeter
- more stylish
- friendlier
- willingness to customize
- ability to be flexible in your manufacturing and/or delivery processes
- ability to incorporate self-service features into your product/service offering
- ability to incorporate auto-service features into your product/service offering

Your unique service proposition should be built around an area of core competency that your staff can deliver consistently and reliably. It also has to be supported by an on-going investment in infrastructure, processes, policies, and monitoring systems that help ensure the consistent and reliable delivery of your unique service proposition. Additionally, your service-related USP has to be instilled into your employees, both front-line and back-office staff, with an appropriate set of measurement and rewards systems installed and used.

Citibank in the early 1990s built a unique service proposition around the concept of CPT

– Competence, Problem-free, Timely service.

Its entire internal infrastructure was designed to deliver CPT to customers on a consistent and reliable basis. Its training programs were designed to increase the knowledge and skill levels of the front-line staff. Its rewards system was crafted to reward employees, teams, and departments that eliminated or prevented problems from happening to customers. Its capital budgets were ranked in terms of which items would improve the timeliness of service and product delivery. Using these steps these steps the bank was able to reduce the time it took to issue ATM cards to new account holders from ten days to less than three days, including mailing time.

In the airline industry, the unique service proposition of SIA is not just its friendly and efficient cabin crew, but also its highly efficient ground handling staff and process. SIA gets its passengers' luggage off the plane and onto the baggage carousel faster and more efficiently than any other airline.

Qantas, on the other hand, is notoriously awful at getting the luggage up onto the baggage belts quickly. Often, 'priority tagged' bags appear on the carousel after the economy class bags. On the other hand, Qantas has one of the most efficient and friendliest reservations teams I've ever dealt with. It's a pleasure to call the Qantas reservations staff on the phone to make a booking, change a flight, or make a special request. They willingly fax across trip itineraries and the overall trip scheduling process usually goes without a hitch.

Both SIA and Qantas have equally friendly, efficient cabin crew, and the food, entertainment choices, and other amenities on board are on par. They fly the same aircraft and their schedules between Australia and Singapore practically run in parallel.

So there may be little difference in the unique selling proposition between SIA and Qantas. But as you can see, each has its own unique service proposition.

As you develop your future marketing strategies, develop and instill both a unique selling proposition and a unique service proposition into your marketing mix.

Think of this as the Power of USP times two. One USP will help you gain new customers, while the other USP will help you build a more loyal customer base.

KEY POINT:

Creating a unique service proposition will enable you to craft a competitive market advantage.

TAKING ACTION:

How does your standard service differ from competitors?

How could you enhance your service to create a strategic competitive advantage?

If you are a manufacturer of products, what would it take to enable you to provide more flexible and customized manufacturing solutions to customers?

If you are a marketer or seller of products/services, what would it take for you to offer self-service options to your customers? What would it take for you to incorporate auto-service features into your products and services?

This Chapter is excerpted from MORE Powerful Marketing Minutes by Steven Howard.

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