



WHAT IS YOUR USP?

Most good marketing campaigns will focus on communicating a firm's Unique Selling Point (USP). In today's crowded market, customers have more choice than ever before. This increase in competition makes finding, defining and communicating your USP more important than ever before.

So what is your firm's USP? Do you offer the faster or better or cheaper product or service? Maybe your people are regarded as the best or most efficient? What is it that is truly unique about your business?

When it comes to your product or service, you will know how it works and so you should understand exactly what it is that you do cheaper/ better / faster than your competitors. The problem is that your customers are trying to decide between choosing your product / service or one from your competitor. They don't know as much about your product line as you do. Getting them to choose your firm can therefore be a real challenge.

The problem with most marketing campaigns that focus on a USP is that they try to communicate the "what" rather than the "why". Most businesses will talk about what it is that they do. They probably won't talk about why it is that they do it. However to really stand out, you need to differentiate your firm. Maybe you should think about using the "why" as your USP.

This is a point that is well made by Simon Sinek in his famous Ted Talk. Sinek, a bestselling author, set out to discover why companies like Apple have been able to achieve such huge success, while others with the same resources have failed.

He outlined how Apple focuses on "Why" rather than "What". What is it that Apple makes? They make electronics. They make tablets, laptops, desktops, portable music players and watches that have a nice design. They make nice software. That isn't any different to any other electronics manufacturer. However, Apple builds its core marketing message on "Why".

The core marketing message from Apple would likely be something along the lines of "With everything we do, we aim to challenge the status quo. We aim to think differently. Our products are user friendly, beautifully designed, and easy to use. We just happen to make great computers."

Taking this as an example you can create a USP and associated marketing message for your business which

communicates "Why" it is that you do what you do and how this is of benefit to your customers (and potential customers).

MANAGING INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Today's hyper-connected business people are bombarded with more information than ever before. We are all faced with information overload.

Many businesses have tried to encourage their offices to go paperless. However, people still have stacks of paper, magazines, articles and reference materials all around their desks. Inboxes are overflowing with ever increasing volumes of emails. Businesses are spending more and more on digital storage (and physical storage). So how do you manage information overload?

Identify sources and create filters

Consider where your information comes from. You probably receive email, newsletters, industry publications, etc. Consider what information you really need then set up email filters which cut out the rubbish and only allow the relevant information through to your inbox. In terms of physical information – create a rule. If you don't read an industry publication within a week you should pass it on or bin it (in the recycling of course).

Allocate time to review it

Put some time in your diary to go through all the data that you are collating. Go through those email folders. Review documents that you have stored away. Book a meeting with yourself to do this so that you've got some structured time in your diary each week to deal with information. If you use a mind map to organise your data sources into categories you could set up time to deal with each category one by one and therefore avoid jumping around from one topic to the next.

Act on it or delete / recycle it

During your review time your plan should be to act on information or delete it. Your options should be something along the lines of the following:

- Deal with it now
- Deal with it later - only if it's going to take more than 5 minutes to do.
- Add it to your To Do list or mind map of tasks.
- Pass it on to someone else to action.
- File it away as information that is useful to know.
- Delete it.



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DROPBOX BUSINESS

Dropbox is among the simplest and most user-friendly cloud storage and file-syncing services. It gives users access to files from nearly anywhere. You can install Dropbox on virtually any computer or mobile device and dozens of other apps support integration with Dropbox, too. Dropbox Business is aimed at the business and professional market. For larger firms there is also the option to upgrade to Dropbox Enterprise.

Dropbox Business supports real-time collaboration for Office Online users, so you and your colleagues can access and edit the same Dropbox file at the same time while seeing one another's changes appear on the screen as they happen.

It includes useful extras such as remote wipe, unlimited file recovery as well as email and telephone support services. You begin with 1 TB (1,000 GB) of storage, but can request more once you reach that limit.

In terms of collaboration, you can share files and folders with Dropbox users regardless of whether they're part of your Dropbox Business account, but external users are limited by their plan's storage limits.

In addition to a desktop app, Dropbox also provides mobile apps for iOS and Android, all of which sync with your online account. The mobile apps let you create files and folders and share them.

The system is good but it isn't perfect. You can't edit documents inside Dropbox itself. When you click the open button on a file, you're redirected to Microsoft Office 365 online, where you have to either set up an account or log into an existing one. This isn't ideal but given that most businesses use Microsoft Office, shouldn't prove to be too much of an issue.

Dropbox Business offers lots of options in terms of security permissions, encryption, etc. and users can prevent other members from adding, editing, or deleting files in a particular folder. Dropbox business costs from £11 per user per month (based on a minimum of 5 users). You can also choose a free 30 day trial of the service.

In light of the recent Brexit decision, one thing is inevitable in business in the coming months and years and that is change.

Whichever way you decided to vote, the result of the referendum means that you and your business must be prepared to change and adapt to a new business environment. Here are a few change management tips for your business:

Create a plan and set realistic goals

People tend to resist change so create a plan that outlines each step of the change process, the key stakeholders, the timeline and the deliverables. Ask different staff members from across the business to feed into this plan. Someone might have a great idea to contribute to the plan – sometimes all you need to do is ask.

Communicate

Communicate your vision clearly to your team. Identify what it is that you are trying to achieve through the change process. What is in it for your team? The best managers can explain this in a way that inspires the team to get involved and move forward with the plan.

Maintaining momentum

Your employees may agree with your vision initially, but they're likely to become frustrated or disillusioned along the way, especially if they don't see immediate progress. Find ways to keep the conversation going through short town hall meetings, staff surveys and casual conversation. Ask the team for their honest feedback regularly and be willing to listen. Be honest about what you don't know, and commit to updating employees when those details are finalised.

Get the team on board

Getting the senior management team on board is relatively easy. They should be able to see "what's in it for them." However to succeed in managing change in your business you need to get your middle management and your junior staff members on board too. Ask representatives from different groups across your business to get involved, share their views and take ownership of different aspects of the change process.