

what's your **USP?**

boost sales by positioning your salon as the best in the market, says Liz McKeon

What makes you personally, or your salon, more unique, more valuable, and more visible in the market?

You've heard the old saying 'Differentiate or Die'? In our highly competitive industry, you have to be unique and fill a special niche to be successful in the marketplace. Yet one of the most harmful mistakes salons make is not being unique and positioning themselves as the best choice in the market.

Having a Unique Selling Proposition or 'USP' will dramatically improve the positioning and marketability of your salon and products by accomplishing three things:

Unique: It clearly sets you apart from your competition, positioning you as the more logical choice.

Selling: It persuades a client to buy from your salon.

Proposition: it is a proposal or offer suggested for acceptance.

Your USP is the force that drives your business and success. It can also be used as a 'branding' tool that is included with every tactical marketing effort you use, such as business cards, brochures or your website. This allows you to build a lasting reputation while making sales.

The ultimate goal of your USP and marketing is to have people say to you "yes, I've heard of you, you're the salon who..." And then respond by requesting more information or making a sale.

develop your USP

Your USP is the very essence of what you are offering. It needs to be so compelling that it can be used as a headline that sells your product or service. Therefore, since you want to optimise all your marketing materials for maximum results, create it before any other advertising or marketing material.

step 1: use your biggest benefits

Clearly describe the biggest benefit of using your salon and explain why that is important to your clients. Think in terms of what your salon does for your client and the end-result they desire from your service.

step 2: be unique

Basically, your USP separates you from the competition, and illustrates your salon is the most logical choice. Write your USP so it creates desire and urgency.

step 3: solve an industry 'performance gap'

Identify which needs are going unfulfilled in your local market. The need that exists between the current situation and the desired objectives is termed a 'performance gap'. Many salons that base their USP on industry performance gaps are very successful.

step 4: be specific & offer proof

Clients are sceptical of advertising claims. Alleviate their scepticism by being specific and offering proof where possible.

step 5: condense into one clear & concise sentence

The most powerful USPs are so perfectly written, you cannot change or move even a single word. Each word earns you money by selling your product or service. After you get your USP written, your advertising and marketing will practically write itself!

step 6: integrate your USP into all marketing materials

Variations of your USP will be included in all your marketing materials such as:

- Advertisements
- Business cards, brochures, flyers and signs
- Phone and sales scripts
- Letterheads and postcards
- Website and internet marketing

step 7: deliver on your USP promise

Be bold when developing your USP but be careful to ensure that you can deliver. Your USP should have promises and guarantees that capture your client's attention and encourages them to book with you. Having a strong USP can make your business a big success, or a big failure if you don't deliver on it, thereby risking your reputation.

Build your USP to optimise your marketing materials for maximum results. If your salon has a good, clear and honest USP there is an excellent chance that you will be able to compete on factors other than price. And, that means that your business will be more profitable!

Liz McKeon runs a Business Training and Consultancy Service, assisting Beauty Businesses reach their full potential.

For information on upcoming events, check out www.lizmckeon.com or call 00353 86 386 1243.

