

Unique Selling Proposition

In today's times, when thousands of brands in the same product or service category are jostling to grab mindshare in a highly competitive market environment, it is the USP or the Unique Selling Proposition of a brand that sets them apart from the crowd. Being the *raison-d-etre* of any branding campaign, USP is a unique characteristic or exclusive feature of a brand that helps creating an identity or niche for your brand in the over-crowded market space, catapulting your business to the zenith of success.

The conceptualization of this ground-breaking idea is attributed to the legendary advertising professional Rosser Reaves during his professional stint at the advertising agency Ted Bates and Company in 1940. He enumerated three primary features of USP in his first book; *Reality in Advertising* that completely transformed the way people perceived brands and revolutionized the advertising and marketing world.

Firstly, a USP should try to underscore a tangible benefit of the brand or establish a perception of that benefit in the minds of the customer. Secondly, it should harp on a particular feature or aspect of the product that the competition is not offering be it a new innovation, prices slashed, discounts offered or freebies given as value-additions. And the third point highlights the pull-factor of the proposition amongst the public at large that would break the clutter of innumerable brands and instigate the buying propensity of the customer in favor of your product.

A layman would confuse between a USP and a tagline and dub both as the same thing but that is not exactly the case. A tagline is a reflection of your brand's USP summarized in a catchy phrase or one-liner that captures the imagination of the customer and creates an instant connect or brand recall in the minds of the customer. Conventionally known as brand slogan, the tagline should be strategically placed with the brand logo and used in all forms of marketing communication be it advertisements in print, electronic, outdoor, online media et al.

A USP is a must for branding your own self wherein you make a statement about your over-all persona and what makes you unique amongst scores of others who claim to be the best as well. The online medium has opened up a vista of opportunities for us which is not only cost-effective but reaches international audience base at the click of a mouse! Owning a professionally managed personal domain or blog, having profiles in professional as well as social networking sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, Myspace, Twitter etc can work wonders for your personal brand, as starters.

If your business is going nowhere and you are desperately seeking the mantra for success, then get yourself a USP for your brand at the first place. It is the cornerstone of

establishing any business which enables you to make future decisions about brand segmentation, price positioning and ascertain other strategic business moves.