

Marketing

Tools and tactics for the business-to-business expedition

Brand (brand) n. a claim that an offering is unique, more valuable

reDiscoverSM your brand

Define what is truly unique about your entity, its products, and/or its services.

Ask a variety of your associates, "What is our unique selling proposition or USP?"

Distill the list of potential USPs down to just a few that are really, truly unique.

Survey your customers to see which USP is most important to them.

Craft a brand message that: captures the idea of the most important USP; contrasts the competition; is trademarkable.

Search the web for potential conflicts and look for a website domain that matches your brand concept/words.

Expand on the brand message to clarify the concept. This becomes the language that all of your associates incorporate when they correspond and speak about your organization.

This language should also be used in all forms of marketing communications.

The company name and the products and services names should all correlate the brand message.

A brand concept based on reality is affirming. So gather proof of the claim or promise made in your brand message. This may consist of testimonials and case studies.

Develop a brand implementation plan considering business cards and stationery, website, collateral, exhibits, laptop presentations, signage, email signatures, etc.

When we study a client's industry, most often the collective marketers look and sound pretty much the same. If an enterprise doesn't make its distinction apparent, how will its customers/prospects perceive it as being different from any other source? How will associates know what distinguishes their organization? To market effectively, an entity must clearly define what's unique about itself and/or its products/services and communicate this clearly to its internal and external audiences.

Differentiate or discount

You risk commoditization when your offering is perceived as being no different from that of the competition. A well-defined brand creates the perception there is no other offering like yours. Once this is apparent to your target market, pricing becomes a less important factor when a buyer is comparing you to competitors.

What's your distinction?

Most entities have something unique to offer their market, but may not have discerned what this is. Your company's product, service, process, or mindset may be unique in your industry. Look deep within and determine what you provide that no competitor does.

Gather input from a cross-section of associates, top to bottom and across all departments. Ask each person, "What's unique about our company and/or its offering?" The combined feedback becomes the list of potential unique selling propositions (USPs). Boil down the long list to a few USPs that are truly unique.

Which USP is most important?

Once you've compiled the internal list of potential USPs, it is essential to get your customers' input. The USP that you ultimately promote must not only

be unique, but it must be what your customers want or need. Ask your customers to rate the importance of the USPs you believe to be unique in your industry segment. Your clients' input will help determine the focus and gist of your brand message.

Borns surveyed Agility Therapy's customers (hospital administrators). Of the five USPs presented in the survey, the one rated most important was, "Agility is adaptable, agile, and responsive to the needs of customers." The survey also revealed that Agility's competitors were not flexible. Borns coined the word **flexagilityTM** to convey Agility's most important USP. This is featured in their brand message: *Delivering flexagilityTM, every way, everyday.*

Name it and claim it!

Once you have confirmed what's really unique about your company and most valuable to your customers, it's time to express this point of differentiation. In the fewest words possible (i.e., 3 to 5), coin a word and/or craft a phrase that defines your claim of distinction. This becomes your brand message, which is the centerpiece of your brand.

So, what does it mean?

Now that you've met the challenge of capturing the distinction of your company, product, and/or service in a concise brand message, you must expand on it to clarify its meaning. We call this the expanded brand message (EBM). This becomes the language of your elevator pitch and marketing communications such as the primary message on your website homepage.

What about the other USPs

In a customer survey, the USPs that weren't rated most important may still have been rated fairly high. These

runner-up USPs could be woven into your EBM for further differentiation and to give your customers even more reasons for doing business with your organization.

We need backup!

As you promote your brand, it can gain credence much faster if you prove your claims. Collect examples of how your unique offering has benefited your customers. This could be published in the form of a testimonial or case study.

What does your name say?

Does the name of your company reflect what your entity does or offers as it did back when it was established? Has the name kept up with the times? Or has your industry changed and left your name meaningless or archaic? As you evaluate your overall brand, this is a good time to evaluate your name. This is also a great opportunity to tie the name of your organization and your brand message together.

When we conduct keyword research for clients, we determine the actual words/terms searchers are using when they are looking for specific products or services. We do this research when we are designing a new website or optimizing an existing site. We have modified company names to be more relevant based on the results of the keyword research.

As an example, we changed the name of Progressive **Technologies** to Progressive **Surface**[®] based on keyword research results. What was revealed was that the word 'surface' was always included in the terms searchers used when looking for surface treatment equipment.

Tie it all together

A brand survey we conducted revealed that the majority of Progressive Surface's customers valued their discovery and design process the most. We coined the word, "**Pro**cisely[®]" and the phrase "The **Pro**cise Process[®]" to convey their USP. The emphasis was put on "**Pro**" to tie back to their first name, "**Pro**gressive." We also incorporated "**Pro**" into their software names, CITS **Pro**[®] and PRIMS **Pro**[®].

Get those domains!

Among other reasons, purchasing your website domain names will protect your brands. We discovered that a competitor of a new client had purchased the domains of our client's equipment brand names. It was obvious the competitor wanted to capture business (e.g., parts, service, new equipment) that may have otherwise gone to our client.

Names/domains to consider:

- business name and variations
- brand messages/tag lines
- keywords and phrases
- product names
- service names

Always procure the domain with .com and .net extensions.

Next, brand implementation

Once your brand has been developed, then comes the action of branding (i.e., implementing, extending, fulfilling). This is covered in the *Marketteering* issue on 'Branding' at borns.com/marketteering.

If you want to learn about Borns' **reDiscover**SM brand strategy process, contact Randy Borns at 616.502.2213 or randy@borns.com.



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