

Setting Yourself Apart from Your Competition

I was in a supermarket on yesterday and saw a young lady in the pasta aisle deciding which brand of elbow macaroni she would buy. After she briefly scanned the shelf, her quick reach and grab, indicated to me she found her favorite brand.

Now, I'm no gourmet cook, but I can say with some certainty that If she were to make macaroni and cheese with a couple of the other brands of elbow macaroni, the dish would still be the perfect complement to the chicken, green beans candied yams, cornbread and sweet iced tea she planned to prepare.

However, something about the brand she chose, in her mind, stood out from the rest. Could it have been the packaging or the slogan? Maybe it was the quality of the product and its taste. The fact that the serving suggestions/recipes were included on the box might have clinched her purchase.

Whatever her reason, in my business, your business, everyone's business strives to get the customer to choose their product/service rather than other available choices.

The obvious question is, how do I entice buyers to purchase from me instead of others?

The answer is, to tell buyers how your product/service is different from the person selling the same thing, something similar or a substitute. One of the most brilliant uses of messaging a "difference" in its product was conducted by the makers of Splenda (artificial sweetener).



In an article written by Harold Brubaker in a 2006 edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* he stated that, “after just five years on supermarket shelves, the artificial sweetener – whose advertising slogan is ‘made from sugar, so it tastes like sugar’ – has found its way into 20 percent of U.S. households and takes in 50% of the money spent on sugar substitutes.”

Even though Sweet ‘N Low and Equal were on the market for decades prior to Splenda’s introduction, Splenda was generating more revenue than both.

The way Splenda got there was by proclaiming it was the **natural sweetener**, a claim neither Sweet ‘N Low or Equal made. At a time when natural products were beginning to be all the rage, Splenda capitalized on the trend by attaching its **difference (natural sweetener)** to the prevailing consumer preference for natural.

Maybe this example conveys the importance of being different even better.

Your Difference is What Counts!



Five Guys Cheeseburger



Big Mac. Coke & Fries

At McDonald's, a burger, order of fries and a cold drink costs \$5.99. At Five Guys, the same concept, burger, order of fries, something cold to drink is about \$11.00. The difference?

Five Guys:

- Fresh ground beef, never frozen
- Fresh cut fries (extra in the bag)

- Your choice of toppings, no extra charge
- Snack on peanuts while you wait

Both businesses are selling the same concept successfully, however by providing some different options Five Guys distinguishes itself from McDonald's and charges a higher price.

Identify What Makes Your Business Idea Different

If you are starting a business, research other products/services that are similar to yours and identify a difference that gives you a real edge. Citing top quality, better than the rest, high standards, etc. as your differences will not capture a buyer's attention. Everyone says those things about their products/services in some manner.

You are searching for those hard-hitting differences that really make you stand out. If you are an existing business, periodically reexamine your marketing messaging related to your product/service difference to make sure that you still have an advantage. Your competitors are always seeking to take away your share in the market.

As you can see by the Splenda example, your product/service difference does not have to be some magical or revolutionary invention. Sometimes it only takes a bit of creativity and imagination to identify a **difference** that sends your business to new heights. Remember, your difference is what counts!

Tell me one thing about how your business is different than your competition and I will give you some feedback.

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