

# BOARD PAPER: MAKE YOUR BUSINESS STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD.

## Abstract

Determining what makes your business different is one of the most fundamental marketing decisions you need to make. If you are unable to decide what it is that makes your business different, then you cannot expect your customers to know why they should buy from you.

**Helen Down**  
Board Facilitator and Coach



## Introduction:

Determining what makes your business different is one of the most fundamental marketing decisions you need to make. If you are unable to identify what sets your business apart, you cannot expect your customers to recognise it either! Leaving their purchase decision to whatever takes their fancy at the time will only make your competitors appear more attractive.

## What Makes Your Business Different?

When you think about it, very few businesses are one-of-a-kind. Chances are you operate in an industry where you have competitors offering similar products and services. To make your business stand out in the eyes of your target customers, you need to pinpoint what makes your business different and connect this to their needs and desires. To discover what makes your business stand out from the crowd, ask yourself some key questions:

1. What does our business do **better** than anyone else?
2. What do your staff say about what makes you **different** and why they work for you?
3. What do our customers say when you ask them why they chose us or what they like best about us?
4. Which of these things that make us different do our customers **value** most?
5. What does our **SWOT analysis** tell us about what makes us different?
6. What are your **competitors** doing and what do they think makes them different?

## What's Unique About You?

Pinpointing your uniqueness can take some soul-searching and creativity, especially with many competitors. Take a good hard look at:

7. **What do you do?** Your products and services
8. **How do you do business?** Is there something special, unusual, or significant about the way you operate?
9. **Who are your ideal customers?** Where are they located? What are their ages, interests, and income levels? Can you target customers that your competitors aren't focusing on? Targeting a specific niche can be a powerful point of difference.
10. **What do your customers want that your competitors are not offering?** List the benefits that customers derive from you.



## Use All Your Marketing Tools

It's not just your product or service that makes you different. There are seven marketing tools in your toolkit. Think of them as seven levers you can pull to make your business stand out. These seven tools are often referred to as your Marketing Mix and are:

- Price
- Promotions
- Place (location and distribution)
- Product/Service
- Physical facilities
- Personnel
- Process

You may be able to adjust one of these, several, or even create a unique combination to make a compelling difference your customers will truly value. Remember, you want to create points of difference that are difficult for your competitors to copy and that will work for the long term. Finding your points of difference is not a quick job—it takes research and accurate information to get it right.

## Handy Checklist to Get You Thinking

Use this checklist to give you some ideas and help you identify your key points of difference. Ask yourself and research what changes you can make in each area to help you stand out from the crowd.

## Pricing, Payment, and Rewards

- Can you differentiate yourselves from the competition based on any of the following?
- Price: regular price, trade price, internet price, we'll beat any price by 10%
- Payment terms: 7 days, 14 days, 20th of the month, monthly automatic payments, subscription, refundable deposit
- Payment plans: layby, interest-free terms, no payments for x months, no money upfront
- Barter or swap
- Incentives to join: Free development, installation, or membership with ongoing monthly fees
- Package deals, value adds, and special offers: buy one get one free, discounts for buying more than one item, free consultation, free measure and quote, free gift with purchase
- Payment methods: online, cash, cheque, invoice
- Loyalty schemes: loyalty points schemes, spend a certain amount or visit so many times and receive a reward
- Are there payment or pricing methods used in other industries that could be introduced into yours?



## Location and distribution

- Can you differentiate yourselves from the competition based on any of the following?
- Unique location: stunning surroundings, historic building, rural setting, beautiful interior design
- Convenience/proximity to target audience: your 'local', closer than your competitors, just 50m from the railway station/bus stop, in the heart of the CBD, just off State Highway 2
- Availability of parking: free parking, ample parking, we'll pay for your parking, no time limit on parking
- Distribution channel: available online, text to order, sold through leading department stores, events and industry shows, community markets, party plans
- Geographical market service: cover a wide area or 'we're your local'
- Delivery: free delivery, same-day delivery, delivered to your door, secure delivery, free gifts with delivery, personal delivery

## Customer Service

Can you differentiate yourselves from the competition based on any of the following?

- Response times: if we're late, you don't pay, we'll get back to you within 2 hours, quick turnaround, same-day service, no queues
- Service promises: if we mess up, you get your money back or a \$50 gift voucher
- Turning a negative into a positive: where your service might create frustration, can you turn this into a positive experience? E.g. a health service that is enjoyable.
- Staff qualities: friendly, knowledgeable, authentic, qualified
- Personal service: a real person answers the phone, local experts, face-to-face service
- Opening hours: late night, 7 days, 24/7
- Level of interest in customers: remembering their name, keeping a record of what they've bought in the past, taking an interest in them
- Communication methods: sending reminders, email newsletters, sending mobile phone vouchers

Ask yourself: What changes can we make to help us stand out and what message should we be giving our customers? Better still, ask your customers.

## Product / Service

Can you differentiate yourselves from the competition based on any of the following?

- Technology: latest technology, easy-to-use, technology that saves time.
- Range: biggest range, unique range, more styles, integrates with other products.
- Quality: 100% pure, finest quality.
- Features: new features, more features, safety features, environmental features, unexpected features.
- Application of product in a different environment.
- Different packaging: package sizes, extras, freebies.
- Ability to customise tailored to your needs, to suit your individual taste.
- Exclusivity: certain brands, one-stop-shop, specialisation.
- Warranties and guarantees long warranties, extended warranties, workmanship guarantee.
- Unique products for a niche target market.

## Process

- Can you differentiate yourselves on any of the following?
- Online process: quickest, easy to use, fewer clicks, seamless journey, personal help.
- Buying process: convenience, remove barriers to purchase, free trial, in-home trial, phone orders.
- Ordering process: automatic reordering.
- Service or maintenance process, warranty.
- After-sales process, follow-up process

## Promotion

- Can you differentiate yourselves from the competition based on any of the following?
- Advertising across different media/platforms
- Different style of advertising
- Unique call to action or special offer
- Unusual words, graphics, or video
- Unusual event promotions
- Exclusive joint promotions (e.g., with a membership organisation)
- Sponsorship

Whatever points of difference you develop, make sure they are much more compelling to your target market than just saying "excellent quality and service." Be specific, use numbers where possible, and promote these consistently.

Make it the **CORE** of your marketing.