



5 Tips for Using Differentiators to Increase Your Small Business Sales

By Caron Beesley

One of the elements in the grand scheme of things is knowing what makes your business different from the competition. What you do with that knowledge can make or break your business. Specifically, are these differentiators clearly defined and part of your sales strategy?

Can you explain the following?

- Why your business is different from the competition?
- Why your differentiators matter to your customers? People call this the “so what” factor.
- If you are in the B2B space, how do you help your customers differentiate themselves from their competitors?

No business can survive by selling on price alone. Here are some tips for incorporating your differentiators into your sales (and marketing) process.

1. Understand your differentiators and what they mean to your customers

Even if you're selling a service in a highly competitive space, there is always something that should differentiate your business.

Take, for example, the saturated yard work and lawn service business. How can you differentiate yourself from the other contractors in your community? Yes, price is important – after all, it's just a lawn, right? But what else have you got to offer? How can you really help your customers? Can you advise you them on the optimal time to seed or treat their lawn? Is there a type of mulch you know will hold its colour and make for a happier homeowner? Is your record strong on reliability?

Your value-add difference, beyond just mowing lawns, is starting to emerge – and this can differentiate you.

It's not enough, though, to know and communicate what differentiates you. Can you explain to your customers what impact your differentiators have on them?

In the example above, you've differentiated yourself in several ways:

- You've delivered a consultative sell that's already above and beyond simply responding to a request for a quote.
- You are likely saving your customer money while helping them do what's right for their yard.
- You've identified and used your reliability and expertise as a value-added differentiator.

This approach alone might just be enough to differentiate you from the next contractor who quite possibly views this as a purely price-based sale.

So get to know what your differentiators are and advocate for them, not just as a sales person.

2. Get to know your competition and how to sell against them

To help refine your differentiators, it's useful to understand what your competitor's differentiators are, too. Get to know their strengths as well as their weaknesses. The latter is important because you can define your differentiators accordingly and step up your game in these areas. Check out online reviews (Google+ Local, Yelp.com, etc.) and even local community discussion boards. If you lost out to a competitor on a deal, be bold and ask the prospect why they chose to do business with them and not you.

3. Find out which differentiators matter to your customers

Your customers play an important role in helping you further refine your differentiators and focus on the ones that matter to them. Step outside your business, listen to your customers' needs, and fine-tune your sales pitch and marketing messages to focus on differentiators that actually matter.

4. Have integrity

No one trusts a glib salesperson who walks all over the competition in a sales pitch. Stay true to your business values. Don't just emphasize the competition's negatives; be prepared to explain why you are better than they are. Selling is a tough business, but a salesperson or business owner with integrity is a huge differentiator and goes a long way to creating a compelling customer service experience.

5. Roll your differentiators into all your marketing messages

To help you ensure your differentiators are well-defined and ingrained across your entire sales and marketing operations, it's important to develop a messaging platform as outlined in this blog: [7 Tips for Getting your Marketing Message Right!](#)

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About the Author

Caron Beesley is the founding partner of April Marketing, a writer, and marketing communications consultant. Caron works with the US SBA.gov team to promote essential US government resources that help entrepreneurs and small business owners to start-up, to grow and to succeed. She has been in the marketing business for 15 years, starting her career as an assistant with a London graphic studio. Caron progressed to hold senior marketing roles with several global and US-based corporations with a particular emphasis on information technology and Internet services marketing.

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¹ <http://www.sba.gov/community/blogs/7-tips-getting-your-marketing-message-right>

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