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Unique Selling Point, Ideal Customer, and Consumer Thinking

By Darrin F. Coe, MA

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Ideal Customer, Unique Selling Point, and Consumer Thinking
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As entrepreneurs there are some very basic things that we've all been taught. The first thing we generally do is identify a consumer need.

Then we're usually taught to define our ideal customer.

Lastly we're supposed to define for that ideal customer, the unique selling point (usp) of our product or service.

I believe all of these processes actually work more as an integrated, dynamic flow than as a linear process.

What many times we are not taught is how do we integrate marketing our product or service with our knowledge of consumer thinking.

Consumers make purchasing decisions based on choice processes. There are generally three process that consumers go through when they decide to make a purchase and the process they use is dependent on the type of product or service they are considering.

Therefore, your unique selling point, identified customer need, and ideal customer profile should be integrated with one another and marketed based on a knowledge of consumer thinking.

Let's use my latest e-book, "Micro Loans: Finance Your Dreams", as an example of integration. First I spent time identifying a need. That need was money. Entrepreneurs need money to finance their business projects. Most home businesses and microbusinesses have trouble qualifying for large loans from traditional lending sources so I wrote this ebook to help them meet the need for money.

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Next, I took the time to identify my ideal customer based on the identified need. The ideal customer is a home business or microbusiness entrepreneur who is motivated and passionate about accomplishing their dreams. This includes both men and women who are currently making ends meet but want more out of life and want to pursue an entrepreneurial dream.

After this, based on identified need, and my ideal customer profile, I was able to create my ebook's unique selling point. As a matter of fact, I wrote the book specifically to create a unique selling point. "Micro Loans: Finance Your Dreams" unique selling point is this: It provides instruction on how to access a little known government business program, which is funded through the SBA, at an affordable price combined with tools and templates to make access to the program easier.

Now, we have an identified need (money), we have an ideal customer (home business entrepreneur)

and a product with a unique selling point (an ebook). These can now be factored into our marketing decisions.

There are, as stated earlier, three generally accepted processes consumers use to make buying decisions.

The first is the "buyer action process".

This process involves five mental steps a buyer goes through before making a purchasing decision. It is the job of the marketer to guide them through these steps.

1. Creating awareness - get their attention
2. Developing interest - hold their attention
3. Inducing desire - convince them they want your product or service
4. Conviction - solidify their belief that they want your product or service
5. Action - motivating them to make the purchase.

This process is generally engaged in when the consumer easily understands the features and benefits of a product or service, the product is not expensive, and the purchase does not involve multiple decision makers.

This process is not engaged in when the selling situation involves complex products or services and multiple decision makers are required.

The next process a buyer may go through is the "buyer resolution process".

This involves a process of the buyer answering five purchasing questions. If all are answered in the affirmative then the consumer will most likely make a purchase. The questions are:

1. Why should I buy (is there a need)
2. What should I buy (what product will meet the need)
3. Where should I buy (what source provides the product)
4. What is a fair price (is the price of this product worth meeting the need)
5. When should I buy (is meeting my need necessary at this point)

This mental process is used more often when a customer is actively trying to fill a perceived need. The process is generally not an impulsive process. People who go through this process need to be convinced on each question, in the affirmative. These are the type of people that engage in

comparison shopping and use consumer guides to make decisions.

If your ideal customer profile leads you to believe that your customer is not likely to be an impulse buyer then marketing with the above process in mind is probably smart. You need to present your product or service in a manner that will help the consumer answer the above questions in the affirmative, leading to them making a purchase. This is where your unique selling point becomes very important. The USP is used to answer the consumer's questions.

The final process is referred to as the "needs–satisfaction" process.

This process is engaged in when a person is making a purchase to satisfy a need in a complex selling situation. The consumer is looking for a consultive partnership with the seller. This is the process that many customers engage in which leads to repeat business. It satisfies all of these questions by having the seller identify their needs and generating products or services that seem to be customized to the identified need. Several points concerning this process:

1. The consumer is aware they have a need but may not be aware of what it is specifically so the seller

must conduct an assessment to help them better pinpoint their need.

This process treats the individual consumer as separate target market.

2. Questions and two–way communication are a priority in this marketing process. They are designed to help the consumer pinpoint their need and then you can take them through the resolution process based on your product or service.

3. This type of consumer process is facilitated if you attempt to advocate for and facilitate a long term relationship with the customer. This is the customer that needs to trust the seller. They want to feel like they know the seller and this leads to confidence and credibility on the seller's part.

These three consumer decision making processes are not necessarily different approaches. The reality is they work in concert with one another dependent on what the consumer presents to the seller. You can think of them as a complex progression which is dependent on the customer need, the customer profile, and your unique selling point.

If you keep these processes in mind as you create your advertising and marketing plan. I believe you will see increased success and develop more repeat business.

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Consider Consumer Psychology

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In your marketing efforts, be they on or offline, it's wise to consider the psychology of the consumer you are targeting. If you've done your homework you've developed a profile of your ideal customer and how your unique selling point speaks to them. Now, as you begin to develop a marketing strategy, writing ad copy, developing radio copy, and creating web copy, it is an understanding of consumer psychology that will help you speak to the consumer.

What is the true need your consumer is attempting to gratify? This is the question you must answer before writing copy or launching advertising. Maslow, would tell us that there are five needs: 1) basic needs; 2) safety needs; 3) social needs; 4) self esteem needs; and 5) self-fulfillment needs.

Along with this information consider that in "The Ramsey Report" published recently by eMarketer.com, we are told that consumer "empowerment" is one of the factors driving the continuing boom of online commerce. Consumers perceive themselves to be in the consumer driver's seat when they are online. They can block popups, can spam, and surf away from site that they dislike. They feel as if they are no longer at the whim of the marketing magicians.

This does not surprise me given that recent research would also indicate that online users tend to suffer from depression, low self-esteem, and loneliness. The internet addresses these issue through empowering them and giving them a perception of control.

Now, as a marketer it is up to you to use this information to speak to the needs of your consumer. Consider someone marketing heart-rate monitors. Whether in a retail sporting goods store or online, what need are you really fulfilling by selling heart-rate monitors? You can assume your client has some athletic training; perhaps they are detrained and attempting to recover their fitness? Perhaps they are an average athlete attempting to go to the next level of athleticism? Or maybe they are recovering from an illness or injury and are working with a personal trainer?

This consumer is dissatisfied with their current state of existence. They want to perceive themselves in a more positive light. This consumer perhaps has low self-esteem and is depressed because of their poor level of fitness or perhaps they are dissatisfied with their level of athleticism because they know they can excel beyond where they are currently. The bottom line is they are dissatisfied with themselves, with their social image, and with their level of achievement.

With this in mind you're not selling heart-rate monitors, you're selling positive, and encouraging feedback. The heart-rate monitors tell the consumer that they are achieving and meeting their goals. The heart-rate monitor gives positive feedback and brings pleasure to painful exercise. The heart-rate monitor brings satisfaction to a dissatisfied outlook. What you're really selling is pleasure in the midst of

pain.

This is what I mean by understanding your consumer's psychology before you begin marketing and advertising. With the above analysis, someone selling heart-rate monitors can develop a marketing campaign that speaks directly to the heart of the consumer and hopefully turns more prospects into purchasing customers.

Take the time to analyze the true needs of your consumer and how your product meets that need before you begin writing your and developing your marketing and you'll be at a distinct advantage over your competition.

Darrin F. Coe, MA holds a master's degree in psychology and works as a mental health professional, wealth building advocate, weekly columnist, and author. His latest information product is "Consumer Thinking Exposed" available at <http://dcoe1.tripod.com>. Contact him at coe@ris.net or subscribe to the Darrin Coe Ezine at <http://dcoe1.tripod.com>

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