

## Defining Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) Checklist

Remember, your USP is simply the collection of factors unique to you and your business that compels your ideal clients to choose you over someone else who offers the same product or service. Think in terms of benefits your clients enjoy as a result of working with you over someone else, or, of choosing you over going the DIY route, or doing nothing.

**Important:** You don't need to differentiate in all the categories below – it can be uber-effective to choose one or two and really knock 'em out of the park. That would be enough.

### 10 Ways to Differentiate:

- The kind of clients you serve.** For example, I mostly work with creative service providers who are in business for themselves and have a little bit of a rebellious streak. They boldly followed their creative calling to make a living, even when naysayers and well-meaning loved ones may have discouraged it. (I sketched out an in-depth look at my ideal client avatar in the downloadable *Defining Your Audience* checklist. See that checklist at the end of this blog post: <http://kimberlydhouston.com/the-dreadful-client-repelling-mistake-that-will-keep-you-broke-and-how-to-fix-it/>)
- How you work with clients/your process, etc.** Maybe you have a fabulous and thorough client intake process that makes your clients feel deeply understood, and you also provide truly magnificent customer service, the kind that goes above and beyond what most other creative service providers offer.
- Your backstory or company founder story.** Everybody's got one, use yours to connect with your ideal clients. Your backstory is one of the most effective ways to differentiate yourself in the marketplace; it helps develop a connection with your audience, which aids in getting them to trust you, and your audience has to trust you in order to buy from you. By "backstory," I mean the parts of your journey that **relate to your business** – how you got here, what caused you to come up with the product/service/solution you offer, your story along the way, etc. **The backstory you use should be relevant to the solution you provide.** For example, my experience in the PR and Advertising trenches is an important – and relevant – part of my backstory. A great place to add relevant parts of your backstory is your About page.
- A collection of stories that help your ideal clients relate to you.** Similar to your backstory but more comprehensive, your "stories" are turning points, "ahas," and so on from your background that help your audience connect with you. As with your backstory, you want these stories to be relevant to the solution you provide in some way. For example, one of my stories is that I got accepted to art school, but didn't go, which is relevant in terms of the kind of clients I serve because it establishes my bonfides as a creative myself.
- The kind of content you provide (Or even that you provide it).** What I mean here is that if others in your niche are not providing content at all – and many creative entrepreneurs aren't – then be the one who does. Create weekly blog content that helps your ideal clients solve their most pressing problems or that inspires them in some way. Come up with an "irresistible free offer" to get them to subscribe to your email list. Heck, **have** an email list – again, many creative

entrepreneurs I see online don't do this, so if you do, bingo, differentiation. Look to see what others in your niche are doing, and provide content that makes you stand out by helping your audience feel inspired, or by helping them solve an annoying problem they have.

- Weave an ongoing narrative throughout your site.** For example, I do something on my blog called "The Daily Creative," where I periodically write about how to find creative inspiration in daily life. There are all kinds of ways to get creative here – choose something meaningful you want to explore in a more in-depth way than simply through a one-off blog post, and go to town.
- Your personality or unique "flavor."** This can be one of the simplest and most effective ways to differentiate yourself, especially if you're a freelancer or solopreneur. No one else on Earth is precisely like you, snowflake, so let your freak flag fly. Of course, you want to be professional about it, but you can be a trusted business person and still show personality. On my end, I try to bring my fun, irreverent, playful personality into everything I do in my business and on my website.
- Design.** What are other people in your industry doing in terms of website design? Do something different. I looked at dozens of other copywriter websites, and what I mostly saw were standard, corporate-looking sites. The content was often very good, but many of the sites were very similar to one another. My site is a work in progress and certainly won't win any design awards, but I've made a concerted effort to make it look different from the standard copywriter's website by choosing a Wordpress theme that emanates warmth and friendliness.
- Your "WHY."** Your big "why" – your goals, your vision, your big idea, what you stand for, why you do the work you do and work with the kind of clients you work with. This can be overtly stated on your website or it can be more subtle. And like no one has the same backstory as you do, no one else will have exactly the same "why" either.
- Your Community.** Think of ways you can build a sense of "people like us," of belonging, of membership, etc., into your business. I do this on my site with messaging that speaks to "creative rebels" – those who boldly followed their creative calling to make a living, even when naysayers and well-meaning loved ones may have discouraged it.

**An important caveat:** Again, it's not necessary to differentiate in **all** the categories above to be successful. In fact, choosing 2, maybe 3, and really nailing them can work like gangbusters. If you're just getting started, choose one of these methods of differentiation and start implementing it into your business, then gauge the results.

**Like one of my favorite marketers, Derek Halpern, says, "It's not about finding unique ingredients, it's about finding a unique recipe."** None of the things I do is unique in and of itself, but the *combination* is. So if you're struggling to figure out how you can set yourself apart in your market, let finding a unique "recipe" be your guide.