

A person is seen from behind, standing on a rocky mountain peak. The person is wearing a backpack and appears to be a climber. The background shows a vast, hazy mountain range under a clear sky. The entire image is overlaid with a blue gradient and a white border.

 STUDIOPRESS SITES

# How to Make Your Competition Irrelevant

*by* **SONIA SIMONE**

There's one critical thing you need to understand about your client or customer: She has a lot of options.

There's a whole worldwide web out there, with businesses waiting to serve her needs. So what's going to get her to choose your company, out of all those possibilities?

If you ever look at marketing advice, you'll immediately come across the need for what's called a "USP" -- a unique selling proposition. You can also just call it your "winning difference."

Your USP is that reason why the customer wants do business with you ... instead of all of those other options.

A lot of businesses, when they want to unlock their USP, lock themselves and their team in a room for a week with charts, reports, whiteboards, and salty snacks while they figure it out.

You could do that, too. Or you could try a few five-minute exercises. Totally your choice.

Here are some quick ways to uncover (or create) a USP that lets you stand out among all of those cookie-cutter blogs and businesses out there.

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## The Crossroads USP

This one is interesting and fun. You just take two ideas that don't seem to be related ... and put them together.

The hit movie *Speed* was famously pitched as "*Die Hard* on a bus." *Clueless* is Jane Austen's *Emma* set in 1995 Beverly Hills.

You can create a crossroads USP by taking something well-known and presenting it to a new audience. Maybe you'll offer Yoga for Stockbrokers or Business Blogging for Veterinarians.

*You're looking for two roads that are different enough that you create some energy, but not so different that you can't realistically bring the roads together.*

"The Complete Guide to Flower Arrangement for NFL Players" probably won't find an audience. Although ... never say never.

## The Metaphor USP

Sometimes you can find an overarching metaphor that will snap everything into place.

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One of our favorite examples is our friend John Jantsch and his business, Duct Tape Marketing. For many years now, John has offered something you can find in lots of places — marketing advice for small businesses.

But the “duct tape” metaphor reveals a lot. It tells you the approach is practical, effective, and not too fancy. It probably skews slightly toward men, but not exclusively. It can be interpreted many different ways. And it doesn’t take itself too seriously.

No one’s ever going to confuse Duct Tape Marketing with a site called Green Planet Marketing, Mama Bear Marketing, or Quantum Leap Marketing.

With this approach, you can create your own USP just by using a metaphor to define the market, the approach, and the angle.

## The “You Do You” USP

If all else fails, your USP can simply be ... you.

Seth Godin, Martha Stewart, Tony Robbins, “Sugar” Rae Hoffman, Oprah Winfrey, Gary Vaynerchuk ... they’ve all created persona-driven brands.

Each one started with something fairly ordinary (business advice, housekeeping tips) and made it extraordinary through the force of their personality, their passion, and their individual expression.

Some people feel this is limiting, because the business can’t ever get any bigger than you. But each of those people has learned to partner and delegate in order to create companies that go far beyond a single individual. (You don’t really think Martha Stewart plants all those tulips herself, do you?)

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To make this one work, at least in the early days, you'll need to keep showing up. It's your job to stand front and center and say something interesting. You'll provide the voice and flavor for your content.

And don't think you have to have a "shock jock" personality for this USP to work for you.

Successful examples are all around us -- business owners like Tara Gentile, Darren Rowse, Rachel Rodgers, Chris Guillebeau. People who speak with quiet authority. You don't have to shout to be an authority.

## Why you?

At the end of the day, the only reason you need a USP at all is to answer that question. *Why you?*

Why should anyone read your content? Why should anyone buy your product or retain your services? What do you have to offer that makes it worth anyone's time and/or money?

It can be a tough question, but it doesn't have to be one that ties you in knots for weeks on end.

Keep it simple, and keep moving forward.

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