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Be Unique and Compelling or You Loose!

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The human mind... is it the final frontier? How does it work? How does our memory affect what we buy? How does our memory works from a marketing perspective?

Let's talk about the RAS (Reticular Activating System). The RAS is an important "key" to turning on a prospective client's brain. It is a complex collection of neurons at the base of the spinal cord that serve as a point-of-convergence for signals from the external world (specifically our five senses) and the internal world (our intuitions, emotions, etc.). So what's it have to do with marketing and selling? Let's explore three characteristics of the RAS.

1. **Positive Focusing** – Allows a mother to hear her whimpering baby while dad sleeps.
2. **Negative Filtering** – Allows the person who lives next to a railroad to screen out the noises.
3. **Individual Perceiving** – Explains how five people who saw the same accident have five different stories.

The RAS tends to allow you to perceive three types of information on a regular basis: things you value, things that are unique, and things that threaten you. A unique selling proposition (USP) is a marketing message that clearly communicates your distinctive and compelling selling point. Over the years, the marketing industry has changed the moniker, but the message remains the same. It was the "Differential Demonstration," then it became the "Positioning Statement," and now it's called the "Unique Selling Proposition." They mean one thing: why should a consumer purchase from you and not the business down the street. A USP is not a slogan or a catchy phrase. Forget words like value, quality, leading and newest; they are too broad, too generic and are too easy to emulate.

Your USP must be yours alone. If your competition can claim your USP then drop it. If it requires complex analysis, forget it. If it doesn't fit your customer's perceptions, don't use it. In

short, your USP must be memorable, distinctive, and it must sell! It must sell benefits, not features. It must talk about the consumer's interests, not your ego. For instance, Hershey Chocolate has been an American candy staple since 1884. Hershey's mission statement is: "Our mission is to be a focused food company in North America and selected international markets and a leader in every aspect of our business. Our goal is to enhance our #1 position in the North American confectionery market, be the leader in U.S. chocolate-related grocery products, and to build leadership positions in selected international markets." Godiva, on the other hand was first to create the concept of *premium chocolate*. They did it by combining great chocolate, effective marketing, sophisticated packaging and selective distribution. Simply stated, Hershey's Chocolate is to eat, Godiva Chocolate is to give away as a gift. Note the differences.

When creating your USP make it compelling. Avoid superlatives, sweeping generalities and gross exaggerations; they suggest looseness with the facts. If you have the right message and the wrong audience or the right audience and the wrong message you have failed. You must have the right audience and the right message.

Creating a USP is about more than knowing your customers. It's about your customers knowing you! Your USP must answer the question every consumer asks: Why should I buy from you? Remember, customers don't come to buy from you, they come to eliminate you. The process of elimination is easier than the process of selection. Often it comes down to who gets eliminated last.

Consider all the marketing noise – magazines ads, billboards, television and radio, news print, direct mail... you get it. That marketing noise is like the drone from the nearby airport that your RAS filters out. To be successful your marketing message must cut through the RAS and connect with the consumer.