

Standing out

Julia Kendrick on how to build your aesthetic business USPs

In a crowded industry like aesthetics, standing out from the crowd is critical to business success and some of the most important marketing tools in your armoury are your Unique Selling Points, or USPs. In this article, business strategy and aesthetic communications expert Julia Kendrick outlines how to overcome writer's block and develop a strong set of USPs which will help you attract new patients, retain existing customers and elevate your business reputation above competitors.

WHAT ARE UNIQUE SELLING POINTS AND WHY DOES YOUR BUSINESS NEED THEM?

If you are looking to promote your business, product or personal brand in a crowded, competitive arena like medical aesthetics, you shouldn't even get into the ring without a

robust set of USPs that help you stand out from the crowd and appeal to your key audiences. USPs are a series of punchy, powerful statements which clearly articulate who you are and why you are different in a way which resonates specifically with your audiences. You need to answer the five Ws (who, what, where, why, when) as well as "how", using powerful language or claims that your competitors can't touch – or at the very least, that overlap as little as possible. When crafted correctly, USPs can greatly influence whether customers, business partners or even the media select you above your competitors.

THE AESTHETICS OVERLAP CHALLENGE

One of the most common USP pitfalls I see is when a business has developed what they believe to be USPs but in



fact, everyone else is saying almost exactly the same thing. Often, when I ask new clients to tell me their current USPs, or how they position themselves, I will hear something like this:

“We are a boutique aesthetic clinic committed to the highest levels of quality, offering leading treatments such as cosmetic injections and laser hair removal from highly qualified practitioners”.

As you can see, this statement doesn't differentiate the business whatsoever – there is nothing unique or distinctive about the messaging and thus the clinic will just merge into the background and be unlikely to attract much in the way of consumer attention. So how can this be addressed?

FIND SOMETHING NEW, OR CREATE IT!

Firstly, either find something new to talk about, or create it from scratch. Even if you think that your clinic doesn't have any truly unique differentiators, there will be something in your approach, ethos, services, methods, materials that you can show are different to the competition.

In an ideal world, we want to strengthen the messages with clear comparatives and superlatives: are you a first, only, biggest, best? Does your clinic or product deliver better, faster, longer etc.? Is there something about you or your clinic that is a cut above the rest in some way? If not, an alternative tactic is to create your own “method” or product – to brand this and use it as a platform within your messaging to differentiate.

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An example of this in the aesthetic clinic scenario is that most clinics offer botulinum toxin and dermal filler injections. Some choose to differentiate based on the specific brands they use in clinic – but essentially everyone is talking about the same thing – so from a consumer perspective, they will be using other differentiators (perhaps price, reputation, recommendations) to decide between providers.

Some practitioners have created their own branded treatment method which essentially is still using the same products as everyone else, just applied using their individual expertise or artistry – and cleverly branded and marketed to the public as a bespoke approach. While the products are the same, these clinics can market their branded treatment in a way that stands out against competitors and offers something new and attractive to the consumer.

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT TREATMENTS....

There is an overwhelming reliance among aesthetics clinics and practitioners on the idea that treatment offerings are what should define and differentiate them, when in fact this is a small part of the bigger picture. There is much greater brand equity and value in communicating your personal ethos and approach – what you offer that nobody else can.

Competitor intelligence plays a vital role here – you've got to be clear about how and where you can take the lead in your own positioning, whilst avoiding overlap and maximising differentiation. >

CREATING YOUR COMPELLING USPs

Here are my top three methods for how to develop compelling USPs for yourself and your clinic:

1. Start with the end in mind

A great way to approach messaging is to start with what you want to be said about your business or brand, and reverse-engineer your communications to make that a reality. The things we want to consider and shape here are how people talk about your business or brand to others, what you are known for, what you do better than everybody else, how you leave your customers feeling, what the media headline about you would be – and so on.

You could even send these kinds of questions to a select group of key customers, your team or business partners to see what additional insights can be gathered. Once you have the insights, weave these into your messaging so you are putting out into the world what you want to see coming back through.

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2. Accolades, accreditations and awards

Thinking about current and previous business achievements is another rich source of great messages that will help define and differentiate your business. Consider qualifications, standards, awards and heritage messaging (how long you have been in business). You can amplify the number of messages in this category by thinking about what you can say for these things from the whole business

or brand perspective, as well as any individual products or team members as well.

3: Get into your customer's shoes

Let's be honest: we often only sit up and pay attention when we hear how something is going to directly benefit us. Listening to a person or a company talk about how great they are is one thing – but we often only truly engage when they start talking about things that matter directly to us as individuals.

By creating messaging that speaks directly to your customers' needs and desires, you can capture their attention and position your business in a way that gives the solution they're looking for. Here we're looking to identify the results you achieve or things you deliver for customers – what the benefits are of being your customer from their perspective? We want to consider not only practical, tangible outcomes they will receive, but also emotional benefits – how you leave them feeling, what keeps them coming back to you and how you give them the best possible experiences.

CONCLUSION

You should now have a clear idea about why USPs are so vital for your business success and a clear strategy to develop or hone these within your own marketing communications. The efforts you put into USP development will kick-start instant, tangible benefits for your business, as you will be better able to stand out versus the competition and secure increased revenue, loyalty and visibility. **AM**



Julia Kendrick is an award-winning communications and PR consultant specialising in medical aesthetics. With more than 12 years' experience, she delivers a unique strategic approach to help aesthetic brands, clinics and practitioners build and grow their reputation, stand out from the crowd and secure tangible business growth. Kendrick is a regular industry media contributor, congress presenter and trainer. julia@kendrickpr.uk | www.kendrickpr.uk/elite | @JRKendrick | +44 78970 711 037