

What makes you special

In marketing, what makes you special is your unique selling proposition or USP. You are supposed to find it and exploit it, because it is what sets you apart from your competition and defines you to the public. It should be specific and it should be real. Lots of products claim they are “improved” or “best” or “new.” Those aren’t USPs—at best they are qualifiers. If your product is a skin lotion, what sets it apart from the 100s of other lotions on the market? Does it have more of one ingredient? Is the only product with a certain ingredient?

The truth is many products out there just don’t know what their USP is or actually don’t have one. That is why we see so many boring ads for products that don’t motivate us to buy. (OK, I know sometimes the boring is also a creative problem but I have to stay on topic here.) So first step in any marketing campaign is to figure out what makes you special. Perhaps unique is no longer attainable, but you have to figure out what your single biggest strength is and exploit that.

A company that has figured it out, finally, is the US Postal Service (USPS). Believe it or not, their latest campaign is a stroke of genius. It exploits their true USP. This USP is that they don’t have fuel surcharges. It seems insignificant until you look at the fact that the other delivery companies such as UPS and FedEx are charging an additional fee for fuel. Have you shipped anything lately? It ain’t pretty. So here is the good old post office, trying to make headway into the overnight delivery market, and boom, they found their USP against the other guys—they don’t charge for fuel. It is a cost-savings for the consumer and a check mark for the USPS. In fact, it is a USP check mate.