

3 Steps to Uncover Your Core Message

By Dana K. Dwyer

***It is not enough to offer a nice feature, something your competitor does not; this must be something so special that people can't help talking about your business. End of discussion."* John Jantsch**

What is special about what you do? Why should anyone buy your service? Why buy your service from you?

Tough questions and, ironically, the more sure you are of the value of your service, the harder these questions will be to answer. Yet, as Jantsch, author of *Duck Tape Marketing* and *The Referral Engine* says, as an emerging business owner it is critical that you have a clear, unique message and you are to articulate your unique value in all your marketing efforts. Critical! So critical that it is considered step number one of your marketing effort. Nothing else happens until you are clear on your message. End of discussion.

Critical yet, if you are a service professional, a yoga teacher, a community banker, a graphic designer or real estate agent, your service is not unique. So, how do you create a message so special, so unique that people will talk about your business in a way that sets you apart from the competition?

Think Creatively

It is not easy. The more common place your service the more difficult it will be to set yourself apart. It is not easy, it will take some effort, but it is not difficult either. The hard part is the discipline it takes to stay with the process until you've found your way to the outside of the box. It not easy but successful business owners, those ones who've set themselves apart and reap the rewards, get it done. End of discussion.

Here are three steps to help you stay with the thinking process until you have worked your way to the outside of your industry's box.

Step #1: Separate Yourself from Your Business

You are not your business. Your business is a separate entity. Your business is a system that produces results. You may have studied under a sublime yogi in the depths of the Himalayas, or won the assistant manager of the year award for your division in 2005 but that is not your business. Your credentials may enhance your credibility but a wall full of diplomas does not directly benefit your customer. Think of your business in terms of the service – the value – it provides to your customers.

This is often a huge ah-ha moment for growing business owners. For many the day they realize their business is a separate entity from themselves is a day of transitional professional growth. You are not your business. Your business is not you. Now, what does your business provide?

Step 2 – Go Beyond Simple Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a familiar tool. You may have already taken some time to write down all the aspects of your business that provide value to your ideal customer. If not, stop here and do it now. Give yourself two uninterrupted minutes, writing as fast as you can, write down all the benefits you provide to your ideal customer. Write fast. Do not judge. Just write. No idea is too silly or ridiculous. Write them all down.

Now read the list over. If reading your list back leaves no impression of a benefit of extra-ordinary value, keep reading.

“The main purpose of thinking is to abolish thinking” Edward de Bono

Edward De Bono is a teacher of thinking. His tools and processes for enhancing creative thinking are known in the business world as the “Six Thinking Hats”. According to De Bono, the mind works to recognize familiar patterns in the outside world (i.e. yoga teacher, community banker, real estate agent). As soon as such a pattern is recognized, the mind, like water flowing along the path of least resistance, switches into that pattern and further thinking becomes unnecessary. This is why first impressions are lasting.

In order to push brainstorming beyond an indifferent list of familiar patterns we need to consciously and willingly apply a process of creative or lateral thinking.

Let Go Of Judgment

It is not that judgment is bad. It is just that judging an idea as good or bad locks us into a familiar pattern and blocks further thinking. Instead, look back at those unique but silly or ridiculous ideas you surfaced while brainstorming and, with a completely open mind,

- List the Positive Points
- List the Negative Points
- List those things that are Interesting about the Idea

Take it Further

Hopefully, your conscious effort to push your thinking about your business just a little further outside the box produced some ideas. But don't stop thinking just yet. Try this random word exercise.

Remember your goal it to force your mind out of its patterns. Be bold. Be creative

Choose a random word. It must be random. The intention here is to move our thinking to a new place not one with familiar associations. So use this on-line Random Word Generator.

Using this new word and one of the more promising values uncovered by your brainstorming, begin to make associations.

To use an analogy from De Bono, it is as if you've been dropped on in an area of your town you are not familiar with. You will eventually find your way home but will see your neighborhood from a different direction and a different point of view when you finally arrive.

Allow your mind to make connections. Allow time for this. At least 5 minutes

Step 3 -Harvest Your Ideas

Now gather your ideas. What do you have? See any possibilities?

Have your thinking patterns changed? Answer these questions

- What is unique about the service you provide?
- What is it specifically that you provide to customers?
- What are the top three strengths of your business?
- What future plans do you have for your business?
- What is an aspect of your business that your customers can not do without?

Hopefully you've found something to set your business apart from the crowd. Look for even just a glimmer of an idea. An idea you can allow to take root in your unconscious mind while you go about your day to day activities. Return to this exercise and try again in a day or two. Keep thinking. Go deeper and deeper until you've uncovered the thing that will make your customer choose your business over all the others available to them; the thing that will compel them to willingly tell their friends about it. This one thing is your marketing message. Hold on to it. Return to it. Make it your core message. It is the first and most important step in your marketing campaign.

End of discussion

Learn to lead your business to success. Entrepreneurial coach [Dana K. Dwyer](#) works with business owners on the cusp of success. Through one-on-one coaching she helps entrepreneurs to develop business acumen, sharp insight and good judgment. Many of her clients intend to grow from a small home based enterprise to national recognition. Some have succeeded already.

If you can see your future but not the path to get there, check out the Working Miracles Map to Success at [Working Miracles Map to Success](#)