

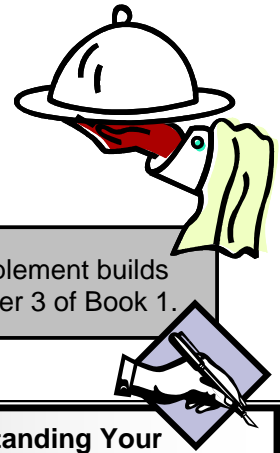
Supplement A: Marketing

The most important thing to any business is its customers. Without customers, businesses die very quickly because serving customers is the only reason that a business exists. The better your business understands and serves its customers, the more likely it will be to continue and grow.

So how well do you know your customers? In the box on the right are some questions that may help you to think this question through?

Businesses that know the answers to these questions, and know them as well as their customers do, are more likely to stay in business than businesses who are not so sure – so the challenge is to really get to understand your customers, and the key to developing that understanding is about building relationships with them:

1. Take opportunities to chat to them, to ask them about their day, to check that they were happy with the last thing they bought from you (*but please make sure that this is not on time that they are paying you for*)
2. Notice things about them, and about their surroundings, comment positively where you can, and remember what they tell you (*people like people who care about them*)
3. If something about them or what they are doing gives you an opportunity to ask them about your product or service – take it! Try to understand what is important to them, and how your product or service can help, and why they like what you do
4. Be sensitive to your customers and their moods, try not to delay them when they are in a hurry, but perhaps ask if you can help (*if that seems the right thing to do*)



This supplement builds on Chapter 3 of Book 1.

Exercise A1: Understanding Your Customers

Why do your customers buy from you rather than your competitors?

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Why do some customers continue to buy from your competitors rather than you?

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What would cause your customers to buy more things from you?

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If your customers could 'wish' one thing about your product/service what would that one wish be?

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What would cause your customers to recommend your products and services to other people?

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How sure are you that your customers would answer the same way you have?

5. Take time to listen to any feedback that they give you about your product or service, and try to receive it with good grace – sincerely thank them for taking the time to bring it to your attention. Ask questions to ensure you fully understand, and then try and do something about it (*there is evidence to show that for every customer who takes the trouble to complain, another nine don't, even though they might meet with exactly the same problem – they simply go elsewhere to buy what they want*)
6. If you have staff, teach them also to build relationships with your customers – create a 'customer facing' business that gives a sense of caring about your customers and not simply caring about their money
7. But please don't let building relationships with one customer cause problems with others (*for instance those waiting impatiently in a queue for service*) – pick your times carefully



As you grow to understand more about your customers and their lives, why they buy from you and what is important to them, you will also develop an understanding about how your product or service suits them. Then perhaps you can develop an understanding about how your product or service can be adapted to suit them more. You can begin to develop an understanding of what keeps them coming back to you rather than go to your competitors. It might not be obvious, and it might take some time for you to work it out, but there will be something that you can do better than your competitors, that will keep your customers coming back to you. One example is the CiB Driving School, who ensure their trainees are safe drivers as well as successful in passing the driving test. In business, this 'thing' is known as your 'USP' (which stands for 'Unique Selling Proposition') and it is very important to know what it is.

Why? Because if you know what it is, you can keep it going, you can improve on it and, perhaps most importantly, you can use it to explain to people who are not yet your customers why they should be. This



The heart and soul of competing is knowing how to appeal to your customers

Don Peterson,
Chairman, Ford Motor Co.

In a competitive marketplace, the effectiveness of marketing is the primary determinant of business success.

Sonia Rappaport

area of business and customer relationships is known as 'marketing' and it is the best way of growing your business and getting new customers.

So what is **your** USP?

That question has to be your start point. And the key to answering it lies in the discussions you have been having with your customers about what they value about your products and/or services. There will be some combination of what you provide your customers with (e.g. quality, convenience, price, experience, confidence) that suits them better than your competitors can suit them. When you have had sufficient discussions with your customers, shared your experiences with your friends and asked God for the insights He wants to include, use the box on the right to reach a conclusion on what your USP will be.

Once you know your USP, the next step is to put it to use. Within each of the following chapters, we will take the opportunity to think through how you can use your USP to help guide your thinking on different aspects of your business:

Exercise A2: What is my USP?

What do my customers value most in my product and/or service?

Special features?

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Consistency?

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Completeness?

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Other quality aspects?

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Price?

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Convenience?

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Relationship?

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Anything else?

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What is the 'unique' mixture of these things that I am particularly good at and keeps the customer coming back?

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Please feel free to continue on a separate sheet of paper.

(Please note, you do not have to use the USP you write here for ever – there is a real advantage in changing your USP as your situation, and the situations of your customers, change.)

Unlike in the west, people in economically developing countries are prone to haggle (*okulamuz*), and this can be very damaging for a young company if it is not handled carefully. Handling it carefully consists of four main things:



1. Try not to compete on price – other businesses may well be cheaper than you, but they are not better – focus on your USP and sell the benefits. As long as they are arguing they are interested
2. Know the price at which you stop making money as a business and do not sell below this. If you do not know what this price is, read the previous guide to this one – ‘Setting up your own business’ – and do the exercises in Chapter 5. (*You can get a copy through reconxile.com*)
3. Prepare answers to all of the objections you are likely to hear as you seek to sell your products and services, and be ready to use them as and when they are needed (*one very good resource for thinking through sales objections and how to handle them is the internet – if you type ‘common sales objections’ into www.google.com you will find many websites which provide free guidance on this*)
4. Try to get better and better at haggling without giving offence; always have a reason why you gave away more discount last time than you are giving this time, focus again on the benefits (even cheeky ones) and try to give less and less away over the selling price each week

**Common Haggling Positions
(Sales Objections):**

- I don't have that much money.
- I need to speak to my husband (*or wife*).
- I can't afford it.
- What I bought last time was poor quality.
- I haven't bought from you before.
- Your prices are too high.
- Your competitor's products are better.
- I can buy it cheaper elsewhere.
- I'd rather use my money for something else.
- I already have enough of that.
- None of my friends buy from you.
- Let me think it over.
- I haven't time to talk any further.

One very good way to get good at haggling is to practice with your friends – get them to play-act a difficult haggling customer, and practice your responses on them until you feel comfortable and confident with them.