

USP: What are your eight words?

 By [Regine le Roux](#)

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Can you fluently describe what your business' unique selling proposition (USP) is? What makes you stand out from your competitors? If you say it's the quality of your service or product, or your quick turnaround time, isn't that exactly what they are also saying?



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If you were to describe what it is that your business does in eight words, what would you say? Would your answer sound the same as the receptionist or intern's answer? How does it compare to the person that has been with the company for ten years or more?

If you took the time to ask everyone in your organisation, you might be quite surprised to find out what the rest of your team are saying. What your team is saying, becomes the message that is communicated internally and externally, to friends, customers and other stakeholders. It has a direct impact on how your business is perceived and influences your company's reputation. The perception of what your company does is not necessarily the truth, but it is that person's reality which becomes their opinion that is communicated to people around them.



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A few years back I realised with a shock that we didn't have a succinct USP, our 'eight words' were all rather muddled. I recall asking the team to share a voice note with me describing what we do in eight words. Everyone's voice note was quite different and varied a lot in length. Clearly, we definitely needed clarity on our eight words.

I really didn't want to dictate what the eight words should be and I believe in being collaborative and involving the team in key decisions. If everyone is on board and gives their inputs, the chances of them buying into it, and adopting it as their own, are much greater. So at the next strategy session, we set time aside to work out what our eight words are, combining the USP and our vision. The reason for this is so that when we share our USP, we automatically share the bigger vision of expanding operations into the rest of Africa as well. Our agreed eight words: Africa's go-to reputation specialists building resilient businesses.

At your next team meeting, why not ask everyone to take a few minutes to write down what they consider it is that the business does.

There are a number of reasons it is so important to be clear in your offering:

1. If you are fluent at what you do, it is so much easier to explain it to someone else and for them to understand and welcome it;
2. Target your sales effort: knowing exactly what it is that you do makes it a lot easier to identify opportunities that you want to focus on which are aligned to your core services. You will also feel a lot less guilty saying 'no' to work that does not fit into your core offering;
3. It helps you to identify growth opportunities;
4. Your reputation is built upon what is communicated internally and externally. When everyone sings from the same hymn sheet and consistently sends out the same message, you are all building your company's reputation. Keep in mind that reputations are all about consistency; you are either consistently good (building a positive reputation) or consistently inconsistent (building a negative reputation). If your core message is inconsistent, and all over the place, your service offering will most likely also be all over the place as everyone has their own version of what they should be doing. The more consistent you and your team are, the more solid your reputation will be;

While you are crafting your eight words, it is also a good idea to review your communication material and check that everything aligns to the eight-word principal of describing your business. Also, remember to check your internal messages and don't neglect your induction pack for new employees. Consider finding out what your other key stakeholders think your business does, because it will help you to know if you need to re-align key messages and identify gaps in your communication initiatives.

ABOUT REGINE LE ROUX

Regine is a reputation specialist. She founded Reputation Matters in 2005; where they measure and manage companies' reputations using their unique Repudometer® measurement tool.

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