

how to differentiate your brand

Differentiation is important because:

- ✓ it helps your brand stand out from the crowd
- ✓ it helps people remember your brand
- ✓ it makes your brand seem special
- ✓ it makes it difficult for people to compare your brand to others, so you can set your own price expectations

Here are three ways to differentiate:

1. Be first – Make your brand the first in a geographic area, or offer a new product or service.

If you are the first to fill an unmet need, you can enjoy "first mover advantages" including:

- assumed market leadership
- being synonymous with your category
- ability to set category expectations
- control of resources and/or distribution

You can also make others seem like copycats, outdated and boring.

How can you be first? _____

example:

Apple iPad

Apple introduced its tablet nearly a year before other brands offered a viable competitor. As a result, the iPad is considered the category gold standard despite reports that other products offer superior functionality.

2. Own an attribute – Use a specific attribute or feature to distinguish your brand.

- Identify an attribute that no one else in your category is promoting – or one that is a weakness for your competitors.
- Ensure the attribute is not a basic requirement that people expect from all brands (e.g., friendly service, fair prices, good quality products, etc.)
- Adopt the attribute as the defining attribute for your business.
- Over-deliver on your attribute and communicate it at every touchpoint so people develop a strong association between it and your brand.

What attribute or feature could you make your own? _____

example:

Target

Walmart dominates the mass merchandiser segment with its low prices and large scale. Target differentiates its brand by owning "design." The company works with designers to offer exclusively-designed products and its brand communications have a design feel.

3. Specialize – Design your business to appeal to a specific market segment.

Don't be reluctant to target a specific group of people. If you try to be everything to everyone, you end up being nothing to no one. But when you specialize in a target market, people consider you an expert.

Plus, if you show your target customers in advertising and signage, it often conveys a distinctive personality and makes your brand seem more personal.

What market segment could you specialize in? _____

example:

City Gates

There are hundreds of website providers in my city. But City Gates focuses on websites for churches. They've developed a real expertise in the kinds of features, content, and designs that churches want and need. This expertise helps them get noticed and hired by churches.

