

Gain Ground in 2007 with a Clearly Unique Business Strategy

By Ed King and Steven Winokur, President of Turning Point Strategies

Are you fed up with losing market share to more and more competitors? Upset that you're spending more time competing on price? Is it time you made a resolution to gain some of it back? 2007 could be your year – if you're up for the challenge.

Squeezing out a bit more margin by beating up your vendors, tweaking your manufacturing process or hiring a new channel sales manager may sound like a good idea, but the effect on the bottom line will be minimal and certainly not sustainable. If you truly want to set a goal of gaining significant market share in '07, make the commitment to a new and better business strategy.

Take a look at your current business strategy. How well have you defined your ideal target market? Have you articulated your differentiating claim in the market? Are all of your sales and marketing materials *clearly and consistently delivering these messages*?

When reassessing your current business strategy, start with three main objectives:

1. Establish your company's difference in the marketplace – what truly makes your customers buy from you and not your competitors
2. Clearly articulate that difference across all aspects of the company
3. Consistently and boldly focus on exceeding your customer's expectations as related to your unique claims

Looking at your business from a bird's-eye perspective is important during this process. You must take into account all aspects of the business – especially the point of view of your customer and prospect. Your new strategy should be built around their needs and wants.

First, when identifying and establishing your unique competitive advantage, it's important to understand what really matters to your target market. Differentiating yourself on something your customer doesn't care about makes no sense. Second, your unique difference must be something a competitor isn't known for – because then it wouldn't be unique. Lastly, when choosing a differentiating claim, be sure it's something you do well and can deliver on time and time again. The worst thing in business is to under-deliver on what you've promised.

To recap, here's the filter when determining your unique claim in the market:

1. Differentiate based on something truly meaningful to the target market
2. Choose a differentiator not claimed by your competitors
3. Choose a differentiator that your company can consistently deliver on

Oh, we nearly forgot one of the most important points when establishing your unique difference in the marketplace. Your differentiating claim cannot be price – low prices are very difficult to sustain over time and will only serve to chip away at your margins and profits.

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Once you choose a unique and compelling differentiator, you'll want to unleash it across the whole organization. This is where you will assess all business functions and introduce the differentiating claim to each one. This may mean you have to make changes in your business processes in production, sales, compensation, human resources, or other departments.

For instance, if the differentiating claim you articulated was promising zero defects to your clients, you'll want to change your compensation structure for factory workers. Rather than basing their compensation on the volume of products produced, you would shift to a structure offering bonuses based on zero defects. Likewise, you may implement personality testing within your HR department, to ensure you hire more detail-oriented individuals who will embrace your zero defects goal.

As you can see, a truly potent business strategy is more than just a tagline or mission statement. Ultimately, your business strategy should be reflected in the way each employee views his place in the company, the attitude and skill with which he performs his work, and his understanding and embracing your company's mission. In short, it's a way of life within your four walls.

Finally, once your differentiating claim is established and you have implemented the claim across your organization, you will encounter the toughest part of all...sticking to your guns. You see, prospects and customers aren't interested in your company's "business strategy". They're interested in what's in it for them. If your communication with your customers and prospects is anything but overt, clear and consistent – they simply won't get it. They won't understand why they should choose you over your competitors.

From your marketing collateral to your delivery drivers to the phone demeanor of your receptionist, your claim of uniqueness should shine through. Your goal is to make a statement – and people (your employees as well as customers and prospects) should be able to recite back to you what that statement is.

Stake your claim to what's rightly yours in 2007. Clearly, there's an opportunity.

— *Ed King and Steven Winokur*

About Turning Point Strategies

Turning Point Strategies is the leader in transforming businesses into Growth Driven Organizations. They can be reached by calling 678.727.4040 or by visiting <http://www.TPStrategies.com> or <http://www.GrowthGap.com>.