



# Differentiate to win

Successful marketing differentiates your company, products and services from others. The challenge is being specific: Clearly explain what makes your company, products or services different. It's not easy, but here are a few tips for upping your differentiation game.

## Differentiation *"dos"* and *"don'ts"*

**DO**

### ***Do - highlight what's new.***

New is different, making it something compelling to highlight. Make sure to explain how this new item is meaningful for your customers. Does it make a process easier, provide more options or potentially increase an output?

### ***Do - highlight specialization.***

Specialization denotes a focus on specific areas relating to a topic. Rather than making a generic statement about specialization (such as "we're specialists") determine what areas of focus your company or team have that competitors don't to make an interesting and meaningful statement.

### ***Do - correctly highlight experience.***

Having more experience than your competitors can be a compelling differentiator, but it must be communicated clearly and in a way that's relevant to your customer. Explain what your experience can do for your customers and how it makes what you offer different.

### ***Do - present a two sided argument.***

It may sound odd to use negative product aspects as a differentiator but including a two sided argument (pros *and* cons) can improve credibility. Research has shown that including information on both sides improves attitudes toward the positive elements mentioned.



**DON'T**

### ***Don't - over use adjectives***

Mark Twain is credited with quipping, "When you catch an adjective, kill it." The sentiment holds true for marketing messages. Use of unobjective descriptions doesn't support the point you're trying to make or separate your work from that of competitors. Try replacing adjectives with specific descriptions highlighting known attributes. Use specific data points instead of touting excellent or amazing yields, for example.

### ***Don't - talk about "our people."***

Every good business has good people. So saying "we have great people" is hardly ever a marketing differentiator. Instead, highlight industry-relevant and specific differentiating information such as employee actions, processes, third-party recognition, etc. that offer proof.

### ***Don't - just tell customers that they're valued... show them!***

Saying you care about customers is generic and overused. Additionally, implying that other companies don't value their clients tends to backfire and create a negative response. Instead, focus on what you do that demonstrates how you value customers. For example: Do you ship replant seeds same day, do you offer 24/7 online support, is every pallet triple checked by real people? Illustrate the steps taken to help or support customers.

### ***Don't - speak generically of "quality."***

The word "quality" is overused and does not distinguish one product from another. Instead, highlight distinctive processes used to ensure quality and illustrate the story with facts or detail on how your way of doing things benefits your customers.