



# Has your company achieved true differentiation?

Thursday, May 16, 2024 06:00 AM EDT  
By [Deborah Daily](#), Co-founder & President, Buckaroo Marketing | New Media

Listen to this story

This audio file is brought to you by **RALLY**

0:00 5:06

Speed 1.00



The company’s owners were stunned when their top salesperson left for a position at their rival. When they asked why this key employee was moving on, they learned it wasn’t about money or prestige. The future looked brighter there.

Losing their sales star was a gut punch, but it inspired the owners to take a closer look at what the competitor was doing and how it compared to their own operations. What they found was sobering. They had assumed their companies were similar, but the closer they looked, the more they realized the other company knew where and what it wanted to be and was several steps ahead on the path to getting there.

Most of all, instead of doing business the same way it had for years, their rival had taken steps to differentiate themselves and then clearly communicate that differentiation with the marketplace. The first company had long considered itself to be the top dog in the market but had fallen into complacency. While they did a good job for their customers, they hadn’t noticed they were falling farther and farther behind.

It’s an all-too-common situation. When people start companies, they usually have a clear vision of what they want to be and how they want to be seen in the marketplace. Their enthusiasm and energy drive them toward the goal. Once they achieve it, though, they often catch their breath and coast along for years, basking in their top dog status.

Unfortunately, customers and marketplaces rarely remain static. New competitors appear with innovative ideas and improvements, catching the attention of customers, who are more likely to remember and engage with a brand that offers something different. Those competitors begin to nibble away at market share.

In a crowded marketplace, standing out is crucial. Differentiation involves distinguishing your company, products, or services from the competition to create a unique and valuable identity. By maintaining differentiation, your company can gain a competitive edge. In addition, relying solely on undifferentiated products or services can lead to vulnerability. Maintaining differentiation provides a buffer against market fluctuations and unexpected challenges, reducing susceptibility to market saturation or commoditization.

Businesses with strong differentiation are often more attractive to top talent because employees are drawn to organizations offering exciting and innovative opportunities. In addition, companies with clearly differentiated products or services can command higher prices because customers who prioritize value over cost are willing to pay a premium for features, quality, or experiences they can’t find elsewhere. That can foster more stable and sustainable revenue streams. Plus, customers who have a positive and distinctive experience are more likely to return and tell other prospective customers.

Businesses typically discover that differentiation is self-perpetuating. Companies that maintain an ongoing focus on keeping a clear distinction from their competitors are generally better able to stay ahead of industry trends and ever-evolving customer preferences.

If you’re not sure your company has achieved the optimal level of differentiation, a good way to start is by taking an honest look inward. What (if anything) makes your company unique? What are your core strengths and competitive advantages? Do you bring a unique value proposition to the companies that buy from you?

Next, take a similar look at your competitors, and be as objective as you possibly can be. Once you’ve asked the same questions about others, you can look for opportunities where you are already different in the market, as well as needs or issues that are currently underserved and easily targeted.

Be careful, though, because in our experience, business owners’ egos can get in the way of comparing their companies to the competition. Rather than become embarrassed upon realizing they’re not doing as well as they imagine, they’ll match their conclusions to their preconceptions.

A trusted marketing partner can help you analyze where you truly stand in the marketplace so you can better differentiate your business. What might this look like? Many of our clients needed market research, competitive analysis, brand positioning, customer insights and strategic planning.

Always remember that differentiation is never a one-time effort. It’s an ongoing process that requires continuous innovation, strategic planning, and regular checks to ensure that path you’re on continues to make sense in the ever-changing marketplace. Do it well, and you can be confident in your company’s continued leadership.

*Deborah Daily is the co-founder and president of Buckaroo Marketing | New Media, a Fishers-based strategic multi-media, marketing, communications and advertising agency established in 1999. She can be reached at [DLDaily@gobuckaroo.com](mailto:DLDaily@gobuckaroo.com).*



## MOST POPULAR STORIES

- [Indiana Supreme Court suspends Madison Circuit judge for judicial misconduct](#)
- [Fort Wayne airport preparing for new Detroit service, Project Gateway completion](#)
- [Haas Cabinet Co. to close in Sellersburg](#)
- [Energy Sciences Network to move into Bloomington Trades District](#)
- [Marian University creates logistics & supply chain degree](#)
- [Indiana's new diplomas emphasize flexibility, but some requirements are controversial](#)

## PERSPECTIVES



### How parents can prevent isolation and loneliness during summer break

The mental health crisis affecting youth in the United States has reached an unprecedented high. According to a 2021 study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 42% of high school students reported experiencing persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness that disrupted their usual activities—a staggering figure that has risen from 28% in 2011 and is expected to continue growing....



Championing early childhood education in our communities.

PNC BANK [Learn more >](#)

See how we can make a difference.

© 2024 The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. All rights reserved.



Inside INdiana Business  
A division of IBJ Media  
1 Monument Circle, Suite 300  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
PHONE: (317) 634-6200  
FAX: (317) 263-5060  
[NEWSLETTER@IIBNEWS.COM](mailto:NEWSLETTER@IIBNEWS.COM)