

## MARATHON STRATEGIC MARKETING WORKSHOP

### ESTABLISHING KEY IDENTITY ELEMENTS FOR YOUR OVERALL BUSINESS OR FOR YOUR INDIVIDUAL PRODUCT LINES

#### CREATING A MISSION STATEMENT

A Mission Statement is a brief paragraph that directly addresses three elements:

1. What is the purpose of the organization?
2. What does the business do to fulfill the needs of those who patronize it?
3. What are the values that are most important to the organization?

These elements can be expressed in any order.

The best Missions Statements are those that are:

- Easy to understand.
- Free of jargon or wordiness.
- Appealing and convincing.
- Brief enough to be easily repeated by those associated with the organization.
- Motivating to those connected to and supportive of the organization.

A dynamic Mission Statement helps the business stay on course. Well-managed organizations look to the company's Mission Statement when approaching strategic decisions by asking: Will our action be consistent with our Mission?

It is appropriate to create a Mission Statement for your overall business and for major product lines.

Example of a Mission Statement:

<b>Persnickety Pet Portraits</b>
<p>Our mission is to reflect the joy pets bring to the lives of our clients through personalized, decorative art and accessories that honor the compelling bond between pets and the people who love them.</p>

## **DETERMINING YOUR SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

A **Sustainable Competitive Advantage** is derived from an organization's **Core Competencies**.

A **Core Competency** refers to an area of specialized expertise that:

1. Provides consumer benefits.
2. Is difficult for competitors to imitate.
3. Is capable of developing new products and services and possibly can be leveraged across other Market Segments.

**Core Competencies** are typically thought of in terms of things your company can do better than your competitors. When a core competency yields a long-term advantage, it helps to support the company's **Sustainable Competitive Advantage**.

Because a company's **Sustainable Competitive Advantage** is distilled from **Core Competencies**, it pinpoints the reasons why a business is likely to survive against its competition over time. These reasons should be easy to understand, as they often form the basis of key selling points in persuasive promotional copy.

Example of a **Sustainable Competitive Advantage** and the **Core Competencies** from which it was derived:

### **Sustainable Competitive Advantage of Persnickety Pet Portraits**

- Jim and Ann Monteith are nationally known for their skill and artistry in creating exceptionally pleasing, heartwarming portraits of pets and the people who love them.
- We are experienced dog-handlers, and we understand cat psychology.
- We create custom heirloom-quality portrait art rather than cutesy calendar-style photos.
- The studio and grounds are totally pet-friendly.
- Our business has grown through the referral of satisfied clients.
- Something WONDERFUL is always happening at Persnickety!

#### **Core Competencies of Persnickety Pet Portraits:**

- National reputation: Displayed at AKC's Westminster KC show, anniversary cover for AKC magazine
- Experienced dog handlers
- Classic posing and lighting skills
- Ability to empathize with pet lovers
- Outstanding knowledge base of dog breeds and cat psychology
- Deep understanding of the history of animals in art and relevant compositional styles
- Location and grounds are unusually pet-friendly
- Long-standing reputation for pleasing clients
- Demonstrated ability to run a profitable business
- Desire to create "fun" activities for pet lovers

## DEVELOPING YOUR UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

In today's competitive market, your business will thrive only if your marketing succeeds in cutting through the clutter and noise that bombards consumers daily, so that you can position your studio as the best choice . . . the only choice.

Compelling ads put forward a simple proposition to the consumer that says: "Buy this product and you will receive *these specific benefits*." Your advertising will be more effective if you develop a clearly articulated **Unique Selling Proposition (USP)** that sums up the benefits that consumers can get from you. This summation should be set within a context that stresses:

- **Uniqueness:** When your benefits are not easily obtained from other providers in your market, then your USP will position you as the most logical choice.
- **Selling:** Your benefits should be stated in a way that persuades consumers that your products and services are highly desirable.
- **Proposition:** Remember that your USP is a proposal for clients to use your services.

It is appropriate to create a USP for your overall business and for major product lines.

The following steps will help you to create a compelling USP:

### **Step 1**

List every possible advantage the consumer can receive from your overall business or individual product line.

### **Step 2**

Narrow down this list by applying the following questions to each benefit:

- Will my prospects perceive this benefit as a true advantage?
- Is this benefit strongly differentiated from what my competitors are offering?
- Have I adequately described the benefit in terms of its value?
- Does this benefit solve a problem for consumer or fill a "performance gap" in the market?
- Will my prospects believe in the validity of this benefit?
- Will my description of this benefit create a desire on the part of my prospects to actually purchase from me?

### **Step 3**

Narrow your list again to the **three** strongest benefits of owning your products . . . especially those that from the consumer's point of view will solve a problem, fill a need, or represent emotional or financial value. Each benefit should be stated in terms compelling enough that it could be used as an advertising headline. Remember to look at these benefits from the consumer's point of view so they perceive your product as "must-have" item . . . especially as compared to what is sold by your competitor! If you having trouble determining what consumers value or what makes them buy from you instead of a competitor, turn to your best source of information: your clients! They will provide you with priceless information if you just ask.

**Step 4**

When possible, create a sense of urgency in your USP and relieve the natural skepticism of consumers by offering proof of satisfaction or offering a satisfaction guarantee as part of your statement.

**Step 5**

Write your UPS as a short paragraph that includes your three strongest benefits and any other brief, compelling statements that might persuade a prospect to give your business a try. Ruthlessly edit out any jargon or generalities. Use unambiguous, crisp nouns and adjectives and expressive verbs to create statements that will hold meaning for your targeted prospective clients.

**Step 6**

Condense your USP into a single compelling sentence. This will be hard to do, but the exercise may help you to determine what words and thoughts might be most useful in creating a tag line or slogan for your product line or studio identity.

**Step 7**

Make sure you can deliver on any promises made in your USP!

**Step 8**

Integrate your USP into all levels of your marketing . . . from printed materials and Internet text to conversations with clients and promotional campaigns.

**Step 9**

Review the list of benefits identified in steps 2 and 3, as these might be useful as the basis for future marketing campaigns.

**Unique Selling Proposition of Persnickety Pet Portraits**

Through our unmistakable expertise in photography, our comprehensive knowledge of pet behavior, and our proven ability to earn the respect of our clients, it is our pleasure to honor the compelling bond between pets and the people who love them by creating personalized decorative artworks designed to touch the heart and warm the home.

## VERIFYING THE VALIDITY OF YOUR BUSINESS IDENTITY

### **What's In a Name?**

#### **It's Who You Are to Consumers!**

Marketing experts stress the importance of establishing a business concept that capitalizes on your uniqueness . . . what sets you apart from competitors. It is equally important to choose a business name that at the very least does not interfere with your business concept.

Good business names are designed to create consumer awareness in these important areas:

- ~ What you do.
- ~ Where you are located.
- ~ Your position in the market.

The following business names facilitate consumer awareness by telling prospects precisely what the business offers:

*Wedding Photography by John Smith*  
*Martha Jones Wedding Photography*  
*Portrait Photography by Smith & Jones*  
*Williams Portrait Studio*

Lending your name to the business is appropriate when you wish to be tied closely to the product; but also consider that it might be easier to transfer business ownership someday if you choose a name that is less specific to you personally. If you are well known in the community, tying your name to the business can foster immediate awareness of your enterprise. But what if you are new to the community? Perhaps a better strategy would be to tie your identity to the town, or region, or well-known address. This approach will foster an image of credibility or “belonging” in the community. For example:

*Main Street Photography Studio*  
*Pleasantville Studio of Photography*  
*Carriage Square Portrait Studio*  
*Rocky Mountain Family Portraits*

Perhaps your business concept goal is to reflect the “essence” of your photography through your firm’s name. Sometimes it’s possible to accomplish this goal through the business name itself, but more often than not, it requires a “tag line” to help consumers readily understand what you do. A name like “Creative Images” really doesn’t help your business achieve recognition in today’s crowded marketplace. But these examples work well:

*Seniors Unlimited*  
*Romance Images . . . the art of wedding photography*  
*Lifetime Portraiture . . . your life as art*

No matter how carefully a business name is crafted, most can benefit from the addition of a descriptive “tag line” that facilitates consumer awareness by locating, defining or positioning the business. Some examples:

*Smith Photography Studio*  
— *On the square in historic Centerville*

*Elegance Photography*  
— *Exclusive Wedding Coverage and Fine Portrait Studies*

*Jones Portrait Studio*  
— *Exceptional Photography*

*Jones Photography Studio*  
— *Exceptional Lifestyle Portraiture*

*Jones Portraiture*  
— *Classic and Lifestyle Photography*

*Jones Photography Studio*  
— *Preserving Family Memories for Three Generations*

*John Smith*  
— *Artist In Photography*

*John Smith*  
— *Photographic Artist*

Business Identity for Persnickety Pet Portraits
-------------------------------------------------

**Persnickety Pet Portraits**

*. . . heartwarming portraits of pets*

*. . . and the people who love them*

**Persnickety** is a warm fuzzy division of **Monteith Portrait Design**

## Slogans and Tag Lines Help to “Position” Your Business

A marketing slogan or tag line (or even a variety of slogans or tags used with different product lines) can help to build your business image and simultaneously make your studio memorable in the minds of your clients. A good slogan is worth its weight in gold. Everyone knows what businesses are represented by these slogans:

- ~ Just Do It! (Nike)
- ~ When You Care Enough to Send the Very Best (Hallmark)
- ~ Nothing Runs Like a Deere (John Deere)

A creative slogan or tag line can do the same for your photography business. Here are some examples to get you thinking about this image-building tool:

Making Your Wedding Dreams Come True Through Photography

Exceptional Photographic Portraiture

A Jones Portrait: Anything Else is a Compromise

Building a Family Legacy . . . Through Artful Photography

More Than Just a Picture

A Jones Portrait Isn't Expensive . . . It's Priceless

Life is Too Short for Ordinary Portraits

The Essence of Life . . . Through Artful Photography

Creating Family Heirlooms

Bringing Generations Together

Capturing Life . . . Through the Art of Photography

To construct a slogan or tag line that is appropriate for your business, go back to your Mission Statement, Sustainable Competitive Advantage or Unique Selling Proposition. Chances are, you will find some pithy words from which to weave a phrase that will attract your ideal client to your business. If not, continue the word-play process by writing down words or phrases that provide some additional insight.

Ask and answer these questions of yourself:

What do I want people to **see** when they view my work?

What do I want people to **feel** when their view my work?

How do I want people to **feel** about the way they are treated during their time at my business?

What do I want people to **say** about my photography to others?

What do I want people to **say** about the experience of working with my studio?

If you are still stuck . . . then call on a few enthusiastic clients and ask their help in explaining what is so special about your business. They'll have plenty to say that will help you find just the right way to express your identity!

## **Your Business Logo**

A well-designed business logo will create a “look” for your business and perhaps even convey something about your business style or concept. The services of a design professional are essential in creating a logo—one that can be manipulated for a variety of uses. Make sure the designer understands your business concept and recognizes the type of clientele you are seeking to impress.

The logo design process should take into account more than just the business name, since it typically will appear with some or all of the following informational elements: business address, area code and phone number, and website address. Decide if you intend for a slogan or tag line to be part of your logo or merely presented with it. This will allow the designer to suggest an appropriate font for the slogan or tag line. Also explain any unique features about your business that might be translated into a graphic presentation of your logo. When properly executed, these elements become critical recognition factors for consumers.

As your business grows and changes, it's possible to outgrow your logo, tag lines, slogan, and sometimes even your business name. Before you begin to create marketing materials, review these important business image elements to make certain they are functioning appropriately to support your business concept and properly position your business in the marketplace.