



IE New Evidence, no. 14 Letter from Simon Dixon, CEO

I was watching Donny Deutsch's "Big Idea" show recently and he had Donald Trump on as a guest. Donny asked him the secret to being a good negotiator, a question which surprisingly (or maybe not so) seemed to have the Donald acting like a deer in the headlights before he stammered out something about telling prospects that there were "other people who wanted the deal."

Advertising is essentially a one-voice negotiation and many of the same rules as in negotiation hold true. A key one is that you need to promote the true and unique selling propositions for the product. If you don't know what they are, find someone to help you figure them out. If there aren't any, stop reading this and find a new product – selling something you know to be useless makes one a con man.

When looking for unique selling propositions, look beyond the obvious. Sometimes what initially seems like a secondary or tertiary advantage actually resonates with purchasers more. Comparing the story of the Toyota Prius and the Honda Civic hybrids is a good example. Both cars give extraordinarily good miles per gallon returns which the manufacturers thought would be the primary sales igniter. (In fact the Honda actually gets slightly better mileage than the Prius, 44 vs. 40 MPG according to Motor Trend's real-world testing.) As it turned out, the Prius, with its unique body style, has far outsold (three to one) the Civic which looks much like its regular engined brethren. The reason is that many of the people buying hybrids want to make sure everyone *knows* they have a hybrid. Such is not clear with the Civic and sales have suffered as a result – look for the Civic hybrid's replacement to be uniquely styled.

In this case, although the primary feature of the car weighed in heavily on sales it was another factor entirely that made one vehicle the sales leader and created a bond with customers and almost a brand of its own. In fact, Toyota is mulling over pursuing that exact strategy and creating a "Prius" brand with several vehicles under the umbrella.

So know your customers and your product well. The better you can discern what develops traction and what ignites action, the better the chance of turning potential customers into *actual* customers.