



## Different Definitely Matters

*Business-owner prospects are short on attention. If you want a chance to win them over, you need to stand out from your competitors.*

The advice to “be different” or to “stand-out” is trotted-out so often by marketing gurus that it’s become cliché. In industries where the work that businesses do for clients is largely consistent from business to business—and this is true for advisors as well, as much as we might not want to admit it—being different is incredibly hard. Most efforts to stand-out are half-hearted at best and have no meaningful impact on how prospects differentiate one business from another.

While the work that an advisor does for a business is valuable and requires a high-level of insight, prospects have a different vantage point. They have no shortage of options, and they are likely courted by multiple highly qualified advisors throughout any given quarter. To convince a business-owner prospect to leave their current advisor behind and to work with you is a big ask, and you won’t get and keep a prospect’s attention if you sound just like every advisor who also wants their business.

The charge to be different is sound business advice, but too often that advice is not followed by suggestions as to *how* you can be different. This white paper aims to correct that, giving you specific actionable suggestions that will help you communicate why you are different from your competitors and do so in a way that elevates the whole of your sales process, and to do so in a way that is sincerely genuine, matching who you are and what you want your work to represent. But first, let’s talk about cheeseburgers.

### Fast-Food and a Truly Compelling Brand

Few industries have been as over-saturated as fast-food. As McDonald’s spread across the globe, other restaurants attempted to follow suit and found varying levels of success—Burger King, Carl’s Jr., Arby’s, A&W, Jack in the Box, Hardee’s, Sonic, White Castle, and so on. While each of these restaurants attempts to separate itself from McDonald’s in some way, while still trying to capitalize on its momentum, it’s hard to argue that they are that different from each other. They vary in appearance and have different menus, but at a certain point the view from the customer’s side of the counter is mostly the same: a teenager halfheartedly punches your order into a computer while another teenager dumps your greasy food into a paper bag.

How do you make your burger joint different from every other burger joint? Well, In-N-Out Burger found a way.

Founded in 1948 by a husband and wife in California, In-N-Out Burger has grown into a powerful brand and fast-food outlier with over 326 restaurants clustered primarily on the southwest. While whole books have been written on In-N-Out's success, the brand has made a few key decisions to break from the crowded market that we can cover briefly here:

*“Being different is not simply a marketing choice.”*

- Narrow menu and obsessive focus on ingredient quality. While other fast food restaurants tack on new menu items each year, to the point of rivaling the word count of small novels, In-N-Out specializes in a handful of offerings and sources the highest quality produce and beef they can, emphasizing quality and expertise over volume.
- The simplified menu leads to a unique customer experience. The language around ordering at In-N-Out is driven by customers and has morphed into its own micro-language of sorts. Ordering a double double animal-style (two patties, two pieces of cheese, extra condiments) feels much different from placing an order anywhere else, and that experience matters to customers.
- The aesthetic and brand personality of In-N-Out is distinct. While other fast food chains frequently overhaul their locations to appear more modern, In-N-Out stays true to its roots and sticks with a markedly retro look. Being inside an In-N-Out is much different from stepping inside any other restaurant.
- In-N-Out has resisted franchising or going public. A family-owned business from the start, In-N-Out is slow to add new locations and refuses to follow the typical fast food business plan (rapid expansion and rapid franchising deals) because they feel it would negatively impact quality. That means that the experience stays strong and also somewhat exclusive. For some foodies, In-N-Out is a tourist destination, not a simple fast food restaurant.

For In-N-Out, being different is not simply a marketing choice. It's wired into the DNA of the business and actively informs how they drive their growth. You aren't flipping burgers, but you likely aspire to reach a similar level of brand dominance. You want your prospects to see you and your services the way that burger fans see In-N-Out: A clear departure from the norm that sets a new standard for how businesses in the space should serve their clients.

## **Building a Unique Prospect Experience**

Put yourself in the shoes of a prospect: Your focus is on running your business, which means your attention is pulled in multiple directions on any given day. As you try to do this work, you get solicited from a range of sales people. A new vendor wants to sell you on their version of the widget you use your in business. A rival internet provider wants you to switch to them. And occasionally an advisor calls to suggest that you rethink the parts of your business that you would rather leave on autopilot.

How do you break through this noise? Start with recrafting your message and build from there using this process:

**1. Identify what makes you different.** When we work through this process with clients, we often find that advisors don't actually know what sets them apart. What is your double double animal style? What emotionally compelling mission drives your work? Do you serve a certain kind of business exclusively? Are you passionate about a cause or about solving a particular problem? Are you having a certain kind of impact on your clients' businesses that other advisors aren't? Talk through these sorts of questions with your team and even survey a few of your clients to find what makes you unique.

**2. Overhaul your story.** Advisors have a tendency to lean on their products. While we see the value and importance of key nuances in service and support, diving into the weeds is likely to lose a prospect's interest. Start instead by speaking to higher-order concerns that a prospect has, being empathetic to the challenges they face and articulating why you care about helping business owners like them. Talk more about why you are in business and how that informs your work. If you're a burger joint, of course customers want a great tasting burger, but the customer experiences the brand in a broader way before taking that first bite.

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**3. Make that message consistent.** Once you have crafted a compelling story about who you help and why, build that message into every potential touchpoint. Your website, your business cards, your leave-behinds, and your drip marketing should all be consistent and play their own role in telling your story. We often see advisors talk strongly about a specialization but make no mention of it on their website, for example. If you look at great brands, every possible entry point builds on the same powerful experience.

**4. Refresh your sales process.** Having a powerful story is one thing, but telling it as part of your sales process is another. Work with a sales coach to finetune your delivery and to learn from each meeting you have. You may also find it beneficial to give your support staff extra training as well so that they can do their parts to deliver the message. Your years of expertise and insight might be the core of the business, but the person answering phones has a big impact on the client experience as well.

**5. Get more “at-bats” with prospects.** Your story will evolve and adapt as you pursue new prospects, but if your pipeline is populated only by referrals, you may have too few opportunities to deploy your messaging. As the time between appointments increases, your sales process will get rusty and you will learn very little about what aspects of your message really resonate. Working with an appointment setting firm can ensure that you regularly meet with high-value prospects.

## The Next Level

The most successful advisors we work with come back to this process regularly. They learn from every prospect meeting and from their growing pool of clients to hone and refine their approach and their message. The result is a consistent growth curve where they meet more prospects and close more business year over year. And it starts with the message.

## About the Author



John Pojeta is Vice President of Business Development at the PT Services Group ([www.theptservicesgroup.com](http://www.theptservicesgroup.com)), where he initiates and manages strategic, corporate-level relationships. Previously, he owned and operated an Ameriprise Financial Services franchise for 16 years. For more information, email him at [john@theptservicesgroup.com](mailto:john@theptservicesgroup.com).

## About The PT Services Group



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