



Presenting Solutions: Features, Advantages and Benefits

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There comes a point, during the sales process, when the salesperson needs to present the solution that meets the customers' needs. Presentations can relate to products or services or the company itself.

During the sales process it is important to:

- Sell the concept of buying the product
- Sell their company as the natural choice of provider

Many salespeople fall down because they raise awareness about the need to buy a particular product/service, then fail to sell their company. This can lead to shopping around for the cheapest option which may not actually meet the clients' buying needs.

When salespeople present information, they tend to present features of their products or company:

Our company is market leader?

This product has flexible payment options?

Our company has been established for 100 years?

Our pension plan is the most flexible on the market?

and the reaction of most potential customers is to say, to themselves *So what?*

Let us look at how a number of different products could be described. Read the examples overleaf and decide which is the most persuasive.

Example 1.

This mobile phone has a hands-free facility

Our calculator has a solar battery

Our computer has a 32 GB Hard Drive

Example 2.

Because this mobile has a hands-free facility you can use it safely while the car is in motion.

Because it has a solar battery our calculator can run indefinitely in normal daylight.

Because our computer has a 32 GB Hard Drive you can use the widest range of software available.

Most people find that the second style of statements is more persuasive

What is the common factor in the second type of statements, which makes them seem more persuasive than the first? Each of the first statements is a neutral description; a fact or a piece of information about the product. In selling, such statements are called Features.

A Feature describes some characteristic of a product or service. Features are relatively neutral, both in their content and in their effect on the buyer. In fact, the second set of examples goes beyond simple product characteristics. It shows how a characteristic, or Feature, can be used and applied. Such statements are called Advantages.

An advantage describes how a product, or a product feature, can be used or can help the buyer. Advantages, as we have seen, are more persuasive than Features. Most Advantages can be expressed in the form:

Because of ... (feature) you can ... (advantage)

So, if the Feature is:

This policy has a flexible maturity date.

An Advantage could be:

Because the policy has a flexible maturity date you can choose the best time, based on your personal circumstances, for the policy to mature.

But there is one way for a seller to describe the produce which is even more persuasive than using advantages. People buy because they have Needs. If the seller can relate the product specifically to those needs, then there is a high probability of making a sale. Statements, which show how the buyer's needs can be met by product features, and advantages, are called Benefits.

Benefits are the most powerful way in which a seller can describe the product. A Benefit describes how a feature or advantage of a product can meet a specific need the buyer might have for that product. By having a clear understanding of the Buyers' needs, we can sell the particular benefits of the product that meet those needs

You will recall we have spent time in the sales call asking questions in order to identify needs. Using the examples, above, of the mobile, the calculator and the computer, let us say that during the sales calls that took place the following answers were received during the 'asking questions' phase of the call.

I need to be able to respond quickly when customers contact me on the mobile, but I am also concerned about the safety aspects of driving and using the phone at the same time?

I like the look of your calculator but I find it expensive to run my current machine as it gets through a lot of batteries.

I am looking for a flexible computer system and I need to be sure that I have enough space on my hard drive to take into account future upgrades in software?

During the presentation phase of the call we can sell Features Advantages and Benefits to link our presentation to the actual needs described by the customer earlier in the sales call. For example:

Because our mobile has a hands-free facility you can be confident that if a customer calls you in the car you can respond to the call quickly and safely.

Because it has a solar battery, our calculator can run indefinitely in normal daylight, which means that you will not need to worry about the cost of replacement batteries.

Because it has such a large hard drive, our computer can use the widest range of software available, and will continue to do so in the future. This means that you can be reassured that your particular accounting and stock-control needs will be met.

Benefits relate to the individual. They say how the features and advantages will affect the individual and are therefore much more persuasive. Most people are thinking *What is in this for me?*

Benefits describe what is in it for the individual customer and reflect feelings of confidence, reassurance and peace of mind