



People Buy *Benefits & Value*—Not Features

By Jim Stewart

Jim Stewart is a regular contributor to North Country Business on topical business issues. This article is the fifth in a series of articles on Selling Techniques.

As discussed in a previous article, questions are used in the selling process to deepen and broaden one's understanding of customer's needs. There are two types of selling processes—a *Solution Selling* process and a *Transaction Selling* process. This article will focus on the *Transaction Selling* process, emphasizing the importance of stating benefits to the buyer, whenever features of a product or service are being discussed/presented.

In the *Transaction Selling* process, questions are being posed to a prospective buyer to:

- get the customer to give basic information about their needs and the characteristics of the product/service they are looking for; and
- allow you to identify & present your product / service features that will address a need and the related benefits of those features.

In the *Transaction Selling* process, you are ready to answer questions and move directly to presenting a solution based on your own product/service knowledge combined with the information you gathered during the needs identification stage. In the *Transaction Selling* process, you "sell what you make"; and in the *Solution Selling* process, you "make what you sell."

When you "sell what you make," it is critical and essential to describe the benefits your product/service offers to your prospective customer. A *feature* is simply a fact about your product or service, while a *benefit* tells someone how that *feature* helps to meet a need and the expected outcome. Stating the value goes even further towards motivating someone to buy by suggesting how they will feel as a result of owning the product/service that offers certain features. Values are designed to appeal to *wants*, whereas benefits are designed to appeal to *needs*.

It is sad to say (but a common malady) that many salespeople continue to spout fact upon fact and feature upon feature. Too many salespeople assume that the prospective buyer will recognize the associated benefits and values. This is simply not the case!

So from now on, whenever you hear yourself stating a fact or feature, I suggest that you think of hearing a little bell go off inside your head—and at that moment, think of your prospect looking at you and berating you with an indifferent "Uh-huh...so..." response. This shouldn't be very hard to do, since your prospect is probably thinking something that is pretty close to that response. This type of reaction should condition you to discuss the benefits, and when appropriate also add a discussion of the value. To reinforce this habit each time you state a fact or feature, follow it up with the following series of words (or something similar): "...which means to you can..." (then state the associated benefit/value).

Common needs and the logical benefits that people look for in business today might include items such as increased productivity, cost effectiveness, reliability, flexibility, ease of operation, durability, compatibility, portability, future applications etc.

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Some of the psychological values and wants that buyers have today include, prestige, peace of mind, safety, security, freedom, pleasure, gratification, ego enhancement, perceived wealth, help to others, comfort, ease etc.

When you begin to link *features* with *benefits*, supported by those psychological values, you will be activating all the forces possible in presenting your evidence and recommendations, and in a positive and powerful way!

This is a vital and critical element of your sales presentation—but be mindful that this is not in itself the entire presentation. Unless you plan and implement the balance of your presentation according to well thought-out standards, all will be for naught. Your presentation will fall on deaf ears and go no further.

The integration of each of these steps is a truly professional and progressive approach to selling in these challenging times.