

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 your 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 the prospective buyer to...

- Get the customer to give basic information about their needs, and the characteristics of the product / service they are looking for.
- 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, and 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 and feature, upon fact and feature. Too many salespeople assume that the prospective buyer recognizes 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-UH. So.” This shouldn’t be very hard to do, since your prospect is probably thinking something that is pretty close to that response. This reaction should condition you to add the benefit, and when appropriate, also add 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...’ (then state the associated benefit / value).

Common needs and the logical benefits 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.

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, followed-up with psyche values, you will be activating all the forces possible in presenting your evidence and recommendations, 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 not. 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.

***Jim Stewart** resides in Muskoka, Ontario, Canada and has extensive corporate, entrepreneurial, small business and consulting experience. Jim owns and operates TriNorth Consulting Inc., a company providing professional consulting and corporate training programs and services.*

Jim can be reached at 705-646-4339 or jim@trinorthconsulting.com