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Why You Should Sell Benefits, Not Features

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So, what's in it for them?

This is the first question you should be asking if you're launching a new product or service to users.

If your user can't immediately tell what he or she will get out of this product of yours, then chances are they'll move on. In fact, studies show that consumers rarely buy just for the sake of buying. What do they buy? Something that will solve their problems (or that claims to, at least).

While many marketing folks choose to focus on a product's shiny bells and whistles (aka the features) to initially entice their users, they're missing out on the real draw by focusing on how their product will improve a user's life (aka the benefits) and how they will feel by using it.

Because when you focus on the benefits, you can turn a prospective customer into a buying customer.

Features v. Benefits

Although features and benefits are often inextricably linked, try to think of them separately. A feature is something your product *has*, whereas a benefit is the product's result when a customer uses your product. In other words, features are logical while benefits are emotional.

To illustrate this example, let's take a look at the world of cosmetics. Perhaps you are in the market for a mascara that will lengthen your naturally-short lashes.

Now let's say you come across an advertisement for a new mascara that only speaks to its cool features, e.g. a brush with silk fiber bristles and a ball-tip wand. As a consumer, would you buy? Probably not.

Now let's say the advertisement focused instead on the "instant definition" and "4X longer lashes" you'd experience by using this mascara. Chances are you'd be much more inclined to purchase, given the benefits were clearly spelled out for you and aligned with what you were already looking for.

So why do benefits take the backseat? Although marketers may mean well, they tend to forget that not everyone is so well-versed in their product's benefits and can rattle them off with ease. And just because *they* know why their product will make their users' lives better doesn't mean their users do. Although you can (and should!) be proud of all the hard work you've gone through to develop and launch this product of yours, keep in mind your users aren't really all that concerned about you, your business, or the long hours you put in to make that product happen.

What are they concerned about? Themselves. To put it plainly, they care about their own problems and want to know if you can solve them.

And guess what? You can.

Speak to Your Audience

When you look at your product or service as a solution and can articulate the issue or dilemma it addresses, you're starting to speak your audience's language.



To do this, you'll need to carry out [some market research](#). Here you'll want to identify your audience's problems, then figure out what effect these problems actually have on their personal or professional lives. Once you do this, you can start to properly position your product.

An excellent example of speaking to your target audience is the female startup-turned-overnight success, [THINX](#). Arriving on the scene back in 2014 thanks to Kickstarter, THINX sought to revolutionize women's menstrual cycles, all with the design of some clever underwear. The three founders not only identified their audience (women who menstruate) but also highlighted all the potential issues these women would face when that time of the month inevitably rolled around.

Their marketing strategy was simple, but genius. All over New York City, advertisements were put up with euphemisms and suggestive visuals that spoke to the real problems women faced, with the message that they had the product (underwear) that solved the issue (monthly menstruation).

By depicting real-life situations, THINX strongly resonated with their target audience. And in doing so, women became curious and eager to try the product out for themselves, giving the company a big boost in sales.

When you're able to engage your audience and leave them feeling an emotional connection, you've done the impossible. You've made them relate, and therefore trust you and your product.

Get Emotional

Creating a longing, solving a pain point, or touching on your users' emotions can pay off in a very big way. Although spelling out the benefits is fantastic (and necessary), emotions are what will actually drive your user to purchase.

[Recent studies conducted by neuroscientists](#) indicate that people whose brains are damaged in the area that's responsible for generating emotions are rendered incapable of making decisions. Needless to say, this reinforces the fact that human beings are guided and driven by their emotions.

Let's revisit the mascara example. We've already established you're looking for a mascara that will lengthen your naturally-short lashes. But now ask yourself, why? If you're single, perhaps it's to attract a potential mate with your longer, doe-eyed lashes or perhaps it's to make your friends long for long and beautiful lashes, too. Whatever the reason, the "why" always stems from a particular emotional state.

According to Inc.com, research indicates that there are [6 emotions that make customers buy](#): greed, fear, altruism, envy, pride, and shame. To apply this to our mascara scenario, the emotions here could range from "pride" (you want to be seen as attractive to a would-be partner) to "envy" (you want your friends to admire you).

The best kind of marketers, however, are the ones who use their emotional influence for the greater good. Since appealing to shame, greed, fear, or envy doesn't necessarily inspire happiness, many marketers have decided to forgo the negative and embrace the positive. [Glossier](#), the millennial-loved beauty brand, is a shining example of this resurgence of positivity.

In 2017, Glossier launched its [Body Hero campaign](#), featuring women with a range of backgrounds and real bodies. While their products weren't exactly revolutionary, their campaign was. Instead of presenting very made-up, idealized images of what female beauty should look like, Glossier decided to strip everything down (literally) and celebrate body positivity. The result? Female users who felt empowered, not belittled, by an advertising campaign.

In essence, emotional connections are what will sell your product or service to users. Being able to tap into their emotions, and thereby engaging them, is the secret to them coming back for more.

Transform Your Features into Benefits

Good news! Features can, with a little practice, be transformed into real-life benefits. How? By simply telling your audience how that particular feature will benefit them in the short or long run.

Sure, features may lack an emotional connection, but they can still play a crucial role in selling your product. Features act as the "proof" for your benefits, giving credence to your product claims.

A perfect example that demonstrates this is from [Away](#), the brand that's quietly disrupting the travel industry with its sleek array of luggage. Named one of [TIME's 50 Genius Companies of 2018](#), one of Away's advertisements stated the following:

KEEP IT PERSONAL

Ward off curious hands with a secure combination lock even the TSA approves of.

Although the message was simple, Away took one of their *features* (a combination lock), transformed it into a real *benefit* for the user (that their luggage would be safe) and engendered *emotions* (eliminating the fear of lost luggage and generating pride that the TSA approved).

To make this idea work for your product, try this handy exercise. First state your product's feature, then ask a question like, "So what?" or "Which means?" immediately thereafter. By asking these simple questions, you're making sure that your answer illustrates how your product feature helps to solve a real problem.

Remember, benefits don't always require features to back them up. Customer testimonials, depending on your product, can also be [very effective](#).

Final Thoughts

When features and benefits naturally coexist together, it's a powerful thing. And while features are logic-based and don't elicit emotions, you now know that a well-crafted narrative does.

As a marketer who undoubtedly wants to sell and be successful, don't forget to put yourself in your users' shoes. Imagine they don't know anything about your product or service. Now think about what *you* know about your product or service and what emotions you'd like to evoke if your users end up purchasing. If you can't figure out how to engender emotions in your selling process, it's time to go back to the drawing board.

Because when you're able to identify and convey the emotions associated with your benefits, you're well on your way to setting yourself apart from the competition.