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Features and Benefits: Which is Which and Why Do I Need to Know the Difference?

By Linda Elizabeth Alexander

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How do you guarantee that your ads, sales letters, web copy and other marketing materials as hard-hitting as possible?

You've heard that when writing promotional copy, you should promote benefits rather than features. Benefits show the genuine value of your products to your customers. They go beyond the specs of your product to tell customers about all they will lose if they don't

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buy from you now. How do you distinguish between features and benefits? And once you do, how do you communicate those benefits?

1. Write down features and benefits before you start.

People don't buy products -- they buy what products do for them. Before you begin, make two columns for a list: One for features (your point of view) and another for benefits (from your customers' points of view). Are they buying telephone service, or connection with their loved ones? Are they buying a portable heater, or in-home comfort and protection from the elements? Are they buying college courses, or the lucrative career that will ensure their financial security?

2. Write the way you speak.

Use your company's voice and personality in your copy.

Make it sound like a written conversation between your company's personality and your customer. Every company will have its own style and tone, depending on what the you sell.

2. Write in second person point of view.

Remember to write that conversation as if it were you and one customer speaking. Be sure to use "you" and "me" a lot -- companies don't sell products, people do. Here are a few examples to keep you on track:

"You will feel ... "
"You'll learn hat ..."
"...brings you ... "
"As you know, ... "

4. Provide a call to action.

No, you're not ordering customers around when you tell them what to do -- but without spelling out specific actions to take, you'll risk losing their response.

Tell them exactly what you want them to do, and be specific. If you don't ask for the sale, you may not get

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it. For example:

"Please fill out the form and mail it to ..."

"Enter by December 13 for your chance to win ..."

"Call toll-free today 1-800-..."

"Click the blue box to read more ..."

Follow these tips when communicating features and benefits and be sure your customers are hearing the message you want them to hear. That way, they will also respond to your call to action the way you want them to, and you make the sale!

Linda Elizabeth Alexander writes marketing copy for nonprofits and other businesses. Contact her today to get your free consultation!<http://www.write2thepointcom.commailto:lalexander@write2thepointcom.com>9 other people are willing to help build your e-zine list, for free! Click now.<http://www.subscriptionrocket.com/cgi-bin/r.cgi?r=1618>

What's really different about your company, product or service?

By Jim Logan

What's really different about your company, product or service? by Jim Logan

Assuming you're not the only company on the planet that provides products and services similar to yours, what is it about your offering that's unique? As with benefits you offer your customers, your uniqueness needs to be tied to things valued by your customer. Your uniqueness is your 'orange'...your 'orange' as compared to other's 'apple.'

Being different only counts to the extent your target customers acknowledge the difference as a benefit. For example, if your difference is that you support 1000+ color choices for your 'widgets' however, your target customers only buy or care about 4 basic colors, then your difference in having 1000+ color choices is of no benefit to your customer and has little to no market value.

Your difference has a shared space with your benefits as the ground you stand on to compete for your prospective customer's business. The things you highlight as differences are the items you most want to compete on and are in effect 'traps' you set for your competition.

Look for difference in your offering that is tied to the use of your product and service. Your difference is your unfair advantage over your competitors. Another way to look at it is your benefits are what your customer gets from your products or services; your difference gives cause as to why your benefits and solution are unique.

Remember...Difference without benefit is of no value to your customer. Be sure to highlight difference

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that is recognized by your customers as benefits they are willing to pay for.

Jim Logan is founder of Accelerate Business Group, LLC, a revenue growth company. Accelerate Business Group partners with their customers to build revenue the only three ways possible – getting more new customers, increasing the value of your average sale, and getting more repeat business. Jim can be reached at <http://www.jslogan.com>.

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