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Features vs. Benefits – The Mystery Revealed

By Butch Pujol

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Whenever someone mentions advertising or sales you can be sure the phrase "features vs. benefits" will come up in short order. Everyone knows that phrase. Everyone knows that features don't sell, benefits do. However, exactly what is a benefit and how do you turn features into them?

Let's get some definitions set forth first. A feature is an attribute of a product or service. Web site hosting companies will often tell you there package offers "catch all" email addressing. That's a feature. That type of email is a mechanical part of the hosting package.

To determine the benefit, you look at how the catch all email adds value to the customer. In other words, "What's in it for me"?

The customer doesn't care about the mechanical feature of the hosting. What they do care about is how the catch all email can improve their life. Catch all email allows anything typed before the "@domainname.com" to go through the system and make it to the "primary" email box. The benefit of catch all email is that even messages with a misspelling in them make it through so you stay in contact with your customers. Every online business owner cares about that.

One of the most effective ways to derive benefits from features is to address problems or concerns your customers have. Let's turn our

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attention to the ebook industry for a moment and define some concerns these customers might have.

When publishing an ebook, the concern is primarily about getting the information across to readers. It needs to be in a format they can readily access. While reading the sales copy for some ebook compilers, the phrase "no reader required" came up. This is a feature. It didn't mean much to me until I read the benefit

The benefit of "no reader required" is that the software is complete within itself. Unlike some ebook compilers that require the ebook purchaser to download special software in order to view the book, this

feature offered the benefit of being all-inclusive. As soon as the book was downloaded, the customer could begin reading without further delays. That spoke to the concern and answered the question, "What's in it for me".

As you can probably tell by now, the benefits are what make a difference to your customer. The benefits – more or less – explain why the feature is important. This is why benefits have selling power and most features do not.

Here are a few steps you can use when working with the features vs. benefits equation:

1. List the features of your product or service. (Catch All Email.)
2. Next, list the concerns or needs of your customers. If you don't know... ask them. (Being able to get emails even if misspellings or other mistakes occur.)
3. Next, ask yourself, "Why does this feature matter to my customer"? Write your answers on the list. (Catch all email allows you to stay in touch with your customers.)
4. Finally, take it one step further. As yourself, "What problem or concern can this feature address"? (You can know that any email sent to `anyname@domainname.com` will make it through to you.)
5. Write down the benefit.

By explaining your sales information in language the customer can understand you are helping them reach the point of purchase more quickly. So, the next time you create an ad, be sure to focus on the information

that's important to your customers... benefits.

Butch Pujol offers a safe haven for online business owners. Whether you're a Newbie or a Pro, you'll find legitimate and safe Internet business solutions and tools that can help your company grow. Visit <http://www.safeinternetbusiness.com> today. Karon Thackston is President of KT & Associates who offers targeted copywriting, advertising assistance and ezine article services. Karon's Web site is located at <http://www.ktmarketing.com>.

Take the "Mystery" Out of Becoming a Mystery Shopper

By Ted Belfour

Many people all over the world are making money as a mystery shopper. Thanks to the Internet, details on how to become a mystery shopper are widely available, taking the "mystery" out of the process.

Mystery shoppers provide a great service to retailers and service businesses. By walking into a business as an unknown – the basic, average, every day customer – mystery shoppers relate their experiences to corporate headquarters. Why would a big corporation rely on people they don't know? Because their opinion counts! Mystery shoppers can get a more accurate look at the day to day operations of a business than a CEO can on a yearly visit. It's a known fact that employees put their best foot forward when their boss is in the building. Mystery shoppers are an effective way for corporate offices to learn about the service, employee attitudes, and cleanliness of a business. If a customer walks into a fast food restaurant and is greeted by an indifferent employee and the place is a mess, that customer will likely tell other people. Word of mouth from one unsatisfied customer can kill business. That's why mystery shoppers are so important.

There are many mystery shopper programs that enlist the help of average people every day. Some are scams and others are for real. How do you separate the two? Follow that old basic rule of thumb: If they ask you to pay to work for them, it's a scam.

A legitimate company will not expect you to pay them in order to work for them. You wouldn't expect to pay a doctor's office to let you be a receptionist or a convenience store for the opportunity to be a cashier. Mystery shopping is a job, so there is no difference.

There is a mystery shopping certification available. The Mystery Shopping Providers Association of North America offers such certification. With two certifications to choose from, potential shoppers may test online for certification that proves they have the basic skills needed to be a mystery shopper. A more expensive plan also covers some training for mystery shoppers. It is important to note that certification is not required to be a mystery shopper.

So, if you are looking for a way to make money part time, consider a career as a mystery shopper. Assignments might have you sampling yogurt, going to a movie, or eating out at a restaurant you might not normally go to!

Dave is the owner of
and
websites that
provide information on mystery shoppers.



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