



CK's Epiphanies

Inspirations & revelations from the mind of a marketer.



messaging: Back to Basics: Forget Features...Boast Benefits!

This is a "Back to Basics" issue focusing on a fundamental – and altogether essential – messaging model. The marketing principle supporting the model is both simple and revolutionary:

When selling a product or service, marketers should promote **benefits, not **features**.**

Simple indeed, we've all learned it in Marketing 101. But with the myriad of marketing messages currently appealing to sellers' objectives, not buyers' goals, I believe we could all benefit by learning it again. So this month's issue will serve as a refresher on architecting compelling messages through the model of discerning and delineating features, advantages and benefits.

Introducing the epiphany:

Customers don't buy a product because of what it does; customers buy a product because of what it does for them.

Admittedly, this edition is as much for my own edification as it is for my readers. Being a professional services provider, I frequently find myself rattling off the services (features) I provide and the unique methodologies (advantages) I employ rather than focusing on the improvements (benefits) my work yields.

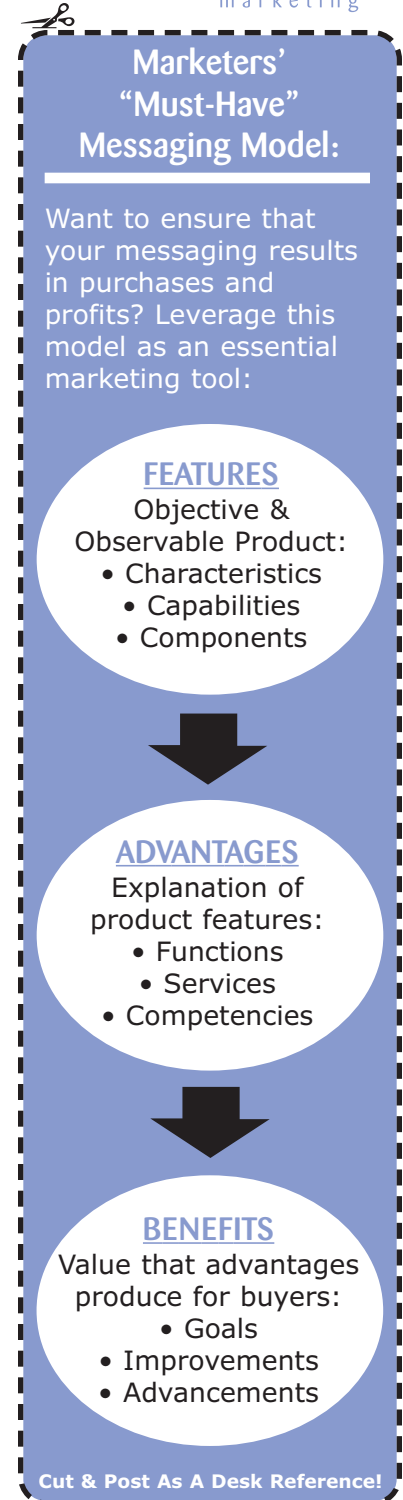
It can be quite challenging at first, but once you switch to the mindset of touting benefits instead of features, the process quickly evolves into practice.

Let's start by defining the differences between features, advantages and benefits.

Feature: A feature is an objective and observable characteristic of your product or service. Features remain unchanged whether or not the prospect purchases your product (e.g. price, components, capabilities, longevity).

Advantage: An advantage is an explanation of what the feature does; its functions, and the service(s) it performs. An advantage may only occur if the prospect purchases the product or service (e.g. cost-savings, competencies, efficiencies, durability).

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Benefit: A benefit is the value that the advantage engenders for the prospect. Benefits, then, are defined by the objectives of the prospect. (e.g. Higher profits, New business opportunities, Increased productivity, Return-On-Investment)

The model provides an abundance of value to marketers, as it's instrumental in enhancing and facilitating:

Purchase Acceleration --> Turning browsers into buyers.

By promoting benefits, the marketer focuses the prospect on the rewards associated with purchasing the product, thereby whetting the buyer's appetite to realize those rewards and shifting pre-purchase mentalities to post-purchase mindsets.

While marketers may not be able to re-engineer the buying process, they can leverage benefits to shorten the duration of time between browsing and buying (as benefits may only be realized by the buyer once the purchase has occurred).

Purchase Justification --> Justifying the buy to the buyer.

Benefits are how prospects justify the purchase to themselves. Features and advantages are how the prospect justifies the purchase to their managers, friends and family.

By providing benefits, the marketer is arming the decision-maker – not the individuals ancillary to the purchase - with relevant justifications and compelling incentives for purchasing the product.

Overcoming Objections --> Circumventing gripes and grumbles.

When selling a product or service, marketers want to eradicate, not encourage, buyer objections. However, prospects are more prone to object to features than benefits, as they may not feel they need all of the features, but they certainly desire all of the benefits.

Therefore, the most effective, and the easiest, method for overcoming objections is to direct the pitch and the buyer's attention toward benefits.

Effective Communications --> Hitting the "hot buttons."

When marketers speak directly to buyer needs and purchase outcomes, instead of marring the pitch with features and advantages, they are engaging in a successful dialogue with the buyer. So when marketers speak to product benefits, they are speaking the buyer's language by hitting on those proverbial hot buttons and unleashing messages that resonate with prospects.

Advertising Impact --> Packing a powerful pitch.

Studies have proven that advertisements promoting benefits produce higher profits than advertisements claiming features. If marketers want to provide more impact to their promotional pieces, they should focus advertising and promotional materials on valued benefits not fancy features.

Higher Margins --> Breaking down price barriers.

Promoting a product's benefits enables marketers to charge higher prices, as the product's value becomes more apparent and appealing to prospects. Prospects' desire for benefits becomes the prominent purchase factor, while price becomes a subordinate one.

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Emotional Appeals --> Getting them to purchase, not ponder.

When marketers list product features and advantages, they are appealing to the rational reasons for purchasing a product (e.g. price, capabilities). On the other hand, when marketers promote benefits, they are appealing to the emotional motivations for buying a product (e.g. better looks, better health, increased success).

While prospects will take both logical and emotional reasons into account for purchasing a product, it is most always the emotional factors that motivate the prospect to purchase.

Uncovering the epiphany:

Features (rational appeals) make prospects think.

Benefits (emotional appeals) make them buy.

The bottom-line is that benefits benefit the marketer as much as they do the buyer. The model is a tool that may be adopted as a messaging technique and integrated into all marketing communications – be they product advertisements, service proposals or professional resumes. As simple as it is in concept, it's that successful in practice.

Next edition we'll unleash more marketing epiphanies, hope you'll join us. ■

who is CK?

CK is Christina Kerley.

Since '91, Christina has been identifying and developing marketing epiphanies for up and coming Start-Ups and formidable Fortune 500s. Passionate about working on extraordinary projects and providing exemplary service, she formed ckEpiphany in '99.

Strengthening marketing efforts one epiphany at a time, the business develops client strategies, plans and programs. For more information on CK and ckEpiphany, please visit: www.ckEpiphany.com

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