

► Features vs. Benefits: A Lesson in Converting Customers

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When was the last time you read the content you've written for your website or latest brochure out loud and asked yourself if your potential customer will understand what it is you are selling?

The key to writing for your audience is to create content that is both valuable and helpful to your potential customers. However, many content writers experience a couple of problems with this. The first problem is writers who are intimately involved in the details of their business assume a certain level of understanding for their audience, and instinctively write about features that are oftentimes too technical. These selling points are factual bits of information intended to describe how one business is distinctively different from the competitor. The second problem is those features prevent your potential customer from making an emotional connection with your services because the features lack benefits.

Customers are looking for meaningful benefits—a tangible reason why your services will create a positive and lasting impression from their experience. In order to connect with your audience, you have to be willing to show your audience the benefits of your services vs. tell them about the features. Let me give you an example.

The Difference Between Features and Benefits

In a technically correct, albeit features-heavy piece of advertising copy, you may write:

Each of our fellowship-trained musculoskeletal imaging radiologists ensures the appropriate study is ordered utilizing the imaging modality that will provide optimal results for our referring physicians and patients. We have achieved ACR accreditation in MRI and our leading edge technology ensures the most accurate and rapid images and comprehensive reports.

All of these features sound very good, and they actually do serve a purpose. When benefits are present, they are the proof that your business has the credentials necessary to deliver upon stated benefits. But where are the benefits in this piece of copy? How is the patient supposed to take away something meaningful from this block of text when they have a choice of where to have their imaging exam performed?

Let's try writing a similar message that's loaded with benefits that the patient will actually understand.

When your back hurts, our specialty team of medical doctors understands the connection between muscles, joints, and bones and can pinpoint the source of your pain and then help treat it. We use MRI technology that saves you time with the quickest possible exam and gives us the most detailed images to guide your care. When you feel good, you can worry less about your pain and spend more time focusing on living life.

Do you see the difference? The paragraph above communicates an understanding, identifies a source of treatment, saves the patient time, and lessens their worry.

The more you know about your audience, the more you'll be able to get really specific with the content you serve them. In a previous issue of the *RBMA Bulletin* I wrote about buyer personas. Identifying buyer personas means recognizing patients as influencers and decision makers, and the end of writing marketing messages we think they will want to hear and the start of writing content based on their unique needs and wants.

Practice Makes Perfect

It's actually very easy to become good at writing benefits instead of features. Try making a list of your typical features and then converting each of those to a benefit based on what you know about your customer. As you identify different buyer personas, you may find a single feature will have more than one benefit. You may also get to know your audience better and understand how they relate to your services—ultimately creating an emotional connection with your customer. ■



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