

So What

Think back to the last major purchase you made. Maybe it was an iPod, a new pair of running shoes, or a brand-name handbag. What was your interaction with the salesperson like? You may not have known it, but chances are good that s/he used feature-benefit selling in the sales presentation. If you bought an iPod nano, the salesperson might have pointed out its miniature size. To you, the tiny size might mean more convenience in taking it from place to place. Did you know that the iPod's size is one of its features and its convenience is one of its benefits?



SAMPLE PAGE

being able to take it with you wherever you go is a benefit. What about the fact that you can use it to listen to music? If you plan to pursue a career in sales or marketing, read on to learn more about features, benefits, and how to create a feature-benefit chart.

Objectives:

- 1 Describe feature-benefit selling.
- 2 Prepare for feature-benefit selling.

What Is Feature-Benefit Selling?

Our highly competitive market economy produces a wide variety of goods and services—everything from skincare products to dog-walking services to industrial-grade steel beams—you name it, you can buy it. And, believe it or not, *new* goods and services are appearing on the market every day. Like the wide range of products available on the market, modern consumers also have wide ranges of desires and interests.



An important part of your job in selling is to determine what each customer is looking for in a good or a service. You must then prove to customers that your good or service has the features that will benefit them. This phase of the selling process is known as **feature-benefit selling**. Although feature-benefit selling can occur at any time during the selling process, it should always occur during the sales presentation as part of the sales dialogue and product demonstration.

It's important to keep in mind that customers do not actually buy features. They buy benefits. In other words, they are not buying the product itself; rather, they are buying what the product can do for them. Customers do not buy treadmills—they buy the ability to work out in the privacy of their own homes. Customers do not buy toasters—they buy the ability to make toast! This means that merely describing or pointing out features to customers will not persuade them to buy. The customer wants to know, "Will the features you are describing give *me* the desired benefits?" To complete sales, you must be able to translate the features of your product into benefits for the individual customer or client. And to do this, you must have adequate knowledge of your product.



The Gray Zone

Brad is a salesperson at a local electronics store. He is selling high-end televisions, HD-TV, etc. Today, Brad told Brad that the store on the street has a

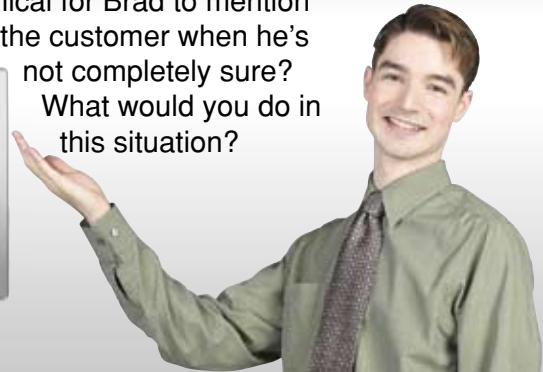
SAMPLE PAGE

Brad had to get into high gear. He wanted to point out features and benefits to the customer that the other store's television doesn't provide. How-



ever, he hadn't exactly done his homework on the other store's product. He was *pretty* sure that his competitor's product had a more limited warranty than his own product. Is it ethical for Brad to mention this to the customer when he's not completely sure?

What would you do in this situation?



- **Service and warranty.** In some cases, whether or not a customer buys depends on the service your company offers and/or the warranty on the product. This is especially important when selling products such as appliances, electronics, and cars. If your company also services its own products, you have a definite benefit to offer your customers. When selling a dishwasher, you might say to your customer, "All our dishwashers are guaranteed for three years. This means that we will replace any parts and make all repairs without any charge to you."

Step Two—Know where to get facts about product features.

You know what features to look for in your product, but where do you get this information? Here are the best places to look:

- **The product itself.** The salesperson should study and, if possible, use the product before selling it to customers or clients. Many sources and types of information may accompany the product itself. For example, a customer might ask, "Do you know how these jeans look after they have been washed?" The salesperson would have no idea unless s/he learned this information by buying a pair and trying them. Firsthand knowledge, gained by experience, tends to give a salesperson confidence.

- **Customers.** If it is not practical for you to learn the features and benefits of your product by buying it yourself (if you are selling expensive sports cars, for example), the next best source of information could be your customers. Let's say that Mrs. Wisby, a teacher, is on her feet all day, walking and standing in her classroom. Even though she had purchased several pairs of shoes at various stores, none of them had been comfortable to wear for hours on end. When she finally found a pair at your store that gave her the benefit of comfort, she came back and bought several more pairs of the same shoe in various colors. She said, "These are the only shoes I have found that I can wear comfortably all day." You can imagine the value of such testimony in making future sales.



Find Features, Boost Benefits