

Salespeople, Stop the Rambling!
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One of the most powerful distinctions in successful selling is the difference between selling features and selling benefits. This distinction is simple and familiar to many salespeople. Yet many, many professionals believe they are communicating benefits, when in reality they are rambling on about things that don't matter to their buyers. The result: turned-off buyers and lost sales.

Remember: *People buy based on feelings*. They decide whom to do business with based on feelings—in particular, feelings of trust, confidence, and a feeling of being taken care of.

There are three basic levels of describing your products and their value. The level you choose will make a huge difference in what feelings you evoke in your customers, and in turn, your success in sales.

Level 1 - The Features-Only Conversation (Least Effective)

Features are a product's distinct attributes. Alloy wheels, computerized nav system, built-in satellite radio, 100,000-mile warranty—these are all features. In our experience, most car salespeople sell primarily based on features.

The conversation might go something like this: “So, I see you're looking at the new 1200 Series. This model is the top of the line. It has all the bells and whistles: 16” alloy wheels, 6-speed turbo-glide automatic transmission, the top Bose digital audio system with a 24-disc CD changer, Bluetooth, rear-view backup camera, etc.”

There's nothing wrong with describing features, but many salespeople ramble on about a car's features and fail to connect them to *benefits*—*why the features matter to the buyer*. The features-only conversation is rarely enough to tap into the feelings that drive people to buy. When you fail to communicate benefits, many buyers will feel a lack of confidence in you and uncared for.

Level 2 - The “Benefits-in-a-Vacuum” Conversation (Somewhat Effective)

Returning to our Series 1200 model, what benefits does someone get from this car? Prestige? Luxury? Reliability? Safety? Fuel Economy? The smoothest ride this side of the space station?

For every feature there's a benefit. For example:

Feature: Top-of-the-line audio system with 24-CD changer

Benefit: The impeccable sound makes your driving experience even better, plus you can access even more of your favorite music without having to juggle CDs in and out of the system.

Feature: Rear-view backup camera

Benefit: Easily see what's behind you without having to twist your back, plus the safety of seeing objects below your line of site in your rearview mirror, like small children who might be right behind the car.

Feature: Built-in Bluetooth

Benefit: Use your cell phone hands-free and be a safer, more responsive driver.

So why do we call the level 2 conversation “benefits *in a vacuum*”? Many salespeople describe *generalized* benefits that they *assume* matter to the buyer. They may be benefits to the salesperson or someone, but not necessarily to the person in front of you. The benefits-in-a vacuum conversation is often perceived as rambling and leaves many buyers feeling unconfident in the seller and uncared for.

A participant in one of our *Sell the Feeling* sales trainings told the story of taking his grandmother to shop for a car. The salesperson focused on the convenience and utility of the car's CD changer and the computerized navigation system—features the technophobic grandmother wouldn't use in a million years. He spent *zero* time talking about the two things that really mattered to her: comfort and fuel economy to save her money. Had he had bothered to find out what was important to her, he might have made a sale. The woman actually left the dealership and decided to stick with her old car because she felt the new cars were gas hogs and too technical.

Salespeople who sell based on features-only and benefits in a vacuum make a fundamental error: They sell based on their own thoughts and feelings about the product or what they *assume* is important to the buyer, rather than tapping into the buyer's true needs, desires, and feelings.

Level 3 – The *True Benefits Conversation* (Most Effective)

True benefits are the personalized benefits that matter to the buyer in front of you. Most successful salespeople focus their selling conversation on true benefits.

So how do you know what the true benefits are? Simply ask questions about what your buyer is looking for in a car and what's important to him or her. Sounds simple, but it's astonishing how few salespeople bother to ask what's really important to their buyers.

You could ask, "What are you looking for in a car?" or "What's important to you in a car?" These are good questions, but they pack little emotional wallop. Remember: People buy based on feelings, and to increase your chances of making a sale you need to elicit the feelings that motivate someone to buy.

We suggest you use language to evoke more positive feelings in your buyer. For example, "What's important to you in a car that you'd *really love to own*?" When you use a feeling word like "love" and add, "to own," the buyer will unconsciously contemplate loving a car and loving owning it.

We call the "what's important" question an *emotional needs question* (step 3 in *Sell the Feeling*). It hones in on what the buyer truly values so you can identify the right product for him and tailor your selling conversation to his needs.

Once the buyer responds to the emotional needs question, ask, "What *else* is important to you in a car that you will love to own?" (Email us find out why we use the words "you will love" here.) We recommend you keep asking until you've identified four to six needs. When you ask emotional needs questions then tailor your conversation around the *true benefits*, the buyer will feel confident in you and taken care of. These are the feelings that motivate people to do business with you. Now doesn't this beat rambling?

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