



BIG Consulting

Business Improvement Group

Suite 13, 150 Chestnut Street
Richmond VIC 3121
+61 3 9421 2442 P
+61 3 9421 2443 F
www.bigconsult.com.au

Features & Benefits – What’s the difference?

Watch TV tonight and you will witness millions of dollars of clients money being wasted by marketing agencies selling features. For instance, would you buy a Honda because of its race proven VVTI engine or for what performance that engine could deliver you?

A lesson therefore for all marketers: Customers don’t buy features, they buy benefits.

So what’s the difference?

Features sound great but who really knows what all these technical descriptions actually mean. Will I be better off with more gigabytes in my processor or if my supplier has a warehouse that is ISO quality endorsed?

Features can be defined as the **indisputable characteristics or attributes** of the product or service. They describe what the product/service is, or has. Typically it’s explaining the specifications, which can leave the customer thinking “...that sounds great but so what?”.

To answer “So what”, we need to complete the FAB story.

- **Features are indisputable attributes.**
- **Advantages describe what the feature does or doesn’t do.**
- **Benefits are the end results or outcomes.**

Let’s look at an example:

Qantas might market the fact it has the most flights between capital cities of all the airlines in Australia. That sounds great for them, but how do I benefit as a business traveller? Well using our definitions the indisputable attribute is that they have more planes, flying more often between major cities. But I only need one flight to take me up and back, so what’s in it for me?

The advantage of so many flights means that their schedule allows for flights on the hour, every hour. Sounds good but so what? But we are still talking about how good the airline is and not highlighting the outcome for the traveller.

The end result is that the business traveller has choice and convenience that ensures less time travelling and more time with family. That’s why you see the warm image of the Dad getting home in time for cuddles with his family having worked all day in another city.

FAB or BAF?

The traditional way to sell products or services is to mention the feature, explain what it does or doesn't do (as the advantage) and finally arriving at the outcome or benefit. The risk here is the customer's screen saver comes up and they lose interest.

At BIG Consulting, we challenge our clients to turn this on its head and use it in reverse! Lead with what the customer gets (the benefit), and then work backwards to the advantages and features. If the customer can see what's in it for them up front, they are more likely to buy into your ideas and proposition.

SPACER - Getting benefit statements down to single words.

A helpful way to communicate benefits is to shorten the statement down to single words. The method is called SPACER. As all benefits are derived from one (or more) of these six benefits, it makes it easy to highlight exactly what's in it for them.

S	Security	It's the comfort or peace of mind, the feeling of being safe
P	Performance	What the product can deliver in production, yield or user experience
A	Appearance	Relates to how looks deliver associated positive feelings
C	Convenience	How time is saved, hassle avoided
E	Economy	How money is saved or value for money increased
R	Reliability	Trust in consistent and complete fulfilment

Applying BAF and SPACER

So next time you are planning your sale, strategising on how to communicate your proposition or questioning to find out what the customer is really seeking, write down the acronym SPACER and identify the single words that describe the benefit you are selling as the solution to their needs.

Another helpful distinction is to realise that if you are still describing the product or service you are still selling features and advantages. If your delivery changes to describing what people or businesses get as a result of purchasing your offer then you will know you are now selling benefits. You can't say "so what" when you highlight the benefits because the customer is now seeing what they get. Try it out tonight when the ads come on TV!

Simon Dethridge
Managing Director
BIG Consulting