

Benefits That Sing and Soar – In Five Simple Steps

By Clayton Makepeace

Here's a little exercise to help you drill down to the benefits prospects are willing to pay for ... fully dimensionalize those benefits ... and then connect those benefits with powerful response-boosting emotions that your prospect already has about those benefits (or the lack of them) in his life.

By the time you're through, you will have a complete list of company and product features ... you will have squeezed every possible benefit out of those features ... you will have fully dimensionalized those benefits ... and you will have connected each one to a powerful emotion your prospect has about each one of them.

In short, you'll have a comprehensive "features/benefits/dominant emotion" inventory you can refer to as you write your copy.

I do NOT suggest that you do this on every project. After a while, this kind of thinking comes naturally. But even for more advanced writers – and especially for folks who supervise writers – going through this exercise can go a long way towards finding new themes and adding power to your promotions.

To begin, create a spreadsheet with these headings:

Feature	Why?	Benefits	Dimensionalize	Dominant Emotions	Rank

Step #1:

Create a Comprehensive FEATURES Inventory

If you've read any books or taken any courses on direct response copywriting, you've probably learned that features are immaterial. Only benefits matter.

Only problem is, that's just horse-pucky.

Features are the fathers of each benefit your product provides. And if every product benefit has its roots in a product feature, identifying and fully understanding each feature is essential to identifying all the benefits your product provides.

And so, if features are the fathers of benefits, it makes sense to begin at the beginning – by listing all the key facts about 1) The business and 2) The product or service you're promoting.

Start by answering the following questions about the company and the spokesperson behind the product in the first column of your table ...

A.

"What are your qualifications?" What degrees or certifications have you earned in your field of endeavor? From which institutions? What associations are you a member of? How many years have you provided this product or service?

How many customers (patients, clients, etc.) have you served? Are you the largest or oldest in your area of expertise? What specialties do you offer that your competitors don't?

B.

"What resources do you use to produce a superior product or service?" How large an army are you putting to work on the prospect's behalf? Who are the stand-out players? What unique or proprietary tools do you use to produce the desired result?

Do you have custom computer programs or hardware that nobody else has? How many customer service reps are available to make ordering comfortable and easy? How many service techs are on your payroll who can respond when the product needs service?

C.

"How is your location a factor?" Are you closer to your prospects than your competition? Are your headquarters impressive-looking? Is your office close to a major intersection or freeway off-ramp? Do you offer plenty of free parking?

Or, if you're promoting a product for a national company, how does its location help you produce a superior product? Are you offering an investment product that's produced on Wall Street or anywhere in New York, for example? Or are you selling a politically oriented product that's produced in or near Washington D.C.?

D.

"What's your reaction time?" Are appointments readily available? Do you perform your service faster than your competition does? If I order this product, how fast will I get it?

E.

Inventory: How many different products do you have available? How does that compare to what your competitors offer?

Product or Service Features

Now, it's time to really start digging – with answers about the product or service you're offering ...

A.

Purpose: What, *exactly*, does your product or service do? If it accomplishes several things, great – list everything you can think of!

B.

Physical dimensions: How does your product compare to competing products? Is it smaller? Bigger? Lighter? Heavier duty?

If it's a published product, how many pages are in the book or the regular issues of the newsletter or magazine? Is the page size larger than what the prospect may be used to?

Are there illustrations, charts, or graphs? Is it written simply – in a way that's easy to understand? Does it give clear, concise directions that anyone could follow? How many times do customers hear from your client each year (count regular issues, bonus issues, e-mail alerts, web site updates, etc.)? What regular features are included?

If you offer nutritional supplements, are your pills smaller than the competition's? Does the prospect have to take fewer of them, or take them just once a day? What are the ingredients? Are they fresher than those used by some other competitors? More absorbable? More potent?

C.

Performance metrics: How quickly can your product be delivered, installed and/or begin producing results? How fast does your product complete the desired task? How thoroughly does it do its job? How long does it last? How do your product's performance metrics compare to similar products offered by your competitors?

For investment products, what results has it produced for investors in the recent past? How did it perform at key turning points in the economy or markets – the tech wreck of 2000, or the gold price explosion of the 1970s, for example? How and when did it help prevent investors from making major blunders?

For health products, how fast does it work? How can I know it's working? What studies have proven that it works? Or for information merchants, what health breakthroughs were you the first to publicize? How else does the past performance of the author, editor or the product itself demonstrate the superiority or indispensability of the product?

D.

Credibility: What have customers, subscribers, peers and others said about your product or service? What guarantees and/or warranties come with it? How do they compare to what the competition offers?

E.

Available options: What *choices* does your product offer to prospects? What colors or sizes does it come in? How do your terms make ordering the best fit possible for customers? Is it customizable in any way? How do these choices make your product superior to the competition?

F.

Timeliness: How quickly can your product be delivered and/or installed? How does this compare with the competition?

G.

Pricing: What are your prices? How do they compare to the competition? Do you deliver more for the money? Or does your product's quality demand a higher price?

If applicable, divide your price by the numbers 12, 52 and 365 – and then write down the product's cost per month, week and day.

These are just a few idea-starters – please do not stop here!

Use this opportunity to think through every step of the process that your prospects experience when shopping for, buying and using your product or service.

Step #2: **Attach a "Why" to Each Feature**

The next step is to figure out why these features are included in the product or service, and then to turn those reasons into tangible benefits that will bring value to the customer's life.

So now, in the "WHY?" column next to each feature, enter the benefits each feature provides.

Example: If you're selling a high quality drill bit, your entry might look like this:

Feature: Constructed of carbon steel.

Why: Never wears out.

On the other hand, if you're promoting a dentist, your list might look like this:

Feature: A TV in every exam room.

Why: More comfortable for the patient and time passes more quickly.

The "why" for an investment newsletter might go like this ...

Feature: Daily e-zine included with subscription to monthly newsletter.

Why: Stocks move fast; opportunities could be lost without split-second updates.

Or, if you're writing for a book on health, you might write ...

Feature: Specific prescription for each age group on each supplement recommended.

Why: To eliminate reader confusion.

Attach as many "whys" to each feature as you can.

My guess is that as you review your completed list, you'll be getting pretty excited. And for good reason: Your brain is already beginning to take the next step – visualizing how these features improve your customers' lives!

Step #3: **Turn Features into Benefits**

The simple act of completing Steps #1 and #2 above could easily multiply sales and profits at tens of thousands of businesses from coast to coast – merely by shifting the spotlight off of the advertiser and his product or service and on to why their features are important to the customer.

But still, we focused entirely on a company and a product or service. Now, we're going to bring your prospect into the picture – and answer the question, *"What's in it for me? How does each of these features – these facts about the business and product or service – directly connect with and improve my life?"*

Think about how each feature and "Reason Why" benefits your customer, and list every possible way each one of them brings value to your prospect's life.

We're going to ask the one question that's constantly at the forefront of your customer's mind: *"What's in it for me?"*

And we're going to answer by listing the problems your product or service solves ... the desires it fulfills ... and the future disasters it will help your customers avoid.

Be sure to think about immediate benefits as well as those the customer will experience later on.

If you're selling one-hour oil changes for example, you can save your customer oodles of time right now, today. But you also make it easy for him to properly maintain the family chariot, thereby helping him avoid an inconvenient or even dangerous breakdown and costly repairs later on.

Write each benefit as a "you" statement – as if you're talking face-to-face with your prospective customer, patient or client.

Then, go back over your list of benefits ... look at each one ... and ask yourself, "What additional benefits does this benefit bring to my life?" Keep drilling down until you hit the Mother Lode – the benefits that mean the most and bring the most value to prospects' lives.

Step #4: **Dimensionalize each benefit**

I don't know who first coined the word "dimensionalize." I do know that it drives my spell-checker bonkers, so it's probably not in any dictionary you'll ever see.

But the word "dimensionalize" does a great job of describing what "A" level copywriters do – the extra mile we travel to make sure each benefit in our copy is as compelling as possible.

When you "dimensionalize" a benefit, you give it added dimension by painting word pictures of all the ways the prospect will enjoy that benefit. You compare that benefit with those offered by others. You add specifics that demonstrate all the ways the benefit will enrich the prospect's life.

When you've finished, your list may look something like this, for example:

Feature: Constructed of carbon steel.

Why: Never wears out.

Benefit: The last drill bit you'll ever buy.

Dimensionalized Benefit: You can save up to \$75 a year in broken drill bits ... hours of unnecessary trips to the hardware store ... and hundreds of dollars in lost income!

Or in our hypothetical promotion for a dentist, your list might look like this:

Feature: A TV in every exam room.

Why: More comfortable for the patient and time passes more quickly.

Benefit: Your appointment is over before you know it!

Dimensionalized benefit: Great for fidgety kids: The time zips by. In fact, just last week, little Jimmy asked if he could stay longer.

The benefit drawn from a feature offered by an investment newsletter might go like this ...

Feature: Daily e-zine included with subscription to monthly newsletter.

Why: Stocks move fast; opportunities could be lost without constant updates.

Benefit: You'll never get caught wondering what to do when major events break!

Dimensionalize: You'll lock in your profits when the market sags and go for even greater profit potential by getting into each up-move on the ground floor.

Or, if you're writing for a book on health, your list might look something like this ...

Feature: Specific prescription for each age group on each supplement recommended.

Why: To eliminate reader confusion.

Dimensionalize: You'll always know precisely what you should be taking ... how much you should be taking ... and even when to take it.

Step #5:

Connect each dimensionalized benefit with a dominant resident emotion

I've already written reams about this – and this issue is already running a bit long, so there's no need to go into great detail at this time.

The point is simply to identify how your prospect is likely to feel about each of the dimensionalized benefits on your list.

Do NOT stop at listing just one emotion per benefit. Think about how the prospect feels about the lack of this benefit in his or her life now. And about how the prospect will feel as he or she is enjoying that benefit. And about how they'll feel as others see them doing things better ... being healthier ... richer ... happier.

One last thing: When you're done, review your inventory and rate each benefit/emotion combination on a scale of one to five.

As you assign each ranking, think about three things:

1.

The relative importance of the improvement each benefit brings to prospects' lives: A benefit that can prevent cancer

would be scored higher than one that merely produces sweeter breath, for example ...

2. The relative number of prospects most likely to covet that particular improvement: More people are likely to have arthritis than cancer ...
3. The relative intensity of the emotion(s) connected to each benefit.

Finally, sort the entire spreadsheet by these rankings in descending order.

When you're done, you'll have systematically created a comprehensive inventory of features, benefits and dominant emotions for your product.

Then, USE your inventory to make sure you press every possible hot button as you begin writing your copy – and please, for mercy's sake – to get real, dimensionalized, emotionalized BENEFITS into your lead copy!

Published: November 2, 2009

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4 Responses to "Benefits That Sing and Soar – In Five Simple Steps"

Clayton really scrapped the plate here

much to the b e n e f i t of us all.

We are silently clapping in gratitude

for sure.

Lorna Macintosh – over a year ago

One of the steps in writing good and organized copy are the actual mechanics of placing it on "paper." I've always organized my copy in an outline form, forming a higher to lower structure and allowing me to visually see what I'm writing

about. The above also gets the job done, but seems to be a little more organized. I'll try it and see what happens.

Scott T – over a year ago

I just did this with the 12 dominate features and benefits of the program. It took some time, maybe 1-2 hours, but WOW, it sure laid out in front of me exactly what I'm going to write about. It spells out what priority each feature is and what amount of text and emphasis each might take in the finished copy. It's now time to write...

Scott T – over a year ago

Thanks, Clayton. This article got me thinking about how to drill deeper when identifying Benefits. Great method for considering benefits from multiple perspectives.

Alex S – over a year ago

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