

The Private Practice Marketing Roundtable

Is It a Feature or a Benefit?

Understanding the distinction between features and benefits is one of the biggest areas of confusion I see when business owners are working on identifying the needs of their target markets (or putting together practice brochures, or writing service descriptions). Knowing the difference allows you to make good use of each one.

Is it a feature or a benefit? The distinction seems confusing until you know the difference; but once you do, it's a piece of cake. First, let's talk about why the distinction is important, and then I'll show you how to determine what they are in your practice.

Here's what's important to know:

People buy on emotion and then justify their purchase with logic.

What that means to you is that people buy based on the emotions that are triggered by the “promise” of your service or product. They then use the logic of the features to justify their purchase.

Of course, most people don't even realize they are doing this. In fact, it's not unusual to hear someone reciting a laundry list of feature-based reasons for the purchase without any mention of the emotion that really led to the decision to buy.

Features are the logic; benefits are the emotion.

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Here's an example I like to use. A patient seeking tooth whitening isn't buying whiter teeth. They are buying confidence when they smile, the perceived increased ability to attract the opposite sex, a chance for a new promotion, or any number of other things they believe having whiter teeth will bring into their lives.

See the emotions?

Open any magazine and look through the ads. Sure, you'll see feature lists, but it's all wrapped up in a promised benefit. Benefits are the emotion that surrounds the promise.

Triggering the Desire to Buy

The importance of this to you is that in your marketing, you will need to offer and explain them both: features *and* benefits. If you only offer one, your prospective client won't have the incentives they need to follow-through with a buying decision.

In fact, if you have ever wondered why someone didn't buy from you yet they turned right around and bought the same thing from someone else, that's probably why.

If you focus only on features, you won't trigger the deep desire to have your service or product; if you focus only on emotions, you don't give your prospective any way to justify their purchase.

Remember, it's the emotion that will make the sale. The features provide your client with the logic with which to justify their purchase. Again, this is not something people knowingly do – it's just the reality of how it happens.

With this in mind, take a look at a typical practice brochure.

If you read a traditional practice brochure, you'll see information about the service provider, their background and credentials. You'll see information about the office, the hours and how to

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schedule an appointment, maybe even directions. You'll see a description of the services offered and maybe the names of various programs offered as solutions to the problems of the client.

These are all features. If you have been wondering if people were reading this type brochure with excitement or yawning their way through it, well...I guess you have your answer.

Features are those elements that make up or describe the product or service. Weekly sessions, assessments, reports, a particular process or equipment, hours of operations, program or service descriptions – these are all features.

Features are the “logic” of your offering. It's available Monday through Friday, you can have it by appointment, you can order the basic version (e.g. get your taxes done) or get the super, duper deluxe model (e.g. get a 5-year financial plan with investment recommendations, quarterly conference calls and annual review). These are the elements one uses to make a logical decision on what's believed to be the best choice or decision.

But remember...

People don't buy on logic. People buy on emotion and then go back and justify with logic.

In our above examples, the benefit that comes to mind for me is “peace of mind”. Perhaps you can identify other benefits as well.

To be really effective, include the features *and* the benefits. Features provide the logic. Benefits are the “promise”.

It's the *promise* that triggers the emotion that leads to the purchase of your services...and it's the features they'll tell their spouse when explaining why they bought it.

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Your Features and Benefits Chart

Use this chart to list the features and benefits of the services that you offer.

Service Name	Key Features	Benefits
1. _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
2. _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
3. _____	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____