

# A Simple Technique To Turn Features Into Benefits - And Boost Your Sales

It's hard to find really strong, benefit-driven copy nowadays, in both the B2B or B2C markets. Certainly that's the case in the publishing sector where we do much of our work.

Why is this so? We don't pretend to know all the reasons - but a large part of it must surely be pressure of work.

In an ideal world, crafting really enticing benefit-led copy takes considerable time and effort. (Believe us, we know!) First you need to really understand your product, your market, and the reasons why people buy from you. That entails: mailing surveys to subscribers; phoning subscribers; doing focus groups; talking to your editors, telesales team and customer services reps; reading the trade press; and more.

All this *before* you even start writing...

So, how can we help you to write copy that's more benefit-driven, and thereby get you more sales, without adding to your already-busy day?

We'd like to suggest one simple technique that you can use to tease out your product's features, advantages and benefits. We call it FABB Analysis.

But before we get into that, let's take a quick 'refresher course' on the different levels of product attributes that will also explain the FABB acronym.

## MOVING UP THE LADDER FROM FEATURES TO BENEFITS

We've identified four rungs to this copy-writing ladder.

LEVEL # 1 is FEATURES. These are the fundamental aspects, facets or defining characteristics of the product, as they apply to your target market. If it's a magazine, then it could be "History Alive is a monthly-published magazine available on subscription." If it's an online financial markets data product, it could be "Our news pages are updated round the clock by our team of experienced business journalists".

LEVEL # 2 is ADVANTAGES. This is what features do - and nowadays it's far too frequently confused with benefits. Here's a commonly-expressed advantage of a 1-year subscription to a magazine "... so you're guaranteed 12 issues delivered to your door at no extra cost". This is emphatically NOT a benefit, though try telling that to most UK consumer publishers nowadays!

LEVEL # 3 is BENEFITS. Here's your chance to relate both the feature and advantage to the typical prospect's own situation or concerns - thereby striking a deeper chord and increasing your chance of a sale. By choosing home delivery of History Alive "... you ensure that you never miss a copy of your favourite history magazine - even when you're away on holiday, or too busy at work to get down to your local

newsagent." You could even add, for good measure: "And it means an end to those annoying occasions when your newsagent informs you that he's out of stock."

This is the beauty of benefit-laden copy; it has a direct relevance to the daily trials and tribulations of your typical prospect that gives it immediate and emotional resonance.

LEVEL #4 is BENEFITS OF THE BENEFIT. You seldom find this level of benefit mentioned in copy-writing books and other resources. But it's well worth knowing about, particularly if you're a B2C marketer. Because such uber-benefits (or 'ultimate benefits') are so personal in nature, they work best in a consumer environment. That said, they can work well with certain B2B products. For example, training products with a self-help or personal development dimension that would interest 'opportunity seekers'.

A cautionary note here: while benefits are deliberately intended to strike an emotional chord, benefits of the benefit strike a personal note. So be sure you know what you're doing before you use these in your copy. As a general rule B2B marketers should be cautious about using level #4; B2C marketers, on the other hand, should be looking for every opportunity to employ them.

What's the uber-benefit of a subscription to History Alive? Perhaps it's "So you'll get your monthly history 'fix' without fail". To make sure, you first need to call up a few of your long-standing subscribers. They'll be only happy to tell you why they're so keen to read a history magazine every month when for the rest of us history is a subject we associate with school!

Now let's take another look at the History Alive example, and see how the 4-rung FABB ladder helped us tease out the emotional 'triggers' that'll get you so many more subscriptions.

By pushing ourselves to level #3, we were able to identify, then tap into, three emotional 'trigger points' that will resonate with your typical prospect:

(1) the *fear* of missing an issue of the magazine

(2) the *security* of knowing that now you won't, thanks to your subscription

(3) the desire to avoid the possible future *irritation* of discovering that your local newsagent has already sold his last copy of your favourite read...

You can see how much more convincing this approach is than merely saying "you'll have 12 issues delivered to your door". It's the kind of copy that can double your response rates.

## HOW FABB ANALYSIS WORKS - AND WHY IT SAVES YOU TIME

OK, now for the simple FABB analysis exercise we promised you yesterday.

NB: Allocate the time to do this exercise properly, and you'll have all the features and benefits copy you need, on tap, for the next couple of years – or at least until you move on to your next marketing job...

- (1) Construct a basic 4-column table in MS Word, making it 20 or so cells deep. Head the 4 columns, Feature, Advantage, Benefit and Benefit of the Benefit, Respectively
- (2) In the left-hand column list ALL the product features you can think of, in no particular order, one feature per cell.
- (3) Give the list to your deputy, your product manager, or someone else you're working with, and ask them to add any features you've forgotten
- (4) Now work through each feature, identifying first the advantage, then the benefit, and finally the uber-benefit if applicable
- (5) Circulate the completed table to all relevant parties for their comments and suggestions – publisher, editor, product manager, telesales manager, customer services manager. Anyone and everyone who is involved in the conception, production, sale and maintenance of your product.
- (6) Add all of their comments to your original master copy, and circulate again to all concerned.

Now you've got all the key reasons why someone should buy your products set out in one handy source.

But, you might ask, isn't this an awful lot of work? Yes and no.

What you've created is a goldmine of information you can use *time and time again* whenever you do a new leaflet... sales letter... email campaign... new web site copy – or need to update a marketing or competitor analysis report in a hurry.

And should you ever get in an outside copy-writer, you'll be able to brief them in a fraction of the time.

So you'll find the time you invested in assembling your FABB table will repay itself many times over.

What's more, your FABB table can be put to good use by everyone else associated with the product, especially those in telesales, renewals, editorial and product development. So you've done a good deed for all your colleagues as well. (Make sure your publisher or publishing director gets a copy!)

#### BO'NUS SECTION: A HANDY TECHNIQUE FOR IDENTIFYING THE REAL BENEFIT

Not sure how to identify the real benefit in one of your product's features – as opposed to merely an advantage. Here's a handy way to do so.

Let's take the financial markets online service we referred to earlier, and develop the feature first into an advantage, and then into a benefit. The secret is to keep 'interrogating' each feature until you feel you can't go any further with it. That's invariably where the real benefit lies.

Here goes: "our news pages are updated round the clock by a team of experienced journalists" SO "you're guaranteed the very latest information delivered to your desktop" (i.e. the product advantage), AND THAT MEANS...

At the AND THAT MEANS point, you can probably come up with more than one reason, if you know your market well enough. For example "... you can take a view on the markets safe in the knowledge that your decision is based on the very latest information available..."

Of course you could go even deeper, to say AND THAT MEANS "you're more likely to be on the fast-track to promotion owing to your successful forecasting track record..."

But that sort of uber-benefit is almost certainly best left unsaid, at least in the B2B world of this particular example. Of course, if you identify and express your benefit statements correctly, canny business sector prospects should be able to work the personal benefits out for themselves!

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