

4

Avoid interrupting whilst the prospect is talking. If you want to intervene use a linking phrase (such as 'Can I just see if we understood what you've said' to test for understanding); in this way the prospect will feel you are trying to listen. Once you've got control you can change direction if you want to.

Example:

**Prospect:** Talk Talk Talk

**Salesperson:** 'Let me see if I've got this right. Do you mean...?'

**Prospect:** 'Yes, we're fed up with them.'

**Salesperson:** 'Then let me ask you a question. What would you look for in...?'

## Features and benefits (FAB)

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*Sell the sizzle... not the sausage!*

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A customer or prospect's **needs and wants** have to be fulfilled if the sale is to be successful. So, however skilled you are as a telephone salesperson in questioning and uncovering needs, the prospect will be unlikely to purchase until he is satisfied that your product/service will meet his needs. Therefore during a telephone call, or several other calls, the salesperson will have to give the customer information about their products.

Many telesales-people fall into the trap of talking about their product/service before they understand what the prospect is looking for specifically. This leads to the prospect raising objections and reduces the chances of a sale.

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*Prospects buy when they recognise that the needs they have can be matched by the benefit that your products can offer.*

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**For the best effect only mention features and benefits that are relevant and personalised.**

Some ways of describing your products to your customers are more persuasive than others and therefore the chances of making a sale will be increased. It is essential that we have a clear understanding of the definition of *Feature*, *Advantage* and *Benefit*, so that we are aware of the degree of persuasiveness each represents. Bear in mind that prospects buy what your product or service will do for them, not what it is.

### **Feature statement. Facts**

A feature is a statement made by the salesperson which relates directly to the characteristics of a product and can usually be answered by the question 'What is it?'

As a feature statement has little meaning on its own, it usually has little effect on the customer.

### **Advantage statement. Functions**

An advantage statement describes what the product feature does or how it can help the prospect.

As advantage statements expand on the feature and explain what the feature means and what it will do, then it is apparent that an advantage statement is going to be somewhat more persuasive than a feature statement.

However, people buy because of the benefits which they will derive from your product in answer to their needs.

Link statements with phrases such as 'Which means that', 'Therefore...'

## **So what is a benefit? Value**

A benefit statement is an advantage statement which is related directly to a pre-stated need of the customer and answers the specific question 'What will it do for me?'

We must always remember 'telling isn't selling'. Before we begin to discuss our solution, therefore, we must first determine what it is the prospect wants and for what reasons. Before we tell a customer all about our solution we should first ask the questions 'Does he really need to know this? Is it going to be of interest to him?' Do both of you have an understanding of the prospect's clear needs?

## **Developing FAB statements**

Remember five of the most common buying motives a customer may have is a desire to either:

- **increase something**
- **improve something**
- **reduce or decrease something**
- **save something or**
- **gain something.**

## Examples – fleet servicing contract

<b>FEATURE</b>	<b>BENEFIT</b>
Free pick-up and collect of all vehicles from your offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Save time</i></li><li>• <i>Reduced hassle</i></li><li>• <i>Easy and convenient</i></li></ul>
Fully itemised monthly invoices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Improved reconciliation</i></li><li>• <i>Saves time in the accounts department</i></li></ul>
Volume discount prices on tyres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Saves money and time in shopping around for prices</i></li></ul>
Free valet and wash on all vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Improved satisfaction with service by drivers</i></li></ul>

# People buy for different reasons

People buy largely for a combination of two factors:

1. Emotional and subjective reasons (largely unconscious).
2. Tangible and logical reasons (conscious).

For example, consider the elements in choosing a mobile phone – a product commonly purchased over the telephone:

## Mobile phone

### Emotional and subjective reasons for buying (largely unconscious)

- Brand name
- What will my friends say?
- Does it look good?
- What will it say about me?
- Is it the right image?
- Peace of mind in case of faults?
- Colour
- Do I *like* the person selling it to me?
- Do I trust them?

### Tangible and logical reasons for buying (conscious)

- Service coverage
- Is it in my budget?
- Is it easy to use?
- Does it have the right functions?
- Size
- Has it been reviewed favourably in the magazines?

To increase buying desire find out 'want'. Highlight or discuss how they will gain or benefit from fulfilling this want.

## **Matching**

The objective of matching is to match what you are recommending to what the customer wants.

You must establish what the customer needs in order to know what to sell him. Don't try to sell until you know what the customer wants.

Needs are individual and it is the telesales person's job to establish what they are in each case. The customer may not always realise that the need exists, in which case the telesales person should point out a need first. Having found the need he/she can show how the customer will satisfy the need by agreeing to an appointment or sale.

Matching without need is an uphill task. Needs provide information to buy. Don't sell the product or service until you know what the customer wants.

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*Don't tell the customer what your service is.  
Tell him/her what it will do for them.*

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What makes one service better than another, it is not that it has more features or benefits, but that it does more of what the customer wants it to.

At this point you must be certain to know those aspects of your organisation which can be of benefit to the customer so that you can choose those which relate directly to him/her to take the appointment or sales.

**Features and all benefits are relative.**

Use your imagination to adapt the selling points to each case to make the match as accurate as possible. Make sure that he/she understands and is convinced of how each point will benefit him and his business.

Remember that very few services are so good that they sell themselves, and the knowledge and sheer enthusiasm with which you present is all important. Give your matching a structure so that it has a logical sequence and works toward a conclusion.

### **Selling benefits that need both emotional and logical needs**

A single feature can often have many different benefits. Some of these might be logical and very tangible, others more subjective. For example, in the above illustration, what could be the possible practical benefit of having a mobile phone that would allow you to change the colour to suit your mood or outfit? It certainly won't improve your line quality or reduce your call charges.

Because of the lack of visual communication on the telephone it is vital the benefits are explained and mentioned well and clearly.

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*People don't buy a product or service... they buy how they imagine they will feel using the product or service.*

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# Handling objections and questions

## Handling customer objections

When you are asked a question about a feature or benefit, don't jump in with a specific answer until you know what it is you are answering. Use the structure below for answering questions. In summary, it is possible to answer a question in three ways:

1. by giving information only
2. with a question only
3. by giving information followed by a question.

**It is best to employ No. 3 where possible in order to regain control, and find out why the customer is asking the question.**

Objections fall into two categories:

### Real and Insincere

There are two types of real objections:

- **Genuine objections**
- **Misunderstandings**

Insincere objections take the form of **EXCUSES**.

### **WHY DO REAL OBJECTIONS OCCUR?**

Most real objections occur when salespeople offer 'solutions' that the customer does not consider relevant. Thus many objections are the product of a **misunderstanding** or **mismatch**.

This situation usually occurs when salespeople assume needs or react to vague needs. They offer solutions without fully developing clear needs by asking problem effect and commitment questions.

Because the salesperson does not understand the clear need, they will probably offer the wrong solution or a partial solution which the customer will reject.

Objections also occur because your product/service has a genuine disadvantage to that of your competitor(s). These are hardest to deal with and have to be outweighed by emphasising the benefits of your product/service which can only be done if you have a good understanding of the customer's clear need. Therefore, sound need creation is the secret to avoiding **misunderstandings** and answering **genuine** objections.

**Insincere** objections or excuses occur when 'political' situations exist or when you are talking to the wrong person, and should be identified by asking the customer if they will commit if you can prove to their satisfaction that you can handle their objections. This technique is known as **confirming**.

## **How *not* to overcome objections**

When faced with an objection there are several traps to avoid falling into.

### **ARGUING/JUSTIFYING**

We often see an objection as a personal attack and consequently argue/defend the situation. The problem with this is:

- if you win the argument you lose the customer. If you lose the argument you still lose the customer, or
- if you start to justify, you are saying to the customer: 'You are right.'

### **EXAGGERATING**

It is easy to exaggerate product/service capabilities when faced with an objection. This will only lead to future problems when the customer finds out your product won't do what you said it would.

### **REPLYING TOO QUICKLY**

If you jump in too quickly you may answer what is not really an objection or the answer you give may appear too glib.

### **AGREEING**

If you agree with an objection you have to put in the word 'but' (ie 'Yes... but'), which is always seen as a disagreement.

For example:

**Customer:** 'You're very expensive.'

**Salesperson:** 'Yes, we are, but...'

### **IGNORING**

Ignoring an objection can be dangerous. If the customer thinks it is important he will expect you to answer it: if you don't, he may assume you are hiding something.

### **DEFERRING**

You will probably have deduced from what has been covered that objections can only be handled effectively if the salesperson has a sound understanding of the broker's situation and where the product or service will solve problems.

Very often, however, objections occur early in the sale before the salesperson has been able to develop clear needs; in this situation the salesperson should defer the objection rather than try to answer it. This is necessary because the salesperson will not be able to handle the objection because he doesn't have enough information about the customer situation, ie the problems, buying criteria, future requirements etc. If the salesperson attempts to handle the early objection he runs the risk of losing control, and the sale, because the arguments will be weak through lack of information.