



Features Before Benefits?

by Robert W. Bly

Perhaps the oldest—and most widely embraced—rule for writing direct-response copy is, "Stress benefits, not features." But even this sacred commandment doesn't always hold true.

"As a direct-response copywriter, I do my best to write copy that focuses on benefits," says freelancer Connie Clark. "But sometimes—in admittedly rare circumstances—a different approach can work as well or better."

Specifically, I can think of five selling situations in which features should be given equal (if not top) billing over benefits and promise-oriented copy.

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SELLING TO EXPERTS

As a new homeowner, I don't know beans about insulation. So I need to be sold on the benefits: How much will the insulation reduce my winter fuel bills? What's the benefit of insulating my attic floor vs. the roof? Why is an "R value" of 11 better than 9? Will my house actually become warmer and less drafty?

But could you imagine repeating this discussion in a mailing aimed at insulation contractors and installers? Of course not, because these contractors are experts in insulation. They already know what insulation can do and why it is important. So copy should stress the features of insulation—R values,

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MEIK'S COLUMN

A word from Executive Director
Meik Bartoschek, CPC CPMC

Dear Members, Fellow Consultants:

Another year has almost passed, and it seems to me like yesterday that we were all worried about Y2K, the end of the Millennium, and the question whether we can afford to attend this outrageously expensive New Year's Eve Party. I usually use the last issue of the year to reflect on changes, new benefits and upcoming events. But this year, I wanted to share a letter with you that has reached me by email just a few days ago.

One of the best investments I have made for my consulting business has been joining the International Guild of Professional Consultants (IGPC) in October 1998. Working with Meik Bartoschek, Executive Director and Saralyn Collins, Director of Educational and Certification Services has been a pleasure and very enlightening.

Being a sole proprietor, it has been difficult finding benefits that are not exceedingly pricey. Joining IGPC, I now have the buying clout that large organizations have. Finding reasonably priced Errors and Omissions insurance, which is necessary for my business, has become a reality for me through IGPC. Meik is constantly on the lookout for benefits that will help all of us, from certification to group insurance to travel to telecommunications to buying office supplies to networking with other consultants.

One of my greatest challenges has been to market my healthcare consulting business. I am a nurse, not a marketer. Both Meik and Saralyn have helped me become a marketer for my services through proven techniques. They have been available via phone or email for me. I have treasured not only their expertise, but also their friendship. They want me to succeed and are willing to help me get there. Thank you Meik, Saralyn and IGPC. Without your help, I might not still be in business today.

Pat Ford
President and Owner, Pat Ford HealthCare Consulting

Whenever letters like this reach us, we are humbled and proud

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