

10. Other Factors in Making the Sale

Features and Benefits

Remember back when you were a kid riding around all summer on your bike without a care in the world? Nothing bothered you and life was good. You probably even had a family-run pizza joint down at the corner like I did. I can remember on Friday nights how my entire family would all meet down there at dinner time to enjoy a big slab of pizza and some sodas.

My favorite part was when my mom gave me quarters so I could play the pinball machines in between slices. If I ran out, she always seemed to have more. Moms are always good for change, you know. There was an endless supply of quarters coming from the bottom of my mom's purse—at least it seemed that way.

Looking back, and looking back as a marketer, I can see that it wasn't necessarily the pizza that got my attention—it was the pinball. That was something that benefited me directly, and I thoroughly enjoyed my time on the flippers. The feature, so to speak, was the pizza; the benefit was the pinball.

Now that I'm a big kid, I don't get to ride around on my bike all summer—and I sure don't get to play pinball very often—but I understand the value of features and benefits and how they play an integral role in the sales process. All products have features and benefits, but it's the *benefits* that motivate people to take action, or to buy.

Think about it. Why did you purchase your last car? It probably had all sorts of cool features and modern ameni-

Beautifully designed greeting cards are a great way for you to keep in touch with your clients. These are from Sarah Petty.





Scenes from Michael Redford's studio show how a welcoming area can be designed to showcase a variety of portrait products.

ties, but when it came down to it, the *benefits* of those features is what got you nailed down. It had antilock breaks, which would keep you and the kids safe on those rainy nights. It had a DVD player in the back, which made it convenient to travel with young children on long trips. It had an extra large cargo space, which meant that everybody in the family could put their suitcase in. It had a surround-sound speaker system, which meant everyone could enjoy the music. It had a moon roof, so you could stare into the sky on those warm summer nights. It had a six-cylinder engine, which was strong enough to tow a boat but small enough to give you respectable gas mileage. You didn't buy the DVD player, or the moon roof, or the six-cylinder engine or the speaker system, you bought the benefits and the value that those particular things brought to your life.

Let's take this a bit further. What about the features and benefits of a ball point pen?

Feature: It has a clicker on the end that retracts the tip.

Benefit: You won't accidentally get ink all over your shirt.

Feature: It has black ink.

Benefit: You can sign all of your legal documents with it.

Feature: It has a metal clip on the side so you can put it in your shirt

Benefit: It won't fall out when you bend over.

How about a coffee cup?

Feature: It has a handle on the side.

Benefit: If you are drinking something hot, you won't burn your hands.

Feature: It holds 8 oz. of fluid.

Benefit: The contents won't get cold before you can drink it all.

Feature: It's white.

Benefit: It will go with just about any color you may have on your table.

How about an 8x10 print? Now you have to work a little bit . . .

Feature: It's an 8x10.

Benefit: (1) You can purchase frames for it just about anywhere. (2) It will fit nicely on a desk or bookshelf. (3) It's suitable for viewing at close distances.

Feature: It's printed on archival paper.

Benefit: The print will last for generations to come.

Feature: It comes laminated.

Benefit: It will hold up to fingerprints, dust, and other potential damage.

Feature: It is UV protected.

Benefit: The print won't fade over time when exposed to a limited amount of sun.

As you may have guessed from all this, we're in the business of selling benefits and need to structure our sales techniques toward that goal. Look at the following examples. The bad ones emphasize the feature (the product itself), the good ones focus on the benefit (the advantage of buying the product).

Bad: What type of life insurance do you have?

Good: If your husband were to die today, how would the house payments be made?

Bad: Do you have a cell phone?

Good: If your most important customer called right now, how would you get the message?

Bad: Who do you currently use for long distance?

Good: If your long distance charges were 50 percent higher than they should be, how would you know?

All of these questions make the buyer respond in terms of his own interests and how the benefits of those products can enhance the value of their experience with the product.

Get the picture? Next time you go into your studio, make a list of each item you have, then list the features and benefits of each. After you have them on paper, practice reciting them in conversation so that the words come out naturally. This is the language of a successful salesperson—and all you need is a little practice, practice, practice!

Eliminating Risk

Eliminating risk is another important factor in determining your customers' desire to purchase. If you can eliminate the risk in their eyes, they are much more likely to

buy big. How much simpler can selling get, you ask? In order to harness the power of this strategy, ask yourself these questions:

1. In the eyes of my customer, what risks are they taking when they make a purchasing decision? (*The risk of overpaying? The financial risk of going over their intended budget? The feeling they don't really need the product? The fear they will regret it down the road?*)
2. How can I remove that risk during the sales presentation?

A risk is usually just a mental barrier that causes people to hesitate. As a professional salesperson, your number-one job is to identify the risks, then eliminate them as you go along—so you need to be an expert at risk removal! Nobody likes taking risks, but everybody wants the reward that risks brings with it. If the risk is the price, then the reward is the value. One at a time, brick by brick, remove the risks that the buyer perceives as stopping them from doing business with you. Then drive home the rewards, both logically and emotionally.

Overcoming Objections and Closing

If you hear things like, "Let me think about it and I'll get back to you later," "Let me talk it over with my husband and I'll call you tomorrow," or "I can get the same thing cheaper at the studio down the street," you are losing many potential customer each month—but needlessly so.

There are time-tested responses that can easily turn objections into more bookings.

If fact, a good salesperson welcomes those types of objections, because they see them as opportunities to build value in their product. And, as luck would have it, there are time-tested responses that can easily turn objections into more bookings and bigger orders.

An Ounce of Prevention. When dealing with objections, prevention is *always* the best medicine. Most ob-



Everything about Sarah Petty's production room reflects the fact that she believes in her product—a critical factor in being able to sell it effectively.

jections can be overcome simply by addressing them as you go instead of waiting until the prospect brings it up. To do that, you have to get real about your place in the market: your studio—*every* studio—has perceived weaknesses. You're too big, too small, too new, too far away, too expensive, etc. The tendency for us is to hide our weaknesses so that nobody can see them, but a better strategy is to minimize any weakness by turning it into a benefit—to turn your perceived weaknesses into the exact reason why they *should* do business with you.

For example, if your studio is on the other end of town, people might perceive this as a disadvantage—unless you directly address and eliminate this potential concern in your presentation:

Mrs. Jones, although we may be farther away than other studios you may be considering, you will find our service very attentive—just like we were right next door!

Or, if your prospects always are saying they can get their portraits for less somewhere else, don't wait to hear it from them—beat them to the punch by justifying your higher prices during your presentation. Tell them why you

are more expensive on your wedding coverage, or why your wall portraits cost more.

Mrs. Jones, if you shop around long enough, you can always find someone who can meet your needs for a few dollars less. We don't claim to be the least expensive or the most expensive. But our customers have found that when choosing us as their photographer, they get a greater value for their investment. They are getting a team of industry professionals and that saves money in the long run. Isn't that what you are really looking for?

Likewise, if your prospects are always saying, "Let me think it over and I'll get back to you." They are telling you that your presentation did not give them a compelling reason to book the session today. Adjust your presentation to create a sense of urgency and this objection will not be heard again.

Track Objections and Plan Responses. Every day we hear the same objections over and over again, yet we still show up to work each day with the same old stale tech-

niques—just hoping and praying that today will be different. But it doesn't change. This will absolutely wear you down over time. Nobody likes to hear objections, because they make us feel like we aren't doing a good job. But when you have no objections, you have no sale because the customer isn't interested. And when you have too many objections you also have no sales because the customer isn't convinced. Objections are, by their very nature, a mixed bag.

Here's a great exercise. Start writing down all the objections that you get on a regular basis—for the next couple of weeks, listen to your prospects very carefully. Every time you hear an objection and don't get the booking, write it down. By the end of the two weeks you will be able to see a clear pattern emerge. It will tell you what part of your presentation is weak.

Based on this information, you can preplan your responses. This will make your life a whole lot easier. In fact, studies show that salespeople who use carefully thought out and planned responses make an average of four times more income than those who just make up their responses on the fly. That's an amazing amount! Realizing that your income and your lifestyle are directly related to your ability to overcome objections should be a good reason to overcome any discomfort you have with handling objections. Best of all, very powerful and motivating responses to all objections are already available to you. You don't have to reinvent the wheel to tackle this problem—you can just profit from other people's experiences.

Have faith, ye people! Objections are a sign of interest. They show that your prospect or customer is engaged in the sales process. Depending on what type of objection you get, each statement also helps you to understand exactly where you are in the sales process.

Here are the four steps to overcoming any objection:

- 1. Neutralize or cushion the objection.** What this basically means is that you agree with your customer. Use phrases like, "I understand how you feel, Mrs. Jones," or "That makes perfect sense," or "I totally agree with you," or "I would feel the same way if I were in your shoes." When a prospect or customer says something that could potentially be confrontational, their

defensive guard is all the way up, because they are expecting you to react in a negative way, or not react at all.

- 2. Repeat or restate the objection.** For example if the objection is, "I want to check around before I make a decision," you can say, "Mrs. Jones, I totally understand your need to make sure you are selecting the right photographer for your needs." In that one sentence you have neutralized the objection by agreeing with them, then you have restated the objection back in a way that makes sense to them.
- 3. Give them a reason to decide today.** You could do this, in this scenario, by continuing with a statement like, "Mrs. Jones, I totally understand your need to make sure you are selecting the right photographer for your needs. I heard that from many of our current customers before they selected us. But after checking around, they found that we were best able to meet their individual needs and provide them with a wonderful experience."
- 4. Ask a closing question.** Ask a question that gets them to agree with what you've just said. For example, "Now, isn't that what you are really looking for Mrs. Jones?"

Of course you will need to add some of your own words, your own personal style, and practice the delivery so you are comfortable with the presentation, but by following these four simple steps, you will be able to book more sessions, generate more sales, and make your life much more rewarding.

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More on Phone Skills. Earlier in this book, I covered the main objections we hear on the phone—this happens on what seems like a daily basis. In fact, eight out of ten calls that come into a studio end with, "Let me think

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about it and I'll get back to you," or "Let me check with my husband and I'll call you back." Eight out of ten times!

Experience shows that they never call you back and you never get a second chance to win their business. So, if you accept that excuse and let them go easily, you are losing eight out of ten possible orders. That means you need to do a better job of helping them overcome their indecision—and get them excited about you and create a sense of urgency.

Overcoming Some Common Objections. Let's go through a few objections and see how we can use the four-step process to overcome them.

I don't have time during the week.

Can we come in on Saturday?

I would love to be able to come in on Saturday, but unfortunately we are closed on weekends. I would be more than happy to come in early one day

during the week, or perhaps one evening after work would work better for you. Would you prefer to come in before work or would an evening be better for you?

Can I have some proofs to take home and show everybody?

Mrs. Jones, I would love to give you something to take home with you, but we now have a better system that will allow you to get only the images you want. We are going to prepare a special slide show presentation of your entire session, and you will select your images during that presentation. You can order only the ones you enjoy the most, which means you will be able to show off your best stuff to your friends and family. How does that sound?

I will order more later, but I only want the small package right now.

Mrs. Jones, I totally understand the fact that your portraits are ending up being more than you had initially anticipated. But what we have found from our past clients is that once the initial order is placed, they don't come back to place the rest of their order. What I suggest is this. Instead of going with the 24x30 wall portrait of the family, let's just go with the 16x20. And instead of the twelve-way wall collection, we can make that an eight way. Also, if it would help, we can even split your payments up to make it a little easier on you. Fair enough?

If you work these simple techniques into your scripts and into your presentation, I guarantee you will book more

customers and substantially increase your averages—just by changing a few words!

Additional Closing Techniques

With literally thousands of closing techniques, it can be overwhelming if you try to eat the entire elephant all at one time. There are some basic strategies, however, that you can implement right away to put extra dollars in your bank account.

The Feel, Felt, Found Close. One approach is the “feel, felt, found” technique, which can be used on just about any objection:

Mrs. Jones, I understand how you **feel**. Many of our customer **felt** the same way before making the decision to come to us. But after they had a chance to experience our wonderful service and excellent products, they **found** us to offer the best value for their investment.

What mother who received this marketing piece from Sarah Petty could resist booking a session?



Isn't that what you are really looking for?

The Boomerang Close. Turn an objection into an advantage. For example, if the customer says that you are more expensive than everyone else in town, here's what you might say:

Mrs. Jones, that's the very reason why you should come to us. Although we may be a few dollars more, I am confident you will see why once you have had a chance to experience our service. All of our custom prints are hand-finished and retouched. They are textured for lifelong protection and mounted on durable art board so they will never peel or curl. Additionally, all of our prints come with a 100 percent unconditional guarantee so you never have to worry about any damage that may occur to them. Also, once you become a customer, we look at you like family, so we extend to you a lifetime portrait pass that entitles you to as many complimentary sessions as you would like. So actually, we are less expensive in the long run than any of our competitors. I believe what you are really looking for is to get a great value for your investment, isn't that right?

The Minor Point/Alternate Choice Close. This close, which offers only two options, is usually used when a customer is having a hard time making a decision. It can get them off of the fence and can add dollars to the order if done correctly. Basically, whatever you *want* your customer to do should be the second of the two options. They will usually go with what they heard last, believe it or not. Some examples:

1. Would you like to pick up your order, or would you like us to deliver it to your home?

2. Would you like to only put 50 percent down today, or do you prefer to pay the entire amount and get the 5 percent prepay discount
3. Will the 16x20 be large enough, or do you want to go with the 24x30 just to make sure?
4. Would you like to pay by check or credit card?
5. Would you like your wall portrait unframed, or would you like us to handle the framing for you?

You can use the same technique when helping a customer decide on which wedding collection to go with. Give it a try. You will be surprised how well it works!

Mrs. Jones, do you prefer to go with the Heritage Collection that includes four hours of coverage, or do you prefer the Elite Collection that has six hours of coverage plus the two parent albums?

The McAddon Close. Did you know that when McDonald's first starting asking, "Would you like a Coke and fries with that?" in the first thirty days they generated an additional 180 million in sales? *180 million* in sales! It seems like this technique, which I call the McAddon close, is all over our world now. (Would you like a muffin with

It can get them off of the fence and can add dollars to the order if done correctly.

your coffee? Would you like dessert tonight? Would you like to purchase the extended warranty? Would you like a shampoo with your haircut today? Would you like some lottery tickets with your gas purchase today?) To you, this should mean that if you are not suggesting frames with your wall portraits, you are missing the boat. If *you* don't sell them, they will have to buy them from someone else, so that's some of the easiest money you will *ever* see!

Creating Raving Testimonials

Testimonials make the sales game much easier. When you say something about yourself it's bragging, but when

somebody else says something about you it's *proof!* That is the bare-bones essence of a good testimonial. So, do you have a file folder with testimonials? Are you using them on a regular basis in your marketing, literature, web site, and direct mail pieces?

I want you to think about the last time you saw a testimonial on a marketing piece. Did it make you want to run to the phone and make a call? Or did it sound like every other testimonial you have seen? Let me give you a couple of examples:

“WOW! What a tremendous experience! Way beyond my expectations. You guys are the best!”

So, good or bad? Very bad. This statement is way too general. To be effective, testimonials have to have a specific message and an “act now” feel to them. Great testimonials should 1) show action or make a call to action, 2) overcome an objection, 3) reinforce a claim, and 3) have a happy ending. Now, here's a testimonial with some real selling power:

I'm so glad we decided to have our portraits done before our daughter left for college.

Remember, your customers can outsell you up one side of the street and down the other. Nothing is more powerful than one customer who loves you telling others to *just do it!* Are you going to believe the car salesman or your next door neighbor who just bought a car like the one you want?

Conversion

The key to a successful sales system is conversion—turning prospects into customers. It's in your telephone skills, your presentation techniques, and your follow-up procedures, so try these techniques out right away. The sooner you try what you have learned, the faster it will become part of your process.



Marketing doesn't have to be limited to printed materials or the Internet. Here, Sarah Petty shows her signature t-shirts and lip glosses, featuring colors, artwork, and slogans that coordinate with other items in her marketing arsenal.

Power Corner

Focus on . . .

Doug Box



Besides being a dynamic writer and speaker, Doug Box is also a man who enjoys life to the fullest! This interview was done on a sunny day in Canada, sitting outdoors with a cold drink in hand, resulting in an interview with a

relaxed, informal tone. His laughter is contagious, and spending too much time with him can put a permanent smile on your face. His vigor for life and for sharing his techniques with other photographers has made him one of the most sought-after instructors across the country.

The originator of the revolutionary concept of “prime time” and “minimum orders,” he is a pioneer of marketing in the age of digital imaging. For years, Doug has been inspiring photographers of all levels to go beyond the normal and create a more successful and creative business. He is the publisher of the Photographic Success newsletter and has written several books, including Professional Secrets of Wedding Photography, Professional Secrets for Photographing Children, and Professional Secrets of Natural Light Portrait Photography, all from Amherst Media®.

For more information on Doug’s seminars and educational materials, visit www.simplyselling.com.

Mitche: What do you feel is the biggest challenge that faces our industry in the future?

Doug: To me, it’s charging for your time. Photographers are notorious for undervaluing their time, and they tend to give it away or do extra things just because they want to. Down the road, I see that being the biggest problem with going digital. Of course, photographers are going to get better with the equipment and the software, but they’re still going to have that opportunity to do a lot of things. As long as they charge for their time, they’ll be okay; if they start giving it away, it’s going to just kill them.

It’s almost like the digital revolution is the core problem, but one of the side problems that develops is that you spend too much time in front of your monitor. And

that’s okay, if you feel it rejuvenates you. I can’t argue with that. Maybe at some point more photographers will be better able to delegate things. Of course, with any business, being able to delegate so that you don’t have to do every single thing, whether it’s digital or film, is the end goal.

What’s your marketing philosophy in a nutshell?

For me, it’s a referral business. I’ve been studying this and I’ve realized that there’s a great difference between a word-of-mouth business and a referral-based business. In a referral-based business, we have systems in place to do things—to get referrals and to thank people for their business, for instance.

Our business is built on referrals. We talk about it with our clients ahead of time, telling them that I can only earn new referrals if, at the end of the whole process, they still like and trust me, and I have delivered above and beyond their expectations. I ask them, “If I do all of those things, will you send me your friends and family?” and then I just wait for a response.

Saying this to the client is almost like raising your hand and promising those things. I’m saying to them, if I fill my end of the bargain, I expect that you’ll do your part too. And they all say, “Oh, sure. . . . in fact, I’ve already told two people about you.” That’s typical.

When I get referrals, I sell the benefits of hiring my studio, not just the features.

When I get referrals, I sell the benefits of hiring my studio, not just the features. The benefits should be carefully worded, though. A good example of that is, “I’ve been in business for thirty years.” Well, if you’re not careful, it’s going to sound like you’re just old. But if you can tell them the thirty years’ experience is good because you can handle any situation, because you’ve seen it all, and because, if they run out of time, you can still get them good images, then that experience is a clear benefit. So, you have to talk in benefits, not just features.

What do you feel is the most important attribute of a Power Marketer?

I think it's the ability to make the time to do it, because it's so easy to put that type of thing off.

You mean mapping out a time in your schedule to sit down and work on your business?

Yes! You should schedule a time to work on your business. Otherwise, it's too easy to just put it off. You can say "Oh, I'll do it next week," or "I'll do it tomorrow," then something happens tomorrow. Schedule time where you're working *on* your business, not just *in* your business. And stick with it. Don't give that time up. That's as valuable a use of time as your photography itself.

You should also schedule recharge time, which for me is like getting away from everything and just recharging my batteries, so to speak. So that I can come back into it clear-headed. If you work twenty-four hours, seven days a week, you're going to burn out so much quicker. Most photographers have never taken a two-week vacation. Maybe they get to go to a school and take a couple extra days off, and they call it a week's vacation. A vacation is totally different than that. So, at the beginning of the year I think it's important to schedule time off for yourself and for your family and to use that recharge time.

You mentioned family. What are the most important things to you in life, and how does your marketing help you accomplish your goals?

My family. Of course, they're very important. My kids are grown, so I don't spend as much time with them as I used to. Right now, quite honestly, I've bought this motorcycle, and I'm having a ball on it. I never thought I could retire until I bought this motorcycle. I could retire this afternoon and just take off on the bike. Teaching is fun for me, too—I'd like to take a week and just ride to some destination, teach for a week, and take a week getting home. Make a three-week deal out of it!

How do you balance the professional and the personal life that you crave so much?

I try to work in two-week blocks, because if you don't, all of a sudden, you have no time. But if you schedule yourself out two weeks at a time rather than three days at a

time or two days at a time, you're able to include time for yourself and your business. And then having the willpower to stick with it and just saying, this is the time for X. On my answering machine, instead of just saying, "Leave your name and number, and I'll call you back as soon as I get back," it says, "Leave your name and number and I will return my calls on Friday between the hours of 2:00 and 3:00PM and 5:00 and 6:00PM." This makes your job more efficient and helps clients, since somebody might leave you a message saying that in the morning they are at this number, and in the afternoon they are at this number. If you're not specific, they don't even know—you're not giv-

Schedule a time to work on your business. Otherwise, it's too easy to just put it off.

ing them any parameters. If I'm going to be away at a seminar, I let them know. I'm going to be at a seminar for a week and I'm learning new customer service ideas to be able to come back and serve you better. So, I'm not just saying I'm off at a conference—because they'll think I'm just goofing off.

What about somebody who's just getting into the industry or who has been around for fifty years—what one or two things can you recommend that they do to take their marketing and their business to the next level?

One of the things, I think, is education. Going to schools and seminars. For twenty-one years I've been going to schools and it advances you. One of the things I would tell people is when you take the time to go to a school or a convention, schedule some time afterward to implement some of the ideas. So many times, you get home and you're so far behind that you don't have time to even try any of the new things you just learned. If you don't try them immediately, the new skills are gone. By scheduling a week for the school and then two or three days afterward to start implementing these things and get caught up . . . I think it helps you to actually use the things you learn.

I voraciously read marketing books and listen to audiobooks. I drive a lot, so these work for me. I've got a bookcase that's three feet wide and six feet tall that's full of nothing but marketing and sales things. I get as much enjoyment and excitement out of making a new marketing plan and writing a marketing letter as somebody else would out of sitting in front of Photoshop and doing pho-

If you want to be a leader, you have to offer something unusual and different.

tographs. It's exciting! Quite honestly, it's more fun for me to book a wedding than it is to shoot a wedding. I love booking them.

What is your most successful marketing philosophy or campaign that you've done or that you do on a regular basis?

You know, because my business is referral-based, I don't have to do much marketing anymore!

So, having a referral-based business is your main focus?

That's exactly right. I did an analysis last year and about 25 percent of my business came from past clients. About 25 to 30 percent came from other photographers who referred clients to me. About 20 percent of the referrals come from the trade. The other part comes from different areas. Almost none of it comes from yellow pages, our web site, or anything like that. I get a lot of calls from those places, but they don't turn into business. So, we're cutting our marketing effort in those areas.

Another important thing is to stand out. Some years ago, my studio brought black & white photojournalism

into our area. We certainly didn't invent it, but nobody else in the area was doing it. It was huge—I mean, there was a real buzz. The next year, though, everybody was doing black & white—and so, to the untrained eye, they all looked the same. So I'm always looking at ways to stand out. Everybody is following. If you want to be a leader, you have to offer something that is unusual and different.

How about your favorite book or author?

Louis L'Amour. I love reading him.

Have you read all of his books?

Not all of them, but a big chunk of them.

What about the best experience you've ever had?

As corny as this sounds, the birth of my kids. They're good kids. Also, I was teaching at a school one year, and my son was in a really bad accident, but he came out of it okay. That was a miracle. It turned his life around. It really made me stop and think a little bit about life.

Who are your biggest inspirations?

Brian Tracy is a big one. I'd like to meet him. Also Dan Kennedy. I'd have to say for me as a speaker, Don Blair. I remember watching him years ago, thinking, "I want to be like Don Blair." And it was a goal that I set, to be recognized as a good photographer, to be respected as a teacher, and to have the staying power he did. He was also a fun, well-liked guy—the whole package.

I think you've got to do what you love. And that's the beauty of our business. For the most part, I love everything about it, and if you don't, get out of it. Do something else. Life's too short!