



Stop Selling Against Yourself

THE IDEA

One of the first sales skills we learn is that selling benefits is more effective than selling features. We learn that a feature is something the product, or solution, does and a benefit is why someone might care.

Benefits are usually treated simply as two dimensional cause-and-effect. If we think a little more laterally we can see that one of our features might have positive benefits for some people but also result in negative benefits for others.

This has a remarkable similarity to Newton's Third Law of Motion which states, "To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction".

AN EXAMPLE

Consider a manufacturing situation. Your proposed solution produces cost savings by eliminating the night shift. The competition's solution is also attractive but their benefits are different and include the retention of the night shift. This will create two factions internally; the people who want to eliminate the night shift and the people who want to retain the night shift.

HOW TO USE YOUR BENEFITS TO IDENTIFY EXPOSURES IN YOUR SALES PLAN

This simple example shows how the very benefits that we are selling can work against us. A critical part of our sales plan is to identify these potential negative effects. Having determined the features responsible for our key positive benefits we need to proactively counter any associated negative benefits. This is a great starting point for the sale's political plan.

TO COUNTER THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR NEGATIVE BENEFITS

Consider one of the key benefits in a sale you really want to win. By playing devil's advocate how can the feature generating this benefit be perceived by other people as being a "bad" thing? Once you identify someone who perceives this feature as a negative benefit there are a number of approaches that can be taken.

To bring the person on-side:

- Is there another perception of the same feature which produces a positive benefit?
- Is there a different feature providing a positive benefit which will outweigh the negative benefit?

Damage limitation:

- If we cannot create a positive benefit, what can we do to limit the damage this person can do to us?

SUMMARY

Negative benefits are reasons not to buy from us. This means that when we are selling our key positive benefits, we are also selling against ourselves to the people who perceive negative benefits associated with the same feature.

In summary:

- Consider your key benefits.
- Identify the people who perceive negative benefits from the same features.
- Determine what you need to do to either bring the person on-side or to limit the potential damage.