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YOUR BUSINESS: *James Watson*

Present the solution, not the product.

Charles Revson, the founder of Revlon, used to say "In the factory we make cosmetics, in the drugstore, we sell hope."

What product or service does your company create? And how do you position it to your customers?

How many times have you gone out to buy a car, cell phone, vacuum cleaner, or financial product, and found yourself listening to a sales presentation about horsepower, storage, airflow or average rate of return? While specifications may be important in defining the product, they're not ultimately what the customer wants, needs nor is willing to pay for.

At the end of the day, people will spend money to solve a problem or improve their quality of life. The product is just a means to getting there. But in developing their sales presentations, too many sellers begin and end with the product. They spend most of their presentation focusing on the product features and fail to clearly map those features to the benefits or the solution sought by their customer.

Making the solution – instead of the product – the center of your presentation will help your prospect see your offering as the means to his or her desired result. So, what are some of the techniques that you can use to make your presentation “solution-centered?”

Take the “so what” test.

Describe each of the salient features of your product, especially those that are unique relative to your competition, and ask yourself, “So what?”. Answering the “so what” question will cause you to describe what’s in it for the customer. Continue to ask yourself “so what” until you’ve arrived at the final, bottom-line benefit. That’s likely the value that your customer will pay for. Be sure to include those “so what” responses in your presentation. Another good phrase to use, to bridge product features to benefits is, “What this means to you is...”

Tell stories.

Everyone likes a story, and people remember stories. But they don’t always remember product features. If you incorporate stories into your presentation, people will be more likely to remember you, your story, your product and how it becomes a solution. Tell about a customer’s situation before they purchased your product, how they used the

product, and the changes that resulted. Wherever possible, make it concrete and personal.

Get emotional.

Remember, we're all human, and our purchasing decisions in business and in our personal lives are driven by emotions, and backed by logic.

Find an aspect of your product that can stir the emotions. Even the seemingly non-emotional products can be positioned emotionally. It may just require a little creative thought. Several years ago, I attended a conference where the president of a credit reporting service described what his company sold – he didn't call it accurate data and timely reports – he called it “peace of mind – we help business owners to sleep better at night, knowing that they'll be paid on time.” That's emotion. And a lot of companies bought off on it, and received that peace of mind they were really after.

Successful selling requires that the customer see your product or service as a solution to their problem. And a sales presentation is your opportunity to make that happen. Map your product features to the customer's desired state, and supplement that with real life stories and emotional appeal to create a presentation that will cast your company as a valued problem solver instead of just a product vendor.

Benjamin Franklin once said, “Wine makes daily living easier, less hurried, with fewer tensions and more tolerance.” Perhaps if Franklin were selling cork screws, he'd present them not as a cork removal devices, but as the key to relaxation.

James Watson is a founding partner of Presentations That Stick. Presentations That Stick helps companies acquire customers and generate revenue by designing and delivering powerful presentations on site, over the Internet, or in a recorded format. To learn more, go to www.presentationsthatstick.com email jwatson@presentationsthatstick.com or call 207.741.9047.