



## Features Vs Benefits: So What?

Connect your clients' services with your listeners' needs

Clients love to tout the features of their products and services, but for every feature they can list, there's a prospective consumer asking, "So what?" In other words, "What's in it for me?"

Let's say a computer retailer wants to advertise a laptop. The AE turns in a copy request with a piece of literature, perhaps an ad or flyer, attached to it. The client wants the world to know that his nifty little computer boasts a Futuron-XR processor — explained in techno-geek jargon, which is expected to appear in your commercial. At which point a listener will certainly ponder, "So what?"

But if you reconfigure the techno jargon to inform your listener about *benefits* — that with a Futuron-XR processor you'll run even the most complicated software at Warp Factor 9, graphics will appear to leap off the screen, and you'll be able to run up to four programs side by side while surfing the net and listening to your favorite Green Day album — the listener will think this is the neatest thing since indoor plumbing.

What's the best way to create commercials that are filled with benefits, rather than features? In your weekly sales meeting, try playing a game of "So What?" Have each account executive choose an account from his or her list. Ask the AE to list any features that the client might want to include in a commercial. Then, let the game begin.

Let's say your AE has an appliance store selling refrigerators. A feature might be dual temperature control Lexan drawers under the bottom shelf. Ask the AE, "So what?" The answer could be that lettuce will stay green for three weeks, and we'll be in a new geological epoch before the drawer breaks. Those benefits would make interesting factoids in a radio spot.

Next comes the AE with the new car dealership. The client wants to inform listeners about the electronic force distribution sensor on the smart-chip anti-lock braking system module behind the tire. Techno-geek jargon at its best — or worst. Ask the requisite: "So what?" Your AE begins to catch on to the game: "At 3:32 a.m., you're driving in the

pouring rain on a back road when suddenly, Bambi appears in your headlights. If you're driving one of our cars, there will be no road-kill to deal with or deployed airbags." Isn't that more interesting and motivating to a prospective buyer than a litany of technical jargon?

A sales rep for an optometrist says the client's new Temp-Ur-Flex frames sport Vari-lucent lenses fabricated from a new space-age wonder, Featherplaz, and coated with Mar-No-Mor. "So what?" The AE looks like a light bulb just went off over his head. The benefit — explained in easy-to-digest language — is that the stems bend outward so they won't snap off, the plastic lens is the lightest thing since Jessica Simpson's SAT score, and industrial grade emery paper won't scratch 'em up. Great fodder for a spot.

An adjunct to this exercise is to look at your radio station's leave-behind sheets and note the many features, usually enumerated in large bullet-point copy. Go around the

room and have each person take a feature, such as "60 percent of our listeners have a college and/or graduate degree," or

"85 percent of our listeners own a home" and apply the "so what?" features-to-benefits strategy. You just might find yourself rethinking your corporate literature.

It's not that you can't list features in a radio commercial — but they shouldn't be left to stand on their own. You need to convert them into benefits that connect with the listeners' needs. It isn't hard to do: Make a list of the features, and keep asking, "So what?"

One of the most important features of a successful radio commercial are the benefits that listeners attribute to the advertiser's products and services. Failure to provide this will result in a sponsor who won't want to re-up. And when that happens, the last thing you'll be asking yourself is "So what?"

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