



FEATURES, BENEFITS, AND RESULTS—HOW TO DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF IN A COMPETITIVE MARKET

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The personal training industry has seemingly exploded in the last decade. With obesity on the rise and more professionals following their passion, there has never been quite so much business to be had or as many personal trainers eager to earn that business. However, this current landscape threatens to commoditize the personal training marketplace. One of the only ways to fight this shift is through strategic differentiation and communication of specific services. By understanding the differences between features, benefits, and results, along with how they impact current or potential clients, personal trainers can separate themselves from the rest of the pack and ensure long-term success of their business.

THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

The United States operates as a free market economy. In a free market, goods and services are bought and sold without regulation from the government. At first thought, this system seems somewhat haphazard; however, it can be quite effective because it allocates power to the people in the marketplace: the buyers and sellers. If you want to sell your personal training for \$200 an hour while everyone else is charging \$60 an hour, there is nothing stopping you. However, you will still have to answer to the driving principle of a free market economy: supply and demand. Supply and demand is the great equalizer when it comes to the cost of goods. If there is a short supply of a product that the market greatly desires, then the cost goes up until it reaches a threshold where buyers decide that the cost exceeds the value. However, when the supply of that product increases, the price is driven down in response to the lower perceived value once it is

much more available. If that product remains in abundant supply for an extended period of time, it will likely become a commodity.

A commodity can be thought of as a product or service whose wide availability typically leads to smaller profit margins which diminishes the importance of factors (such as brand name) other than price. Therefore, if two people are selling the same goods or services with no discernable difference to a customer, it quickly becomes a race, with the winner being the seller who is willing to lower their price the most. A good example of this is when someone calls all the local gyms or fitness facilities to get their prices and chooses solely based on which one offers the lowest price. One way to combat this problem in personal training is to use the unique features and benefits of your services to create value that differentiates you from your competitors.

FEATURES AND BENEFITS

Every product or service sold or marketed will provide the consumer a list of all the things it can do and what it is made up of; these are its features. In personal training, features could be credentials, the size of the facility, the equipment that is available, or even the programs offered. Features are easy to come by, but hard to compete on since most of them are accessible to everyone. With enough money and time, anyone can buy the same equipment or complete the same certifications. What cannot be purchased, however, is the way you do things or how you use the features of your service. Your process is proprietary and can become a key feature that separates you from the pack, but it must be unique and deliver clear, specific benefits to the potential

client. It is important to remember that customers do not really care about the features, but they do care about how the features can benefit them.

A benefit is a positive outcome that a customer receives from a feature. The most impactful benefits are the ones that solve your clients' biggest problems. Most people operate from the mindset of "what is in it for me?" The language of benefits is how you connect the features you offer to why they are important in helping your clients reach their specific goals. For example, one of the features of working with you may be that you are also a certified nutrition coach. The benefit of this feature is that you can get clients to their goals faster since nutrition plays an integral role in accomplishing most goals. By communicating this benefit clearly, you allow the client to see the value of working with you compared to someone without that.

CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE

A large part of communicating your features and benefits clearly is to create a message that speaks your potential clients' language. Oftentimes, personal trainers overlook this aspect since they think that the benefits of what they do should be obvious. This could not be further from the truth. For example, potential clients generally do not know much about fitness equipment, certifications, or the glycemic index. However, they do know what they want and if you cannot explain how you can get them there in their own terms, then they will never see the real value in your services.

The easiest way to get on the same page as your potential clients is to first craft a message that lists all the features that you believe

makes you or your services unique. Next, write down the reasons, in simple terms, that your individual features might be important to your client. Finally, follow up with results that a client should expect if they stick with your services. Table 1 provides a sample of what this could look like.

CONCLUSION

The personal training industry is becoming more competitive each day. It is critical to be able to differentiate yourself from the rest of the pack if you want to thrive in this saturated market. In regards to communicating what sets you apart from other personal trainers, you need to be able to craft your message in a way that clearly articulates what makes you more valuable. By laying out how your unique features elicit the benefits that will ultimately lead to the results that your clients want, you can create a tangible roadmap to success that potential clients can understand, get excited about, and buy into.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Crump has been a personal trainer for nearly a decade. He holds a handful of certifications and has been fortunate to learn from some of the best in the field. After leaving a successful career in corporate fitness, Crump started in his own company and opened his own training studio, Spark Fitness. In addition to helping his clients achieve their goals, he also mentors new trainers and contributes to several websites and publications with the intention of improving the perception of the fitness industry.

TABLE 1. SAMPLE FEATURES, BENEFITS, AND RESULTS

FEATURE (WHAT YOU OFFER)	BENEFIT (WHY IT MATTERS)	RESULT (WHAT THE CLIENT GETS)
Movement assessment for all clients	Allows you to design more efficient client-centered programs	Training sessions that engage the client by eliminating weaknesses and building on strengths
Customized nutrition coaching	Allows you to quickly assess a client's nutrition knowledge and identify habits that may be limiting success	Aesthetic goals are reached quicker and motivation to continue is enhanced
Flexible appointment scheduling	Fewer missed workouts for the client	More consistency accelerates progress and mastery
Online programming support	Clients can access their programs from anywhere and continue to train when traveling	Training frequency is increased for those that travel often
Private atmosphere	Clients are able to train without intimidation, judgment, and distractions	Clients enjoy their sessions more and can express themselves fully and comfortably