

## Tell descriptive stories that engage our minds, create value, and help 'sell' on more than one level

By Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey

Perhaps you've heard or been taught that sharing Features, Advantages and Benefits is a more effective approach to create 'value' than just feature dumping on our prospective customers. But, do we effectively do that in our sales and leadership conversations? As leaders, we too, need to sell our ideas and generate buy-in to remain competitive and profitable.

Let me share a simple experience where a young shoe salesman (Joseph) did this very well. We all need shoes and hopefully, since we are on our feet a lot, we select some that are comfortable, yet stylish to wear when we are at work. At least that is my story.☺

Feature (which means)	Advantage (which means)	Benefit (to customer)
calfskin leather	molds to your foot	custom made feel
full leather lining	finished feel	instant comfort
traditional loafer	will stay in style	wear for years

I was in Puerto Vallarta doing some sailing last summer. One afternoon I was enjoying a quiet break doing some window shopping down town. Along the way a very stylish, yet simple, pair of two-tone loafers caught my eye in a little shoe store off the quaint cobblestone street. Thinking I was '*only looking*', I stepped into the store to check them out. I picked them up and quickly put them down, as my initial reaction was, "Wow...that is not cheap!"

My young and *very wise* shoe expert approached and engaged me in conversation about my visit to his store, to Puerto Vallarta, and what I did for a living. I made the mistake of telling him I was a professional speaker, writer, management and leadership coach, and sales success trainer who traveled sharing ideas on how others could be more successful in their lives, leadership careers, sales, etc. (Guess he figured I could really afford them... smile.)

Picking up the shoes and holding them with care, he said, "You know, when you wear these traditional loafers, your going to have a big smile on your face because 'one of the great things' about these shoes is they're soft calfskin leather with a full leather lining. And as you wear them, they will mold to the shape of your feet, giving you a custom-made feel."

He continued, "It would be fun to walk around in custom-made shoes, don't you think?"

He could have just said, "These shoes are all leather, which is flexible, making them very comfortable." And, on the surface that sounds good, doesn't it?

However what he said '*engaged*' me and was much more effective in getting me to seriously consider investing in a pair for myself, don't you think? Creating value in my mind. He talked about how the shoes were made. He mentioned, they were bench-crafted, which meant one person was completely responsible for making this specific pair of shoes.

Joseph then went in for the kill, "Since they are bench-crafted, they have the artisan's name on them. When they're finished, these shoes have no nicks, no scratches, and all of the components fit perfectly. Unlike shoes made on an assembly line, these shoes are one of a kind." Now there is a value proposition, if I ever heard one!

Then he asked me a *simple* closing question, "What size do you wear?" He then proceeded to have me slip on on a pair in my size. Ahhhh!

**Long story, made short:** He was right, they 'are' delightful to wear. When I walked out of his store, both of us had big smiles on our faces. I could hardly wait for the snow to leave so I could take them out for a walk here in Northern Alberta. PS: I love them!

Simple story of how one young salesman took '*personal*' leadership and leveraged his craft to the next level by engaging his customer. He told a story that created '*value*' in my mind and allowed me to see myself in those shoes.

Do you do that with your customers when they come into your store? Or when you visit them in their place of business? If you're in a management position, have you done that with those you lead? Leaders and managers often need to sell ideas and generate buy in from their teams. When their teams see the value, their buy-in is much easier to gain.

Do you know enough about your services/products/ideas, that, for example, you craft engaging stories to help your customers see themselves sitting in front of that big screen Plasma TV, on that leather sofa with matching love seat and chair, end tables, coordinated lamps and accents to enjoy that quiet evening together?

Are you willing to engage your customers (or your teams) to help them see it in their mind's eye before they see it in their house, workplace, or place of business?

Do you know enough about your services (goals) that you can create captivating stories that help your prospective customers (teams) see themselves enjoying the benefit of wisely selecting or following you to help enhance their lives, businesses and careers?

Do you think this might help you build and expand your business or enhance your management career? Can you use this skill to help equip your teams to win? YES!

Get walking and talking.

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