



## Building a Successful Sales Story

*As part of our business coaching activities we are dealing with an increasing number of requests to help people improve their sales process.*

*One of the key problems that we have identified is a lack of “engagement” with clients at the level of their real need.*

*So what is the starting point for making a better connection to clients? Sales Coach Jackie King-Turner has some ideas for you.*

## Business-to-Business Sales

The key to successful B2B sales lies in the fulfillment of a business need, or problem, in a timely and cost-effective fashion. In times of economic challenge, a “want” is unlikely to drive significant financial expenditure. If the client has a problem which is costing money or eroding competitive advantage and market share, then the proposal of a solution which addresses these issues is more likely to result in a closed sale.

A successful sales campaign will engage with clients on the basis of these issues and deliver concrete business benefit to the client’s organization.

## Sales Story

I recommend the adoption of a top- down approach starting with the definition of a generic sales story, “Why use your company?” that builds initial rapport with the client and puts you in a position to offer more specific solutions.

This takes the form of the following:

- What is your company?
- What does your company do?
- Why should the customer buy from you?

The sales story needs to comprise an “elevator conversation” (a couple of sentences which encapsulate what the organisation does) and a more detailed description. These become the foundation of a wide variety of sale and marketing interactions, such as:

- Introductions at networking session
- Formal sales pitches
- Tender documents
- Website copy
- Brochure material

The detailed version needs to provide “proof points” that support claims you make about your business and why customers should buy from you. So if you talk about quality as a factor then it is important to identify a specific quality parameter (e.g. fast delivery times) and some evidence to back it up (e.g. an industry award).

Depending on the size of your business it may be appropriate to firstly develop a generic story and then apply the process to suit specific departments or markets.

## Use FAB (Features, Advantages, Benefits)

The next stage focuses on selling specific products or services and how you can directly address customer issues. I’d like to introduce the “Features, Advantages and Benefits” to highlight where many businesses are in terms of engaging with clients and where they need to get to.

**Feature.** A description or specification of part of the product/service offering.

*Our ink jet printer has an output of 32 pages per minute.*

**Advantage.** A general statement on what is so good about it

*That's twice as fast as the old model*

**Benefit.** A customer-specific example of "what this means to you" that focuses on solving an issue.

*Which means that you free up 2 hours a day to concentrate on calling clients.*

A lot of businesses, and especially the more technically oriented ones, get stuck at the features stage and tend to bombard clients with detailed specifications. Some companies have managed to get through to defining product advantages where they succeed in arousing some client interest but leave it up to the client to work out what it means for them.

Truly successful sales campaigns follow through to the benefit stage. It is vital to communicate the specific details of what your company can do to solve a particular client need. Imagine the frustration if you sell the product/service and what's good about it, but a direct competitor follows through with the client specific benefits – you have done most of their job for them, but they win the business!

The approach is valid from the most strategic sale, where there may be multiple detailed FABs, to the products on your eCommerce website. The more that you can express benefits and not just features the greater your chances of success.

Jackie King-Turner

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