

Buyer Motivations—An Overview

Whether your first contact with a customer is when he or she comes into your dealership, or it's through a telephone call or an e-mail inquiry, there is one thing you can be sure of—this customer has wants and needs that must be met by the vehicle you sell them. If your customers fail to see how the vehicle(s) you show them meets their wants and needs, they will go elsewhere and continue shopping until the right vehicle (or salesperson) is found. The great thing about this is that customers will tell you what their wants and needs are if you know how to correctly ask them.

“Oh, sure!” you say, “In all my time in this business, no one has EVER walked up to me and just blurted out a list of wants and needs!” And, of course, you'd be right. The secret is to ask the right questions—and appropriate follow-ups—to get the information you need. Then you will know exactly which vehicle and trim level to show each customer.

Almost all customers' “wants and needs” (as well as what features are important to them) can be categorized into one of five “Buyer Motivations”. Each customer will have a buying motivation in mind (most will have more than one and may use other wordings). The five common buyer motivations are:

Comfort and Convenience

Occupant Protection (or Safety)

Value

Engine Power and Technology

Ride and Handling

An easy way to remember these may be to use the acronym, **COVER**... as in: the multitudes of attributes and features (insert your manufacturer here) offers to its customers **COVER** their wants and needs. In the pages that follow, we will describe in detail a number of attributes and features that you can discuss with your customers.

With each customer:

1. Ask the right questions to **COVER** their wants and needs.
 - a. Most of the questions should be open-ended (questions that cannot be answered with one or two words, like “yes”, “no”, or “blue”—like “What is the most important thing for you to have in your new vehicle?”) and in a conversational style. You will also occasionally need to ask a closed-ended question—one that can be answered in one or two words, such as “Do you want an automatic or a manual transmission?”.

Some suggested questions:

1. What brings you in to the dealership today?
 2. Who will be driving your new vehicle?
 3. What kind of driving will you/he/she be doing most of the time?
 4. What is the most important thing to you in your new vehicle?
 5. What other features are important to you?
 6. What do you like most about your current vehicle?
 7. What would you change, if you could, about your current vehicle?
 8. What other vehicles are you thinking about at this time?
- b. Listen, listen, listen.
- c. Ask clarifying questions.
- What does performance mean to you?
(Or can you give me an example of what you mean by performance? This clarifying question is asked to make sure you know exactly what the customer means by whatever they've answered to #4.)
- d. Take notes
- e. Use confirming statements to show your customers that you understand their wants and needs. For example: "So, Mr. Jones, it sounds to me like you are looking for a mid-sized SUV with off-road capabilities and a smooth comfortable ride."
- f. Throughout the process, use a question similar to question #5 in part a. above any time you need clarification as to what the customer means.
- g. Avoid asking "Why?" questions at this point. Some people may think that you are asking for them to justify their answers.
2. Pick out the vehicle that best fits the picture they've drawn for you.
 3. Present and build value in the vehicle (and the customer's choice to do business with you and your dealership) by covering the vehicle's features that meet the primary and secondary wants and needs (Buying Motivations—**COVER**).

4. COVER the appropriate feature as follows:

- a. Feature (What it is)
- b. Advantage (What it does)
- c. Benefit (How this fits in with the customer's wants and/or needs)

For example, when telling a customer interested in "Comfort and Convenience" about the micron air-filtration system that's standard in many of today's vehicles, you might use:

Feature	Micron air-filtration system
Advantage	It filters dust, dirt, and pollen from the ventilation system.
Benefit	It helps keep air fresh for maximum passenger comfort.

"Since you've told me that comfort while driving is a large part of your buying decision, Ms. Bentley, you'll be happy to hear that the _____ has a micron air-filtration system that filters dust, dirt, and pollen from the ventilation system. This means that the air inside the vehicle will be much cleaner and fresher than that in one of our competitors that is without a similar system."

Please keep in mind that MOST Sales Consultants do very well with Features and Benefits. Unfortunately they often leave out the "Advantage" — a very important element. It takes practice to get it right and so that it flows with little effort.

When you do this with all your customers, they will see the value (for them) in the vehicle you're presenting and you will be more successful! If you present benefits that are not of interest to your customer, he or she will see no value in the feature, and will lose interest in your presentation.

Now grab a co-worker, show him/her this article, and practice presenting Features/Advantages/Benefits together. Remember to critique with positive feedback and to include the "Advantage" each time.

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