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The ultimate edge: Identifying emotional benefits

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Do you know why customers buy your products and services? Chances are the answer isn't in the tangible descriptions of your products. Those attributes tend to be short lived. They are important only until your competitor matches your product's features.

The key to establishing a lasting relationship with your customers lies in understanding the emotional benefits that your brand offers. Emotional benefits enable the consumer to say something positive about herself as a result of using a product or service. These benefits are the vehicle for establishing an emotional connection between the product/service and the user.

Club Med was a pioneer in this area through its Kids Clubs at resort locations. Parents were invited to enroll their children in these programs while staying at the resort. Instead of being positioned as "daycare," the Kids Clubs were described as teaching kids new skills or allowing them to share a new experience such as learning circus tricks.

As a result, instead of feeling guilty about putting their children in a day care program while on vacation, parents could enjoy some alone time and say to themselves, "I'm a good parent. My child is learning something he doesn't usually get to experience at home." This is an example of an emotional benefit.

The emotional connection builds the trust that leads to loyalty. With the connection firmly in place, customers will be less likely to abandon the brand because they know they can count on it. In the end, this emotional connection can help retain or gain market share.

When we conduct research to explore reactions to products, services or communications, we probe to get at the emotional reactions that lead to identifying potential emotional benefits. By understanding what lies beneath what people initially tell us, we can help our clients to identify the most compelling way to tell their stories.

To establish a lasting relationship with your customers, think less about what you make in the plant and more about what these important audiences want from you. Understanding the emotional benefits of your products and services leads to the invaluable ability to translate share of heart to market share.