

## Selling to wants more effective than selling to needs

**M**arketing  
Insights  
from 5MetaCom

Suppose you want to view the stars. Not movie stars, but rather the Vega, Sirius and Betelgeuse kind of stars. Explore the universe. You might start looking for telescopes and find ads like these:

1


# PREMIER SOJOURNER XMR

1 Mounted 30 mm finderscope  
2 10 mm Plössl eyepiece  
3 Eyepiece holder  
4 Azimuth fine adjustment  
5 Focusing knob  
6 Declination setting scale

For more information, visit [www.premiertele.com/sojourner](http://www.premiertele.com/sojourner) or call 1-800-555-7788.

A 30 mm lens gives the Premier Sojourner XMR the largest lens in its class. Purchase within 30 days and receive a free tripod accessories shelf!

All-aluminum cradle!



2

## Get up close and personal . . . with Jupiter

**The new Stargazer 3100 lets you...**

- See Jupiter, Saturn, Mars and Venus
- Count craters on the moon
- Automatically track objects as they cross the night sky
- Photograph the beauty of space
- View a lunar eclipse

Order within 30 days and receive free Constellation Finder software — it'll help you find Cassiopeia faster than you can spell Cassiopeia. Order today at [www.stargazer.com](http://www.stargazer.com) or call 1-800-555-STAR.



**Stargazer 3100**

Notice the differences in the ads? The first ad (Sojourner XMR) merely points out the telescope's features — things you might need. But the second ad (Stargazer 3100) conveys the telescope's benefits — things you may want. The second ad tells you what those knobs and lenses enable you to do.

Which ad is more effective? Most experts would say the second one (Stargazer 3100). The Society for Consumer Psychology explains that "desires rule over needs when it comes to consumer purchases."<sup>1</sup>

Consumers might buy within a category based on needs. For example, you might buy a watch because you need to know the time. But consumers buy a *specific* product (or brand) based on wants.<sup>2</sup> So you buy a Tag Heuer because you want prestige or you buy a Casio because you want the latest technology.

Turn to the back page to learn three reasons why "selling to wants" works better than "selling to needs."

## Executive Summary

- Consumers might buy within a category based on needs—but they buy a *specific* product based on wants.<sup>2</sup>
- Satisfying customers today has little to do with meeting physical needs and everything to do with gratifying desires.<sup>3</sup>
- A study found that the No. 1 motivation for buying a new car wasn't need but instead was want or desire.<sup>4</sup>
- You can turn a feature into a benefit by asking a simple question: "What does that mean to me?"

## Recognizing and discovering emotional benefits

A feature is something a product *has* (e.g., 10 mm Plössl eyepiece), and it addresses needs. A benefit is what a product *does* (e.g., tracks objects as they cross the night sky), and it addresses wants.

Here's a simple test: When you hear a product claim, ask yourself: "What does that mean to me?" If there's no answer, you just heard a feature. If there is an answer, you just heard a benefit.<sup>7</sup>

How do you figure out what your customer wants? Here are a few pointers:

- Get to know your customer via interviews and conversations.
- Keep up with your industry by reading publications and blogs.
- Analyze your product from the customer's point of view.
- Ask yourself how you can meet different wants. (One customer might want a telescope to study the moon. Another might want one for the emotional fulfillment of spending time with a child.)
- Frame your product/service with an emotional appeal. (Instead of saying, "4 doors," say, "4 doors for a growing family.")<sup>7</sup>

## Wants over needs: emotions, arrogance and clarity

Three main points sum up why wants override needs:

### 1. Wants involve emotions.

When it comes to purchasing decisions, emotion rules and reason takes a back seat.<sup>5</sup> Pamela Danziger, author of *Why People Buy Things They Don't Need*, says satisfying customers today "has less to do with the practical meeting of physical needs and everything to do with gratifying desires based upon emotions."<sup>3</sup> The Society for Consumer Psychology agrees, noting that "the association people make with a product might be a big factor in whether or not they buy it, more than the nature or quality of the product itself."<sup>1</sup>

A 2005 automotive study provides evidence. Vertis Communications, a marketing and media services company in

Baltimore, Md., found the No. 1 reason (36%) people bought a new car was not because they needed it—but simply because they wanted one.<sup>4</sup>

### 2. Need reflects arrogance.

Who exactly determines what your customers need, anyway? In his book

*"It used to be people needed products to survive. Now products need people to survive."*<sup>6</sup>

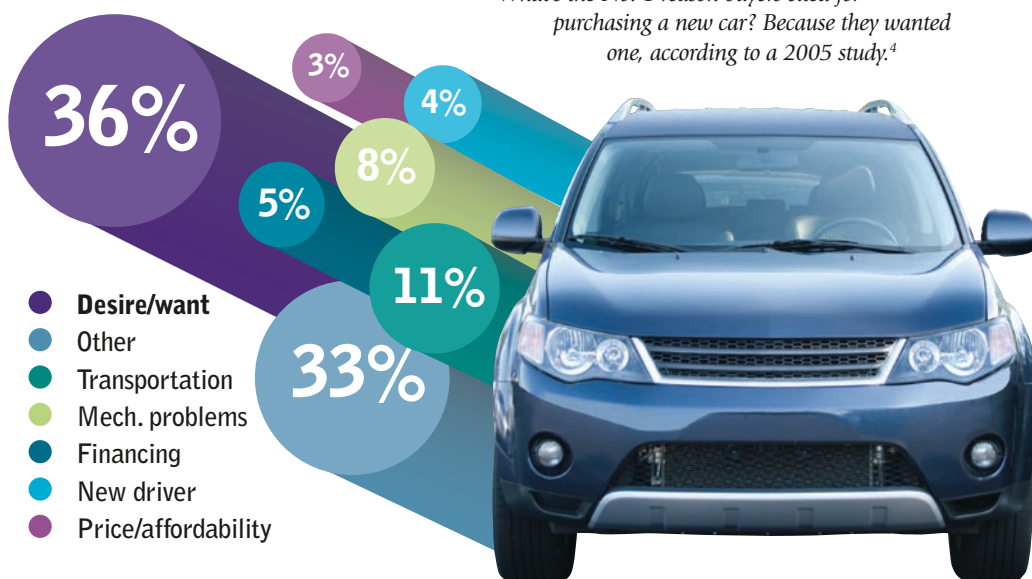
*Nicholas Johnson, former FCC commissioner*

pain with waist-high shelving and create a more relaxed work environment by using a quiet engine. Notice the difference? The

second one connects the dots for you: 42-inch ground clearance (a feature) translates to waist-high shelving, which in turn eliminates back pain (a benefit).

## Reasons for purchasing a new car

What's the No. 1 reason buyers cited for purchasing a new car? Because they wanted one, according to a 2005 study.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Spear, J. Consumer Psychology. *Encyclopedia of Psychology*. Accessed 7/23/2009 at [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_g2699/is\\_0004/ai\\_2699000426/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_g2699/is_0004/ai_2699000426/)

<sup>2</sup> Chance, J. To Be Successful Sell to Wants Not Needs. Business Know-How website. Accessed 7/23/09 at <http://www.businessknowhow.com/marketing/wants.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Danziger, P. *Why People Buy Things They Don't Need*. Chicago: Dearborn Trade Publishing; 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Adults Are Purchasing Cars Based on Desire vs. Need; New Vertis Customer Focus Study Analyzes Automotive Purchasing Behavior of Adults. Business Wire. Accessed 7/23/2009 at [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0EIN/is\\_2005\\_May\\_2/ai\\_n13664356/](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0EIN/is_2005_May_2/ai_n13664356/).

<sup>5</sup> Wirthwein, C. *Brand Busters: 7 Common Mistakes Marketers Make*. New York: Paramount Market Publishing; 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, N. The Life Party. *The New Republic*. April 10, 1971:21-23.

<sup>7</sup> Egelhoff, T. How To Sell The Benefits Of Your Product or Service. Accessed 7/23/2009 at <http://www.smalltownmarketing.com/benefits.html>.