

How to Clearly Present Features and Benefits

Maybe it's the former technical writer in me, but I love tables for organizing information. (I love them even more than bulleted lists, but that's a subject for another newsletter.)

Like bulleted lists, tables work well for listing information, in particular information that requires additional description. For example, I just wrote a one-page product flyer for a software application that included a features/benefits table. This worked because I could link the benefits to each feature, like this:

Features	Benefits
Transforms checks into electronic transactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slashes cost per check by 50%• Reduces operator intervention• Eliminates coding errors
Links check image data with transaction data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduces operator intervention• Resolves check discrepancies faster
ASP solution that requires no POS modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fast, easy installation• No operator training required

If you don't use a table, no clear relationship exists between the feature and the benefit. Yet time after time I see website and promotional material that use this approach:

FEATURES:

- Activity and Task Scheduling
- Alerts and Notifications
- Ticket Assignment by Group
- Customer Email Notifications

BENEFITS:

- Incoming issues can be assigned to service reps for immediate attention
- Auto-populated fields based on customer profiles increase productivity
- Specific rules can be set to ensure standard steps
- For convenience, tickets can be created and submitted internally

For the sake of brevity, I listed just four features and benefits from this real-life example. But the original list was much longer, with no clear link between the two sets of information. If you do this, readers have to work harder to determine if the features provide the benefits they need.

Tables can work in almost any type of marketing collateral. I've also used them in white papers and case studies. Experiment with different organization and headings to find the most space-efficient and effective table.

The next time you find yourself struggling to organize a mess of information, take a step back, and see if it'll work in a table.

I hope you've found this topic on tables surprisingly fascinating. If you struggle with a marketing writing problem, give me a call. I'm happy to offer suggestions.

Regards,

Mary

TIP

Once you find a table format you like and use often, you can save it as Autotext in Microsoft Word®. That way, you can type a few keystrokes and Word will insert your table. This command is under the Insert menu. (For more information, see your online help – or contact me!)

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If you have a writing project coming up, I'd love to talk to you about it. Please contact me for a complimentary 30-minute consultation.

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