

Using Superiority as a Sales Proposition

Superiority is a powerful, yet delicate business claim, and yet marketers use it all the time as they pronounce their certainty that their product is the best in its category. Certainly in many cases these claims are true and the product being touted as the best genuinely is. Other times the claims are more dubious, and they can be easily discredited. Then again, there are the situations wherein the “best” is impossible to determine as the criteria for best is ill defined, and there is no mechanism for measuring it anyway (such as claims to tasting the best – as if taste were anything but subjective).

Marketers keep using the claim that their product is the best because people love to believe that they are using the best. The claim appeals to us on an emotional level and satisfies our desire to believe that we are treating ourselves as well as possible. In fact, it is not always necessary for the product that is perceived as the best to actually be the best, because in many cases we are satisfied buying the perception, as it meets the needs and fulfills the promise of whatever it is that is driving the buy decision.

From a sales perspective it is this buy decision driver that is most relevant and critical. The use of “the best” can serve as a sales proposition based on the reason behind the sale – the motivating cause for the buyer. Some options include:

1. An Expression of Self- Worth – many times the best is sought out because the person doing the buying sees anything less than the perceived best as being insufficient or unworthy. The sales proposition in this instance is wrapped around the notion that the best should buy the best.
2. An Effort to Spoil – sometimes the best is being purchased because it is a earned treat the buyer feels he/she wants to buy for him/herself or someone else who deserves it. The selling proposition is the merit of the product and how that merit corresponds to the degree of pampering the buyer is seeking to experience.
3. A Reward – many times the best is being purchased to acknowledge or celebrate an achievement. The buyer is seeking the best because it makes a statement that communicates the respect and appreciation for the achievement. The sales proposition with the reward scenario is that the accomplishment deserves the prestige and dignity of the best.
4. An Intentionally Expensive Buy – there are people who feel they are settling for less than the best in most of what they purchase because they need to make buy decisions based on price and not quality. Every so often these people may take leave of their discipline and buy the perceived best regardless of cost. The sales proposition under these circumstances works to confirm and legitimize the decision, making light of the cost and validating the buyer’s feeling that every now and then he/she too is entitled to the best.
5. As a Demonstration of Know-How – in order to buy the best you must have sufficient understand of the product category so that you can determine which product is the best. Sometimes this product is purchased to demonstrate to others that the buyer has the know-how that was needed to go into such a complex analysis and decision. The sales

proposition here makes the connection between intelligence, buying savvy, and the product being sold.

6. As an Expression of Lifestyle – there are buyers who identify with the particular values communicated by a brand and will buy the product as an expression of identity with product/brand character. In most cases this is a way of communicating lifestyle, as the brand characteristics stand for something that the buyer wants associated with him/herself (such as athletically inclined, technologically savvy, etc.). The sales proposition for the lifestyle buyer revolves around the very characteristics they seek to embrace. By showing them that the brand under consideration is the best way for them to communicate their values they will bond further to the brand.

To be sure the products and brands that have the reputation for being the best are not necessarily the best performing products available or even the best value available. They are, however, the products that successfully captured the perception of being the best and have managed to hold on to that perception over time. And while the notion of being the best is clear to everyone, what actually constitutes being the best remains an unknown. Therefore, when constructing a sales proposition based on being the best you need to stick to claims you can substantiate and sustain.

The good thing about being the best is that you do not necessarily need to be the most expensive. While it is true that many buyers associate price with quality, there is also the possibility of capturing the crown for being the best within a certain price range. This allows for the idea that there may be better products available, but not within the price range your product is competing within.

To be sure, being the best is a good thing to be able to claim in the marketplace and makes the job of the sales force easier. If marketed properly it can help the sales team transform the product from something buyer might want to have into something buyers feel they need to have. This powerful transformation can serve to drive sales and makes being the best the best thing to be.