

*Entelechy's Newsletter for Trainers, Managers, HR Professionals and Others
Responsible for the Performance of Others*

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DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF – PART II

In the last newsletter, I discussed the difference between macro-differentiation (marketing) and micro-differentiation (linking true benefits to a customer's articulated needs and wants).

In this issue, we'll explore how to use micro-differentiation (true benefits) to close sales even in today's tough economy.

A good differentiator is related to the customer's needs and helps the customer draw distinctions among alternative solutions. Differentiators can be categorized as either "hard" differentiators or "soft" differentiators. Both can be used effectively in differentiating you, your company, and your products and services.

Hard differentiators are those which can be objectively measured by the customer. Typical examples might be speed, price, size, weight, compatibility, or delivery. Soft differentiators are matters of judgment or cannot be objectively measured easily. Typical examples of soft differentiators might be quality, responsiveness, or level of service.

An important strategic ability in competitive selling is to help the customer turn soft differentiators into "harder" ones. If your products/services are strong in a particular soft area such as quality, then you want the customer to use quality as a decision criterion

when evaluating you and your competition. It is to your benefit to help the customer “harden” the soft differentiators by offering proof, pointing to indicators, or providing personal assurance.

Proof: A sales rep must be able to offer proof — such as a reference or a testimonial — to the customer to make soft differentiators more substantial. Of course, the customer must recognize the validity of the proof.

Indicators: Select indicators that the customer agrees would quantify soft areas. For example, indicators pointing to high quality might include a high mean-time-between-failure rate, a low product return rate, a speedy recovery/repair time, etc.

Personal Assurance: People buy from people. A personal assurance may be the difference between you and a competitor. Of course, you must be able to back up your promises.

(This information comes from *Planning For Success*, a module in Entelechy’s High Performance Sales program. You can purchase and immediately download customizable source files to create your own customized sales training program at <http://unlockit.com/HPS.htm>. Differentiate your company! Differentiate yourself!)

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For us editing nuts, this news is a bit disheartening:

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttar in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae.

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WHO CARES ABOUT BLENDED TRAINING?

Ever since the dawning of web-based training (WBT), I've been disgusted with those who hyped the technology beyond its capabilities. For those of you who've been around long enough (as I have), you've seen the same unrealistic yet utterly tantalizing promises made about computer-assisted training (CBT) and videodisc training.

Many companies jumped wholeheartedly on the WBT bandwagon led by the numbers the WBT marketers dangled like carrots in front of CFOs, CEOs, and others: the numbers indicated savings of 50% and more that resulted from using WBT as opposed to classroom-based training. Trouble is, people weren't USING the newly-purchased WBT products as everyone thought they would.

Smart WBT marketers (and truly savvy training professionals) quickly realized the limitations of WBT and declared that blended training — combining WBT with classroom training, online chat, teleconferencing, and other training technologies — leveraged the strengths of WBT and minimized its inherent weaknesses.

But, in my opinion, a focus on even blended training misses the mark. In an article I wrote for the International Society of Performance Improvement (ISPS), I point out the crucial need for anyone in training, HR, or management to look beyond blended training. I ask — and answer — the question, “Who Cares About Blended Training?” at <http://www.performanceexpress.org/>.

If you would like to know more about Entelechy's approach to performance, check out our eGuide aptly titled, *Entelechy's Approach to Performance*, at <http://unlockit.com/eguides.htm>.

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Send this email to your friends and colleagues who may be involved in training and the performance of others and could benefit from FREE performance tips, tools, and techniques.

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