

1.6: How the Buying Process Works

Learning Objectives

- List the steps in the selling process.
- Understand the role of emotions in the buying decision.
- Explore FAB for effective selling.

The Evolving Buying and Selling Processes

The framework for the buying and selling processes has been in place for many years. The buying process changes literally every day and has dramatic impact on the selling process. Cultural, social, and technological changes will continue to drive companies for even better performance, faster, and with ideas as currency, which will continue to drive change in the buying process.

To understand the impact of the rapid changes occurring in the buying process, it's important to know the basic steps in the selling process.

Table 1.6.2 The Seven Steps of Selling

Traditional Seven Steps of Selling	Characteristics
1. Prospecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generating leads• Utilize technology• Social selling
2. Pre-approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand product value• Evaluate competition• Know the industry
3. Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine how• First impression• Build a foundation
4. Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PowerPoint/multimedia• Listening• Team selling• Multiple calls• Value-added
5. Overcoming Objections	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipate and address concerns• Problem solving
6. Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify mutual goals• Adding value• Ensure need satisfaction
7. Follow-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contacts after the sale to build the long-term relationship

Buying Process Meets FAB

No matter how the buying process evolves, customers continue to make purchase decisions driven by emotions. You learned how motivating trust and fear are for people who are making B2B buying decisions. Comfort, vanity, convenience, pleasure, desire to succeed, security, prevention of loss, and need to belong are all emotions that motivate purchases. A company may want to build a new building that carries its brand name downtown to signal its importance to the city and business community; that would be an example of vanity as a motivator. Or perhaps the company wants to move its headquarters to a better part of town to provide better security for its employees. Maybe a prominent figure in the community donates a large sum of money to your college motivated by the desire to give back. The same types of motivations apply to B2C purchases: a woman purchases makeup in the hopes of looking as beautiful as the model in the ads, a man buys a sports car in the hopes of turning heads, a student buys a microwave for the convenience of having food when she wants it.

Emotions are the driving force in so many B2C and B2B purchases that you might not even realize it. Consider this: would you buy the product in Figure 1.6.10?

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1 bag	
Amount per Serving	
Calories 140	Calories from Fat 60
	% Daily Value *
Total Fat 7g	11%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 170mg	7%
Potassium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 18g	6%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 1g	
Protein 2g	4%
Calcium	2%
Iron	2%
Vitamin E	4%
Thiamin (B1)	2%
Riboflavin (B2)	2%
Niacin (B3)	2%
Vitamin B6	4%
Magnesium	4%
Est. Percent of Calories from:	
Fat 45.0% Carbs 51.4%	
Protein 5.7%	

Figure 1.6.10: Nutritional Information. Source: www.thedailyplate.com/nutrition-calories/food/doritos/cool-ranch-ind-bag



Figure 1.6.11: The Doritos bag is more appealing than the nutritional information. Source: <http://fritolay.com/our-snacks/doritos-cool-ranch-chips.html>

So how do you create the same type of emotional appeal with your customers? The answer is simple: FAB.

Why does FAB work? Because customers want to know what a product or service will do for them—not just what it's made of. B2C and B2B customers seek information before making a buying decision but are also driven by emotions. FAB helps you appeal

to a customer's rational and emotional buying behavior by providing the most compelling features and factual information and then showing how the features provide an advantage that delivers a benefit. This is how salespeople help customers establish an emotional connection with a product. You remember from earlier in chapter the power of an emotional connection between a customer and a brand.

You probably use FAB sometimes without even realizing it. "My new Lucky Brand jeans have a dirty wash, fit great, and make me look thin. The best part is they were on sale for only \$89.00." The features are the dirty wash and the fact that they were on sale for \$89.00; the advantage is that they fit well (no easy feat when it comes to jeans); the benefit is that they make you feel like you look thin and, as a result, make you feel good when you wear them. Your statement is much more powerful when you frame it with FAB than if you simply say, "I got some new jeans today for \$89.00."

Or maybe you stopped into McDonald's and tried one of their new Angus Third Pounders. The product feature is that the burger is one-third of a pound and is available in three flavor options; the advantage is that it is thick and juicy; the benefit is that you will enjoy the taste and your hunger is satisfied. The FAB message is more compelling than simply saying that you had a hamburger that was one-third of a pound; that would be stopping at the feature and not offering an advantage or benefit.

If you want to be able to use FAB in conversation, simply think in terms of the following:

- **Feature:** what the product *has*
- **Advantage:** what the features *do*
- **Benefit:** what the features *mean for the customer*

Table 1.6.3 gives features, advantages, and benefits for some common products.

Table 1.6.3: FAB in Action

Product	Feature	Advantage	Benefit
HP Pavilion Computer	250-GB hard drive	Enough space to store music, pictures, documents, and more.	Do more from playing video games to downloading all of your favorite music and still have space for your homework projects.
Caribbean Vacation	4 all-inclusive nights with airfare for only \$999 per person	Don't worry about how to budget for the cost of the vacation because everything is included in one low price.	Enjoy a spring break you will never forget on a beach in the Caribbean.
2024 Toyota Prius	52 mpg	Lower your gas prices with a fuel-efficient Prius.	Be kind to the environment and travel in comfort for less with a Prius.

For example, if you were describing **Netflix** in terms of FAB, you might say something like the following:

Feature: Extensive Content Library

Netflix offers an extensive content library that includes a wide range of movies, TV shows, documentaries, and original series across various genres and languages.

Advantage: Variety and Exclusive Content

With such a vast collection, Netflix provides an unparalleled variety of viewing options, ensuring there is something for every taste and preference. Moreover, Netflix Originals—exclusive movies and series produced by Netflix—are often critically acclaimed and can only be found on this platform.

Benefit: Personalized Entertainment Experience

Subscribers benefit from a rich, personalized entertainment experience. The vast content library and exclusive shows mean users always have access to fresh, high-quality content tailored to their preferences. This makes Netflix a one-stop entertainment solution that can keep the whole family engaged and satisfied, providing hours of enjoyment and value for money.

By subscribing to Netflix, you gain access to an endless array of entertainment options, from blockbuster movies to groundbreaking series, all designed to cater to your unique tastes and viewing habits.

It's easy to remember by using the FAB framework as your guide.

Key Takeaways

- The traditional B2B buying process has seven steps: need recognition, defining the need, developing the specifications, searching for appropriate suppliers, evaluating proposals, making the buying decision, and postpurchase evaluation.
- The Internet is a game-changer as it relates to the buying process because information is no longer the exclusive domain of the salesperson; the power has shifted from the seller to the buyer.
- Emotions such as comfort, security, convenience, pleasure, and vanity are major motivations for buying decisions.
- Trust and fear are especially important in B2B buying because the decision maker has to consider **organizational risk** and **personal risk** as part of his buying decision.
- The buying process continues to evolve, which changes the selling process; the traditional selling process provides a foundation and insight into the evolution.
- **FAB** (a.k.a. *features, advantages, benefits*) is the way to appeal to your customer's emotions with factual and emotional appeals.
 - A **feature** is what a product *has*.
 - An **advantage** is what the feature *does*.
 - A **benefit** is what the features *mean* to the customer.

? Exercise 1.6.1

1. Identify a recent major purchase that you made recently. How did you recognize the need for the product or service? Where did you go to gather information about the options that were available to you? Did you use one method or a combination of methods?
2. Contact a buyer at the headquarters of a retailer such as Dick's Sporting Goods, GameStop, Costco, Urban Outfitters, or another company. Ask him about the process he uses to determine which products to put in the retail stores. Is his process similar to the process outlined in this chapter? How does it differ? How does his postpurchase evaluation impact his decision to buy the product again?
3. Based on the comment that "customers don't want to be sold," what should a salesperson do to sell to a customer? Identify an example of a good buying experience and a bad buying experience that you have had recently. Did the salesperson "sell" to you?
4. Assume you are a salesperson for a major telecommunications company and you are calling on a major construction company that is considering buying smart phones for the key people in the company. Describe at least one organizational risk and one personal risk that might be involved in the customer's decision.
5. Identify a feature, advantage, and benefit for each of the following products and services:
 - Mac Book
 - iPhone 15
 - Buckle jeans

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