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Sales Presentation Skills Going Far Beyond The Show And Tell

The sales presentation is your best opportunity to show and tell, but there's more to it than just showing and telling. You also need to think strategically about the customers buying process and needs, your competitors' offerings, and why your solution is best.

To plan and deliver winning sales presentations, try the following approach:

Find out in advance how much time you will have.

Have you ever had a key decision-maker leave in the middle of your presentation because he was out of time? You can't hold someone's attention when he's looking at the clock.

At the beginning of the meeting, ask how much time the prospect has set aside, then adjust your presentation to take no more than 60% of the allotted time. Why only 60%? Because your prospect's decisions to act typically occur at the end of the meeting. Adjusting your presentation will allow enough time to resolve any remaining issues, and reach an agreement. This is one key skill learned through [sales training](#).

Check in.

Another good question to ask at the beginning of every sales presentation is, "since the last time we met, has anything changed?" If your competitor gave a presentation yesterday afternoon you may have a few new hurdles you need to overcome. The sooner you identify those hurdles, the more time you have to plan a response.

Take his temperature.

The next question you want to ask is, "Where are you in your decision process?" If he tells me he's scheduled presentations with three suppliers and I'm the first presenter, I know the chances of this prospect agreeing to a decision at the end of my presentation are virtually nonexistent. For starters, it would take the prospect more time, energy and stress to cancel the appointments than to go ahead with them.

More importantly, the prospect wants to hear all three presentations, because from your customer's perspective, comparison is necessary to recognize value. Never go for the close when you are the first presenter. You're simply asking for something that you can't get, and customers will think you're pushy. Instead, come up with a legitimate reason to come back after the other presentations, when the prospect likely will be in a position to make a decision.

Try to be the last presenter.

The last presenter has a significant advantage, because he is closer to the customer's point of decision. If I am the final supplier to present, and have shown why I am the best choice, it's only reasonable to ask for a commitment to buy. It also creates an opportunity to address any lingering concerns that may prevent a sale. Just by being the last presenter you will increase your [sales performance](#) substantially.

In one of the largest sales opportunities I ever worked on, I was the third of three presenters to a committee of seven decision-makers, the most senior of whom was the Executive Vice President, I'll call him Mr. Burns.

Ten minutes before the conclusion of my presentation, the phone rang. Mr. Burns had a plane to catch, and his cab had arrived. As he stood up, I said, "Mr. Burns, before you leave, may I ask you one final question?" I asked, "Now that you've evaluated all the options, is there any reason why my solution is not your best option?"

He paused, then said "Yep!" And out came his final concern about my solution. It was a concern I was ready for, but I never got a chance to respond because his comment triggered a firestorm of conversation around the conference table. Mr. Burns missed his cab, but several other decision makers drove him to the airport so they could continue their discussion.

A few weeks later, I learned that in the car on the way to the airport, a lower-level decision-maker had resolved Mr. Burns's concern, and I won the sale.

This example shows that today, as much as 90% of the sale takes place without you being in the room. So it's essential to make sure that the prospects championing your cause have the tools to sell other decision makers for you.

Start with a quick review of the customer's goals and objectives. On a flipchart, list each of the customer's buying criteria. This list is your outline for effective sales presentation. Next, show how your solution meets and exceeds each customer criterion.

Throughout your presentation, get a reaction from your prospect. For example, after demonstrating a capability you would ask, how would this be an improvement or how would this help. Interactive presentations keep prospects more involved and interested.

Communicate all your unique strengths.

Today's customers want to know two things: can you do what we need done, and how can you do it better than the other options we are considering? It's not enough to show that you can meet your customer's needs. You must also have some reasons why your solution is the customer's best choice.

To ensure that my strengths are understood, I always prepare a flipchart titled "Why we are your best choice" which lists at least three reasons why I'm the customer's best option. Often, I list seven or eight reasons. The more reasons you have, and the more compelling those reasons are, the better your chances of winning the sale. In sports, when two teams are evenly matched, the winner is the team that makes the fewest mistakes, and executes its plays the best.

To deliver a winning sales presentation, you must do the same. When you implement these 10 tips in your sales presentations, you will win more sales. To learn more great sales techniques, you should attend a [sales course](#).

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