



Mastering Technical Sales

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The Frictionless Demo

Nailing Down The Basics

Last week I met with four senior presales leaders and asked them "what is the #1 skill your people need?" The answer: "**75% of them just need to get the basics right**". Being a good old-fashioned presales guy I then asked the follow-on discovery question; "Exactly what do you mean by that? Can you give me some examples?"

So here, collected and collated, are about a dozen dumb things you should eliminate from your customer-facing demos. The concept of a "frictionless demo" is that you want everything to go smoothly, with no disruptions or distractions. The only thing you want to stick is your message, and not the quirks, errors or mistakes within your message. Some of these seem so obvious, but they still happen as I review online customer demos before my workshops. These "demo crimes" have been around a long time. I have a presentation I gave at Sybase in 1995 that lists six of them!

1. **Have A Purpose - Why Am I Here?** After 25 years of being in the Pre-Sales business I firmly believe that over 75% of all demos happen too soon in the sales cycle. I've been quoted on that many times. Of course, any good SE who has Mastered Technical Sales knows to ask the customer that question, several times, in several ways - plus many other questions, before they set foot on site. "**The more you know, the less you show**".
2. **Kill The Browser Bars.** The customer doesn't really want to see all your browser bars, search engine aids and bookmarks. Not only are they distracting, but they also take up valuable real estate on the screen. Either use F11 to go full-screen browser, or use a browser skin if your company has developed one.
3. **The Empty Screen.** "Imagine if you will". Nothing is more irritating than clicking on a menu option or drill-down and having an empty screen appear. The SE then says "and if we had any customer data, it would appear here". Load it beforehand!

4. **Navigation is Bad.** Have someone observe your demonstration and record when and where you use any navigational terms such as "click" , "pull-down" , "selection-list" , "menu options" , "drill-down" etc. Whenever you use these terms it is highly likely that you are talking about a feature instead of a meaningful advantage or benefit.
5. **Learn How To Type.** Spelling errors in PowerPoint and handouts are unacceptable, spelling errors when typing happen, but shouldn't be the norm. Take a deep breath and type a little slower, or cut and paste from another document. As an SE you're not being paid to type at 60 wpm, but you are being paid to look and act professionally.
6. **Don't Preach, Don't Teach, But Reach (Out Instead).** It's wonderful to be passionate about your product and your company, but unless you are truly on the leading bleeding edge of technology, you shouldn't be evangelizing. You also shouldn't confuse selling with educating. You are paid to sell your product to the customer, not to educate them in how to use it. There is a subtle difference in that the customer needs to visualize themselves using "your stuff" - but they don't need to know about every feature and function. The 'reach" means interact with the customer and ask questions throughout the demo, don't just make a one-way presentation.
7. **Saying "Yes, Let Me Show You".** When the customer asks you "Can you do/can you show me.." DO NOT say "Yes, Let Me Show You How.." unless you know WHY they want that particular capability. Many SE's forget to ask the "Why?" and try to please the customer by showing them the HOW first.
8. **But Wait, There's More..** Also known as the "Show Up And Throw Up", the "Three Hour Tour", the 'Stop Me If You See Something You Like", the "Dog and Pony" show and the list goes on. See point #1 - have a purpose.
9. **You're Wrong.** Don't argue with the customer. There are many ways of making your point and showing the customer an alternate position than using a direct confrontational approach. If you are accused of doing something illegal or unethical that's a different story, but remember in 95% of cases the disagreement is with the company/product you represent, rather than you personally.
10. **Planning The Ninety Minute Hour.** Trying to pack 90 minutes worth of material into 60 minutes is a recipe for disaster - your customer cannot "listen faster"! Instead, you

should sprinkle 45-50 minutes of content into the 60 minutes and make sure the customer remembers the key points.

11. **Piling On.** "*What Rick really meant to say was*". Unless Rick really got it completely wrong - let it go. You'll have another opportunity later in the call to correct/amend what Rick actually said.
12. **Shut Up and Sit Down.** When you have achieved your purpose, or explained your point or answered the customer's question - shut up and sit down. You are not paid by the word. Only bad things can happen when you add unnecessary detail.

Summary

These are blatantly obvious things to avoid, yet whenever one of these crimes is committed, they add friction to the call, in that the customer is focusing on something other than you and your point. Too much friction, too much discord between what you say and what you do and how you do it, will slow down the sales cycle and force you to push harder. The harder you push, the more friction is generated - and eventually something goes up in flames - just make sure it's not your deal!

"No crime is so great as daring to excel."

Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister & Politician.

"The most difficult crime to track is the one which is purposeless."

Sherlock Holmes.

Talking Points is a monthly column authored by John Care, Managing Director of Mastering Technical Sales. For more information on this and other Sales Engineering topics visit the website at www.masteringtechnicalsales.com.

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