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WTF And The Sales Engineer

A Quick Fix For Features And Function

WTF(*) is a WTF Pitch? It stands for **Wonderful Technical Features**. Almost every SE in the world has their own personal WTF pitch that they are forced to give many times a year. No matter what hundreds of sales books and sales trainers tell you – sometimes you have to talk technology to technical people in a technical manner. That's part of the Engineer or Consultant or Architect in our ever-changing job title and sometimes there is no escaping it. Yet there is a better way! Read on.



"Would you like the technical or the nontechnical presentation?"

The History Of The WTF

Let's look at how the WTF typically gets created.

- Marketing builds a "What's New in Release 3.2" or a "Product Overview" PowerPoint deck. It is full of illegible screen shots and has more bullet points scattered through it than a military firing range. The deck is also exceedingly long, full of acronyms and techno-speak and doesn't have much of a flow other than some high level architecture multi-layer cake diagram.
- Pre-sales engineering compounds the WTF approach by building a demo that shows off all the features to their fullest. This may occasionally be wrapped in a use case or a "day in the life" but it is still mainly a "let me show you this cool thing.." focus.
- The SE team doesn't have the time or the energy to make the deck pre-sales friendly.
- Sales (rightly so) won't even use the deck other than the first three and last two slides.
- Marketing thinks they've done a great job, met their MBOs and will repeat the exact process for Version 3.3, whenever that is released. So the cycle continues..

It really shouldn't be a core function of the SE team to radically modify every deck they receive, so I'd suggest there are three quick fixes you can make to the WTF deck so that it can serve a few more purposes and be easier to present and easier for the customer to understand. (Since Sales and Presales are two of the primary customers of Marketing – they also need to provide feedback to get the deck modified, but that's a different story.)

So here are three ideas you can implement inside a couple of hours and share with your peers.

1. Use A Structure

Just as when you give a demo (see [The Demo GPS Road Map](#)), the audience needs to know where you are going and why they should take the journey with you. Curiosity usually isn't enough. A simple agenda slide with six items on it isn't sufficient so look for something visual to assist you.

The standard marketing architecture diagram (known as layer cake or a multi-column building) can actually be a good place to start. There are many other options, but this is a common one. Spend a few minutes to make it as large as possible, increase the font and icon size and strip out anything you don't need. **<Never ever put up an architecture or system slide and say "this is a bit of an eyechart"!**> Use colour or some other visual to differentiate between the different sections of the architecture and match to your presentation. Then hand out a copy of just that one slide to everyone in the room. If it's a virtual presentation – send it to the main customer contact and ask for it to be printed / distributed.

The whole idea is that your customer can always (literally) see the big picture and knows where you are and what is coming next. That can also stop those nasty pre-emptive questions which are always directed at what you are going to be speaking about in five minutes!

How do you know if you don't have a cohesive structure? You start using a lot of bridging phrases before and after each slide like ... *"and then... and then .. and also .. plus we can .."* .

2. Update The Content (Just A Little Bit)

We are still giving a technical presentation – you can't go all "Steve Jobs" and use slides with an image and three words. It may be aesthetically beautiful but the customer techies will throw you out the room. So assume that you are presenting in the basement conference room (the one with the noisy air conditioning and the leaky pipe in the ceiling) to one or two first line managers and their teams of technicians. They don't care about ROI, they don't care about your corporate HQ and how fast your revenues are growing – and they don't particularly care about the salesperson either. It's up to you.

Your solution has the ability to support **interdimensional reverse dynamic network backup and data regeneration**. It is a competitive advantage, a true WTF, and the slides are crowded and complex to prove it. What's more – you support four options – Transwarp, Reverse, Energetic and Kinetic. Here is what you do:

1. Don't change the technical slides! Except make sure you have one option per slide, the slides are legible and the title tells a story. Instead of the title being "**Option #1 – Transwarp**", it should read "**Option #1 – Transwarp – How You Can Back Up Tomorrows Data Yesterday**".
2. Put one "Steve Jobs" slide in front that has a memorable image and "TREK" – Transwarp, Reverse, Energetic, Kinetic. Put the same slide after the technical explanation with a bit more of a summary of the options.

3. Upsell The Business

But wait – didn't I say that no-one cared about ROI? Well almost. You do have one or two managers in the room, and there are also going to be a couple of people who have their eye on a management position and have some clue about money. Even for the super-tech geeks they will care that the Tatoine Confederacy implemented this product and it cut their backup window in half and saved the CFO ("Chief Force Officer") 300,000 universal credits.

For every feature and widget that you show, you need to have an explanation prepared about how it can help you customer save time, save or make money or reduce risk. You'll need this for mid to senior management anyway, and just because you have it prepared doesn't mean you always use it. But a couple of explanations about how a feature made other customers successful in every presentation can go a long way.

In Summary

And that's three simple ways to improve the WTF presentation – you have to give it, so why not make it easier to understand? That way it will be more fun to present – especially if you weave in some facts you may have learnt during Discovery (if you did it).

Because it's all about "U".

- Use a Structure
- Update The Content (a bit)
- Upsell The Business

"The real problem is not whether machines think, but whether man does."

B.F. Skinner

(*) WTF = American-English slang used to express anger, impatience, surprise. (Google it)

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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