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Webcast Demo Crimes

A Dozen Guaranteed Ways To Put Your Customer To Sleep

60% of customersⁱ who sit through a live software demonstration or presentation were very unsatisfied with the experience. **58%** of Senior Executives “*frequently*” surf the web, check email, read the paper or handle other work during a digital meetingⁱⁱ. Those attention figures are a crime – and it is not the audience’s fault! The fault lies with all the presenters who are guilty of committing multiple web demo crimes.

Editor’s Note: Over twenty years ago, as a presales manager, I made a “Demo Crimes” presentation at a sales kickoff meeting to my peers. The concept took off and has been duplicated many times since then. I thought it was time to share a list of some remote demo crimes I have seen committed – just for the record.

Twenty Sleep Inducing Criminal Acts



We do not give virtual meetings the same attention and planning detail that we use for face-to-face meetings – and it shows. Add in the fact that many outstanding physical presenters are terrible in the virtual environment, and you have the motive for the crime.

1. **Failing To Plan.** Spend some time with the salesperson before the call and plan out the meeting. Who is going to start and perform an introduction, who is attending, what are the expectations and what is the objective of the call? Even in today’s fast-paced run-and-gun sales model, there is still time to spend a few minutes planning. If nothing else – create the elevator pitch for your webcast. Years ago I went through a workshop with Geoffrey Moore, author of “[Crossing The Chasm](#)” and he provided a simple outline that I still use (and I note that Adobe themselves use something similar):

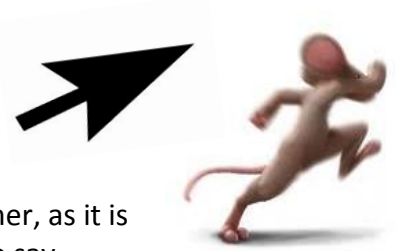
This webinar/virtual presentation will _____ for _____ (target customers) _____ who _____ (statement of pain/need/opportunity) _____ about _____ (current situation). The _____ (what you will show/speak about) _____ is a _____ (quick definition) that _____ (statement of future gain/no pain) _____ unlike _____ (optional competitive point) . Customer “X” tells us that _____ (short reference story). So let’s start

2. **The Opening Fumble.** OK – how many webcasts start with “*can you hear me?*” or “*can you see the screen?*” or even “*who has control?*” Get it sorted out beforehand. The salesrep should be in charge of the opening logistics, and your first screen or slide should have a logo or image in the top left and bottom right. Instead of asking, “*Can everyone see?*” (How do they know?) State that they should be able to see the two logos.
3. **Going Solo.** Having a single presenter do all the work on the webcast is dangerous and inefficient. Let’s say it is a technical presentation and demo – so the person who needs to make an impact and get credibility is YOU – the Sales Engineer. Do not spend the first five minutes of the call dealing with technology, agenda and introductions. Make the salesperson work. The rep should start the call, check the logistics, make introductions and then formally introduce you (write a three sentence intro that makes you look good). Now you have the customer’s attention and can perform your magic.
4. **Running Out The Clock.** A sixty-minute webcast does **NOT** give you sixty minutes of customer time. People are rude and people are usually late. A 10am webcasts will start at 10.06 if you are lucky, and customers will start to tune out at 10.58 to prepare for their next meeting. You’ve lost 8 minutes already – plan for it!
5. **Built-in Boredom 1.** Most webcasts, especially demonstrations – are too long. Can you pay attention for 90 or 120 minutes on an internal call? Point proven! Figure on 30 minutes maximum for a business-oriented conversation, 60 minutes for a sales call/demo/presentation, and 90 minutes for an educational session or a deep dive. You are pushing the limits of human behavior if you expect more.
6. **RTFM.** I know you are an amazing presales engineer and can understand everything technical – but read the online help manual for your virtual delivery tool. You’ll be amazed at some of the fine tuning and options that exist out there that you never knew about. Honest!
7. **Personalization 1.** Present to the audience and not to the screen. You can tell on the other end of the connection when the presenter is just going through the motions. I keep a 14x11” photo of a group of businesspeople on my desk and I present to them – it makes a difference.
8. **Personalization 2.** You also do not want to sound like an impersonal and totally disconnected voice. Use a professional photo of yourself and include it on your title slide. If you are not using video this at least enables people to visualize you and helps make you a person instead of a presenter.
9. **Screen Kung-Fu.** Count the number of different screens, pop-ups and slides you are going to show the customer. I just saw one demo in which the customer was faced with 22 screens in 55 minutes. How can they possibly remember anything? Your job as an SE is not to demonstrate



every single piece of functionality in the product. Your job is to demonstrate the relevant functionality for that particular customer and explain why they are important. If you do not know what is important then you are guessing. Don't guess!

10. **Zippy Mouse Syndrome**. Record one of your webinars and watch the mouse movements (as that is your directional pointer on the screen). If your mouse is moving all over the screen, circling a few drop-downs and generally being continually in motion – that's Zippy Mouse Syndrome (Thanks to Peter Cohan for that one!). It confuses the customer, as it is hard to pick up the mouse/cursor location AND causes you to say stupid things like “*if you look over here*”. Instead – change your mouse to inverse double-size black, and use a highlighter or zoom function to indicate to the customer exactly **where the mouse is**.



11. **Built In Boredom 2**. It is hard enough to keep the customer's attention for 15-20 minutes when you are in the same room. To do that over the web is practically impossible. Droning on about the same subject for 50-60 minutes just makes you a talking head (speaking to nodding and sleepy heads!) Break your pitch up into 15-minute chunks – think of it as an opportunity for a mind stretch.
12. **Personalization 3**. You are also a talking head if you speak for more than 15 minutes without using the customer's name. It is the cocktail party effect – you pay attention when you hear your name used (even your first name). So utilize the customer's names liberally – especially if you have met them before. (I believe this is conditioned into us at school, when you suddenly snap back into reality during class when the teacher calls out your name – but that may tell you something about what kind of student I was.)
13. **The Meeting Split**. The worst kind of webcast is to a split audience – either a technical/business audience or a two-department audience. The more political or personal agendas on the call, the less progress you will make. Instead of having a 60 minute call with both the business and technical folks – try having a 30 minute business call first (techies can optionally attend) and then a 60 minute technical call right afterwards (business folks can optionally attend). Yes – it takes more time – but is much more effective!
14. **The Status Quo Audience**. The best results happen when you emotionally move the audience. Receiving no questions or feedback during your call or comments such as “*fine*” does not mean you have done a great job and nailed the call – it is probably the opposite. Movement is centered on love/hate; pull/push; agree/disagree; Coke/Pepsi – you get the idea. A neutral unmoved audience is a bored audience.

15. **The Magical Mystery Tour.** Would you take a 60-minute journey if you did not know the destination, the sights you would see or the method of transport? Well – your customers feel the same way about your demo. Draw them a map and let them know what to expect and where you are taking them. I wrote about the [Demo GPS Roadmap](#) in another article, and it is an essential part of any webinar. One of my customers reported a 22% rise in close rate by using a map.

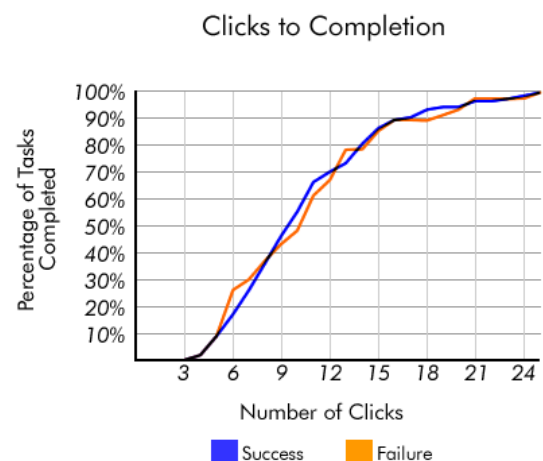


16. **PowerPoint Fatigue.** The only worse than a 60-minute PowerPoint pitch in a conference room is a 60-minute PowerPoint pitch in a virtual room. Show some imagination! Simplify the slides, use some images, remove the complex animations – even change the format (who says you have to use 10 by 7.5"?). Just do something different. How about a blank slide and you personally draw something with a Bamboo Tablet pen?

17. **Ignore The Voice Behind The Curtain.** Alongside the content that you show, your voice becomes your #1 weapon. Killing your voice a) behind a speaker phone; b) on a poor connection; c) at home with dog barking/baby crying; d) with a monotone delivery or e) by speaking too quickly just dampens your message and results in a poor and ineffective call. So make sure your customer can hear you (use a high-speed connection and headphones) and no one else, make sure your customer can hear your passion and enthusiasm (even if it is the fifth presentation of the day) and make sure your customer can hear your message (slow down and pronounce everything).

18. **Getting Navigational.** Record your customer demo and review it. How many times do you say things like “click”, “drop-down”, “button”, “back/forwards”, “drag” etc.? The more often you use these words the more likely you are to be giving a feature / function demo instead of a “how it solves your problem demo”. Focus on what the software does and how it solves a problem (yes – a solution) instead of the exact how it does it.

19. **Brand Crazyiness.** Use the same recording and check how many times you use Product Names and Release Numbers. As a customer, I really do not care what you call your product and even what release some feature appeared in. I am buying what you have now and (maybe) what you will have in the future. The fact that order



entry or network configuration is now 20% faster in this new release is an insignificant fact to a new customer. Only marketing cares!

20. **Burying The Lead.** In the newspaper business, “*burying the lead*” means taking the most important and appealing facts and hiding them 2/3 of the way into the article. This guarantees that most people give up and stop reading – and never see the main point. The same principle applies to any presentation or demo – but especially online. My analogy is that of a cooking show that teaches you how to bake a beautiful cake. What is the first thing that the chef shows you? It is the finished baked cake! Do the same thing for your demo or presentation. (The logical conclusion is that you should bury your Corporate Overview 2/3rds of the way into the presentation!)

How many of these crimes do you see every day? How many of these crimes do you commit every day? Take action now. Throw out the boring and throw out the predictable! Make the effort to make your webcasts interesting and engaging. For even more information on webcast workshops contact [Mastering Technical Sales](#) or read the brief [one-page description](#).

"Talk low, talk slow, and don't say much."

John Wayne

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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ⁱ Greatwebmeetings.com interview/survey

ⁱⁱ Forbes Insights, August 2009