

How to Create an Effective Sales Presentation¹

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Introduction

Sales are an integral part of the business world and one of the most important tasks in a firm. However, sales can often be complicated. This document will detail the elements involved in creating an effective sales presentation. This includes preparing yourself for the presentation, planning and preparation of the presentation, and the actual presentation.

Preparing Yourself

According to Marjorie Brody, when preparing for a sales presentation, the salesperson needs to think of the three V's: Visual, Vocal, and Verbal. These are communication signals that can be practiced before and delivered during the presentation (Brody 2001).

Visual

Appearance is vital to the presentation. Even if the dress code is casual for the customer, the salesperson should dress professionally. While dressing too professionally will not hurt the sale, dressing too casually may. Clothes should be conservative, well fitting, and comfortable. The salesperson's appearance should not detract from the presentation (Brody 2001).



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Facial expressions can relay a lot of information to the customer about the salesperson throughout the presentation (e.g., confidence in the product, boredom, or genuine concern for the customer). The salesperson should remember to make regular eye contact and use hand gestures to emphasize a point, but should never sway, fidget, or cross his or her arms.

Vocal

There are six vocal cues to remember when delivering a presentation: pitch, volume, rate, punch, pause, and diction (Brody 2001). It is important to remember that it is not what you say, but how you say it. Practice simple vocal exercises so that your voice will remain at a steady and relaxed level in front of customers. Vocal cues are used to keep the customer interested and to prevent the salesperson from

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speaking in a monotone. Make sure that the presentation can be easily heard, that key words are emphasized, and that the pace of the presentation is easy to follow. Practice these six vocal cues with a friend, spouse, or colleague.

Verbal

To prevent weakening the salesperson's position, keep the following points in mind: avoid long, rambling sentences (e.g., use descriptive language and short sentences), avoid using buzz words and jargon (e.g., words that are only used within a specific industry), and avoid tag questions and qualifiers (e.g., I think this is a good product, *don't you?*). Keep the points focused and do not use expressions such as *umm*, *like*, and *you know*, which detract from the presentation and may cause the customer to lose focus.

Planning and Preparation

Planning for a presentation helps the salesperson to be organized, prepared, and confident. When planning for a presentation, it is helpful to think of the presentation as having three main features: content, style, and rapport. These are necessary for a good presentation. For instance, it is of little benefit to have good content (e.g., facts to enhance the product) without style if there is no rapport between the salesperson and the customer. Similarly, it is of little use to have great style and rapport with the customer if there is no content.

Analyzing What the Customer Wants

When preparing for a presentation, the salesperson needs to remember that all customers are not the same and that they respond differently to price (what the buyer pays) and value (what the buyer gets). This information is important in making sales presentations to customers and can be determined with a little "pre-call probing." Few sales will be made unless the customer believes that value outweighs cost. Make sure to ask open-ended questions, and then listen to the answers. This will help to focus more on the needs of the customer, not the product. Also, when creating content, it is important to address the question that every consumer has: *What's in it for me?* (Cathcart 2001).

After determining the dominant buying value, or what is most important about the product to the customer, the salesperson can plan the presentation to stress this value. Many salespeople use a guide or planning sheet that helps identify key information about the customer. This information could include the key contact's name, objective of the call, potential needs or problems, potential questions to determine needs or problems, appropriate testimonials, and

prepared answers to any objections that the customer may raise. Space should also be left for new questions that may arise during the presentation and may be helpful later.

The style of the presentation should be interactive. The most effective way to accomplish this is by involving the customer in a dialogue-type presentation.

Gaining the Customer's Attention

Gaining and maintaining the customer's attention is crucial. To facilitate this, ask questions, let the customer have physical contact with the product, use interesting anecdotes, explore the customer's needs and propose workable solutions, offer powerful evidence of why the customer needs your product or service, and physically demonstrate your product or service (Cathcart 2001). These strategies involve the customer with the product and should help lead to a sale.

The Actual Presentation

There are many ways to make a sale, but it takes time. The salesperson should always time the presentation so that the customer never feels "rushed" into making a decision. Rushing the customer due to other time commitments will usually hurt the seller (Davis 2000).

Make sure to ask if anything has changed since the customer and salesperson last met. This will help avoid going down the wrong path in the presentation. Also, ask where the customer is in the decision-making process. This will help the salesperson determine the likeliness of making a sale that day (or scheduling another appointment for later) and whether there is other competition involved.

Try to begin the presentation with a quick review of the goals and objectives of the customer. This will help focus the presentation and let the customer know that the salesperson is interested in the customer's needs.

The salesperson should use visuals to gain the customer's attention and give focus to the presentation. Visuals often help to illustrate key points and help build rapport between the salesperson and customer.

Be concise and factual. Customers will feel more comfortable buying from a salesperson if they feel that the salesperson is straightforward and honest.

Conclusions

A well-planned and interactive presentation should convey how the benefits of the product outweigh the costs. Always summarize the benefits of the product to the customer. This allows the salesperson to recap how the product meets the needs of the customer. The customer may send signals indicating readiness to make a purchase; once the customer agrees, the salesperson can ask for the sale.

References

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