Executive White Paper

Killer Sales Presentations

How To Deliver a Professional, Powerful And Profitable Sales Presentations

Authored by:
Doug Dvorak
Founder & Managing Principal
The Sales Coaching Institute
www.salescoach.us
847 359 6969

Killer Sales Presentations – How To Deliver A Professional, Powerful And Profitable Sales Presentation

There are a lot of different elements in a successful sales professional's approach to converting qualified leads and prospects into long-term customers. Prospecting is essential to identify and connect with qualified leads and being able to complete the close is critical.

In between these two components of the sales cycle is the sales presentation. While this may be the most straightforward aspect of the sale, it is also a critical inflection point where you can establish trust and rapport to make your product/service immediately relevant and connect it to your prospect or it is the place where you can lose the customer in the minutia of the presentation.

Planning a presentation that can truly be called a killer sales presentation takes an understanding of the process combined with the ability to know what will appeal to the customer. Unfortunately, many sales reps rely on either an "off the cuff" presentation style or a fully rehearsed style that doesn't provide the details or the flexibility and responsiveness to address the specific uniqueness of the customer's needs.

Let's look at the preparation and presentation of the sales presentation in order. Considering what to put in and what to leave out will be essential as you want to highlight the critical information. You also need to avoid simply providing every detail of the product or service, particularly those not relevant or meaningful to the specific client.

The Presentation Contents

First, and this really cannot be stressed enough, each presentation needs to be modified, adjusted, and customized to match the specific interests, challenges and issues that the prospect and his or her business is facing.

Selling into similar businesses in the same industry does mean less preparation and adjustments between presentations, but it is a very big mistake not to do your homework on the company and know about both the prospect as well as the particulars of the business.

It is time well invested to research all you can find about the current situation of the company, the types of projects or contracts they have, as well as to understand challenges or issues both in the customer's individual market as well as in the industry as a whole.

This information forms the basis of the theme or the focus of the presentation – the common threads and bonds. It will capture the attention of the prospect or the team from the company because it is relevant, timely and addresses specific questions, challenges, obstacles or issues they are trying to work through without the benefit of your product or service.

By addressing this need or the issues, the presentation becomes more personal, engaging and piques the curiosity of the audience to learn more. After all, once they start asking questions and thinking about integrating your product or service as part of the solution you are well on the way to closing a sale.

Looking closer at how to prepare the contents, start by asking yourself the following questions:

- What do I currently know about the company, the prospect and what additional information would be helpful in feeling comfortable with my level of understanding?
- What issues, concerns, problems, needs, challenges or obstacles is the company and the prospect experiencing that make this product or service valuable?
- How are they currently trying to solve or resolve these issues?
- Why is it not working?
- What is the competition offering to resolve these issues, challenges or problems?
- How is my product or service superior to the competition or what sets it apart from the other similar solutions?
- Where could there possibility be weaknesses or issues with how my product or service will perform?
- How can I proactively address these in the presentation?

- How do my current customers see the value in the product or service I am selling?
- How has it helped their company in production, performance, efficiency, cost-savings or in other areas?
- What questions would I have if I were the prospect listening in on this presentation?

Take the time to prepare short notes or jot down key points on each of the questions. These will form a framework for a presentation and will capture the attention of the target prospect. Remember, this will need to be done for each prospect and it is not a standard script to be used over and over with different customers.

The more specific you can be, particularly with the challenges and problems and how your product will resolve those issues and needs, the greater the immediate benefit of your product will be to the prospect. Never provide vague or general information, instead get your facts, figures and details researched and refined as you develop the presentation.

Creating the Presentation

Once you understand the track or the theme you wish to use to highlight the product or service, the next step is in actually developing the presentation itself. This is also not a one size fits all exercise. It is a one size fits one experience.

By knowing your prospect or the decision-making team and where he or she fits into the company hierarchy, you can develop the right type of sales presentation. It will be a very different type of approach if you are selling to a team of corporate executives or if you are selling to the engineers or even the production managers. Different messages will resonate widely with various groups. Ensure that your research and preparation reflects your message and audience needs.

Slanting or positioning your examples, case studies, problems presented and even the benefits of your product or service will all be a result of this understanding. The CEO is not going to be focused in on the engineering aspects of the product, while the engineer is not going to be as focused solely the ROI (Return on Investment) of the purchase. Different needs mean different approaches, even for the same product or service.

C-Suite Presentation Tips

Getting into the C-suite is a job in and of itself, but once you have the meeting you need to make it count. These are professionals that are used to being sold and used to sitting in on sales presentations.

While they are human and will be impressed by a visually appealing presentation, they are more focused on simply getting the information they need. They want relevant data, facts and bottom line information about how your product or service will make their life easier, save money, boost production or improve efficiency.

Here are some important considerations when preparing a presentation for these upper-level business managers:

- Keep it short – remember, these are professionals that are often scheduled for meetings throughout their day. It is critical to be there before the presentation time to set up and get ready. Start on time and plan to end the presentation 5-7 minutes before the scheduled or allotted meeting time. This prevents you from running over, which is always seen as a negative. Remember, being on-time for a 2:00PM appointment/sales presentation, does not mean showing up at 1:50PM. It means arriving at 1:00PM, checking audio visual needs, etc.

- Know your stuff – this is where you have to be specific. Provide the information, summaries, details and even the challenges or issues from an informed place. Trying to complete the presentation by being vague, going off track or evading answering questions will instantly create distrust and frustration. Keep to the specifics of what you are there to discuss by having your presentation prepared, practiced and relevant.

- Provide an agenda – having a written agenda with the attendees names (spelled correctly), titles and topics to be covered and other relevant data will impress the attendees and show that you respect their time and that you are well-organized. It will also facilitate a next step in the sales process. If you do not have a logical next step you are stuck and the sale is in jeopardy of dying.

- Integrate conversation and interactions – always keep in mind these are the decision-makers in the company. They are accustomed to speaking, asking questions and yes, even interrupting. Consider setting up the presentation to account for the need for some of these individuals to be engaged in conversation throughout the presentation.

A basic outline agenda could look like:

- Come up with an "elevator summary" of the way that your product or service will benefit the company. Highlight data and always keep a focus on the improvement to the bottom line. This should be no more than 30-45 seconds. If you grab the attention of the listeners, they will stay with you. If you fail, they aren't listening to the rest of the sales presentation.
- First 5 minutes on how your products solve problems in the industry, not on the details of the product or service. Think of this as a way to prime the listeners to associate with issues they are experiencing to what your product or service can solve. Be specific, give facts and figures and don't spend time telling a story for this particular audience.
- Probing – interact with the group and ask about current challenges they are facing. Don't immediately answer, let the group provide a detailed and complete answer that allows you to fully understand the needs, concerns, struggles or even pain that the C-suite is experiencing.
- Don't lecture – these are the key decision makers in the organization and they are typically not involved in the day to day operations of the company. This means they don't want the nitty gritty details of how the product or service works. This is great for the middle-level managers or teams, but it is not effective for the C-suite professionals.
- Death by PowerPoint/Problems – PowerPoint can be used in a C-suite meeting, but it has to be done very carefully. It has to add to your discussion and interaction with the executives, not be the focus of the sales presentation. Ideally, use the PowerPoint to display the key concepts, but never read along or spend your time simply repeating what is on the screen. This is not only seen as lecturing but also as a waste of time for this group.

- Be a facilitator – instead of seeing yourself as the authority in the room, focus on being the facilitator. By establishing and encouraging fruitful dialog and conversations, the executives are having at the table around solutions or challenges; you can weave information, case studies, facts and figures and creative solutions. This is very different from having a structured and not a canned presentation where you cannot go off script.

- Provide relevant written information – professional looking presentation handouts are an effective tool. Structure these the same as the presentation with key points in bullet form at the beginning in clear, logical sequence. Written case studies, reviews, articles or other supporting documents can be attached as additional information. This provides an "at a glance" summary of the benefits of your product or service. This can be provided at the beginning or end of the presentation.

The key thing to remember in C-suite presentations is that you are there to present relevant information that benefits the group. It has to resonate as a practical, effective and creative solution to a business issue or problem they face and it has to be presented in a way that engages these high level decision-makers.

B2B Peer-Level Presentation Tips

Peer-level types of sales meetings, which can include selling into specific teams, departments or groups within a company or selling to a smaller company, are no less important.

However, these individuals are a different group with a different focus within the company. While they are often very interested in the ROI (particularly for small businesses or family-owned companies where management is involved in daily operations) they are also interested in the practical aspects of the product or service.

In other words, the ROI is important, but it often takes a lesser degree of importance compared to boosting effectiveness, efficiency or production. Solving the problem or challenge the company is facing so they can move on and allocate their resources elsewhere is the main focus of the presentation.

These meetings are also more geared towards developing a professional relationship with the buying team. They want to understand your experience, expertise and knowledge of their industry, their challenges and how they can improve.

This is where you have to approach the meeting with a more personal and client-focused strategy. Think about what you look for in a sales rep when you are buying a high-value item such as a vehicle or a home. Most people are looking for someone that is:

- Experienced
- Trustworthy
- Knowledgeable and Informed
- Easy to talk to and a good listener
- Provides the information needed in relatable terms
- Similar to them in their approach to solving a problem
- Able to provide new solutions in ways that are supportive and not patronizing or condescending
- Open to listening to you before providing those solutions and ideas
- Makes you feel as if your issues are something that they are concerned about

With this in mind, here are some tips to create a sales presentation that will be well received by a peer-level sales meeting:

- Provide an agenda – as with the C-suite meetings, an agenda is a nice way to allow the prospects to understand how the meeting will unfold. Make sure to provide the majority of the time to interact with the prospects and to help to facilitate discussion around the table. The agenda is also useful as it helps you to stay on schedule as it will also be important to end this meeting 5-7 minutes before the end of the allotted time. You will find this is a group where interested people will often stick around and ask questions or provide more details of what they have tried to resolve the challenge or problem in the past and what has or hasn't worked, all valuable information for follow-up emails, calls or meetings.
- Scenario – start with a scenario instead of the typical information about your company, how long it has been in business and your recognized clients. By focusing the meeting immediately on their business issues, you know you are

making a connection and developing a sense of industry experience between yourself and the group. Keep this to about 4-5 minutes, weaving in issues related to the prospects and how your product or service was able to provide a solution.

- PowerPoint Considerations – PowerPoint presentations should be a supplement to your discussion. You can set up individual slides to provide the details of the facts, figures or highlights of the case studies, industry stories and creative solutions you will focus in on in your presentation. Make a copy of the detail slides and provide this to the prospects, but keep it short and focus just on the key elements you want them to remember as the benefits and advantages to your product or service. Think about handing these out at the end to keep the attention focused on your presentation and not on the handout.

  Use fonts that are easy to read even at a distance. Carefully choose colors for the font and the background that provide a good contrast. Remember, boardrooms are often well-lit so avoid colors that will look washed out unless the room is dark.

- Videos and Images – something that is very powerful in these more informal types of presentations is to use images instead of bulleted points and dry or boring data dumps in PowerPoint. Infographics, which combine key fact and details with charts, diagrams and shapes are very effective and can be remembered much longer than just facts alone. These infographics should be included your handout.

  When using images, avoid those stock images that are on every PowerPoint for your industry. Use unique images that tell a story and send a clear message. Don't use any image that is confusing or could be misinterpreted. It is also very important to review all aspects of the image to ensure there is no potentially offensive or inappropriate material in the image. Look for issues that may date the graphic as old or that may contain branding, marketing or images that may include other brands, particularly your competitions.

  Short, relevant videos of the product in action or in how a company solved a problem using the product or service are often a good idea. These can be integrated into the presentation. Don't start with the video, instead use the first few minutes to enhance that personal connection. Make sure the video is well done. Have it professionally filmed or edited. Poor quality images, infographics or video is a deal breaker; it is better to go without than use multimedia that looks amateur or unprofessional.

- Ask Questions – with the C-suite meeting you will usually find that questions are not a problem. However, with a peer-level meeting you may need to have a set of questions prepared to get the conversation started. These questions need to be planned in advance and should be based on your earlier research about the company and the industry.

  When asking these questions, be sure to word them to be open-ended and positive towards the company and their ability to solve the problem or issue they are facing. Never use an initial question that creates a defensive posture for the people at the table. These questions are intended to probe for more information that will allow you to then refine your presentation. These are a good option at the beginning of the meeting to help you to hone the focus for the specifics of the presentation.

  Some examples of questions to get a conversation started include:

  - I understand it is common for companies to have challenges with boosting seasonal productivity. How has your company been successful in working through this issue?
  - Can you tell me more about how this scenario relates to your business? Where do you see the similarities?
  - What are the opportunities your business has in the near future? What goals are you striving to obtain?
  - What areas of your current business practice would you like to improve? How would this benefit your business?

- Be Flexible – while you want to make sure you get out the information, you also want to be flexible. Sometimes, despite all the research and preparation, you still are blindsided by a question or a focus of the prospect or team of buyers. Respond to this by asking probing, open-ended questions. It may well be that the issues or challenges are just what you expected and planned for, but that the group is stuck on a small detail or a minor obstacle. By listening carefully and getting the full picture, you can then weave a solution into your presentation without having to try to do everything off the cuff.

Being personable but also professional is a fine line to walk in these meetings. Arriving early gives you time to set up your computer, distribute handouts and take a few minutes to gather your thoughts.

However, and this is really essential in these peer-level meetings, it also gives you the opportunity to personally introduce yourself, shake hands and share a few pleasantries with the prospects as they arrive. This is an easy way to incorporate that personal touch and rapport building without taking up your presentation time.

A very effective skill to learn is to be able to recall the names of the people you greet before the meeting in the meeting. This is where working through LinkedIn and other social media sites or doing your company research can really be helpful. By going online, it is possible to find pictures of most if not all of the people you will meet. Memorize their names and faces prior to the meeting. Allow them to introduce themselves and shake hands and make eye contact. Throughout the meeting, you will then have no difficulty in recalling their names, adding to the comfort level of the prospect while also building rapport during discussions.

What to Avoid in a Presentation?

In addition to thinking what you want to put in the presentation, there are some critical mistakes that are easy to make that can derail or detract from even the best presentation.

Avoiding these mistakes will be essential. Simply being aware that these are possible presentation blunders can be highly effective in your preparation and in the meeting.

- Looking stressed – there is nothing that is more off-putting to a buyer than to be dealing with a sales rep that looks stressed, frustrated, irritated or agitated. Simply having this look can turn a prospect off and limit his or her ability to listen to the information. Take your time to get a good night's sleep, eat before the presentation and get there early to get situated, set-up and organized.

- Speed or cartoon talking – if you are enthusiastic about your product, you may find that you tend to talk fast and with a lot of emotion and emphasis. However, this is not a professional presentation and it can come across as very artificial and condescending to the group, particularly with upper management and executives in a first meeting. Tone it down and use a measured, even rate of speech and tone of voice suitable for the specifics of the presentation. Don't be a robot; it is fine to use emotion, but just don't go overboard.

- Careful with humor – humor is fine in a business meeting or a sales meeting but it has to be appropriate. Often what is funny to one may be offensive or seen as belittling or making fun of by another. If you are going to use humor, make it natural and be sure to carefully consider if it is the right comment for the specifics of the situation.

- Not having a plan for a problem – sometimes computers crash, files get corrupted and technology fails. Getting to the location and having everything set up and tested in advance will allow you to work around these issues. Remember, the PowerPoint, video or images are just the background to your presentation, not the focus. You can go on without them, just have a plan in mind of how to address this issue should it occur.

- Information overload – some products have a lot of features and benefits. You will not have time to highlight them all in a 20 or 30-minute meeting. Choose the ones most relevant for the prospects. With email, links to websites and the option to post data to social media you can easily make additional data accessible to the prospects.

Keep in mind that having time for questions and answers throughout the presentation is critical. Without this there can be confusion in the group that is not addressed immediately, possibility leading to a misunderstanding of a critical point that continues on throughout the entire presentation.

Summary of the Presentation Content

There are a lot of factors, strategies and techniques that go into constructing a killer sales presentation. To help to streamline the information discussed, here is a basic overview to keep in mind when preparing your presentation:

1. Do your research – know the prospects, the company and the industry as well as the challenges, issues, problems or obstacles they are facing. Use this information in a short summary or scenario at the beginning of the presentation to personalize the information and connect with the group.

2. Structure the content – consider the group you are meeting with when developing the content and structure of the meeting. C-suite meetings are more direct and focused on the big picture and the ROI and benefits for the

company as a whole. Keep it short, specific and to the point of the product or service.

Peer-level sales meetings are typically more informal and use scenarios, case studies and real-world applications with some emphasis on benefits for the whole. Building trust, rapport and interactions while establishing your experience and understanding of the challenges faced will be important along with providing information on how your product or service can accomplish this end.

3. PowerPoint – in both types of meetings, PowerPoint is the background and not the focus. Provide key facts and details to reinforce the information you are providing. Do not read from the PowerPoint and don't let the PowerPoint take over the meeting. You should be the main focal point during the sales presentation, not the PowerPoint slides.

4. Follow the prospects –encouraging relevant conversation and group discussions through probing and open-ended questions is highly effective at understanding how to continue the presentation. This doesn't mean you deviate from the important points of focus, but it allows you to weave relevant details, case studies and "stories" into the presentation that are directly related to what the prospects are most interested in learning more about.

5. Keep to the meeting schedule – providing an agenda will help ensure that your presentation stays within the allotted time. This is both professional and effective in establishing a positive first interaction. Plan to end the meeting 5-7 minutes before the end time provided and spend that time talking to those who want to ask questions or to share more information.

6. Handouts – professional looking handouts that provide a bulleted summary of the important parts of your presentation on the first page and then additional details, case studies and data sheets are appreciated by the prospects.

7. Call to action – the final part of the meeting, the last 2-3 minutes should provide a call to action for your prospects. This can be an agreement on the next steps or providing further information.

Finally, be sure to practice your presentation. Remember, practice doesn't make perfect, perfect practice makes perfect. Try to anticipate questions, possible objections and even to understand how to respond to possible issues where your product or service may be seen as missing some of the features or benefits the prospect considers important for their business.

If you incorporate some of these tips, tactics and strategies to develop and deliver Killer Sales Presentations, you will gain more confidence and make more sales.

Good luck and good selling!