



[www.kickstartall.com](http://www.kickstartall.com)

## **Demoing to Your Sales Force - The Toughest Customer of All!**

*by Peter Cohan*

It is unfortunate and often true: Most product demos to the sales force are un compelling, unconvincing and fail to generate the desired momentum in the sales team. What's going wrong and what can you do to create an engaging, impactful product demo?

Instead of demonstrating an endless stream of features, today's best demos communicate reference stories or use cases that generate a vision of how your customers will benefit from using your new offerings. In this article, we'll explore a few key tactics to improve the effectiveness of your demo and ensure you gain sales force "share of mind."

### **The Problem – A Lack of Vision**

When product managers demo their new products, they tend to focus on the new key features, showing how they work and all of the many options available. However, they often fail to build a vision with their salespeople of what good things these new features will enable for the customers—and that is the missing element in their demos.

The key to a successful product launch or new release demo is vision generation. You must build a vision in your salespeople's minds of how your offering will help your customers solve their business problems.

### **To Demo a Vision, Tell a Story**

Put yourself in your sales rep's shoes. What information do you need in order to be able to demo a new product effectively? Consider the following example: You are listening to a sales success story for a new product at next year's sales meeting. The successful sales person is relating why the customer made the purchase. In just one slide she outlines a story that tells you about a company, the business issue they faced, their requirements for success, and why they selected your company's product. She ends with an ROI expectation and her revenue projection. Next, the sales engineer provides a crisp 8-minute demo that illustrates the key capabilities used by the customer to solve their problem and meet their needs.

As you sit in the audience you notice other salespeople getting excited. Why? Because they have been hooked by the story. They start asking for more details. They can relate this story to other customers who have similar situations and they now realize that this product can address these customer needs, as well.

The vision-based demo approach works because the sales reps leave the meeting with a clear vision of:

- The target customers

- The business problems that can be addressed
- The specific capabilities provided by the new product to solve the problems
- The value of the solution, in your customers' minds
- The size of the sale

Not bad for an 8-minute demo!

### **Create a Library of Reference Stories to Demo**

When presenting and demonstrating to your sales people, you need to make your new product as appealing, easy to communicate and easy to sell as possible. For existing products, Reference Stories are often the best way for salespeople to begin a sales process with a customer. However, new products often don't have the benefit of reference stories—so what do you do?

First, if you have any pre-release customers who used your product, interview them to generate reasonable reference stories before you design your demo. If you don't have any customer experiences, then you need to create fictional or "suppositional" reference stories. The process is the same: create a demo that tells a story and follows the story outline used in our example.

This is an effective and compelling starting point for your sales reps to begin a conversation with their prospects.

### **Vision Clearly Communicated**

As you look to your next sales meeting, follow these three rules for demo success:

**1. Create a set of existing or fictional reference stories.** These should clearly illustrate a vision for the product and provide the top-level criteria needed to qualify customers. You'll want to provide a series of Reference Stories, like a menu, so that the sales team can see the breadth of sales opportunities.

**2. Showcase the outcome for each reference story from the customer's perspective.** The climax of the story is in the ROI it provides to the customer. You may want to find, create or compare relevant metrics to show before-vs-after comparisons. Or, highlight time/money saved, improved productivity, or any other relevant factor.

**3. Keep it short, simple, and to the point.** In most cases, you can easily relate a complete Reference Story and show its accompanying demo in less than eight minutes!

You've now equipped your sales team with a winning demo that clearly shows your new product in a compelling way. With a demo following these simple rules, sales reps will find your demo easy to present and a very helpful tool for advancing their sales cycle and closing deals.

### **Assess Your Own Demos**

To see how you are doing and compare with your peers, perform an [assessment](#) of your own demos.

[Peter Cohan](#) is a founder and principal of The Second Derivative focused on helping software organizations improve their sales and marketing results – primarily through improving organizations' demonstrations. In July 2004, he enabled and began moderating "DemoGurus", a community web exchange dedicated to helping sales and marketing teams improve their software demonstrations.

Copyright © 2005 KickStart Alliance and The Second Derivative – All Rights Reserved.