

How to Design and Deliver Effective Virtual Sales Presentations



Tom Drews
www.whatworks.biz

WhatWorks!TM
Communications

The Wave of the Future...



Selling in the virtual environment is the wave of the future. It can be an incredibly effective means of presenting both our value and our message to our prospect. That said, it will mean next to nothing if we can't effectively engage them. And it turns out that's the biggest challenge we face when selling online.

The average attention span of the typical human is somewhere between five and eight seconds. And it's only getting shorter as the speed of business and technology change. When we're presenting online, we can't see our prospect. Most importantly, they KNOW that we can't see them. So they are free to wander.

There is virtually no limit to the number of distractions available to our prospects, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, email and instant messaging.



Have you ever sat in on a virtual presentation and wandered off to do something more important? It happens all the time. If we don't deliver an engaging presentation, there's a good chance...

We will put our prospect to sleep!



Presenting Online is Challenging!

During the past ten years, I've been fortunate to work with many great clients, including Google, CLIF Bar, Symantec, McKesson and Cisco. I started out teaching "In-Person" sales presentation skills. The interesting thing is, several of my clients would approach me afterwards and say, "This is great, but can you teach us how to do this online?"



That's when I realized there's a demand for this. And there's a really good reason for it. Presenting in the virtual environment is challenging and requires a whole new set of skills. One that most of us aren't already equipped with.

My Objective

During the next 25 pages or so, I'd like for you to walk away with something of great value that will help you to even more effectively engage your prospects in the virtual environment, so you can shorten your sales cycle, beat your competition and close more business.

Agenda

My agenda is simple. I'll be sharing the following ten tips and strategies with you:

1. Communicate genuine value
2. The discovery process
3. Have a structure
4. The demonstration
5. Keep your slides simple
6. Add some "Hollywood!"
7. Make the most of your voice
8. Interact often
9. Prepare in advance
10. Differentiate yourself

Typical Challenges We Face

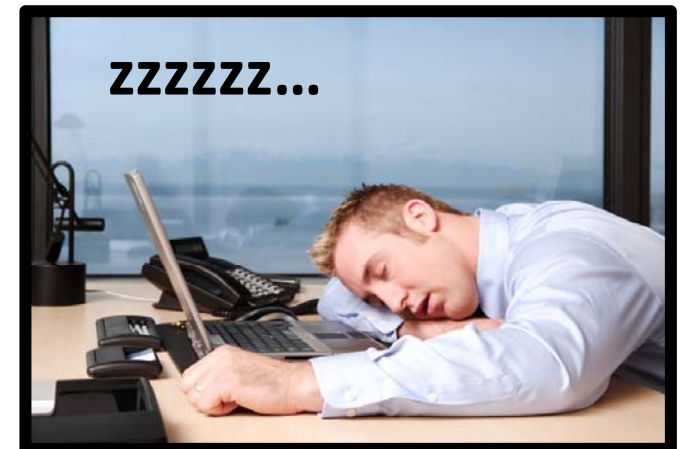


Before I dive in to my best practices, it makes sense to review some of the challenges most sales people face when selling online.

1. The number one challenge I see, based on literally thousands of responses, is not being able to engage the prospect.
2. The second biggest challenge is not being able to “gauge” the prospect. Because we can’t see them, it’s difficult to get a read on what they’re doing, how they’re feeling, and whether or not they’re even paying attention to you. It’s not too different from being blindfolded.

3. Creating interaction with our prospect is another common challenge. Often times the decision makers will sit quietly in the back of the room and not say a word.

We have to be able to leverage every strategy possible to interact and engage or prospect. Once we’ve lost them, we may never get them back. Take this guy, for example.



1. Communicate Value

This may be painfully obvious for most of you, but communicating your value based on your audience's most important needs is by far the most effective means of engaging your prospect. It's amazing to me how many sales people say they know this, but then they don't practice it. You may have the greatest product or service in the world, but it will mean next to nothing if you can't effectively communicate your value based on your prospect's most important needs. Probably the biggest mistake I see sales people make is not presenting value. Most sales people talk 90% of the time and only listen 10%.



I propose that we shift this in the other direction. Listen 90%, and then talk 10%. Then and only then can we custom design a streamlined presentation focusing on those

two our three value points that are of greatest interest to your prospect. Of course, the only way to know what's important to our prospect is to ask questions.



Many sales people will debate me and say that most buyers just don't have time for questions. They're too busy. I think you have to sell them on "why" you want to ask questions. For example, "In order for me to make the most of your time, and to best meet your needs, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your business and some of the challenges you're currently facing. Would that be okay?" If they say no, then they may not be a good prospect anyway. It's also essential to find out who else is involved in the decision process and interview them, as well.

2. The Discovery Process

Rather than asking a few situation questions, why not dig in deeper. Find out what prospect's problems are. And the problems they didn't know they had. And the problems that only you can solve. This will definitely help you to differentiate yourself from your competition!



Next, we can establish the impact these problems are having on their business. Finally, we can determine what their most important needs are. I'll typically ask one last question, and that is, "What will it take for us to work together?" If you don't ask, the answer is often times no, right?

3. Have a Structure



Some of you may be wondering, “What’s up with the photo here?” It’s meant to get your attention. Which is exactly what we need to do in our presentations right from the start. Most people begin their presentations with an agenda, or by talking about themselves, which is not very interesting.

Grab their Attention!

We have to grab our prospect’s attention right from the start. Open with a provocative question, a personal story, a quote, a testimonial, or an interesting fact. My favorite grabber is to present the number

one challenge that my prospect is facing, and then tell a brief customer success story showing how we solved the same problem for another customer. Be sure to add engaging visuals, photos or graphics to help support your point.

Who are you?

Typically, in a sales situation, you won’t have someone around to read an introduction for you. Which means you have to do it yourself. Once you’ve delivered your grabber, share a brief elevator pitch stating who you are, what you do, who you work with, and how you help people. Here’s an example:

“My name is Tom Drews, the CEO and Founder of What Works! Communications. We have delivered Sales Presentation Skills training for all kinds of companies, including Symantec, Cisco and McKesson. Ultimately, we help them to shorten their sales cycle, beat their competition, and close more business.”

Credibility Statement

Bring up a slide with a testimonial, a fact, or a statistic that supports your objective and gives you even more credibility. For example:



State your Objective

Let your prospect know what you want them to get out of your presentation, and what you want them to do as a result. For example: "My objective is to have you walk away with a clear understanding of how we can best meet your challenges, and then have you choose us as your vendor moving forward." Put it in your own words, of course. Remember, if we don't ask, the answer usually is "No."

Agenda with Time

Having a clear agenda is essential, especially in the virtual environment. It helps to keep both ourselves and our prospect on track. Let your prospect know what you'll be covering and how long it will take.

The Body

I recommend no more than three to five points for the body of your presentation. It's best to start by focusing on your prospect and their situation, problems and needs. Then you can present your solution, which might include a demonstration focusing on value. Lastly, and most importantly, let them know clearly what's in it for them. If it makes sense, and if it's necessary, you might also address your competition and any objections your prospect has shared with you.

Closing

Have one final Q&A session, summarize the highlights of your presentation, re-state your objective, and close with a grabber guaranteed to get their attention. Then we can open it up for discussion and next steps for moving forward.

4. The Demonstration

Features Vs. Benefits

Roughly 95% of the demonstrations I've sat in on are focused mostly on features and functionality. There's no question this will be important for a certain audience, most especially the people that would be using your product or services hands on.

However, often times the decision makers don't even need to see the product. They just want to know how you will help them grow their business and increase their profits. That means we have to build a

different kind of presentation. This might be a value based PowerPoint presentation, with your demonstration woven into your solution.

If you've done your discovery process well, then you'll have a clear idea of what your prospect's challenges are. When you're delivering a demo and presenting your features, tie in these challenges, and show how your product or service will solve them. Also, if you team up with a partner, such as a sales engineer, take the lead role and let them know what you want them to focus on and how long they have to present.



5. Keep Your Slides Simple

The biggest mistake I see salespeople make when designing their presentations is including too much information on their slides. How long would it take for you to read a slide like this?

Company ABC

The Black Panther


- Confusion may arise from the distinction between the genus *Panthera* and the genus *Leopardus*.
- Originally, the relatively long-tailed species were called panthers (genus *Panthera*, which includes the leopard) and others were called leopards (genus *Leopardus*, which, perhaps
- confusingly, did *not* include the leopard.) All these species are now
- included in the genus *Panthera*, which therefore covers species such as **lions** and **tigers** as well as "panthers".
- Melanistic leopards are the most common form of black panther in captivity and they have been selectively bred for decades in the zoo and exotic pet trades.
- Black leopards are smaller and more lightly built than normally-pigmented individuals[**clarify**]
- In jaguars, the melanism allele is dominant. Consequently, black jaguars can produce black or spotted cubs, but a pair of spotted jaguars will only produce spotted cubs.

If it takes you longer than three or four seconds, then it's too long. Here's the problem. We're naturally designed to want to read what's in front of us. And while you're reading, you're not paying attention to what I have to say. So we have to keep our slides simple.

There are several ways to solve the problem.

1. We can use a build, where we bring in one point at a time, speak to that point, bring in the next, speak to that point, and so on. This way your prospect won't be reading ahead of you.
2. If you absolutely must keep all of the information on your slide, then at the very least use the annotation tools. Web conferencing platforms such as GoToMeeting provide highlighters, laser pointers and arrows to help your prospect focus on what you want them to focus on.
3. Perhaps the most ideal scenario is to break your slide into several different slides, simplify the text and add engaging photos to help illustrate your points. In this scenario, of course, you can still use a build and leverage the highlighter tools. Here's an example of "before" and "after" slides from a highly respected client of mine, 4 Profit.

Before

❖ Questions You Ask? 

1. Why can't Solution Providers hire, train, and develop salespeople effectively?
2. Why are their sales forecasts so unreliable and inaccurate?
3. Why aren't Solution Providers better at getting new business?
4. Why don't Solution Providers embrace and ramp Advanced Technologies faster?

Copyright 4-Profit 2008 www.4-Profit.com

After

Why can't partners hire, train, and develop salespeople effectively?



After

Why are their sales forecasts so unreliable and inaccurate?



After

Why aren't partners better at getting new business?



After

Why don't partners embrace and ramp Advanced Technologies faster?



6. Add Some “Hollywood”

When I was younger, I spent some time as an actor in Hollywood where I performed in commercials, studied improvisation and had small parts on soap operas. I learned a great deal from TV and Film about how to create engaging presentations.



An academy award winning film is basically thousands of images strung together to tell a story. We can do something similar with our sales presentations. Instead of designing a dull, boring presentation loaded with text, imagine yourself as the writer, producer, director and actor of your own

Hollywood production. Add photos, visuals and graphics to help illustrate your points.

Photos



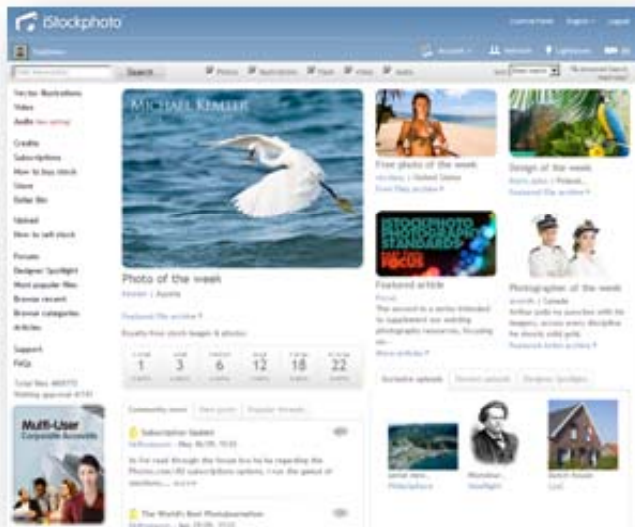
Point

Also, telling customer success stories can be an incredibly effective way to engage your prospect, communicate your value, and drive your prospect to action.

Visit the link below if you're interested in viewing one of my recent webinar recordings to see an example of how I add “Hollywood” to my virtual presentations.

[“Hollywood”](#)

There are many royalty-free stock photo resources on the internet, including Photobucket and Getty Images. One of my personal favorites is www.istockphoto.com. You'll find millions of photos in Google, but we don't have the legal right to use the vast majority of them. It's better to be safe and purchase your photos from a credible stock photo source.



One of the best ways to connect with our audience right from the start is to include a professional photo of yourself on your welcome slide. Include your presentation

title, your prospect's logo, your name and your role at your company. A business headshot will help to make you a real person rather than just a voice.



Another effective means of connecting with your audience is to include what I call a "Looping Slide Deck." As people enter your meeting, provide them with rotating slides to keep your prospect engaged. Include testimonials, facts, quotes, statistics or anything else that might be relevant and support your sales objective.

7. Make the Most of Your Voice



When we're presenting in person, we have the opportunity to engage our audience with eye communication, facial expressions, gestures, body and movement. When we're presenting in the virtual environment, we only have our voice. So it's essential that we make the most of it.

There are several elements that go into the voice, including volume, tone, inflection, pace, articulation and enthusiasm. Perhaps the most important of these is volume. If your prospect can't hear you, then you

might as well send them a PDF of your presentation. Also, when it comes to sales, don't forget that enthusiasm is contagious.

We also want to avoid distractions as much as possible. Remove filler words such as ums, ahs and "you knows." I sat in on a sales presentation recently where I counted 360 "ums" in one hour. This will definitely distract your prospect from the value you're presenting!

We can also avoid distractions by eliminating noise in our background, such as parrots screeching, dogs barking, and people snoring. And when the noise is coming from the audience, we have the option to mute them if necessary.

Um...

Many of us present to a global audience, where the first language of our prospect may not be the same as ours. In this case, it's important to pace yourself appropriately, articulate clearly, and pause every so often so that your prospect can absorb what you're presenting.



The best way to know if you're making the most of your voice is to deliver a sales presentation for a colleague or friend, and get honest feedback. Of course, you can also record a presentation and watch it for yourself. It might be enlightening! A platform like GoToMeeting will allow you to record your presentation and then play it back.

I don't recommend using a speakerphone unless it's high quality. I would absolutely avoid using a cell phone, partly because of the poor audio quality, but also because you don't want to risk having a dropped call in the middle of an important sales presentation.

It will be convenient and cost effective for both you and your prospect to use a VoIP or integrated toll-free audio option, which is something GoToMeeting provides. A headset will provide you with the best connection and the clearest audio.



8. Interact Often



Silence can be painful, especially while you're delivering a virtual sales presentation. Often times it's a challenge to get our prospect involved and engaged. What follows are some strategies and tools for interacting with customers and prospects in the virtual environment.

Annotation Tools

For starters, using the highlighter tool or laser pointer will help to make your presentation more lively, interactive and engaging. It's something for your audience to focus on in real time.

Pass Presenter Controls

Presenter control allows you to give someone control of the meeting and have

them show any file, application or program on their desktop.

Pass Keyboard and Mouse

Keyboard and mouse control allows you to give someone control over the application or program on your desktop. This can be useful in a number of ways, such as negotiating contracts and editing proposals, and it can be done in real time.

The Chat Room

If you have more than a few people sitting in, then you can use the chat room to ask open ended questions and get feedback from your audience all at once. You might ask something like, "What would you most like to get out of our meeting today? In two or three sentences..."

Ask Questions

This pretty much goes without saying, but ask relevant questions of your participants throughout. And be sure to address everyone by first name at least once.

Address People by Their First Name

If you're not already doing this, then I recommend you give it a try. I learned this strategy from the number one sales person at a Fortune 500 company. He said it was by far his number one most effective means of keeping his prospect from wandering. That, and presenting value, of course. He said to try it. I did. And it works. The idea is, if you address individuals by their first name at the beginning of your meeting, then everyone else will be thinking, "I'd better pay attention, he might be calling on me next."

Hey!

This strategy will be most effective if you've had a chance to do a discovery process in advance with your key decision makers. Then you can draw attention to something relevant that came up during your conversation, and you'll actually have a reason to address someone by their first name. I can guarantee you this will help to keep your prospect engaged, interacting, and focused on what you have to present.

9. Prepare in Advance

I believe that 90% of a successful sales presentation is in the preparation, which includes a thorough discovery process so that we can understand what's most important to our prospect. There are several other ways to prepare that will help us to close more business. What follows are some ideas.

Know Your Platform

In my early days, I crashed my computer, inadvertently kicked 150 people out of a meeting, and kept an audience waiting for 8 minutes while I figured out how to push the start button. Clearly, this can lead to lost sales. Learn from my mistakes and know your platform inside and out. Invest in a training program. Call customer support. And most importantly, practice!

GoToMeeting
CORPORATE

Visualize

I don't expect you to take it to the extreme like this guy, but visualizing yourself delivering a wildly successful presentation can be incredibly effective.



It's really as simple as finding a quiet place, closing your eyes, and walking yourself through your presentation from start to finish. Shakti Gawain's book, *Creative Visualization*, has provided me with some valuable tips and strategies for how to make the very most of this process. I encourage you to take a look if you haven't already.

Do a Dry Run

Practice delivering your presentation virtually with a colleague or a friend and get honest feedback. As I mentioned earlier, you can also record yourself and play it back. Why blow it with a real live prospect?



Start Your Meeting Early

Log in to your meeting early and have all your documents set up and ready to go. Make sure everything is running smoothly. Then, if you have free time, you can head off and answer some emails or do whatever is next on your list of things to do.

Use Two Computers

Does your computer ever crash? Mine does. Maybe not that often, but often enough to have a second computer logged on as a back up. I typically have my first computer logged in as the host, and the second one as a participant. It's incredibly helpful to see what everyone else is seeing.



I don't mean to get you in trouble with your boss, or your accountant, but I recommend having three computers logged in. It may sound a little extreme, but this has helped me to avoid disasters that would have cost me many more times what a typical Netbook costs.



10. Differentiate Yourself



Most of us have to deal with competition. It's inevitable. So how do we differentiate ourselves from everyone else?

One very effective strategy is to tell a third party customer success story. Find out the number one challenge your prospect is facing, and tell a story of how you solved it for someone else that was facing the same situation. For example, your prospect says, "So and so can do such and such. You can't." Your response might be, "Well, that's exactly what "Y Company" said, and they chose to work with us because of this and

that. And as a result, they have increased their profitability by X%." You might even take it a step further and suggest that they get in touch with your client so they can learn why they chose to work with you.

Learn to design and deliver engaging, captivating, entertaining, value based virtual presentations. That is if you haven't already. This is one more way to set yourself apart, since most sales people won't be doing this.

The number one best way to differentiate yourself from the competition is to provide genuine and real value. Custom design a streamlined presentation focusing on those two or three key value points that are most important for your prospect.

Value

Summary

When it comes to competition, the sales person that can present their value most effectively, based on the prospect's most important needs, will likely win the business. Here's a brief summary of some of the strategies that will help any sales person to sell more in the virtual environment.

1. Present genuine value throughout your entire presentation.
2. The only way to know what's important to your prospect is to ask questions. And listen. Separate yourself apart from the rest and uncover problems they didn't know that had, and that only you can solve.
3. Have a clear structure from start to finish, being sure to start off with a grabber opening.
4. Rather than focusing on features and functionality, deliver a value based presentation and weave in your demo.
5. Keep your slides simple. Enough said.
6. Add some "Hollywood" by adding compelling photos, visuals and graphics to support your points.
7. Make the most of your voice by focusing on volume, tone, inflection, articulation and enthusiasm.
8. Interact often by asking questions, using the annotation tools, and addressing people by their first names.
9. Prepare in advance by learning your web conferencing platform, doing a dry run, and visualizing a successful presentation.
10. Differentiate yourself by telling third party customer success stories and by presenting genuine value.



Closing Thoughts



Selling and presenting in the virtual environment is the wave of the future. It can be an incredibly effective means of communicating both your value and your message to your prospect. That said, it will mean next to nothing if you can't effectively engage them! Hopefully you have picked up some valuable tips and strategies here that will help you to even more effectively engage your prospect, so that you will shorten your sales cycle, beat the competition, and close more business!

WhatWorks!TM Communications

What Works! CommunicationsTM is a leading provider of “Virtual Sales Presentation Skills” training. We also deliver programs in sales, presentation skills, and time management. We have worked with companies including Google, Symantec, CLIF Bar, McKesson, Williams-Sonoma and Citrix Online.

We help sales people design and deliver more effective sales presentations so they can close a lot more business.

Please feel free to get in touch if you would like to learn more about our programs and how we might be able to help you with your presentations. Thank you!

Tom Drews, CEO and Founder

What Works! CommunicationsTM

www.whatworks.biz
tom@whatworks.biz
415-674-1373



American Association of
Inside Sales Professionals

“Training with Tom Drews is having a significant impact on our sales. I would strongly recommend his course to any sales team!”

Bob Perkins

President,
American Association of Inside Sales
Professionals

GoToMeeting® Corporate is an easy-to-use, cost-effective Web conferencing service. With GoToMeeting Corporate, meeting organizers can securely connect with anyone, anywhere, reducing travel costs and dramatically increasing productivity. Companies can enable employees to conduct sales presentations, product demos and collaboration sessions right from their PC or Mac®. Get unlimited online meetings for one low rate with our All You Can Meet® subscription model.

For a free evaluation of GoToMeeting Corporate, please visit www.gotomeeting.com/s/WReval.

How to Design and Deliver Effective Virtual Sales Presentations

Presented by



Tom Drews
Founder & CEO

WhatWorks!TM
Communications

www.whatworks.biz