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Sales Presentation Techniques

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Sales Presentation Techniques
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Preface

As you climb the corporate ladder you'll need to perform more presentations.

So whether you're selling a product or a service to your clients or if you're selling an idea to the board you'll need to know exactly how to influence and sell your wares in the right way.

This textbook will focus on the key skills and techniques that you need to perform high impact presentations.

Sean McPheat, the Founder and Managing Director of management development specialists, MTD Training is the author of this publication. Sean has been featured on CNN, BBC, ITV, on numerous radio stations and has contributed to many newspapers. He's been featured in over 250 different publications as a thought leader within the sales and management development industry.

MTD has been working with a **wide variety of clients** (both large and small) in the UK and internationally for several years.

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- In-house, tailor made sales and management training courses (1-5 days duration)
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MTD provide a wide range of sales and management training courses and programmes that enable new and experienced staff to maximise their potential by gaining or refining their skills. Our team of highly skilled and experienced trainers and consultants have all had distinguished careers in sales and senior management roles and bring with them a wealth of practical experience to each course.

At MTD Training we will design and deliver a solution that suits your specific needs addressing the issues and requirements from your training brief that best fits your culture, learning style and ways of working. Our programmes are delivered when and where you need them! We believe that training should be fun, highly interactive and provide "real world" practical techniques and methods that you can use back in the office – and that's exactly what we provide.

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1. Introduction

1.1 What Makes a Presentation?

You might think of a sales presentation as those formal, visual presentations that you give in front of a room full of members of the staff of the company you are hoping to land as a new customer. Just you and a PowerPoint and a laser pointer, facing the room and hoping to land the sale. While it's true that these are sales presentations, in the simplest terms, a sales presentation occurs anytime that you interact with a potential or existing customer. You are continually representing yourself, your product, and your organization when you call, write to, or speak to your customers. Learning to do so well will help you make effective, successful sales presentations.

1.2 Understanding the Sales Process

The first area we'll look at in this ebook is the general sales process and how sales presentations fit into that process. You'll see that significant effort is required before the sales presentation in order to help your presentation be successful, no matter what format it is made in. You'll need to research your target organizations and prospects, identify what their challenges are, then determine how your products or services can answer those challenges or deal with those problems. You must have all of this information before you can reach the sales presentation step.

1.3 Skills that Effective Sales Presentations Require

Whether you will be making a sales presentation in writing, by telephone, or in person, there are certain skills that you will need for effective sales presentations. These include different aspects of communication, research, organization, and other related skills. The good news is that all of these skills can be learned with effort and practice. Once you learn them, you will find that they will also help you in other areas of your sales activities as well as in your life.

1.4 Written Sales Presentations

In many cases, the first impression you and your organization will make on a potential customer will be in writing. This will be the first step in a sales presentation process. It's the first time you are promoting your product or service to the customer.

Of course, the customer might first receive a piece of marketing or advertising that another division of the organization has created. But when you write a letter or email to a potential customer, you are in control of the impression that you leave with the prospect. In this section we'll look at the important aspects of a sales letter, a sales presentation technique that is inexpensive and can be very effective when targeted correctly.

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1.5 Telephone Sales Presentation Techniques

If you work with clients across the nation or if you work with a very large client base, chances are that you will be making many of your sales presentations via telephone. Since telephone sales presentations limit you in the ways you can communicate with a prospect, it is very important that what you do communicate to them is well organized, very well targeted, and explicit in how your product or service will help the prospect and his or her organization.

1.6 Face-to-Face Sales Presentations

When you think of sales presentations, you probably think of the face-to-face presentation. Ideally, we would all have the time and resources needed to do a face-to-face presentation for every potential customer since it allows us to use all of the means of communication available to us. When you do get the chance to make a face-to-face sales presentation, there are several tips that you can use to help ensure that your presentation is as effective as possible.

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2. Understanding the Sales Process

2.1 Introduction

As we begin to examine the role of sales presentations, let's take a look at the basic sales process. Before a person becomes a customer, and hopefully a repeat customer, they must first be a prospect. You will always have more prospects than customers, since not every person you contact will see the benefit in the product or service you are offering. Before you can present to a prospect, you need to work through the preceding steps. Figure 1 shows the sequence of the basic steps in sales. The final step, repurchasing, will not necessarily happen with every customer, but in many organizations the product or service you offer is one that can be repurchased, providing you have met or exceeded customer expectations to this point.

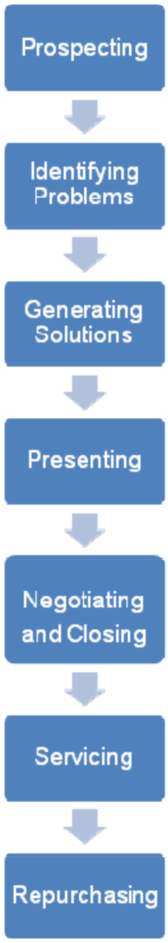

Figure 1: The General Sales Process

Of course, you can't move through the sales process until you've located the prospects that you aim to turn into customers. How well you do your initial research and prospecting has a huge impact on how well your sales presentations will go. If you don't have a fully qualified prospect in front of you when you start yours sales presentation, the techniques you use won't matter.

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One tool that is used for tracking your progress through the sales process is a sales funnel. There’s an example of a sales funnel with the ‘present solution’ step highlighted in Figure 2. You’ll see that you start with a large number of prospects that you identify, and the number of prospects decreases as you move through each step of the funnel. The number could decrease for several reasons, such as:

- Your research on the prospect reveals that your product or service is not a good match for the prospect’s needs or challenges
- You are unsuccessful at reaching the key decision maker
- You are concentrating on the most qualified prospects first

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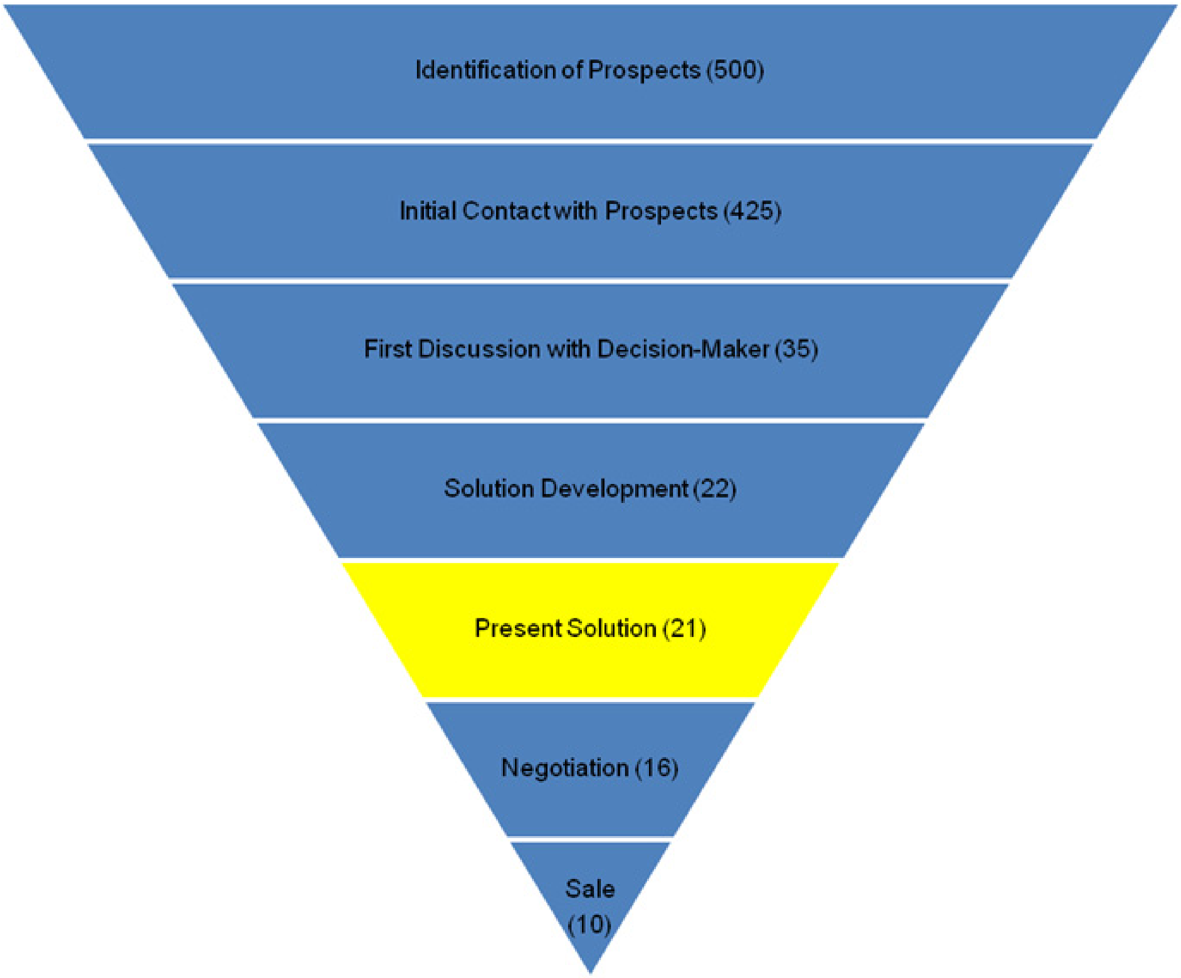

Figure 2: The Sales Funnel

As you work with your prospects, you track their location within the sales funnel. The funnel should represent a specific period of time such as a month or quarter, at the end of which you can evaluate how well you are doing at moving prospects to customers. If you find that you aren't moving customers past a certain step, you know what area of the sales process you need to improve upon. If you find that you can't get the customer past the sales presentation, the information in this ebook will help you to improve that statistic.

2.2 The Changing Face of Sales Presentations

Like everything else about business, sales presentation techniques change and develop on a regular basis. The way that we present to customers will naturally reflect changes in our methods of communication and our technologies. The history of sales presentations over the last several decades has changed dramatically, but the most dramatic changes have come since the advent of the internet and web-based technologies like shared documents and video conferencing. Plus, the trend towards globalization means that we have to consider ways of presenting to customers who may have very different needs than the customers we have worked with before.

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Prospects and customers have changed as well. Today, we as customers expect immediate, convenient, individualized service. If one organization doesn't provide it, chances are we have another choice to turn to. So understanding your potential customers is vital to overcoming the competition and learning what it will take to help your prospect choose your product or service rather than the competition's offering.

In Figure 3 below, a comparison is made between traditional sales of the 1960s-1980s and modern sales. You'll see how the way we work with and present to prospects has been impacted by the changes in our modern environment and by customer expectations.

Traditional Sales	Modern Sales
Seller knows the product	Seller knows the prospect and his needs. In a business to business sales relationship, this means also understanding the prospect's marketplace and what their customers, suppliers, and partners need.
Value of the seller's offering is judged by the sales price.	Value of the seller's offering is judged by sales price plus non-financial aspects related to Corporate Social Responsibility such as ethics and the environment.
Salesperson is the only one who deals with the prospect.	Prospect may deal with anyone in the organization both before and after the sale.
Organization's focus for salespeople is on acquiring new customers	Organization's focus for salespeople is on retaining and expanding current sales relationships (though new customers are also sought)

Figure 3: Traditional vs. Modern Sales

Let's examine the information in Figure 3 in more detail. Whereas once it was enough to know the product you were selling when looking for or presenting to prospects, today you need to know more than the product. You need to know what your prospects are dealing with in their own businesses. Before you could possibly prepare a successful sales presentation, you should be able to answer the following questions about your prospects:

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- What are their needs?
- What are their challenges?
- What do their own customers and partners need?
- How can my product or service meet the prospect or the prospect's customers' needs or assist with the challenges that the prospect is facing?
- How will my product or service make the prospect more competitive in their own marketplace?
- How can I communicate these benefits to the prospect in a way that they will recognize the value that my product or service is offering?

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If you don't know the answer to these questions, you won't be effective at presenting to your prospects. However, you might not know all of this information when you first contact the prospect. Your first contact might involve some information-gathering with the prospect before you can know all of this information. In fact, few of us ever start the process of sales presentations with a face-to-face presentation. We usually start with a phone or written presentation before we are invited to present to the organization face-to-face.

Next, Figure 3 tells us that the way that your offering will be judged by a prospect has changed. In the past, your prospect would have been interested in comparing your price to your competition's and making a choice based solely on cost. But today, your prospects will want to know more about your company. They will decide on a provider based in part on non-financial aspects of your offering, such as your company's values, ethics, social responsibility, environmental responsibility, and more.

What this means for the salesperson is that you will need to know more than just your product or service. You will need to be familiar with the aspects of your company that will be of interest to your prospects. You will have to present this information as part of your sales presentation so that the prospect knows what kind of company they are considering doing business with.

This leads us to the next item in Figure 3 – that you may not be the only person in your organization that deals with the prospect. In giving the prospect the full picture of your organization during your presentation, you may need to bring in other representatives of the organization to help you. Plus, once you've made initial contact, your prospect may be having conversations with others in your organization as part of their selection process. For example, the prospect may want to speak to your product's technical team in order to review what changes would be necessary to their internal fulfillment systems if they choose your product. This means that in many cases, though you'll be making the initial contact on your own, it will take your team's effort to transform a prospect into an actual customer.

Finally, Figure 3 mentions the change in focus that organizations have for their sales teams. In traditional sales environments, the focus has been only on prospecting and acquiring new customers. Today, though prospecting and landing new sales is important, organizations now encourage salespeople to focus on retaining current customers and selling new products and services to them. This is because it is much easier and more cost effective to present and sell to your existing customers. So depending on the relationship that you have with a customer, your sales presentation would be different for existing customers than for customers you've never worked with before.

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3. Skills that Effective Sales Presentations Require

3.1 Introduction

Before we look at specific sales presentation techniques, let's look at some of the general skills that you need if you want to make effective sales presentations. These skills will help you in other areas of sales as well, since many of them are related to inter-personal skills and communication skills. As you read this information, try to determine how you would rate your own performance in each area. You could also ask your colleagues or supervisor for some feedback on how they feel you perform each of these skills.

3.2 Research and Interviewing Skills

Preparing sales presentations for new customers involves a good deal of research. You need to know the company that you are presenting to inside and out so that you are presenting the solution to a need or problem that the company has. Having good research skills means being able to ask and answer questions like:

- Have I presented to this customer in the past? If so, what worked and what didn't work?
- If I haven't presented to this customer before, have I presented to similar customers? What worked (and didn't work) with them?
- What does my prospect or customer look like? (size, number of locations, industry, annual revenue, types of customers, etc.)
- What are some of the challenges facing my customer? Who is their competition and what are the trends in their industry?
- How can my products or services help this customer to meet the challenges they are facing or to be more successful in their marketplace?
- What characteristics are important to this organization in a provider or supplier? How can I demonstrate that my organization possesses these characteristics?

There will be other questions you will need to answer, depending on your product, service, and organization, but these are a good place to start. As you gather information on your prospects, keeping that information organized and accessible will also be important.

3.3 Listening Skills

As we've already mentioned, successful sales presentations involve the seller being able to help the prospect identify his or his organization's true needs. The salesperson needs to ask the questions that help this process by being able to listen to and understand what the prospect is telling him.

Studies have shown that most listeners retain less than 50% of what they hear.

Good listeners are rare these days. Studies have shown that most listeners retain less than 50% of what they hear. Imagine what that means when it comes to a conversation that you might have with your boss, a colleague, or a prospect. If you speak for ten minutes, chances are that you have only heard about half of that conversation – and so have they. No wonder miscommunications happen so frequently!

In order to be a good listener, you should practice active listening skills. There are five key aspects of becoming an active listener. You are probably already employing some of them, but may need to practice others. However, once you are using these tools over time, you will find that they get easier and easier. Plus, you'll learn so much about your prospects and have such better results from your sales presentations that you will be positively reinforced each time you practice.

1. **Pay close attention.**

   With this step, you learn to give the speaker your undivided attention. But you also let the speaker know that you are listening by using acknowledgements – types of verbal and non-verbal tools that help add proof that you are truly listening.

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- Stop any mental chatter
- Don't start preparing your response or rebuttal while the other person is talking
- Make sure your environment doesn't distract you

And in face-to-face sales presentations:

- Look the speaker in the eyes
- Notice the speaker's body language and tone of voice – what are the non-verbal messages telling you?
- If you are in a group, avoid side conversations

2. Demonstrate that you are listening.

Use non-verbal and verbal signals that you are listening to the speaker attentively.

- Nod from time to time, when appropriate
- Use appropriate facial expressions
- Monitor your own body language. Be sure you remain open and relaxed rather than closed and tense.
- Use small comments like 'uh-huh', 'yes', 'right'.

3. Check for understanding.

It is possible for the other person's message to get mistranslated or misinterpreted, so that we hear a message that was not intended. Before responding, it's important to check for understanding using these tools.

- Use reflecting and paraphrasing. Check that you heard the message correctly by saying things like "what I hear you saying is…." or "If I'm hearing you correctly, you're saying….." or "I think you're talking about….".

- Ask questions that will help clarify the speaker's meaning. Suggestions include things like, "Can you tell me more about…..?" or "What did you mean when you said…?" or "I think you're saying… is that right?"

- Summarize what you've heard occasionally – don't wait until the end or you might not remember exactly what was said.

- Practicing this tool is also excellent preparation for dealing with objections from customers.

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4. **Don't interrupt!**

   There is nothing good that comes from interrupting the speaker. You will only be limiting your chance of understanding the message because you won't hear it all – and because the speaker will get frustrated!

5. **Respond Appropriately.**

   When you are actively listening, you are showing your respect for the speaker, as well as gaining the information that you need to form your response. Once you have that information and have clarified it, it's time to form your reply. When expressing your thoughts:

   - Be honest and open
   - Be respectful
   - Be thorough

3.4 Effective Communication Skills

Remember that a sales presentation is not a one-way form of communication. In addition to listening, a successful sales presentation requires that you are able to respond to questions, concerns, or points that the customer raises. You must be able to respond well, whether in person, over the phone, or in writing. You must be able to clearly communicate solutions to the prospect's problems if the prospect is ever going to become a customer.

Imagine you are on one side of a wall and the person you want to communicate with is on the other side of the wall. But there's more than the wall in the way. The wall is surrounded by barriers. These barriers could be things like different cultures, different expectations, different experiences, different perspectives, or different communication styles, to name just a few.

> Communication skills are the tools that we use to remove the barriers to effective communication.

You might experience only one of these barriers at a time, or you might find yourself facing them all. Getting your message to the other person during your sales presentation requires that you recognize that these barriers exist between you, and that you then apply the proper tools, or communication skills, to remove those barriers preventing your message from getting through.

Of course, since communication is a two-way street, the person on the other side of those barriers will also try to send messages back to you. Your ability to understand them clearly could be left to a dependence on their ability to use communication skills. But that's leaving the success of the communication with your customer to chance. Instead, you can also use your own communication skills to ensure that you receive messages clearly as well.

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Finally, there isn't only one point in your communication with another person at which you have to watch out for barriers. To be successful at communicating, it's important to recognize that these barriers to communication can occur at multiple points in the communication process – before, during, or after the sales presentation.

Remember that communication skills involve both verbal and non-verbal communication. When communicating with others, the non-verbal aspects of what we are saying are actually more important than the words that we use. In fact, if the two conflict, we will automatically believe the non-verbal communication we are receiving over the verbal.

So what do we mean by non-verbal communication? Mainly, we are referring to tone of voice and body language. Tone of voice is responsible for about 35-40 percent of the message we are sending. It involves the volume, emotion, and emphasis in our voice when we speak.

> We instinctively recognize what body language and other non-verbal forms of communication are telling us.

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Over half of the message we are sending can be due to body language. Body language is very important in a face-to-face sales presentation because it is a subconscious way that we communicate and it is one that we recognize in others on instinct. Examples of body language include:

- Facial expressions
- The way you stand or sit
- Any swaying or other movement
- Gestures with your arms or hands
- Eye contact (or lack thereof)
- Breathing rate
- Swallowing or coughing
- Blushing
- Fidgeting

Basically, body language includes anything you are doing with your body besides speaking. We recognize this communication instinctively, without having to be told what it means.

When you speak or present to your customers, you need to be fully aware of your body language. You want your physical signals to support what you are saying rather than contrasting it. Otherwise you will leave your customer with the impression that you don't believe what you are saying – so why should they? A great way to know what kind of body language you are using is to have someone watch you during a sales presentation and then give you feedback. Or, try videotaping yourself as you practice the presentation, then watch it for any body language that you need to eliminate.

3.5 Solutions to Problems

The salesperson of today is a problem-solver who works in conjunction with the prospect to identify any issues that his organization has and then uses that information to present solutions to the prospect's problems or situations. Before you make your sales presentation, the tricky part of this situation is ensuring that the problem that the prospect is attempting to solve is the actual problem that exists.

For example, when you first speak to a prospect, she might say that she needs a specific type of software. You could just make a presentation on the software and that would be the end of it. Or instead, you could ask the prospect questions in order to determine what the problem is that they are trying to solve. Then during your sales presentation, you will be able to:

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- Offer a better product or solution than the specific one the prospect asked for
- Offer a broader solution that the prospect didn't even know they needed or wanted
- Offer additional products or services that enhance your sale and also exceed the prospect's expectations
- Identify additional needs that the prospect has which you can then offer to resolve with other products or services
- Determine that you don't actually have a product or service that will solve the prospect's problem

The final point above may not seem like a solution you would want to offer. But the fact is that telling a prospect the truth will establish you as a reliable, trustworthy source of information for the next time they need something.

> The first step in problem-solving is to ensure that the problem the prospect is trying to solve is the actual problem that needs solving.

One simple problem-solving tool is to use something called 'The Five Whys.' It is simple because it uses the question 'why' up to five times in order to help get to the root of a problem.

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But remember that it is indeed a simple tool – if you are dealing with a more complex problem, you may need to learn other problem-solving skills. An example of how to use this tool is shown in Figure 4 below. Notice that in this case, it's not necessary to use five 'why' questions to get to the root of the problem.

Prospect	Salesperson
I might be interested in a copy of your ABC billing software.	Might I ask why?
We are having problems keeping track of customer bills.	Why are you having trouble?
We do it by hand, but now our customer base has grown so much that we can't keep up. Correspondence in general is difficult.	Why is correspondence difficult?
Because we have about 10 different pieces of information that have to go out to different customers in addition to the bills. Keeping all that in order is quite a challenge.	It sounds to me like you need more than a billing system – it sounds like a customer contact management system is what you really need. Why don't I show you some of the benefits it could provide?

Figure 4: Using the Five Whys Tool

3.6 Organization Skills

Successful sales presentations require that you be well-organized. You'll have information on your own products and services to keep track of, all the research information you've gathered on your prospects, your customers, and their businesses, and any other information that your organization might produce or require that you need to know.

Once you've gathered the information from your potential customers, you'll need to be able to organize your information into a logical sales presentation, whether that be in letters, on the telephone, or in a face-to-face presentation.

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So what can you do to help improve your organization skills in order to make effective sales presentations? Here are some suggestions:

- Use a contact management system software system, if possible, which will help you keep track of when you have spoken to, sent mail to, or sent email to a prospect, as well as when you need to contact them again. Ideally, you would be able to save documents into each customer's file so that you can attach any sales presentations, proposals, or other documents that you have created and sent to the customer.

- If you can't get a content management system, create one of your own using Microsoft Access or Excel. You should be able to sort by different values that are important in determining how and when you contact each prospect (size of organization, type of industry, current products the prospect has, date(s) you promised to follow-up with prospects, etc.)

- Create a template for your sales presentations that you can customize for individual customers and individual products. This saves you from having to duplicate efforts to create information that you will include in every sales presentation such as the key benefits of your product or service, information about your company, and your contact information with instructions on what the next step will be.

- Use a sales funnel such as the one shown on page 4. Keep track of the time that you are taking between the first contact with a potential customer and the preparation of your sales presentation. You want to make sure that you aren't losing sales because that interval is too long. You can also use the sales funnel to identify the 'conversion rate' of your sales presentations. Are you having to present to 50 people to get one sale? You might need to look at your initial research to see if you have been thorough enough in your interviewing and information-gathering.

3.7 Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are more than just communication skills. They are the 'people skills' that seem to come to some of us so naturally, while others of us may struggle with them. Interpersonal skills will help you to make more effective sales presentations, to work with your prospects and to build rapport with them, but it will also help you to advocate for your prospects with your colleagues across your organization. Interpersonal skills also help you to build the type of long-term relationships that are important in turning prospects into customers that you keep for the long term.

> Interpersonal skills are the 'people skills' that help you to work with and build rapport with prospects, as well as to advocate for your prospect within your own organization.

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Some interpersonal skills include:

- Courtesy – it's been said that good manners cost nothing, and that's the truth. There is no reason to be anything but courteous when dealing with your prospects, customers, and colleagues. It fosters relationships and shows that you care about making the other person comfortable.
- Respect for others – you've heard the 'golden rule', that you should treat others the way that you would like to be treated. But the true expression of respect is something called the 'platinum rule' - treating others the way that they would like for you to treat them.
- Ability to see things from others' perspectives – if you have a prospect or a customer who is not convinced that your product or service is the best choice for their organization, you need to be able to put yourself in the customer's shoes to determine what their motivation is – for both buying or for not buying.
- Ability to understand various communication styles – each of us has a way of communicating with the world, and your prospect's could be very different from your own. These differences could create barriers to relationship building if you don't understand how they may show up.
- For example, a person who you perceive as being rude or cold may simply be reserved or shy. Or a person you see as intrusive or forward may simply be interested in people in general and is not meaning any disrespect. This is just one form of keeping an open mind when working with others – a huge factor in interpersonal skills!

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3.8 Self-Motivation Skills

As a salesperson, you have to be able to motivate yourself. There will be those times that you don't want to take the next step in the sales process, or to make that phone call to present to the next customer. But you'll need to know how to work through those feelings and take the steps that your prospects and customers need – and that will help you be successful in your job.

Motivation requires a goal to strive for. You can get as creative as you want in the goals that you set for yourself, as long as they will help you to take the next action(s) that are necessary in moving through the sales funnel. The goals don't have to be related to your sales funnel – they could also be related to your own personal growth, such as working on your body language or your organization skills.

> There will be times that you don't want to take the next step in the sales process. Self-motivation will help you work thorough those times.

Here are some tips for how to keep yourself motivated:

- As we said, motivation requires goals. Decide on what your goals are – and write them down. Consider short, medium, and long-term goals.

- Do it anyway. We all have days where we just don't feel like doing our work. But in a job like sales, every day and every contact can be important. So even if you don't feel like doing something on your list – do it anyway. The more practice you get at this, the easier it will become.

- Stop procrastinating. It's very easy to find things to do other than what is on your list. You need to recognize when you are procrastinating and nip it in the bud. The sooner you get whatever it is you are procrastinating over finished, the sooner you will be free of it and ready to move on to the next thing on your list.

- Set rewards for yourself. As you complete your goals, be sure to celebrate your successes with rewards for yourself. This positive reinforcement will then motivate you to work towards the next goal – and the next corresponding reward.

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3.9 Perseverance

As you start contacting prospects and preparing sales presentations, you will find that you hear ‘no’ a lot more than you hear ‘yes’. This can be discouraging, but you should recognize that it’s just part of the process. Perseverance is vital, along with self-motivation, to keep from losing your momentum. Remind yourself that every ‘no’ is getting you one step closer to the next ‘yes’.

Of course, if you continue to get no after no without getting any success with your sales presentation techniques, you might want to seek input from others. Persevering doesn’t mean continuing on blindly with an approach that isn’t working. It means continuing to move forward, even if you have to change your approach repeatedly until you get one that seems to work the best.

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4. Basic Sales Presentation Techniques

4.1 Introduction

In this section we'll examine some basic sales presentation techniques that will help improve your sales presentations and that will help improve the chance of your sales presentations in being successful. This is no easy feat. Think about the phone calls, emails, and mail that you've received in the last few days. How much of it was unsolicited advertising? How much of it did you read before you tossed it out or hit the 'delete' button? Not much of it, probably. And it's probably very rare that you would actually follow up and take further action on a piece of unsolicited sales material.

Getting a prospect to treat your sales presentation seriously means that you have to grab their attention in just a few seconds. The prospect has to see some value in what they are reading in order to keep reading or listening. And then they have to be convinced that the value is something that they want, need, or could benefit them before they are willing to take the next step of committing to a sale.

4.2 The Five Second Rule

Getting someone's attention is harder than ever these days – but keeping it is even harder! We have so many competing attempts for our attention that we have to make fast decisions about what is important and what is not. Think about all of the ways in which we are bombarded with information and sales attempts – television, radio, print, billboards and other street advertising, telephone advertising – it's everywhere that we turn. In such a world of noise and information, how can you stand out from the crowd?

In today's fast-paced work environment, you have about five seconds to capture a prospect's attention. This means that you have between ten and twenty words of your opening statement in order to get the prospect to keep reading or listening. This is why so many sales letters, advertisements, and marketing collateral pieces use headlines, loud voices, or bold openings – they are effective at grabbing attention within the five-second rule.

4.3 The Language You Choose

Your prospect should be able to get the gist of the sales presentation in the first opening statement. This will communicate more to the customer than the words you are saying. It also tells the prospect something about you – that you can communicate efficiently and effectively, meaning that you respect their time. As you think about the vocabulary that you are to use, be sure of a few points:

- Be careful and choosy about the words and information that you include. If every word isn't forwarding your message or isn't important to your point, you need to keep editing your speech or writing.

- Be scripted and well-practiced. If you are using a written sales presentation, you will have plenty of time to review your organization. If you are using a telephone or face-to-face presentation, you should have a script with the information you need to cover and you should have practiced it enough that you could be comfortable without the scripted words in front of you.

- Be certain that your contact would understand any jargon, 'tech-speak' or abbreviations that you want to use. If in doubt, spell or speak it out.

- Use language and make points that are relevant to decision makers, such as the financial impact of implementing a product or service.

- Use vocabulary that a decision-maker is used to hearing. In other words, don't 'talk down' to a prospect, but don't use such unusual vocabulary that they would need a dictionary to understand it. As a good rule of thumb, read the most popular trade or business journal in their field and use a similar level of vocabulary.

- Keep the tone professional and polite. Don't imply a level of acquaintance with the prospect that doesn't yet exist or any other similar 'tricks.' Honest, straightforward, and professional is best.

> How you get the prospect's attention and the first impression that you make will set the tone for your relationship going forward.

4.4 Use the Information Available Online

There are four great sources of information online when you are working on your sales presentation, no matter what presentation format you choose. First is the information that your potential prospects have put online about their own companies. You can see how they represent themselves in the marketplace. What values are important to them? What are their strengths? What does their annual report say about them and how they envision the company's future? Can you identify any weaknesses that they might have? How could your product or service help them to be in an even stronger position?

That's where the second source of information can help – the information online about your prospects' competition. Who are their main competitors? What kind of edge does the competition have, if any? What are they focusing on and how are they representing themselves in the marketplace? Can you get any ideas that could help your prospects to be better positioned?

Now you can do a search for information from independent sources on your prospects. What are customers or reviewers saying about your prospect? Are there any specific complaints that seem to be reappearing? What news is out there about the business itself? Are there concerns about the prospect's ability to compete in any way? Are there issues raised about specific aspects of the prospect's operations? If you can bring solutions to these issues to the table, you will be demonstrating value to your prospects.

The final area of information you can research online is related to your own competition. What will your prospects hear from the competitions' salespeople? Are you prepared to respond to those offerings? By being familiar with what other offers your prospects will receive, you will be prepared when and if the prospect brings them up. Even if they don't bring them up, you will know how to position yourself and your company in order to remain the forerunner in the prospect's mind.

4.5 Getting Past the Gatekeeper

In many cases, before your prospect even gets to hear or see your presentation, you have to get past the person whose job it is to weed out salespeople like yourself. This is not necessarily an easy task. This person will be looking through dozens of similar pieces of mail every day or fielding similar phone calls from other providers and salespeople. So to get to your prospect, your approach needs to stand out. You need to present yourself as professional and your ideas as relevant to your prospect's needs.

In order for your letter, email, phone call, or personal visit to make the cut, you need to make sure that it is:

- Personalized to the decision maker, with correct spelling and the correct title for written presentations. If you don't have this information correct, you will look as if you are randomly contacting potential customers rather than contacting this prospect because your careful research has shown that your product or service can be of benefit to them.

- Significant for the financial, commercial, or operational issues of the company. If it's not relevant to the organization, again, it looks like a telemarketing or mass mailing attempt and you will be rejected by the gatekeeper before you have a chance to begin your presentation.

- Of interest to the decision maker and demonstrating a potential benefit. Otherwise, why would the gatekeeper pass it on?

- Well-targeted to the decision maker. In other words, you must be asking the right person to make the decision that you are asking them to make. If your presentation is made to someone who doesn't have the level of authority needed to move forward, it is unlikely they will pass unsolicited sales information on to their own boss.

- Credible. You have to sound like an expert in your presentation and a reliable source of information on the topic you're addressing. You can do this by including some testimonials, some examples of other clients (if you have their permission), or some relevant data that would interest the client. Be sure to include your personal contact information – and be sure you will be the one responding.

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- All of your sales materials that you use or give to the customer grammatically should be grammatically and organizationally perfect. Don't rely only on a spell check feature for spelling and grammar – it can miss words that are spelled correctly but used incorrectly. Any mistake will make you look unprofessional and as if you didn't care enough to do some basic proofreading. Letting someone else in your organization read and edit your materials is also a good idea. Don't let a perfectly good prospect be ruined by a failure to proofread your materials.

4.6 Sales Presentation Structure

Whether you write an email or letter, make a phone call, or deliver a sales presentation in person, your sales presentation structure should follow the AIDA format. This is a classic, effective sales model, and one that has been around since the 1950s. The acronym stands for:

- A – Attention
- I – Interest
- D – Desire
- A – Action

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The model refers to the process that is required for a person to act on external stimuli – not just sales opportunities, though it is a perfectly valid model for sales. Anytime we make a sale, we must first gain the attention of our prospect, and then generate some interest on their part to learn more about the product. Next, they must want the product – they must see the value in the product for their organization – before they will perform the action of contacting you for a telephone appointment or a sale. Let's look further at each individual step.

4.6.1 Attention

Getting the attention of your prospect is the first step, and is important because it sets the tone for your relationship going forward. As the saying goes, you only get a single chance to make a first impression, so be sure that you are representing yourself, your product or service, and your organization in the best possible light.

Remember that you have just five seconds to capture the attention of the customer. In a written sales presentation, you might use a headline of some sort in order to focus the customer's attention on the main benefit. Over the phone or in person you should have an opening statement that will give the customer a reason to continue listening.

4.6.2 Interest

Once you've gotten the prospect's attention, you can't hold it unless you generate some interest. Something will appear interesting to your prospect if:

- It is relevant to the prospect and can provide some kind of advantage (benefit) for them
- You are approaching the person who has a need for your product or service
- You are approaching the prospect at the right time – both in the sense of convenience and in the sense of the correct time of year / correct timing for your prospect to use your product or service.
- You can talk the language of the prospect. You should be able to empathize with and understand the prospect's situation, then express that understanding in a way that shows you have that understanding of their situation.

> Taking the prospect from interest to desire requires that you learn more about what the prospect's needs are and how you can help them.

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4.6.3 Desire

Once you have the prospect's interest, you need to be able to grow that interest into desire for your product or service. This requires further development of your value to the prospect. This step will continue when you get the prospect on the phone or when they have agreed to a meeting. In this phase of the letter, you should:

- Discuss the prospect's:
    - Situation
    - Needs
    - Priorities
    - Constraints
- Include information on why the prospect should trust you and why they should be comfortable doing business with you. Your job is to demonstrate that you are not a risk – you are a proven partner in helping businesses like theirs become successful.
- Distinguish yourself from the competition. Since you have done your research, you should be able to put your best, competitive aspects into the limelight in your presentation.
- Identify any particular advantages of your product over others, and identify every way in which those advantages can help the prospect.

4.6.4 Action

If you have completed the first three stages thoroughly and well, this final stage of your presentation should flow forward easily. The prospect will have a strong desire for taking the next step – or even for buying your product or service, and they will either believe or be considering that you are the right choice to be their provider.

It now only remains for you to get the prospect to take the next step – the action which you propose to the prospect at the end of your presentation. Be aware of a few things, though:

- Caution, hesitancy, or the simple fact that there is so much more to do these days for all of us may mean that it takes some follow-up efforts in order for you to get the prospect to take the next step.
- Make sure that you follow-up on any response that you need to make as soon as possible. You don't want to let the prospect think that their business wasn't important enough to follow-up on right away

- Make it very clear what you are asking the prospect to do next. If your initial presentation was by letter and you want to schedule a telephone presentation, be sure to tell them how to set that up. Make it as easy as possible for your prospect to reach you and to move forward in the sales process.

> While Microsoft PowerPoint is still widely used and accepted for sales presentations, new technology offers other options for today's salesperson.

4.7 Sales Presentation Media

The standard in presentation media, Microsoft PowerPoint, is no longer the only standard means of presenting. It is still very common, and has evolved to incorporate other media such as video and internet links that are accessed directly from the PowerPoint slide. You can put together a very impressive, effective presentation using PowerPoint, but there are now other means of presenting to consider as well.

> If the first three stages have been done thoroughly and well, this final step will flow easily.

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4.7.1 Interactive Whiteboards

Flip charts and markers are still out there, but they are being replaced by the new digital displays known as interactive whiteboards. They are used as a projector screen for your digital media, but they also allow you to record and display videos, make notes or highlight areas of what you are presenting, and control your laptop display using your fingers or a remote control. If you want to make an impression as a high-tech organization that knows how to put technology to good use, consider incorporating an interactive whiteboard in your presentations.

4.7.2 Video Conferencing

In the era of high-speed internet and with the advent of free video conferencing software, video conferencing is growing in popularity for presentations. No one has to spend money to travel to another location. Instead, you can use video to make your presentation to the customer just as if you were live and in front of them. If you also incorporate shared workspaces, you can show the customer any information that you would normally have printed or handed out.

4.7.3 Shared Workspaces

Imagine you are on a video conference with a client and you want to walk them through your presentation. A shared workspace program allows you to pull up documents (or allows your customer to do so) so that you are both looking at the same document. You can point to specific aspects of the documents, as can the customer. You can switch between different documents, back to video, over to a website, and back again, all with the customer following along. Of course, the level of interactivity that you get depends on the program that you use. There are free options that have limited functionality, or you can purchase access to fully interactive, shared workspaces that you can permit your customers to access.

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5. Written Sales Presentations

5.1 Introduction

You will often make your first version of a sales presentation in writing, either through a mailing, a letter, or an email. The AIDA format that we discussed in Chapter 4 is valid for written sales presentations, but there are some additional tips that you should follow when writing a sales presentation that the customer will be reading without you being present. We will use the example of a sales presentation via a letter to discuss these tips, though they are appropriate to sales presentations by email as well.

5.2 Structure Tips

When you write your introductory sales presentation letter or any other letter to a prospect, there are some structural aspects that are important if you want your letter to be professional and well received.

- Always check the details before you send the letter. You should be certain that you have the correct title, the correct spelling of their name, and any professional qualifications that you know are accurate.

- Keep your sentences short and direct. Use bullet points or numbers if you have several points to make. You should keep the letter to one side of the page since you'll be keeping it to the main points.

- Remember that you want the letter to be read in 20 to 30 seconds so that your prospect will be able to judge whether or not they want more information pretty quickly.

- The letter should include:

    - Salutation – Dear Mr., Mrs., Ms and surname. If you don't know the surname, you could use Dear Sir or Madam. But hopefully you have done your research and you know the correct name. You can always call the prospect's secretary and confirm the name and address.

    - Headline statement – this is optional, but as we mentioned, it is a great way to capture your reader's attention

    - Credibility statement – establishes who you are, your credentials – in other words, why they should listen to you

    - Relevance statement – why you are writing to them and what the importance to them could be

    - How and why statement – this is optional, but you should tell them why your offer is the best they will receive and how you are the best choice for a company to offer this service or product.

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- Action or follow-up statement – this is mandatory. You need to let the prospect know what you want them to do next. What is the outcome you want? A phone call? An email? An appointment for a face-to-face sales presentation?

- Sign-off - the closing statement of your letter, including a thank you for their attention.

- P.S. Statement – although this can work in many situations, you should avoid it if you are writing to senior decision makers because it could be considered unprofessional.

Let's look at a couple of these in more detail.

5.3 Headline

If you decide to use a headline, there are some guidelines that you should follow in order to make it as effective as possible:

- Make it concise, relevant, and unique
- Use a maximum of 15 to 20 words

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- Avoid using uppercase letters, which make things harder to read and could be construed as 'shouting'
- Avoid using italics, bold, or colors, all of which can appear unprofessional and can limit readability
- Put the headline at about one-third to one-quarter of the way down the page where the eye naturally falls first
- Try writing the headline after you've written the rest of the text so that you know what the top point should be and what headline would be most meaningful

5.4 Credibility and Relevance Statements

In some cases it is easier to combine these two statements into one – or at least into one paragraph. Your job with this section is to establish yourself and your company as experts in the industry and as having something of value to offer. Here are some suggestions for creating your credibility and relevance statement:

- Mention what your company has done in similar areas or industries to your prospect's business
- Use technical language only if it is relevant and if you are sure that your prospect will understand it
- Use language that shows you are familiar with the prospect's industry, needs, concerns, and problems as well as their successes
- Most sales letters avoid mentioning any information about pricing. If you feel you can give at least a general idea of what the financials would be for your customer to take advantage of your offer, give it.
- If you do mention costs, relate them to the potential returns on that investment. Since decision-makers are always cost conscious, demonstrating the value they will get in return is an excellent way to answer cost-related objections before they even arise.
- If the prospect works in a highly competitive marketplace, mentioning their competition may be acceptable as long as it is relevant. If the prospect is not surrounded by aggressive competition, then mentioning the competition is not as acceptable.
- Focus in on one theme, one benefit, and one result. Drive home what the main value is that you are providing. Make sure you have explained what is in it for the prospect to take the action that you are suggesting in your letter.

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5.5 How and Why Statement

This is your chance to explain in concise terms how you would be the best partner the prospect could choose if they need the service or product you are offering. It is your opportunity to show them why you are the expert that they need and why your company's ability to fulfill their need is unique. What is it about you that separates you from the rest of the pack? What do you bring to the table that other salespeople will not?

5.6 Action or Follow-Up Statement

This statement is when you ask for a specific action from your prospect and you tell him what you will be doing next as well. This could be notice that you will be calling them to follow up within the next week or so. Don't give them a specific date and time because it will sound presumptuous. However, you could ask them to email you or call you with a convenient date and time for a phone call. Remember, the rule is to make it easy for your prospect to contact you or take the next step.

5.7 Sign-Off

Before you sign your name, it doesn't hurt to restate what you will be doing next. Then to remain professional and polite, stick with the standard closings that are expected in business letters. Use 'yours truly', 'yours sincerely', or 'yours faithfully'.

5.8 P.S.

If you feel that it will complement the rest of the letter and if the tone is appropriate, you can use a 'P.S.' to add a last bit of interesting information, to draw more attention, or to highlight a final point. You could direct the prospect to your website, mention a special offer, or mention that you will be in their area during a specific week if they would like to meet in person. However, if you are writing to a high-level decision maker, avoid the P.S. It can seem too much like a gimmick at that level.

5.9 Other Tips for Written Presentations

When you are sending your sales presentation in written format, there are a few more tips to keep in mind in order to appear professional, efficient, and credible. These include:

- Less is more. Get to the point fast – if you can't read the whole letter in under a minute, it is entirely too long or too complicated.

- Remember that you are not trying to sell the product or service – you are only trying to sell the next step (usually a phone call).

- Write using the 2^{nd} person – you, your, yours. This ensures that you are continually directing your information to the company and the prospect specifically.

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- If you enclose additional information, be sure to note that you have done so – and why. Why should they take even more of their time to look at what you've included? What is the benefit?

- Make sure that the visual presentation is easy to read. This includes the font, the margins and page layout, the length of the paragraphs and sentences, and any bulleting or numbering of information. Does it look neat and organized? Is everything properly aligned? The presentation should be visually appealing.

- Use the tone and style that would be most appealing and appropriate for the reader. Think of who you are writing to and then write accordingly.

- Your presentation of the offer should be believable. If it sounds like it is too good to be true, your prospect will not believe what you are offering. This doesn't mean that you can't offer them information or resources free of charge – but your offer shouldn't be so outrageous that your prospect will not believe it. Remember that under-promising and over-delivering is better than over-promising and under-delivering.

- Avoid trying to be funny or clever. You have no guarantee that your attempt at humor will be understood or interpreted in the way that you intend it, and it could make you look unprofessional instead.

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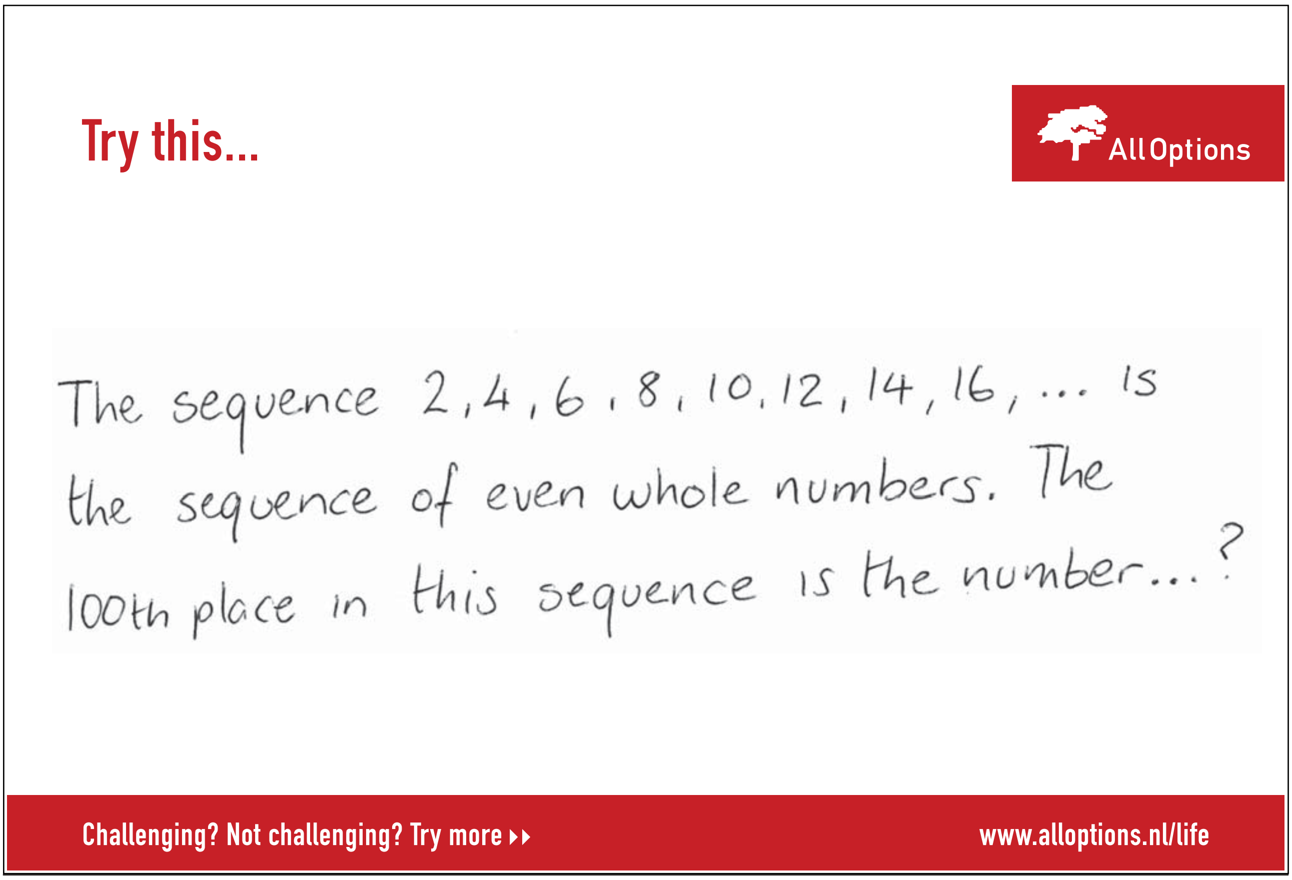

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- Don't pose puzzles or make it difficult for your prospect to understand what you are offering. You might be excited about the answer to the puzzle – but your prospect is too busy to play games or have to put forth extra effort to understand what you are saying.

- Remember that what you are writing should make the reader say 'yes, I want to learn more about that.'

- If you can, try to get the prospect's secretary or personal assistant on your side. Let them know that you are sending the presentation and why. Then when you send it, it is more likely to be noticed by him or her out of the pile of letters like yours.

5.10 Special Considerations for Email Presentations

It's not uncommon these days to send a sales presentation via email, with supporting documents included as attachments. Yet there is a certain etiquette and format to an email that you can follow in order to help the email sales presentation be successful. Some tips include:

- A clear subject line. The customer should know from the subject line of your email what it is that you are sending. They get lots of email every day like we all do, so distinguish your email with a direct, information-rich subject line. Avoid using all capital letters in the subject line or elsewhere in the document, which can be interpreted as shouting.

- Use a salutation and a closing, just like in a letter.

- State in the first sentence why you are writing and what you are sending.

- List your attachments and if there is any possible confusion as to what they include, give a brief description of each one.

- Be as brief as possible, using bullets or numbers to identify separate pieces of information.

- Don't use an urgent send setting unless it is truly urgent from the customer's point of view.

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6. Telephone Sales Presentation Techniques

6.1 Introduction

There are eight steps to a telephone sales presentation, which are particularly of value if you are contacting your prospect for the first time over the telephone. Notice as you read these steps that your main focus is not on a hard sell – instead, you are aiming to open up the conversation between you and the prospect which will lead to a sale once your prospect recognizes the value that your product or service offers. The eight basic steps are:

- Preparation
- Introduction
- Questioning
- Objectivity
- Listen and interpret
- Inform and educate
- Involve and coordinate
- Keep in touch

Let's look at each of these in detail.

6.2 Preparation

Preparation is important so that you don't waste your own time or the time of the people you will be calling. There are three parts to successful preparation.

- Knowing your own product and service inside and out
- Your attitude towards selling by phone and your mental approach to it
- Your knowledge regarding your offer or proposition and how it will add value to your prospects' organizations and situations

Without being prepared in these three areas, what are you going to say to the prospect? Why would he or she be willing to listen? Why would he or she trust you to be the supplier of this service or product? You should know how your product would benefit the prospect, why your prospect should feel comfortable choosing you, and then be able to express all of that to them succinctly and clearly. Otherwise, your call will have been wasted effort.

You've done your research on the organization, and you have a strong understanding of how your product or service will benefit the customer's organization. You even feel you can explain it clearly in terms of financial returns on the initial investment. But you have to do one more thing – you have to realize that even after you've done the research and come up with a proposition, you might find that your prospect is interested in or needs a completely different product or service than the one you were proposing. This just means that you need to have enough of an understanding of your product or service line in general that you can change your proposition, if necessary, once you have spoken to the prospect.

6.3 Introduction

When you call the prospect, you have about five to fifteen seconds to capture the prospect's attention. As you open the conversation, you need to be very clear and concise about who you are and why you are calling. Have a very strong reason for asking to speak to the prospect or for requesting a scheduled time to speak in more detail. Explain the benefit the prospect will enjoy in return for giving you a few moments of time.

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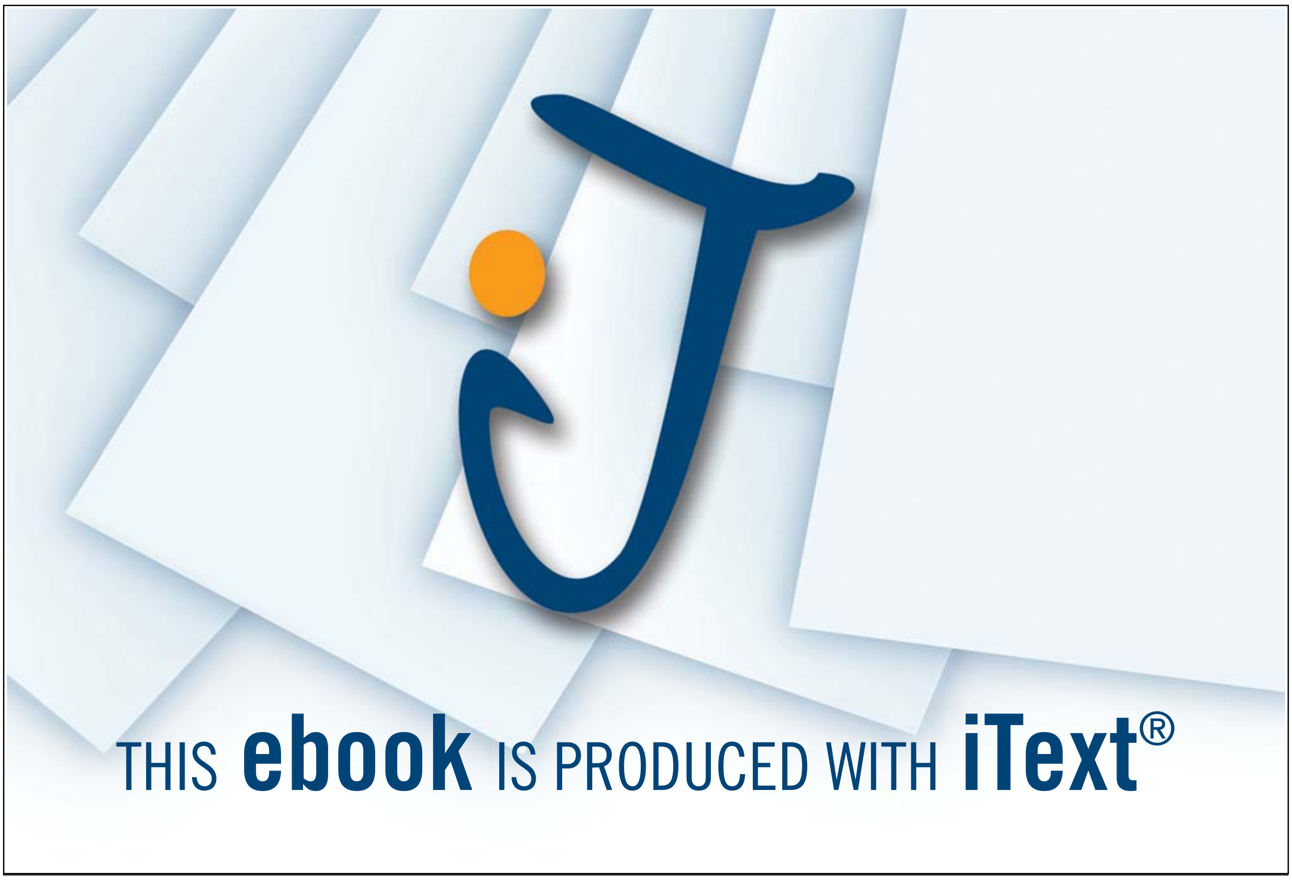

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6.4 Questioning

Once you get the prospect to give you some time, you have the opportunity to show that you know what you are talking about by asking facilitative, intelligent questions. Your questions should show that you are familiar with the prospect's business, their challenges, their competition, and their concerns. If you prepare your questions well, your prospect will be helping you to make the sale because their answers will demonstrate why they should purchase your product. For example, you could ask questions like:

- We've talked about the fact that you have a challenge with ___________. What would it be worth to your organization if that challenge were resolved?

- How would it help you to be more competitive if you didn't have to deal with the problems caused by _______________ anymore?

- What value can you see in eliminating ______________ from your daily workload?

6.5 Objectivity

Although this sounds unusual for a salesperson, objectivity is an important characteristic of someone the prospect will trust as an advisor. Think about your own experiences as a customer; were you more likely to buy from someone who pushed and pushed their own products and services and denigrated the competition, or not? Instead, focus on making yourself a good guide and a knowledgeable partner in the prospect's decision making process. This reinforces your role as an expert that the prospect can rely upon.

6.6 Listen and Interpret

This tool goes hand in hand with being objective. If you aren't focused only on pushing your sale, but instead are listening to and understanding what the prospect is saying, you encourage the prospect to think of you as an advisor rather than a salesperson. You can interpret what they are saying by asking clarifying questions that let the prospect have a chance to correct something if it wasn't what they meant to say. Some examples of ways to clarify what you're hearing are:

- What I think you're saying is…

- So if I'm hearing you correctly, your main concern is…

- Let me be sure I understand; you're saying that…

- So you felt that…

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6.7 Inform and Educate

If you are going to position yourself as the expert in your given service or product area, you need to be bringing some information to the table. If you are not able to explain, define, and elaborate on your offering, you are not going to be seen as the expert that you want to be. Every question that the prospect asks is an opportunity to demonstrate the value that you can bring to the prospect as an expert in your field and in theirs.

You are also helping yourself by learning whether or not there is an actual fit between the prospect's needs and your offer. Take your time and help the prospect understand how you can add value to their organization. In the worst case, you have left an excellent impression with someone who might become a customer – or refer customers to you – in the future.

6.8 Involve and Coordinate

Once you've determined that there is a match between what you have to offer and what the prospect needs, now you need to explore how the prospect would like to move forward. Let them give you an idea of what would be the best next move because they are the ones that know how their company's purchasing processes work. Do you need to have a face-to-face meeting? Send a written proposal as a follow-up? Let them tell you what they need you to do and then you can coordinate the action. Demonstrate your value starting now by making it easy to do business with you.

6.9 Keep Ownership

This step actually applies to any sales presentation and sale that you might make. Once you are on the way to a sale, you may need to pass the customer on to another division in your organization. But no matter what happens next, remember that this is your customer. You need to keep ownership of the customer's experience with your organization. Take excellent notes, make sure everyone agrees upon delivery dates and times, and keep in touch with the customer to make sure their experience is good. Keep the customer informed and remember that no matter what might happen, as the salesperson you are the 'face' of your company for the customer. Fulfill your role with the first sale and you will find that successive sales with the customer are easier because they know you and trust you to come through on your promises.

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7. Face-to-Face Sales Presentations

7.1 Introduction

The face-to-face sales presentation often occurs after you have already sent either a written presentation or had a telephone presentation with the customer. At this point, all of the stakeholders in the decision are brought into the room in order to hear your information, ask any pertinent questions, and give their input into the possible selection of your product or service. It can be challenging because you have to be a true expert, ready to answer questions for each of the different people attending the meeting. But with some preparation and practice, you should learn to see a face-to-face sales presentation as the chance for you to truly shine. You can communicate more in a physical presentation than in any other format, giving you the opportunity to deliver your message in as effective a means as possible while demonstrating your value as a partner in the success of the customer's organization.

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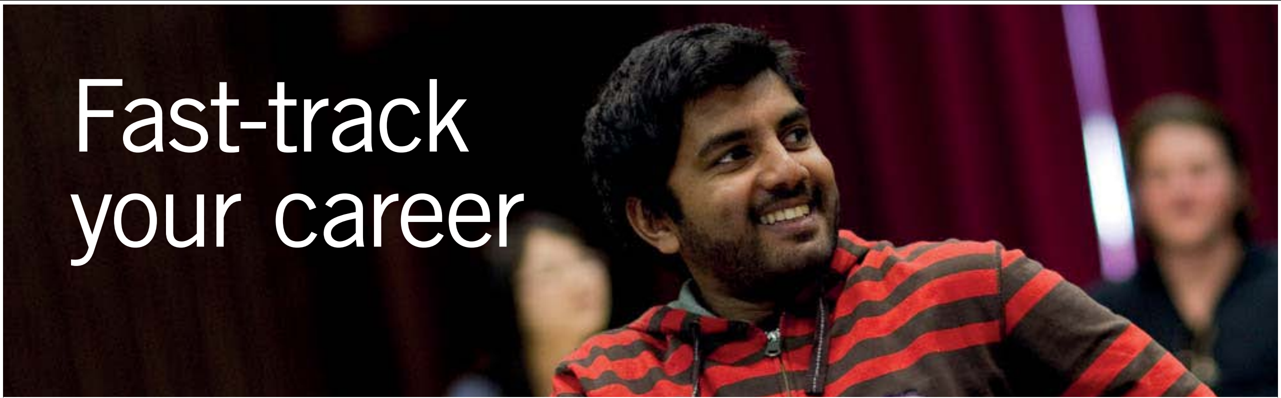

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7.2 Know Your Timeframe

When you are preparing for your face-to-face sales presentation, be sure that you know how much time you will have for the appointment. You don't want the prospects to be more interested in their watches than in what you are presenting. A good rule of thumb is to schedule your presentation to take about 60% of the allotted time. That way you have left time for asking questions, clarifying details, and making plans for moving forward. You can often avoid having to have another meeting if you can format your presentation this way.

> Find out how much time you have for your presentation, and then time your material so that you use about 60% of the time for presenting.

7.3 Create a Sales Presentation Checklist

After you've made a few face-to-face sales presentations, you'll realize that there are certain aspects of your presentation that you repeat with each customer. You may also have the negative experience of forgetting to include or bring with you some information that the customer asks for during your presentation. Hopefully one time will be enough to convince you of the need to create a sales presentation checklist. Following is an example of what your checklist might include.

____ I have prepared a script for the presentation, both in written and outline formats.

____ I have scripted the answers to questions that I think are likely to arise.

____ I have delivered the presentation to several people in order to get feedback (and/or, I have videotaped myself giving the presentation to review it for myself)

____ I have prepared all printed materials for my audience, including extra copies for those unexpected attendees.

____ I have arranged for any necessary equipment and I have a contingency plan should any equipment malfunction.

____ I have confirmed that anyone needed to make the purchasing decision will be present at the presentation.

____ The presentation starts with the most important, pertinent benefit to the prospect's specific problems or challenges.

____ The presentation relates the financial benefits or return on investment of the product or service where applicable.

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7.4 Edit, Edit, Edit

When you listen to a sales presentation, do you want to hear ten minutes on the history of the organization or do you want the presenter to get to the point? While a brief history might be important in order to convey certain benefits of working with your organization (size, experience, convenient locations, a proven commitment to customer service), you should only include information if it enhances your focus on benefits for this specific customer.

> Cut the fluff from your presentation. Include information only if it enhances your description of the benefits your product or service offers.

Look for the fluff and cut it out. You can always add information verbally that is not included in the materials if you feel that it might be important to some of your listeners. As you read your presentation, look for information that you can edit and move into your notes instead. Since you should be having someone else listen to the presentation, ask them to make notes as to what they would cut from it. Then do a scan to make sure you haven't included any jargon or abbreviations if there is any chance that someone in the presentation won't understand it.

Finally, look back at the information you prepared on any questions that you think might arise from your attendees. Can you add any information to the presentation that will answer those questions? If your experience, your research, or your instinct tells you that the question is likely to arise, put the information in the presentation. But if you're not certain, leave it out. You can always answer the question at the end of the presentation.

7.5 Your Behavior

When you stand in front of your audience, your body language is saying more than you think. Stand tall, keeping your posture open. Avoid crossing your arms, fidgeting, swaying, touching your face, wringing your hands, or any other action that could distract your audience. Remember to make eye contact with everyone in the room, not just the main decision maker.

You prepared your outline of the presentation as well as your script and other notes. But be sure that you don't read directly from them. If you are using slides for your presentation, don't read the slides to the audience. Your slides should include the main points, but what you say should elaborate and add supporting information to your presentation. You can't bore your audience any faster than by reading your slides or your notes. It cuts off your connection to the audience and makes you seem like a nervous amateur.

Last, be yourself. You should be natural, open, and friendly. If you get flustered or make a mistake, just take a deep breath and address the error. Enjoy yourself if you can – this is a chance for you to really express your enthusiasm for your product, your service, and your organization as a whole - as well as your excitement about what you can do for the prospect.

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7.6 The Presentation Process

There are multiple ways to move through the presentation process, depending on the level of complexity of your product, the familiarity you and your prospect have with each other, and the amount of time that you have for the presentation. But there are some general tips that you can use to make the process smooth and to ensure that you make the best use of your time.

- Start with a review of the company's current situation, challenges, and problems as you understand them, and try to ascertain whether anything has changed. You might have spoken to the prospect weeks ago, and you don't know what might have changed in their situation since then. Have there been changes in the marketplace, in their competition's offerings, or even from your competition? If they are entertaining multiple offers, you might learn that your competition has made a presentation already. This could result in some comparison between your product and the competition's that you will want to address.

- Find out where the organization is in the decision process. If you find out that they still have other sales presentations to hear, you know that you won't be walking out of the room with a signed deal. But it does let you know how you need to position yourself at the end of the meeting.

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- As you go through the presentation, try to keep it interactive. Mention information that you know about the customer's situation, demonstrate how your product or service could answer that concern, and then ask the audience how having the answer would be a benefit. Keeping them involved also helps to make sure they stay interested – and tuned in.

- Be sure to state directly why you are the company's best choice. If you can't state this clearly, how could you expect your customer to be able to do so? Stick to the main, relevant reasons, but make sure that you include enough that your argument is compelling.

- Use visual materials in your presentation. Add pictures that represent the ideas you are trying to convey, but make sure that it is a clear connection that anyone could get. Use data or other visuals that are customized to your prospect. Visuals give you the chance to make your point through more than one method and they also help break up the monotony of slide after slide of words.

- Make sure you finish with a summary statement and a strong conclusion regarding your offer. If you can't get a decision at the end of the meeting, be sure you schedule your next meeting, phone call, or presentation. Don't leave without everyone knowing what is going to happen next.

7.7 Presentation Killers

This ebook has focused a great deal on telling you what to do in sales presentations, but we will end with five key things that you want to avoid whenever you make a presentation to a prospect. With all of the hard work that you have put into preparing your presentation, be sure that you don't negate that effort by making one of these 'presentation killer' mistakes.

- Having an unprofessional appearance. When you give a sales presentation, you are the physical representative of your company. You should expect that you and your company will be judged by your cover. Be well groomed, organized, on time, and in your sharpest suit.

- Talk, talk, talk. While people say that salespeople really know how to talk to people, there is such a thing as too much talking. Especially if you aren't saying something that is relevant to the customer. Instead of talking the whole time, remember that communication and sales both require two-way action. Keep your customer engaged, involved, and interacting with you while limiting extraneous chatter to a minimum.

- Failing to build rapport. Yes, we just said not to talk too much. But you have to talk enough to build rapport with your prospects. So much of sales is based on relationships – the small amount of time that you take to build rapport with your prospect will go a long way towards making this and future sales.

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- Failing to do your homework. Imagine your embarrassment; you stand in front of a room full of people who you have come to present to, only to discover that their business is not a real prospect for your product. Even if you could have offered a different product and met their needs, you have blown it if you haven't done your homework. Remember, you should be the expert that has come to help them be more successful – work hard to keep that image and it will serve you well.

- Failure to keep your ego in check. Remember that as a salesperson, you are a serviceperson. You will undoubtedly encounter difficult customers in your sales career. But you need to learn to manage your ego if you are going to deal with them effectively and still make the sale.

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8. Resources

Businessballs.com. Sales and Selling – Training and Techniques. The Changing Face of Selling.
http://www.businessballs.com/salestraining.htm#changingfaceofselling

Businessballs.com. Cold Calling Techniques.
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Mindtools.com. The Sales Funnel. Keeping Control of Your Sales Prospects.
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_94.htm