

HOW TO ACE YOUR PRESENTATION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Are you performing your web sales presentations as those previous to the pandemic? If so, you are not taking advantage of the technology or compensating for the disadvantages. I spoke with a salesperson recently who said she is finding it difficult to monitor buying signals now that she cannot see the attendees' reactions and body language that she previously was able to observe. It is a mistake to assume that what worked well when you met face-to-face with prospects will be as effective when you are not in the same room. You now need to make your sales presentations more interesting and engaging because it is easier to lose the attendees' attention when you are not in the same room.

I previously posted a guide on how to sell during the pandemic. I predicted that web or virtual meetings will be the new sales presentation standard, even after the quarantine ends.

Here are 9 tips to make your video meetings more effective:

- Make sure that you remove any possible visual or sound distractions before you begin your meeting. This includes barking dogs, crying babies, and ringing phones. Check your appearance to confirm your distance from the camera.
- Add more probing and questioning to keep the attendees' attention. Encourage the attendees to participate more by occasionally stopping presenting and asking thought-provoking, open-ended questions. These could be about their current state and their desired solution. If they still do not speak up, keep asking them questions, but do not act like an interrogator. Their responses will also help you better assess the buyer's level of interest.
- Cut down on the quantity of PowerPoint slides in your presentation., I suggest you present no more than 15-20 during a 1-hour web meeting. It is likely your attendees have been on web conferences most of the workday and are video fatigued. "Death by PowerPoint" is a meme and should be avoided. Each slide must be evaluated as to their value to the meeting and all non-essential slides should be deleted, I use the "so what" test on every slide and bullet item. Each is meaningless unless they are tied to your value proposition. Brevity is supreme, especially in a virtual meeting. An agenda slide should be included and it should be validated at the beginning of the meeting.
- Steve's presentation word meter is a fictitious invention. Its purpose is to count the words spoken by each person during a meeting. If the word meter indicates that the buyer's attendees spoke more than 50 percent of all words during the meeting, it was likely successful. If the buyers' spoke less than 20 percent, then it was probably sub-optimal. If it was under 10 percent, then it was probably a disaster. The attendees were just letting you speak, and they were not participating in the meeting. Their mind was elsewhere – but you did not know it.
- A mistake that I often saw salespeople make is assuming that they need to fill empty spaces during the meeting with their words; in fact, the opposite is true. You should be economical with your words during a web meeting and not try to "out talk" or talk over the buyer. Do not try to fill the silence with chatter.
- Stories are effective, both theirs and yours. People like to talk about themselves and their company and this should not be discouraged in the interest of time. Your stories should include

customer success stories. and should be specifically chosen for each meeting, so that you do not present any that are irrelevant to the buyer.

- It is important that throughout the web meeting you solicit verbal assurances from the attendees that they understand your value proposition. Thinking that they seem to be following or understanding you is a trap you need to avoid. The attendees may believe they are being polite by not saying they do not, or they are not paying attention to you. Do not ask “Does everybody understand what I am explaining?” In that case, few people will say “No, I do not.” Instead, put it on yourself and say “Have I made myself clear?” Then, if they do not understand what you have explained, they will readily answer “no,” and you can try harder to provide a better explanation.
- Reinforce the important *takeaways* that were presented or obtained through questioning and conversation at the conclusion of the meeting. Repetition increases retention. What five things do you want them to remember from this meeting?
- Allow sufficient time at the end of the meeting to ask closing questions and define the next steps. I have seen many meetings run over the allotted time and then everybody leaves the meeting, or shuts off the videoconference, without important questions being asked, such as “Did the meeting meet your expectations today? If not, why not?” and “Are there any reasons why you could not purchase our product or service?” It is more important to do this than completing the PowerPoint deck or even demonstrating a few more features. And there are no planes that you need to catch.

This new era of web sales meetings is new to many of us. Like all major changes, it has both positive and negative aspects. Embrace the positive that it will increase the number of prospects that you can call on each week and that prospects may be more willing to accept your invitation for a web meeting than they would have for an on-site meeting. That should increase your sales this year.

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