

Is Your Presentation a “10”?

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Most sales managers recognize the importance of making a great first impression. They understand that developing and delivering a consistent message that shines the brightest light on the company’s products, services and personnel is essential. Without it, the company would be hard pressed to distinguish itself from the competition. Yet, if you ask the typical sales manager if he has a yardstick or benchmark that identifies what a perfect “10 out of “10” presentation looks like, chances are the answer is no.

Defining a “10” presentation

Simply stated, a “10” presentation is one that generates and establishes a standard of excellence. It manifests the company’s best practices and the outcomes enjoyed by its clients, while further demonstrating the company’s sales process, including how and why people buy. It represents a well-conceived, designed and delivered message that earns the admiration and respect of the intended audience. As such, a “10” presentation increases the likelihood of generating initial and secondary interest in the company, its products, services and people. This accomplishment can result in a shortened sales cycle, which reduces the cost of the sale and goes right to the company’s bottom line.

Failure to provide sales teams with a “10” presentation can have the opposite effect. Without a well-rehearsed, professionally delivered presentation that includes a compelling and consistent message, sales teams struggle to convince potential buyers to make a positive decision in the company’s favor.

Companies that don’t invest their resources in this way are leaving the door open to competitors who are waiting in the wings to seize untapped opportunities and gain market share.

Perfect “10” Strategies

Creating, preparing for, and delivering any presentation requires a wide variety of considerations such as appropriate content, context, tone, pacing, belief, passion and enthusiasm. So it’s no surprise, developing

a presentation that raises the bar requires additional effort. While every “10” presentation is company-specific, there are universal strategies that companies can use that pay off handsomely:

Know the audience and speak their “language.” Products and services mean different things to different people within the same organization. Craft the presentation to the level and languages of the decision influencers. Bear in mind, in order to reach everyone, more than one version of the presentation may be required

Identify the available alternatives. Learn about the competitors’ products and services. Be prepared to present alternatives in a way that clearly demonstrates a better solution.

Predetermine the knowledge transfer required for success. Know what key information needs to be exchanged across the negotiating table – the “gives and the gets” – as well as the most likely concerns and objections that prospective buyers have.

Keep the end goal in mind. What are the desired outcomes or actions for every presentation? Earning a customer’s business requires meeting and exceeding their expectations better than all other available alternatives. As marketing guru, Jay Baer says, “If you sell something, you can make a customer today. If you help someone, you can create a customer for life.”

By providing an environment that encourages individual and organizational continuous analysis and improvement, companies can further support their sales teams in a variety of ways. For instance, create a “living lab” or “idea clearinghouse” to capture, codify, modify and communicate best practices. Also, inspire individuals to create presentations that surpass and replace the current standard by hosting “presentation competitions” complete with prizes. Further, videotape presentations to enable presenters to see where improvements can be made. Efforts such as these not only recognize individual effort, but also keep the company message fresh and relevant in a changing marketplace.

Perfect “10” Tips

Strong start. Provide a solid “aha” moment or interest grabber.

Utilize props, stories, audio, and visual aids to enhance the presentation to make it more memorable. Molecular biologist, John Medina points out in his book, “Brain Rules,” that human memory is increased 10 to 65 percent by adding a picture to a piece of information.

Educate prospective buyers about the outcomes they will receive when they work with your company. Appeal to their desires, issues and opportunities, and whenever possible, quantify the value they will receive.

Raise questions or doubts in the prospect's mind about their current approach, vendors and the products or services competitors provide. This creates awareness that prospects are missing opportunities to solve problems or enhance their positions within their company.

Encourage further action. Motivate the prospect or client to move forward and take the next steps in their evaluation and decision process.

Stand out from the crowd. The adage, "You never get a second chance to make a good first impression" is a truism in business. A company's initial and subsequent sales presentations coupled with the sales team's ability to deliver them separate winners from losers.

With businesses struggling to stand out in a crowd, company representatives are feeling the pressure to set and achieve higher goals. A supportive environment helps, but today's salespeople require more than a pat on the back. They need tools, techniques and skills to do their job – all of which are part of the perfect presentation. Just think about it. When the goal of every presentation is to leave the buyer informed, excited, changed, positively influenced and walking away wanting more, a "10" presentation puts the company's best foot forward, unlocks opportunities, and generates sales success. Defining the criteria of what constitutes a perfect "10" presentation and possessing a willingness to adjust the standards when necessary requires extra effort but the results pay for themselves over and over again.

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