

Creating a Product Presentation

Creating a Product Presentation Overview and Objective Product presentations are an important part of selling your product to prospective customers. In many cases, this will be the customer's first introduction to your company and potentially your product. First impressions are critical. There are also times when it is important to sell your product to the people inside your company as well as investors. Proper preparation is vital to presenting your product in the best light possible. The objective of the product presentation is different depending upon the target audience and the presentation should be adjusted accordingly. It is important to know your audience and why they are interested enough to hear your presentation.

Points to Consider Before you even start building your presentation, be sure you know the following information:

- Objective/call to action – At the end of your presentation you want something to happen, either you want a customer to move forward to evaluate your product, your management to buy into what you are doing with the product, your sales people eager to sell your product, or an investor or your management to provide additional funding of your product.
- Target audience – Who are you giving the presentation to? (Prospective customers, investors, management) What is their industry like right now? What are their needs and immediate concerns? What are their individual goals?
- Orientation -- How much does your audience know of your product and other similar products? What is special about the way this audience looks at your product? Do they have any preconceived notions? What are their special interests?
- Target presenter – Who will be giving the presentation? (Yourself, sales person, company executive) It is helpful to write the above information down before building the product presentation so that you can go back and review it if you get stuck on any given point. You will want to refer to it later to make sure the presentation meets the objective and you will also need it for doing practice runs. Once you have your basic product presentation, it can be modified for other presenters and other audiences, but it is important to have a target audience and a target objective when building the initial presentation. Failure to do so can result in a presentation that doesn't speak to the audience and one that is not focused on their needs.

Outline The following is a basic outline for a product presentation. You will note that the maximum number of slides is twenty. Most sales calls allow 30 minutes for the formal presentation, at two minutes a slide, fifteen slides is the appropriate number. It is important to keep your presentation precise otherwise your point will be drowned out in detail.

- 1) Introduction – This is normally just a title slide where the speaker introduces themselves, and the point of the product presentation. This is where you want to hook your audience and tell them what is in it for them. If you are not going to be giving the presentation you may want to have a note slide with the point on it. (1-2 slides)
- 2) Agenda – An agenda is optional, but provides you with an your opportunity to tell your audience what you are going to cover in your presentation. It avoids people asking questions early in the presentation about material you will be covering later. (1 slide)
- 3) Company Information – You want to make the audience feel comfortable with your company. Ways to do this include customer lists, high-profile executives or advisors, information on funding (if a private company), awards and major milestones.
- 4) Positioning – Successful products have a unique technology or positioning that sets them apart from other products on the market. You want to introduce this aspect of your product up front to let your audience know how your product is different and why they should listen to the rest of your presentation. Use this as an attention getter. This should be done in terms of the problem that they have that you are solving with your product. (1-5 slides)
- 5) Product description – Clearly describe your product in terms that your audience will understand. It may be helpful to have a chart with the product components. You want to give the audience a frame of reference for the features and benefits that they are going to see. You also want them to know how your product fits into their existing environment. Show how the product interfaces with other products or systems they may be using. (1-2 slides)
- 6) Clearly articulated benefits as they relate to your target audience – You can use a features and benefits list or just walk through the features and benefits. Whatever you do, do not forget the benefits! They may be obvious to you because you live and breath the product, but your audience should have them clearly called out and they must relate to their needs. (1- 5 slides)
- 7) Examples/successes – At this point in the presentation your audience should be familiar with your product and why it is different and better. In order to drive this point home use examples of how your product is being used and how customers have benefited from the product. (1-3 slides)
- 8) Closing argument – This is your opportunity for a “call to action”. You want summarize your presentation, reiterate the point of the presentation, and ask your audience to do something, if that is the point of your presentation.

Other Important Points

Use Examples Use examples whenever possible. Examples help to illustrate your points and provide a frame of reference for those people in your audience that don't already have one.

Simplify Keep slides as simple as possible. Lots of text on a slide makes it difficult to read and it loses its impact. Make sure the slides will be readable from the back of the room. If you are not giving the presentation, you may feel compelled to add more text to the slides – provide speaker's notes instead.

If you are using PowerPoint, don't get carried away with colors and many different transitions. Pick a format and stick with it so that you don't draw attention away from your subject.

Use Easy-to-Read Fonts A san-serif font (a font that does not have the little lines at the top and bottom, as in the headings of this document) is easier to read for bullets on slides.

Provide Speaker's Notes In order to keep the bullets on your slides concise; you may want to consider providing speaker notes to people that may be giving your presentation. If you do provide speakers notes, keep them short and concise and use bullets to make it easy to read. Remember that the more text you put on the speaker's notes, the less likely the speaker is to read it before the presentation. I can't tell you how many times I have seen a presentation where the speaker says, “I think this slide is trying to say…”. Both the speaker and the marketing group that provides the presentation look bad. If you are using PowerPoint, print the slides with the speaker's notes so that the presenter does not get the notes out of sync with the presentation.

Provide Handouts You will probably handout copies

of the slides. It is always nice to print the slides in a format where there is room for the audience to take notes. You may want to use handouts in addition to providing copies of the slides. Often, to keep slides simple, you may compromise the ability for the viewer to use it as a reference later or you may have charts or back-up information that has too much detail to include in your presentation. In these cases it may help to include handouts and refer to them during your presentation.

Use Themes for Group Presentations If there are a group of people presenting it is helpful to use a theme and weave it throughout all the presentations. This provides a sense of cohesiveness to the entire presentation. A good agenda is an important part of group presentations. You want to introduce all the speakers and let the audience know the topic each speaker will be discussing.

Mark Confidential If the presentation is confidential, don't forget to mark it confidential. Slides often get copied customers and can easily end up in your competitors' hands.

When You are the Presenter Practice your presentation. No one ever has the time to do it, but even if you are used to winging presentations, the following are the benefits of practice:

- 1) Your pitch will be more powerful, polished, and professional
- 2) You are more likely to accomplish your objective.
- 3) You look better.

There is nothing worse than watching a presenter bring up a slide and then try to interpret it as if this is the first time they are seeing it. The slides are to support your presentation. I will often give the presentation to a practice audience within the company first before giving it to an external audience. You will get some great suggestions from people who have a slightly different perspective. This is especially true if you can give your pitch to a different department. I have found that giving a product presentation to the engineering group will provide some great insights. Before you give your presentation to a practice audience, be sure to go over the "Points to Consider" above with your audience so that they understand your objective, target audience, and that target audience's perspective. Additionally you should add slides that talk specifically to your audience. Identify the issues and problems that they are dealing with or tell them about how their competition is doing something. Then show them how your product helps with the issues and to exceed their competition.

Other helpful hints:

- Use gestures to make things visual and clear.
- Use an expressive voice to emphasize points and show your enthusiasm for your product.
- Always stand, even when you are talking to a small audience. Standing projects more energy.
- Use highlights or colors on charts to emphasize an important point. (Though don't over use this, and don't use red unless you want to set off alarms.)
- Use controversy -- It is sometimes useful to start your presentation with a controversial statement to grab your audience's attention.
- Use metaphors to help with visualization.
- Make sure you have a smooth verbal transition between slides for a very polished presentation. (This is where the practice really pays off.)

Product Presentation Checklist

Identify Objective
 Identify Target Audience
 Identify the Point of the Presentation
 Include Positioning
 Include Company Overview
 Include Product Description
 Include Benefits
 Include Examples
 Identify and Include Closing Argument
 Can slides be read from across the room?
 Do you need speaker notes?
 Is the presentation proprietary?
 Are there handouts to be included?

<http://www.infrasystems.com/product-presentations.html>