

How to Optimize Your

SOFTWARE DEMOS

35 Best Practices to Wow Your Audience and Close More Sales

DEMO



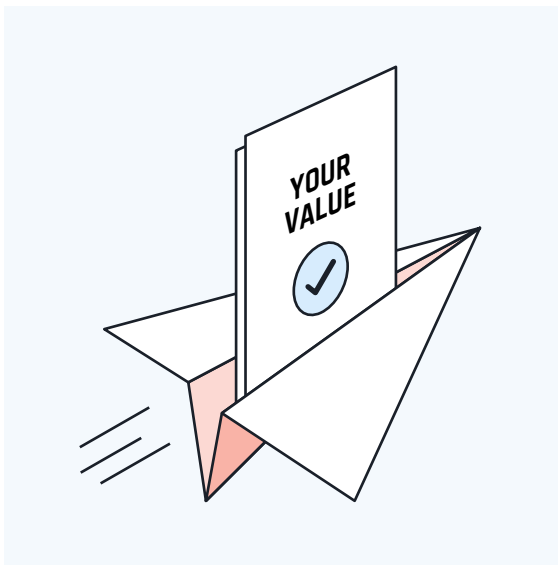
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Introduction

The sales demo is key to creating a connection between you, the customer, and your brand.

Nailing the product demo builds much needed rapport. After all, more than 70% of customers buy from a sales rep because they like, trust, and respect them.



You won't gain their trust if you're putting them to sleep. You must learn how to use the time you have effectively to deliver value and close the sale.

This ebook takes you through how to prepare a better product demo, forge a connection with your audience, keep them engaged, close successfully, and follow up effectively.

Diagnose Before Prescribing

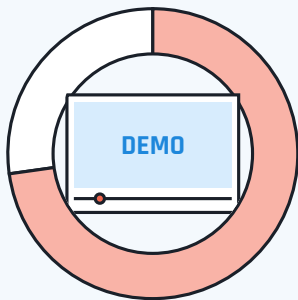
Discovery is the most important part of the sales process.

Sales demo expert Peter Cohan offers this analogy:

“ Imagine somebody says to you, ‘Just show me a demo.’ This would be exactly like you being sick and the doctor tells you to go the pharmacy, try each of the drugs on the shelf, and let me know what works.”

Peter continues,

“ You’ve got to execute discovery so that you can diagnose before prescribing.”



Demos conducted without appropriate time spent in the discovery process result in **73% fewer wins**



Demos that are tied to specific audience pain points are **35% more likely to close the sale**

Spending time discovering the needs (or pains) of your audience helps you understand the features they need to see to recognize the value of your software. Without the research, you'll have no idea how to map the benefits of your product to the needs of your audience.

Qualifying your audience also helps you discover if the audience is your ideal buyer, if you're capable of solving their unique problem, and if the deal is worth spending time pursuing.

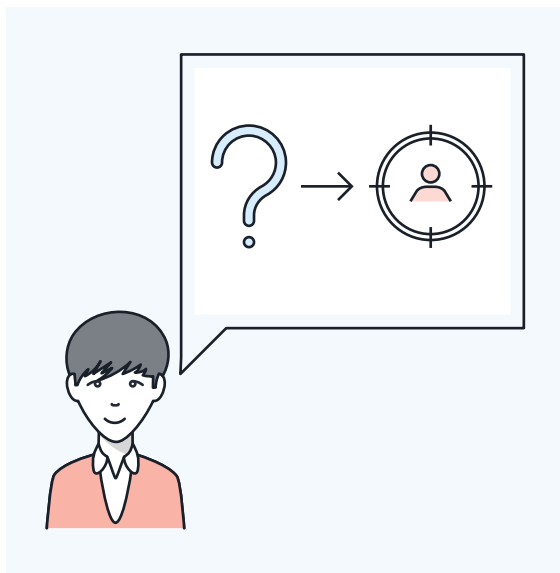
01 Qualify in Advance

Qualification should take place before you set an appointment to deliver a demo. During the initial contact, ask questions to help define their interest in your product.



02 Ask the Right Questions

Of course, you'll want to develop a set of questions that best serve your needs. As a starting point, consider the following:



- **What** is your role? (Job title and industry)
- **What** is your main responsibility?
- **What, specifically,** do you hope to gain in terms of capabilities from the software?
- **What are you currently using** to address the problem?
- **Who are the stakeholders** and decision makers?
- **What kind of criteria** will you use to evaluate the solution?
- **When** do you need to have a solution in place?

03 Ask Open-ended Questions

Very little can be gained from closed “yes” or “no” questions. Use closed-ended questions sparingly, such as confirming the statement of a prospect.

The best kinds of questions to ask in the qualification phase are open-ended questions that elicit more detailed responses. The majority of questions should be open-ended to eliminate the opportunity for a prospect to answer simply “yes” or “no.”

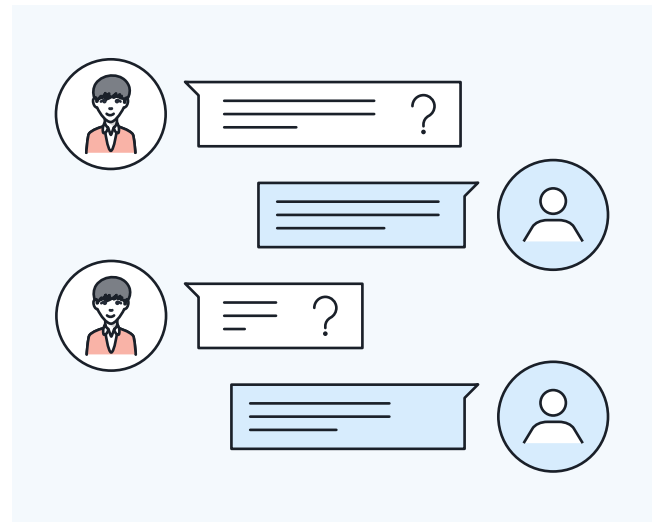
04 Dig Deep with “Why?”

Don’t treat your initial set of questions as merely a checklist. Instead, they should be conversation starters that help you understand underlying reasons and motives.

When a prospect makes a statement, dig deeper and ask “why?”

The “why” question reveals motives, beliefs, struggles, and other goals which can have a significant impact on the purchase decision. You’ll gather insights to help shape your product demo including features worthy of emphasizing as well as what not to focus on.

No amount of product info will help you overcome a lack of understanding the prospect’s needs and wants. Even if you can only get in a few minutes for questions, it’s an important step in the process.



Sell the Demo

Once you've qualified a prospect and decided they're a fit, it's time to go into sales mode.

“ It's not enough to invite prospects to a demo. It's not enough to just offer them a demo or ask them to attend. You actually have to deliver a compelling pitch and apply salesmanship so they'll commit to joining your demo.”

Steli Efti, CEO, Close.io

You'll proceed by building your demo based on the insights you gained from qualification in the discovery phase taking care to highlight what your prospect is trying to achieve.

Structure your sale in a very concise and targeted approach that puts the emphasis on them—not your product:



Highlight what they do



Show paths to optional solutions; place your solution in the best light



Point to their goals



Consider including a brief success example/case study



Show correlation between their goals and your solution



Ask for the close, or for moving to the next step

Getting resistance? There's more you can do to sell the demo...

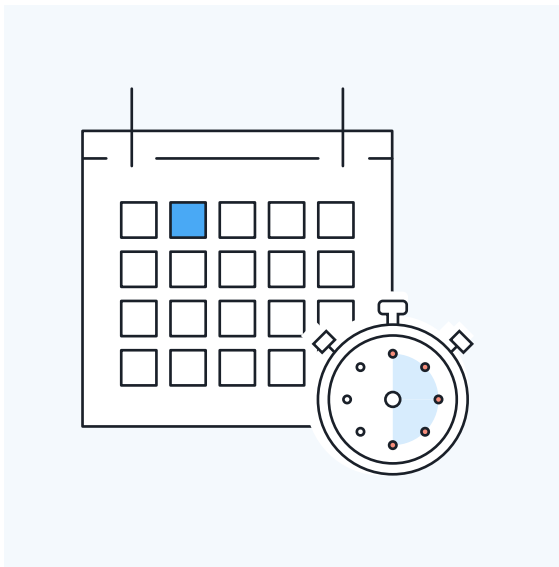
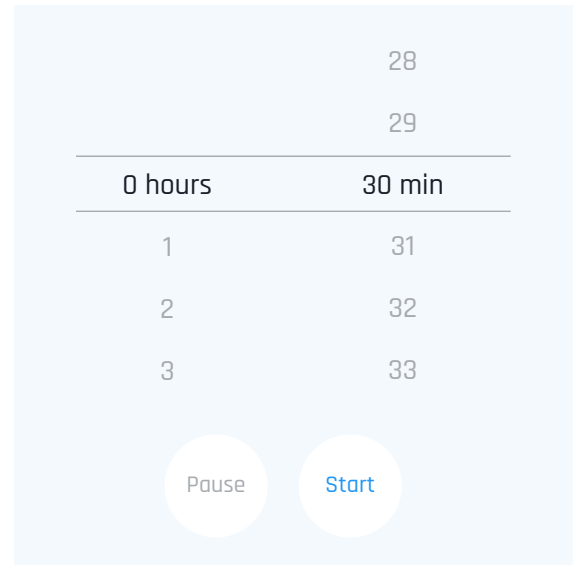
05 Emphasize Time

When prospects object and state they don't have time for a demo, respond by being empathetic. Tell them

how you understand the challenge and value their time.

Try to help them understand you're prepared to deliver all the information they need in the span of just 30 minutes.

Point out how they would otherwise burn many hours researching and gathering answers on their own.



06 Stress the Value of the Demo

Sometimes a prospect fails to see the value in a product demo. If this is the case, explain clearly and

succinctly how it can make them more successful. Again, emphasize it's the faster way to discover if the product is a fit. You might also mention clients who have found tremendous value in a short demo.

07 Schedule the Appointment

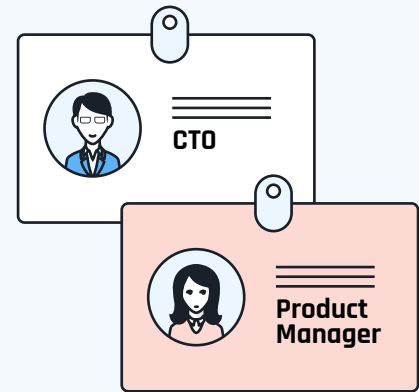
Don't wait until after your call to set a demo appointment. Doing so gives the prospect the

opportunity to disappear. Try to get a commitment right away and schedule the demo. Ask them to check their calendar and suggest a time that works best for them.

08 Invite the Decision Makers

You'll also want to suggest everyone involved in the decision-making process to take part in the demo.

It bears repeating that during the discovery phase you should learn who the decision makers are. You may not be able to land the decision makers though, so strive to create an internal champion to help your prospect sell it up the chain.



ATTEND



YES NO



YES NO



YES NO

09 Follow-up

Make it your job to ensure your prospects show-up for the demo.

Surprisingly, some 50% of software sales people fail to send confirmation emails after setting an appointment. Rest assured, your attendance rates will decline as a result.

Immediately after confirming the appointment, send a calendar invite to reconfirm. Create reminders for day-before and morning-of notifications.

7 Ways to Sabotage Your Success with Product Demos

As you'll discover in this eBook, the list of things that can threaten the success of your software demos is long. Here are seven common killers.

01 Giving demos to the wrong people



You want to give demos ONLY to the people who make (or heavily influence) buying decisions.

Don't allow the process to be a repetitive series of demos that swim slowly upstream. Qualify your prospects and be selective.

02 Not selling the demo in advance



Software companies struggle with bad show rates for demos. Prospects often bail when it feels optional or less than urgent. Your

need to clearly communicate and reiterate the value of your demo in advance.

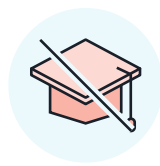
03 Unpolished presentations

Not knowing your material will doom your demo. You should never be caught stumbling around trying to make your point. Know your product. Know exactly how to demonstrate it.

04 Lack of context

Begin with a laser-focused elevator pitch. Follow by telling your prospects the precise problems you're going to solve. Make it as easy as possible for them to go away with a simple and clear understanding of the value.

05 Treating demos as training



The most common (and deadly) demo destroyer is going too deep or wide. Software demos are not for training; they're for generating

sales. Focus on a short list of things that matter most. Leave them wanting more.

06 Featuring the future of the product



Your software's going to get updated and include cool new features. Understood. Don't go there. It won't help to broach what

product doesn't yet do. Remain focused on your product's proven strengths.

07 Failure to close



It should take ONE demo to close the sale—at least for the person or people in attendance. Don't waste your time or sales opportunities

slip away by failing to close. Ask for the business and agree to the next step.

Prepare to Shine

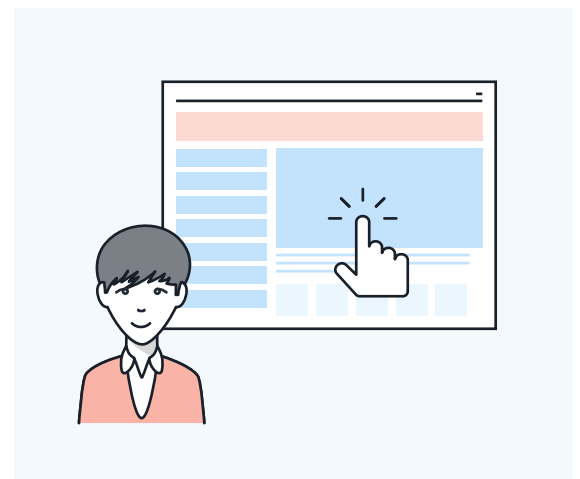
Booking a demo might feel like a victory, but there's no reason to celebrate at this point. The work-intensive part lies ahead: planning and preparing your demonstration so it goes off without a hitch.

“ Get organized in advance. You should never futz around in a demo – for example, looking for folders and files on your hard disk. You have weeks to prepare; you're absolutely clueless if you haven't set everything up in advance.”

Guy Kawasaki

10 Know Your Software/ Environment

Take the time to get intimately familiar with your presentation platform. Run through a test demo with a coworker so you're familiar with how the software behaves while people are connected.



11 Provide High Quality Audio

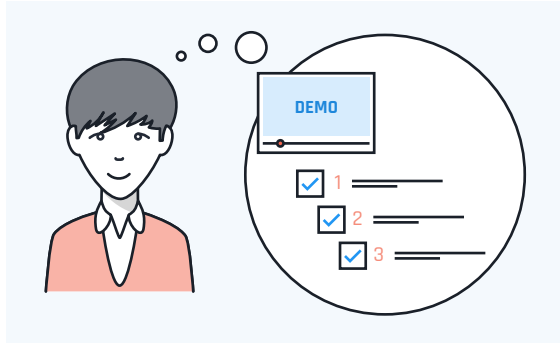
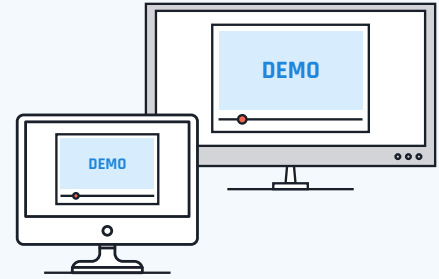
A web-based product demo doesn't require a lot of equipment. However, make absolutely sure to use a high quality microphone.

The microphone built into your computer may let you down. At the very least, invest in a high quality headset.

12 Consider the small screen

Preview what your presentation will look like across the array of popular devices. You may be using a large desktop monitor, but is your audience? Your demo may appear substantially different on a small tablet or notebook, so be prepared to satisfy those looking at small screens.

A self-contained demo environment is easy for your prospect to access and only requires a browser to access. While modern browsers are responsive, you still want to ensure that buttons and other interactive items in your demo are easy to use across various devices.



13 Know your Product

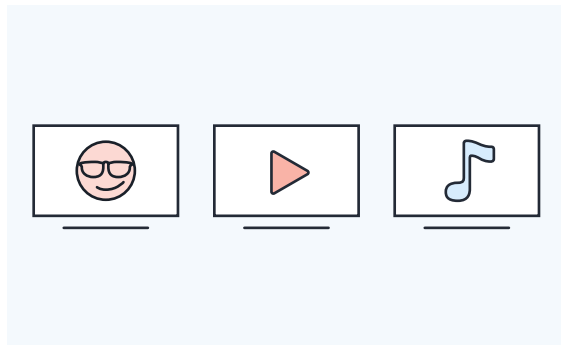
While it may go without saying, it shall be said: know your stuff. Regardless of the amount of time since your last demo—but, especially if it's been a while—always budget time to refresh and familiarize yourself with the product. Practice your demo taking time to run through every element, feature, and benefit. You can never have too much practice.

14 Present Interesting Data

When you demo a product, it's typical to include placeholder data linked to dummy accounts and fake businesses like "Acme Incorporated, located at 1234 Main Street in Any Town, USA".

It's been done a million times and it's boring.

Instead, use the information from your discovery phase to generate relevant data your prospect expects to see when using the product. Another way to hold their attention is to work in pop culture references from movies, television, and music.



15 Optimize in advance

Do you plan to use an online meeting platform? If so, plan accordingly. You don't want your audience seeing notifications pop-up, like Facebook messages or email previews.

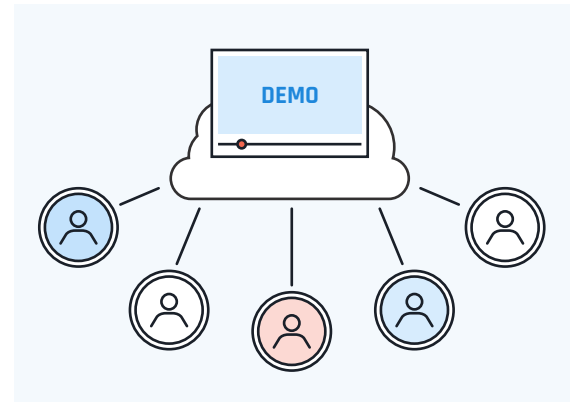
It's a distraction and certainly won't help close a deal.

- **Clean up** and organize your desktop. Try to eliminate or hide anything that could take the prospect's attention away from your pitch.
- **Optimize your browser** before your demo. Hide your bookmarks bar and any extensions you have running. Make sure only the tabs you need are kept open.
- **Clear your browser history** to avoid any embarrassing or revealing autocompletes. Your audience doesn't need to know what sites you visit.

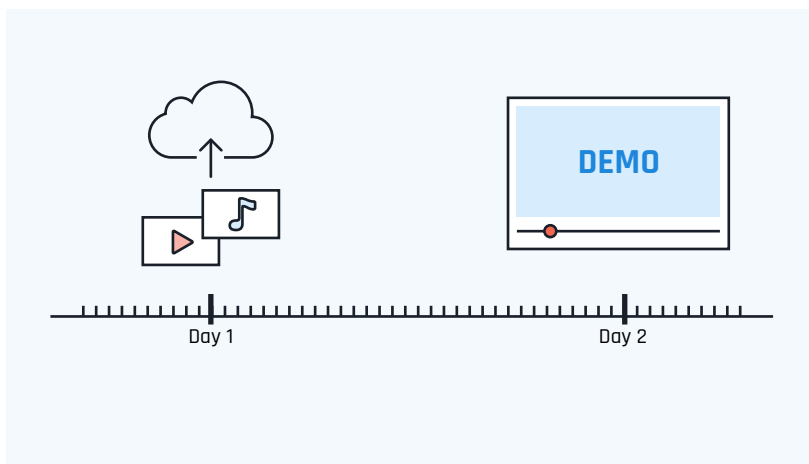
16 Use a Cloud-based Environment

The tips above are likely to non-issues if you use a cloud-accessed demo environment built to host interactive software demos.

Rather than rely on a suite of video meeting, screen share, and browsers to deliver a demo, your audience can work through the demo with you in a self-contained environment without fear of common technical glitches and conference drops.



Accelerate the sales cycle and the effectiveness of your demo. The CloudShare sales demo solution enables you to provide prospects the opportunity to experience your product firsthand. There's no hardware to ship, software to install, or IT support required.



17 Preload Content

If you're certain elements of your product take a little time to load, preload the content prior to your meeting to speed up the process and eliminate wait time. During a presentation, a few seconds of silence can feel like an eternity and can negatively impact the trust you're trying to build.

Structure Strategically

The structure of your product demo is likely to change gradually over time. As you gain experience, you'll make important discoveries regarding what does and doesn't work and refine the structure of your demo and pitch.

18 Pick Three Things

When creating the agenda for your meeting, you'll have a lot of things to cover. To make the best use of your time, structure your demo around three key areas you want to focus on which is most relevant to info gained in the discover phase.

This isn't arbitrary. According to a study by Kurt Carlson and Suzanne Shu:

“ In settings where consumers know that the message source has persuasion motive, the optimal number of positive claims is three. More claims are better until the fourth claim, at which time consumer's persuasion knowledge causes them to see all the claims with skepticism.”

Choose the three things that will have the most impact on your audience and drive home the value.

19 Present the Big Picture

A common mistake is treating a product demo like product training by taking an audience through systematic steps. Focusing on granular details can be confusing and distract your prospects from the point you're trying to make.

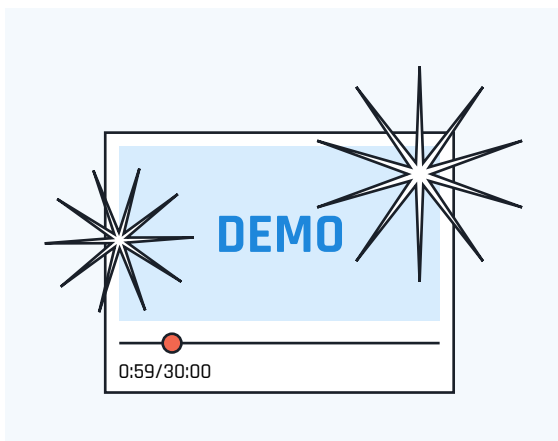
Start with the big picture. Peter Cohan calls this “Do the last thing first.”

“ I cannot tell you how many times I've watched someone deliver a demo and they say, 'I've saved the best for last.' That suggests that everything else is not of interest or value and the right people are unlikely to left in the room when you get there.”

– Peter Cohan, author of Great Demo! How to Create and Execute Stunning Software Demonstrations

Engage your prospect first, based on what you learned in your customer discovery, then get granular, if need be.

20 Start with Shock and Awe



Every sales rep wants to wow the audience during a product demo, but sometimes save the best for last. You want to make an impact and grab their attention right out of the gate.

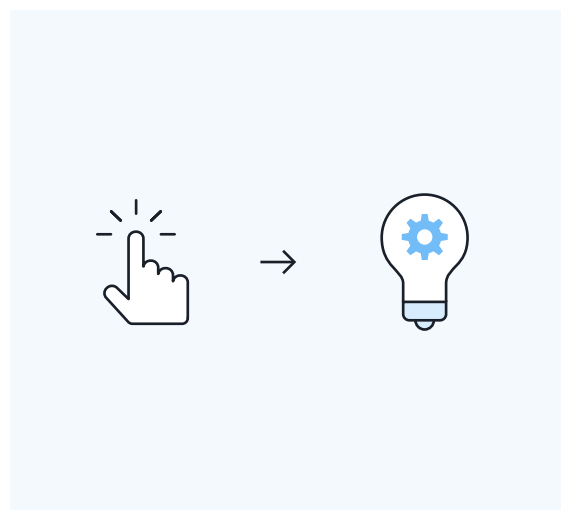
Cohan believes you have about one minute to captivate your audience. Don't try building to a crescendo. Start with "shock and awe," the absolute coolest stuff your product can do. The goal is to blow people's minds right up front to help keep them engaged for the remainder.

21 Execute with the Fewest Clicks

You've no doubt heard the one about someone asking what time it is and they're told how to make a watch. Not good. Do that in your demo and you'll lose your audience's interest.

Answer the question. And extract any information and instructions that don't immediately speak to it.

Once your audience sees the solution—sans detail—they may indeed ask "how" questions. Perfect. Such requests will guide what you do next.



22 Focus on Features That Demonstrate Value

Don't make the common mistake of focusing on the bells and whistles of your product. Your prospect doesn't care about your product. They only care about what it can do for them. Build your demo around the most valuable features and how they relate to the prospect's problems.

“ Your product is only as good as the problems it can solve for someone. What I want to hear during a demo is what problems you are solving and for whom, not a laundry list of features in your product.”

– Ryan Leask, manager of data engineering at Facebook

Keep Prospects Engaged

You don't want your audience to feel you've shoved a fire hose of features and functions down their throats.

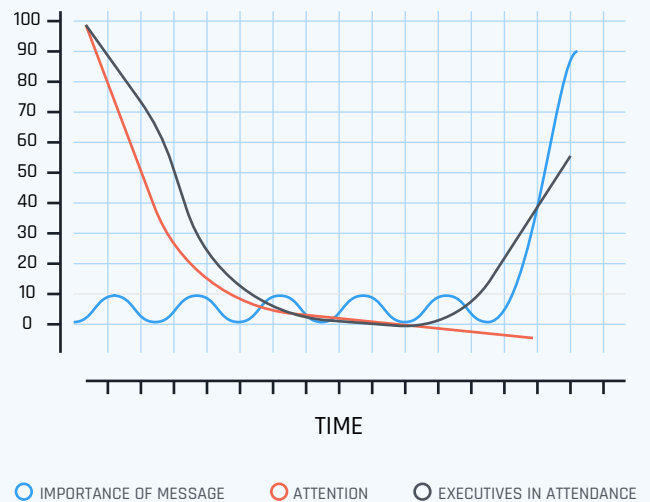
Think of a product demo as a conversation in which you reveal the challenges and goals of your audience. Through display and dialogue, you help them discover how your product can help them achieve their goals.

Conversations shouldn't be dominated by one person, so it's important to engage your audience. Remember, you're not giving a training seminar—and it's not about you.

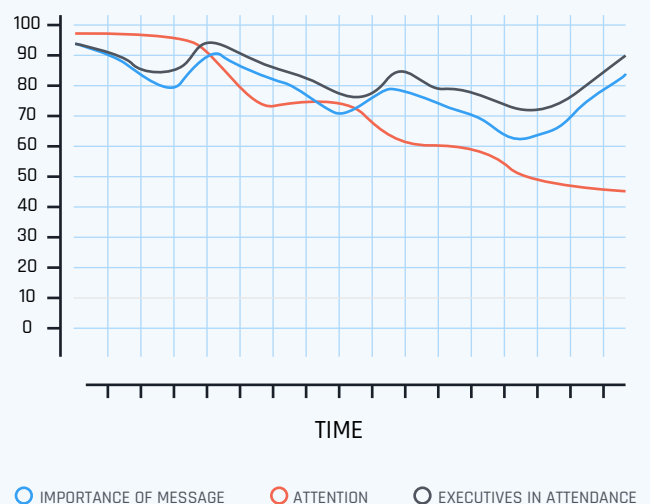
In a typical demo attendance and attention declines progressively. If an important message is delivered toward the end, there are far few decision-makers listening (or still with you).

A great demo is shorter and sees far less fall-off for attention and attendance.

ATTENDANCE



ATTENDANCE

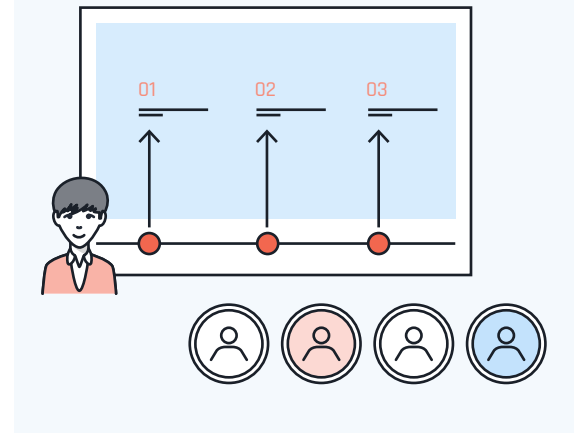


Source: Great Demo! Surprisingly Compelling Software Demonstrations, Peter E. Cohan, The Second Derivative

23 Share the Agenda

As much as you want to build a custom agenda based on what's most relevant to your prospect's pain points, you want to make sure you can fit everything in. Be sure to share the agenda with your audience and review the timeline for the demo.

Ask everyone involved if they have any hard stops before the planned finish time so you can adjust the agenda accordingly. This is also a good way to show your prospect you value their time.



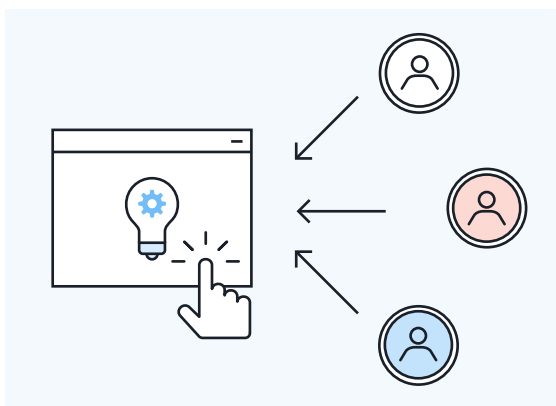
24 Be Human

If you want to avoid losing your prospect's interest, don't be a robot. You have material you need to cover and time is precious—but so is rapport. Build the relationship by injecting personality into your demo.

Become a storyteller. Weave engaging tales into the conversation using simple-to-understand examples.

“ A product demonstration should never be a tour of a product's features and functions. Instead, it should tell the customer's story, with the product playing a key role.”

—Geoffrey James Contributing Editor, Inc.com



25 Hand Over the Control

Let clients really try the product. With a virtual demo, you can hand over the controls so prospects interact with the software. Doing so can vastly accelerate their understanding of the features and give you a competitive advantage to make the sale.

During the collaboration, you can act on needs as they arise to steer the demo toward a successful outcome.

26 Include Reset Moments

Your demo is only likely to run 15 minutes or so, with an additional 10 to 15 minutes dedicated to answering questions. That may seem overly brief, but is actually plenty of time to lose the interest of your audience. The average human's attention span is only about 10 minutes (if they're acutely interested in the topic being discussed). If you sense attention is starting to slip, try these "reset moment" tactics:



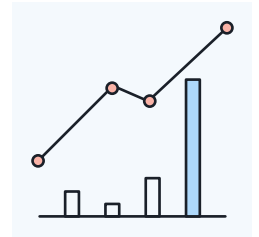
Tell a story



Say something funny



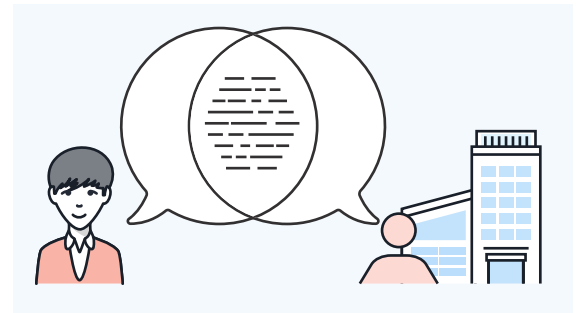
Ask an open-ended question



Share a striking statistic

27 Speak Their Language

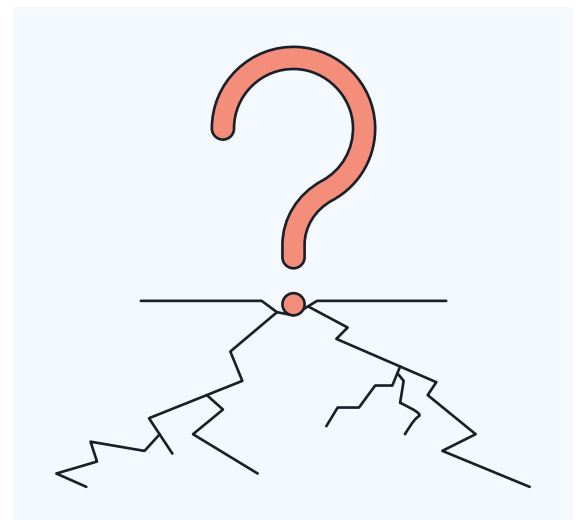
You want your audience focused on the value. Using vernacular different from their industry lingo could derail the demo and add an element of distraction. Pay attention to the language they use, avoid jargon, and keep it comfortable for the prospect.



28 Be Ready for Tough Questions

Just as you should be prepared for technical hitches, you will inevitably field some tough questions. Whether the question is about competitive differentiation or a "what if" scenario, you never want to be caught in an awkward silence unable to respond.

If you can't answer a question, pause and write it down. Make sure they know you're writing it down. Let them know it's a great question. Tell them you'll get back to them quickly with an answer.



Seal the Deal

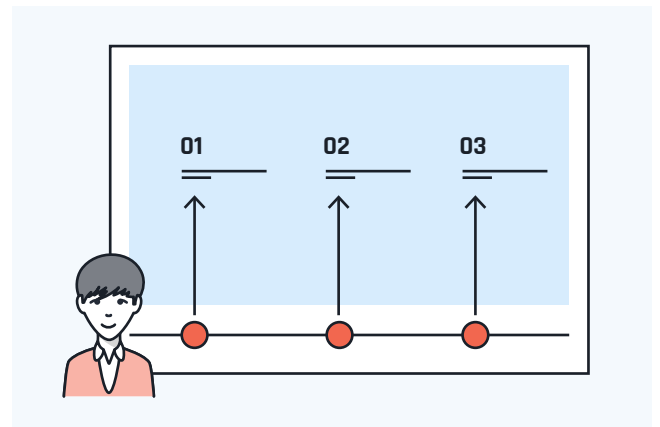
Every demo must end with a call to action. And it can't be generic. You want to seal the deal. Here's your opportunity to lean on your discoveries.

Remember the three things you built your agenda around? Bring them up again and make sure they stick.



29 Review the Highlights

Get back to the value points that were most relevant to the prospect one final time.



30 Close

Ask for the sale.

“ Because seeing is believing, there is no better time than after a successful demo to close a sale or ask for the next step. So when you demo, you must ask something that will move the sale forward.”

— Geoffrey James, author of *Business to Business Selling*

31 Hang in There

You gave a convincing demo, but failed to close on the spot. It's not time to give up yet. There's plenty more you can, and should, do. On the InsightSquared blog, blogger and host of the Ramp, the SaaS analytics podcast, Cara Hogan, recommends you:



01 Write a great follow-up email

Offer a case study, white paper or video that further explores to the prospect's pain points, as uncovered in the demo.



02 Connect on LinkedIn

Look for shared connections between you, your company's leadership, and the prospect's VP or manager. Social selling can improve your chances of reaching and connecting with leadership at your prospect's company to help close the deal.



03 Send additional content

Avoid generic "just checking-in" email and make every contact valuable. Much like in the follow-up email, you should a tailored and specific offer with interesting content to pique their interest.



04 Offer competitive comparisons

Your prospects are likely to be looking at products beside yours. Be proactive by sending a competitive analysis to help them with the process. Include pricing, features and more to help your prospect champion your product internally.

32 Watch What Happens

With an advanced platform like CloudShare you can gain visibility into the prospect's response. You'll know who is using the product and how often they're doing so.

Create an Interactive Environment

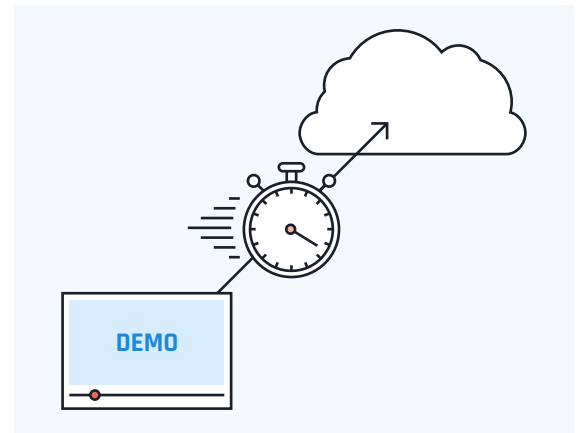
The insanely expensive, in-person sales demo is dead and the “watch how this works” webinar version is dying.

Serious software demos, delivered by enterprise software companies, empower the sales engineer to provide prospects the opportunity to experience the product firsthand—and 100% remotely.

The following best practices apply to software companies aiming to accelerate sales by capitalizing on the tremendous benefits a **cloud-based solution brings to the software demo experience.**

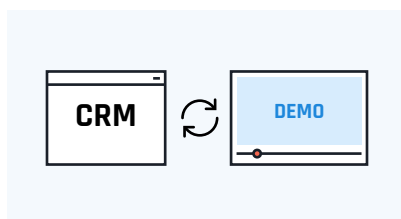
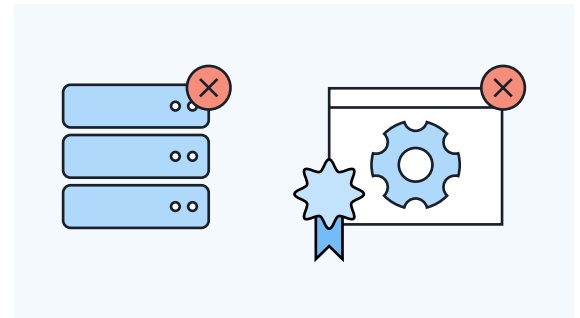
33 Get the Show Going Faster

In an instant gratification world, the lag time between securing a demo appointment and delivering it may hinder your success. When you’re equipped with a cloud-based solution, you can respond immediately, or at least, much faster to demo requests. Your environment will enable you to build comprehensive, networked environments in minutes without any IT support.



34 Remove Any and All Ware Woes

The cloud-based software demonstration environment eliminates the need to fuss with servers, networking, storage, operating systems, application licenses, and more. Virtualization is flexible and unlimited and, if needed, you can easily integrate your own systems.



35 Integrate with Sales and CRM Systems

A software demo is obviously part of the sales process. As such, integrating the system with your CRM and the other apps you rely on will deliver advanced functionality to maximize your team’s productivity.

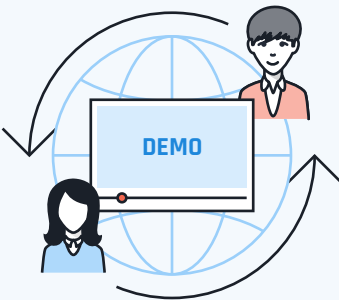
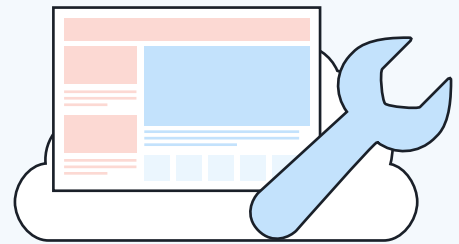


Your Premium Sales Demo Lab

[Buy now](#)

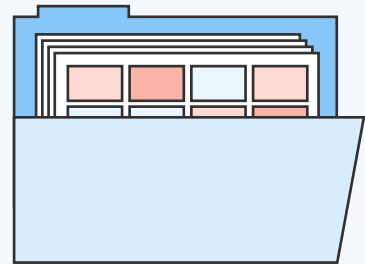
[Learn more](#)

CloudShare offers advanced cloud-based resources and infrastructure to provide sales engineers a powerful 24-hour software demonstration environment that far exceeds the capabilities of basic “virtual lab” offerings.

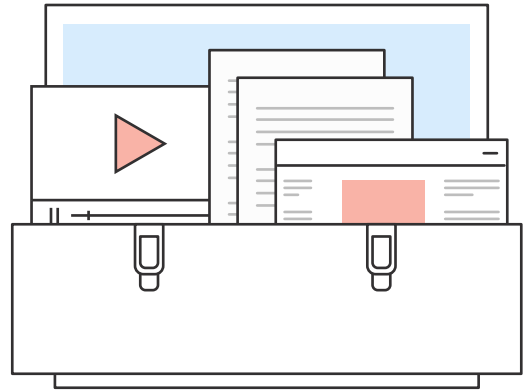


The solution enables extended user interaction in dedicated hands-on, production-grade replicas of their existing IT, delivered as cloud-based ITaS. Software demos can enable multiple prospects—or even partners—to interact live.

A library of best-practice templates makes it easy to fully customized demo labs in minutes. You can invite prospects to spin up personal copies of your environment via a web browser. You have complete control over the behavior and appearance of the demonstration experience.



RESOURCES



- Efti, Steli. "Product Demos that Sell: How to Deliver Winning SaaS Demos." Close Publishing. Jan. 2016.
https://www.amazon.com/Product-Demos-That-Sell-Deliver-ebook/dp/B01B8TA8VM/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1490561910&sr=8-1&keywords=product+demos+that+sell
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