# Your Product is Awesome…But your Demos Flop!

*"The demo is the make or break moment in your sales cycle. It's the place where deals can blossom or disintegrate in a matter of minutes!" Mark Rye, President, TechBoost*

Effective demos illustrate the power of your product in a logical, concise and impactful manner. Sadly, many demos are more of an afterthought than a showcase. The success of your demo can be measured in the ability to get your prospect to say *Cool*, or *Wow*, or *We Need That*! These are the words that lead to sales.

If your prospects leave your demos under whelmed, you may have simply skipped some steps in the demo process which pave the way for a favourable response to happen. Prospects need to feel:

- that you are likable and trustworthy
- confident in your knowledge of the subject matter
- confident doing business with your company
- confident enough to share insights into their challenges
- a build up to the big *Cool* moment
- able to absorb what just happened and then talk about what it means to them

All of the work you have put into your product, and all of the work you put into an opportunity to move it to a demo, all hinges on your ability to wow your prospect in the demo. While every product may not be full of excitement, your prospect has a problem, you have a solution, and the recipe for *Cool* exists.

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I have personally led thousands of software product demonstrations over the past 15 years. This first-hand experience has allowed me to refine the process for impactful demos. I work with companies of all sizes to review, analyze and rework their product demos. I can help your organization define a demo script that can be customized by each demo leader to allow them to convert demos to sales.

I use the following steps when guiding clients on the development of their demo process.

**Introduction and Personal Story**

Before you begin selling you need to build rapport and credibility. Starting a demo without connecting on a social level starts the whole discussion off on a bad course. I have personally been in many demos which started late, or had technical difficulties where the pleasantries were cut short. It is very hard to build rapport once you have started the demo this way. Once the demo starts, prospects are now evaluating you and your solution and rapport building is largely off the table. However, it is easy to continue rapport if some simple, fun and friendly dialogue has taken place prior to getting down to business.

Be likable. It is not about what you say, but how you say it. Smile, laugh and make a connection. Even when, no especially when, you are scrambling with technology that isn't working quite as planned.

Once they like you, you need to address the question: Why should I listen to/trust/believe/take advice from this person?

Once the presentation begins the prospect is now evaluating your expertise on the subject matter. Keep in mind that people consider their time and insight to be very valuable and guard it very closely. If you have ever had a demo where there was virtually no interaction with the prospect(s), where they would not respond to your questions or ask any of their own, chances are they were not convinced the presenter was worthy of their interaction. This group sits tight lipped, wanting to see the product and then get out of the meeting as fast as possible.

If this group had felt that they had a valuable resource at their disposal, an expert in the industry, they would have wrung every bit of value out of the allotted time. These are the conversations that lead to sales. This is where you want to be.

So, open up a bit, set the stage with who you are and why you are qualified to speak on this subject. This step takes real time and thought to put together, yet is priceless in its impact on the demo. Of course this is easier for an industry veteran, than someone brand new. But without bringing this forward to the prospect, they will assume either the veteran or the newbie has little to offer them. So carefully craft a story which answers the question: Why am I qualified to speak to you about this topic?

Then use this story every time, make it better, evolve it, tailor it to your clients industry or market. Show them that you are an expert that they can learn from, and be confident doing business with.

This may sound simple so far. However, most demos I see miss badly on these points, resulting in a quick show and tell as opposed to business conversations that lead to a sale.

With rapport and credibility addressed, you have set the stage for a great demo.

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**Tell the Solution Story**

People love stories (note the importance of the above Personal Story). Your solution needs a compelling story detailing how the issue came to mind for you or the company and how you developed your solution. This needs to include real life scenarios, relatable circumstances, funny missteps, the "aha" solution moment, and confirmation from customers that what you do is amazing. The prospect needs to see you (being the company and/or the presenter) in the trenches as problem solver, innovator, expert, and solution provider.

**Discovery/Problem Definition**

At this point, after you have told your story and the story of the company/solution, we need the client to tell their story. Steps to getting the prospect to open up about their problems include:

A) Stating the problem(s) which your client (likely) has and that your product can address
   a. "We work in the area of…"
B) Having the client state the problem/current experience in this area
   a. "Before we dive in to the demo could you tell me about your experience or challenges with…"

If the demo was qualified, and the prospect feels that the presenter and company/solution are credible, they will likely share their experience and challenges in this area. Take notes, as this is key information that you will want to reference throughout the demo. Use their terminology, their systems, and their processes as examples as you present the demo. Ask follow on questions as required to get the level of detail, but don't get too bogged down here. As the expert, after a short but detailed exchanged you should be able to say: "This is great information, I appreciate you sharing this. I speak with a lot of companies on this topic, so I feel like I have a pretty good understanding of your challenges."

If the client doesn't have a problem that you can solve, your pitch may need to be much more educational in nature. They may not know they have the problem, or have not experience it just yet. Or, worst case, they are not actually a prospect, best to figure that out now. If they don't have a problem

but are still interested in seeing the demo, treat it as practice and give a concise yet engaging demo. With this, they may come back to you when the problem arises for them.

**Process**

Before you dive into the demo it is critical that you tell them what you are going to show them ahead of time. Otherwise, they are trying to figure out *what you are doing* and can't focus on the *impact it will have on them*. Start at 30,000 feet, so anyone in the room can understand and quickly bring it down to ground level. Often people are invited to demos who have no knowledge of the solution or the previous conversations you may have had with the company. Confirm that everyone understands the proposed demo flow.

Note: you don't have to give away the *cool* moment, just coach them so that they are ready to receive it when you show it.

**Defining the *Cool* Moment**

If your demo currently proceeds through a series of product features with no connection to the prospects challenges, it will not generate excitement. The *cool* moment is derived from the benefit that the prospect receives from the product. Configuring your demo to highlight this benefit is critical.

You may have multiple cool moments. However you must avoid the risk of thinking that everything about the solution is amazing. You need to build to one or multiple specific moments. Use the challenges that the prospect spoke about earlier to define which moments to focus on.

**Demo**

Demonstrate the least amount of functionality possible to get to *cool*...and tell a story as you go.

Your demo should not consist of showing each feature of the product. The demo should consist of real life scenarios and how the product is used to solve the problems they present.

The best demo's build in a logical process to the *cool* moment. Then stop. Once the client says *Cool, Wow, We Need That*. Stop and listen. The job of the demo is done.

They like you.

They think you are a credible industry expert.

They think the company is a credible solution provider.

They think the solution is *Cool* and something they need.

These are the goals of the demo.

**Prospect Visioning**

The conversation now needs to shift to how would this solution impact the prospects challenges (gathered earlier)? Get the prospect talking about their situation. Look for language that has them owning, using, implementing, experiencing the solution. Feed that dialogue with insights from other customers/projects/solutions as long as possible. This may last for a minute, or it may last for an hour. This discussion however is the goal of the demo so give it time and space to be. If the prospects talk amongst themselves for 10 minutes with you simply confirming their understanding from time to time, this is a sign of a great demo and great potential for a sale.

When this discussion winds down, let them know whether there are still some interesting things to learn about the product or not. In other words, is the product demo over, or do you have more exciting stuff to show? Repeat this shift from *cool* to client dialogue as many times as required/possible.

**Business Discussions**

With the prospect excited about the benefits they will receive from your product, it is time to discuss business. Transition to business discussions can be accomplished through the use of leading questions such as:

- How soon would they like to get the solution in place?
- What would the procurement process entail?
- Who should you work with on pricing and the contract?

**Determine the Next Steps**

Every successful demo closes with a clear understanding of the next steps. What these are will depend on your solution and sales process. If pricing is the next step, make it clear what information you need from them to determine the price of the solution.
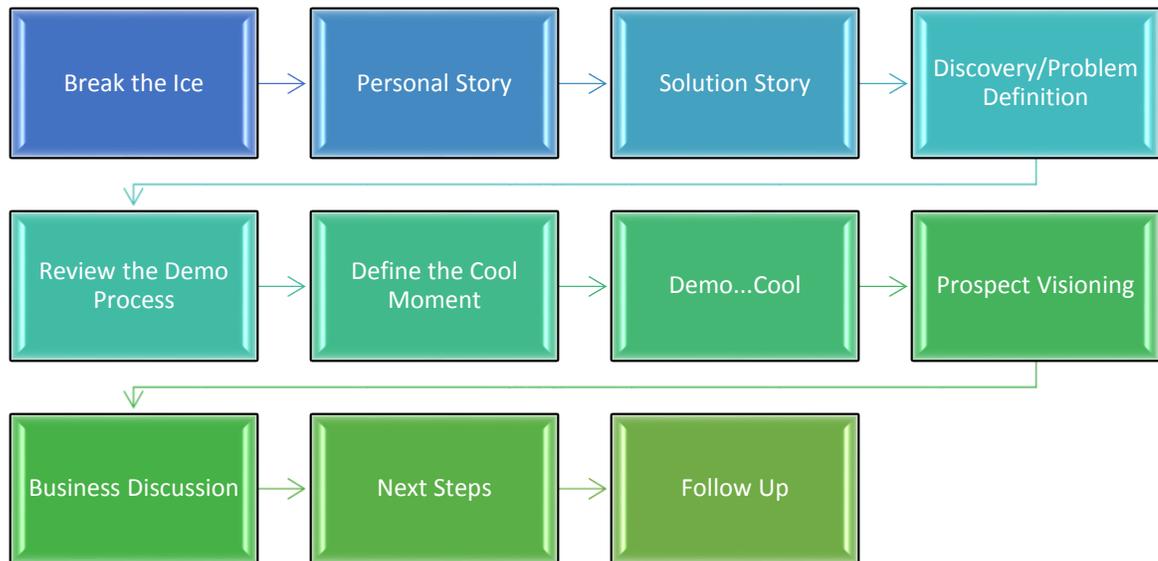
**Follow up Summary Email**

In the moment, the prospect was quite excited about what they saw. However, they will likely get pulled in to many different issues before the end of the day or week. It is critical to follow up each demo with an email that:

- Thanks them for their time and participation
- Outlines the challenges they have that you discussed
- Describes how the solution can address the challenges
- Lists the Next Steps (who will be doing what)
- Identifies when you will be in touch again regarding the Next Steps

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**The Cool Demo Path**

The Cool Demo provides a simple path from demo start to finish. Each step requires careful planning and rehearsal for your demos to elicit that *cool* response. Properly preparing for each step will allow your prospect to follow your demo and get excited about what your product can do for them. The Cool Demo path looks like this:

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Break the Ice → Personal Story → Solution Story → Discovery/Problem Definition
                                                            ↓
Review the Demo Process → Define the Cool Moment → Demo...Cool → Prospect Visioning
        ↓
Business Discussion → Next Steps → Follow Up
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**What's Next?**

TechBoost provides one-on-one consultation to improve your demo process. We can work with your demo leaders to craft re-usable scripts that build the credibility of your personnel, product and company. Our approach analyzes your current demos and identifies the areas which require the most improvement. With this analysis complete we help your demo leaders build their own Cool Demo scripts.

We also evaluate the technical demonstration of your product and identify ways to improve the way the technology is presented. This allows your prospects to able to absorb and appreciate what your product can do for them.

We would be glad to discuss your product, your demo, your challenges and help you win more business with Cool Demos.

**Contact Mark Rye at mrye@techboost.ca or 519-835-8152 to discuss your demo!**

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