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Stunningly Awful Remote Demos

The Top Ten List of Inflicting Pain at a Distance

You are watching someone else's demonstration, via WebEx, and you are getting bored. Someone comes into your office – you mute the speakerphone and chat with your colleague for a few minutes. She leaves and you return back to the demo, still in progress, and un-mute the phone...

After another few minutes of listening listlessly, you receive an email message – you flip over to email, respond to that message, then you idly review your Inbox – while the demonstrator's voice drones on about, "Another really nice thing about our software is all of the file types we can handle. Let me show you..."

Does this sound familiar? Has the demo made a strong (positive) impression with you? Likely not! Now turn the situation around and imagine that it is your organization delivering the demo to one of your prospects... Ouch!

If your organization's Remote Demonstrations are not as successful as you wish, consider using this list as an assessment tool. If these items "ring too true" then you may want to contemplate making some changes...

The Stunningly Awful Demos ("SAD") Remote Demos Top Ten List:

1. Don't Learn the Technology: "Gosh this is boring..."

Assume that delivering a Remote Demo is just the same as presenting face-to-face. Ignore all of the tools and capabilities that the folks at WebEx, Live Meeting (Microsoft), *et al* have implemented to enable you to increase your level of interactivity with your customers.

By all means, do not set up a session ahead of time with a colleague from your own company to try out the capabilities and get feedback on what works well.

Instead, simply assume that your audience is paying rapt attention as you describe the seven layers of security associated with logging-in to your application...

2. Don't Test the Technology ahead of time: "Sorry, we can't seem to join the meeting..."

Schedule a Remote Demo for, say, 11:00 AM with the customer – preferably with a large audience – and spend the first 15 minutes "joining" the WebEx or Live Meeting session. This will ensure that

your audience is bored and already contemplating leaving for another meeting or back to their desks to “get some real work done...”

To maximize the potential negative impact, don't have your customer test their firewall or network/computing infrastructure to make sure that the collaboration software will work in their environment. Leave this until the start of the meeting to increase the possibility of technical challenges. After all, many IT groups are absolutely delighted to see their end-users downloading unknown components onto corporate machines...!

Along the same lines, pay no attention to screen resolution. It is best to find out that the audience can only see a fraction of your screen fifty minutes into the demo...

3. Present to a Large, Unqualified Audience: “Why are we here...?”

Dramatically decrease your success rates by presenting demos to large, unqualified audiences – even better, encourage your customer to include people from multiple, disparate sites and time-zones. For the greatest (negative) impact, launch right into your demo without any mutual introductions, review of objectives or, God forbid, any brief qualification of any new players.

4. Use a Speakerphone: “What...?”

To maximize miscommunication, use a speakerphone on your end. That way, you can appear to be yelling into the phone when you are speaking directly into it – and your voice will fade to a mumbling whisper when you turn back to your screen during the demo.

5. Use a flat, monotonic, Passionless Voice: “Yawn...”

You'll have your audience sleeping peacefully in no time with this approach! Nothing says “boredom” like a flat, passionless voice presenting from a speakerphone...

It is always best to assume that your audience knows you intimately, can see your eloquent gestures and hear your subtle changes in tone. And by all means, don't work to compensate for the inability of the audience to see you by putting more energy and dynamics in your verbal delivery.

6. Move your Mouse Rapidly: “Where's the Dramamine...?”

“Oh my God, he's got ‘Zippy Mouse Syndrome’...!” Few things excite an audience as much as trying to track a mouse moving like lightening via a web connection – and lightening is a good analogy. The mouse appears briefly, then disappears, only to appear again in a flash somewhere else on the screen. The element of surprise is high, enabling customers to play Mouse Location Bingo. “I wonder where the mouse will appear next?”

To add to this effect, make sure to click much faster than the collaboration software can keep up. This will enable you to finish the demo a good ten minutes before your audience does...!

Even better, your “voice-over” will be several screens ahead of what your audience is seeing, proving to the audience how skilled you are with your software. This strategy will also help prepare for your next career in fortune-telling...

7. Eliminate Interactivity: “Any questions so far...?”

Visualize that you are presenting to an audience of cardboard cut-outs. This will help ensure that you minimize any possible interactions with your audience. Don’t draw them into the demo, don’t make it a conversation, and absolutely don’t use any of the tools that might generate real interactivity:

- Don’t ask specific questions, such as, “Can you see my mouse pointing at the logo?”
- Don’t use the highlighter, arrow or pen tools, as they only mess-up an otherwise pristine screen.
- Don’t ask the audience to change their seat colors, raise their virtual hands, or use the chat dialog – doing so would only interrupt your flow.
- Don’t offer to let someone in the audience “drive” – this would be far too exciting for the audience and might risk real engagement.

If you must ask a question, remember that the safest question to ask in a Remote Demo is, “Are there any questions so far...?” The sound you typically hear in response to this question is the sound of crickets in huge, open meadow...

8. Don’t use an Agenda or Roadmap: “Where is this going...?”

It is best if your audience has no clue as to your overall plan for the demo – that way, every topic will be a wonderful surprise. To ensure this effect, eliminate presenting any agenda or demo roadmap from your meeting. And, by all means, if you make the mistake of sharing an agenda at the beginning of the meeting, make certain to never show it again!

Even better, present your demo as a long, complex story, with multiple fictional characters and a storyline that braids together several storylines. Jump back and forth between these characters as you present the benefits to their counterparts in the audience. Make sure that you move seamlessly from section to section, module to module, while applying the other techniques in this list.

This strategy should have your audience lost by the ten minute mark (“Who was the character named ‘Bob’, again?”). Even better, the lack of any clear demarcations between demo segments will ensure that once lost, your audience will never be able to rejoin the story. The good news is that they will be able to use the time in the demo to do their email, since you can’t see that they got lost...!

9. Point at Your Screen with Your Finger: “If you look right here...”

Yes, audiences are clairvoyant – they can accurately visualize your every motion and gesture via a speakerphone. This is why pointing at your own screen with your finger (“If you look right here...”) is such an effective approach in Remote Demonstrations.

As an exercise, practice developing this and related skills by gesturing broadly when you are talking on a cell telephone while driving in a car. Your audience will mysteriously be able to visualize points you are making...! For extra credit, practice your remote gesturing while on a cell phone driving on the freeway or autobahn during rush hour.

10. Follow the advice in the Stunningly Awful Demos Top Ten List:

If you do manage to generate interactivity and engage your audience by ignoring the previous nine items, you can still snatch defeat from the jaws of victory by following the devastating advice found in the *Stunningly Awful Demos Top Ten List* article. Here are the key items to keep in mind to maximize your chances for failure:

- Be unclear on the Customer’s Needs - “The Harbor Cruise”
- Present a Linear Demo from beginning to end - “Where is this going...?”
- Start with a Corporate Overview - “Death by Corporate Overview...”
- Don’t reconfirm the Time Constraints for the meeting - “Sorry, we’re out of time...”
- Show as many Features as possible - “...And another thing you can do is...”
- Show the same demo, regardless of the Customer’s Depth of Interest - “One for all...”
- Let Questions interrupt and take control of your demo - “But what about...?”
- Let Bugs and Crashes consume you - “Gee, it’s never done that before...”
- Limit the time you show your big Pay-Off Screen - “Ta-da... Any questions?”
- Avoid Summarizing - “And the next thing is...”

Practice and perfect the items on these lists and you’ll join the hallowed ranks of the Sales Prevention Team at your organization. In any case, following these “Top Ten” SAD Remote Demo guidelines will certainly increase the probability that your demos will not help you achieve your goals.

When you do these ten simple things, you should expect your audience to say, “That was a Stunningly Awful Demo!”

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