



High-Impact Sales Presentations: A Primer for Development and Delivery

By Kathleen Norton-Schock, Director – Business Development, Onset Marketing LLC
Knorton-schock@onsetmarketing.com

While “public speaking” has been reputed to be the #2 fear of most human beings (only superseded by a fear of death!), in sales, much of a person’s and a company’s success depends upon the superior and compelling presentation of facts in a public forum.

In order to achieve your goal of eloquently (and profitably!) promoting your product or service, you will want to ensure that the distinctiveness, uniqueness and benefits of that product or service are clearly understood by your audience. And you must make a persuasive, consistent argument leading that audience (from 1 person to 1000 or more) to agree that your products and services are a superior solution to their needs.



The ability to present a winning sales presentation --- regardless of the business you are in ---- can be learned, and mastered. And it is in your best interest to do so.

Developing presentations can be boiled down to three main action items. The first relates to **substance**, or the subject matter of the presentation. This is the essence of what’s being proposed and presented.

Secondly you need to concentrate on the **structure** of your presentation --- how the essence is organized, so that it is memorable and positively distinctive.

Third, it is important to focus on the **style** of the presentation. While style *isn’t* everything (as the fashion industry would have us believe!), a unique and convincing style can set your presentation apart from the many others that your audience must endure in any given work week --- and elevate your product, service and YOU above your competition quickly.

Let’s take a look at each of these.

Substance

Never rely on just one source of data or one point of view in crafting the essence of your presentation. It can cause data errors that will seriously undermine your credibility, and may also limit your own creativity and clear thinking. Use *many* sources and inputs for your speech.

However, at the same time, Substance Rule #1 is: **HAVE ONE STORY!** That story should be woven around a compelling theme, with connected sub-themes if necessary, but



should have (like all good stories) a beginning, a middle, an end and be told in one, articulate “voice”.

It is important to consistently verify the accuracy of any data that you use to underpin your presentation’s substance. You don’t want to use data that can easily be refuted or challenged.

And ***always*** differentiate facts from opinion.

Some quick techniques for data collection are:

- Use facts published by external subject matter experts;
- Use external market research data collected by secondary and primary market research companies;
- Quote a pre-eminent source (or agreeing sources) in the industry, someone with obvious distinction and who is respected for their knowledge. This can go a long way in developing your audience’s trust.



When creating the essence of your speech, keep your audience, always, in mind. Always try to be contextually relevant; in other words, try to present within the context of the listeners. As much as possible, forecast who will be attending your presentations. What are the roles of the audience members? Are they supporters of your assertions? Are they competitors or non-supporters? What is their interest level and what will be of most interest to them? If they are not supporters, which facts, in all the substance you are collecting, will most likely persuade them to give your proposition a fair hearing?

When you determine those things, ensure that your presentation contains facts, data and opinions that will resonate with the audience, in a positive, but also succinct fashion. Imagine yourself standing in the shoes of your target audience member. As much as possible, determine the issues that matter to him/her and why he/she should care about what you’re saying.

Another stratagem for excellent substance collection is to try and rehearse your presentation in front of people who have some similar characteristics to your target audience. Listen to their feedback, and incorporate it into your presentation’s essence.

Finally, decide how you are going to handle questions and answers. Do you want them at the end, or throughout your presentation? Once you decide that, state it up front, so that your audience has the appropriate expectation of what you want from an interaction with them. And craft the essence of your speech in a logical manner to invite the kind of interrogation with which you are most comfortable, and which improves and strengthens your substance.



Structure

Axiomatic to presentation development is the time-tested approach of:

- Tell them what you are going to tell them;
- Tell them;
- Tell them what you told them.

While that might sound like a cliché, it is particularly important when creating presentations that are longer than just a few minutes. Human attention span, even in very interested adults, is really not very long! So, to repeat what you have said and to emphasize your key points, consistently, is a kindness to your audience.

One key technique for developing a cogent presentation structure, and creating a positive learning experience for your audience, is to begin by developing an outline. An outline will force you to consider the sequence of information that you will present; the priority of the facts that you will be conveying (with the most important facts coming first); and the inter-relationship of all of the facts to the STORY that you are articulating.



Additionally, you need to determine the one unifying theme that each graphic, bullet point, or chart will emphasize and reiterate. Then every slide or paragraph you create should be tested against one basic question: “Does this slide (graph, chart, bullet point etc.) underpin my unifying theme, and emphasize my story?” If it does, keep it. If it doesn’t, omit it.

Many leading, top-tier consultants follow a tried and true method of developing their presentations. They make an assertion in the opening statement of a presentation or the header of a visual, and then, throughout the presentation, they validate it. It is an approach that has served “The Final Four” and all of their competitors very well for many years!

While your presentation can (and should) be fact-filled and logical, try not to “over-define” what your listeners ought to know. Allow some flexibility in interpretation. But in doing that, ensure that the interpretation *most often* underscores your offering’s positive benefits and **USP (unique selling proposition)**.



Additionally, to tie your theme together, your transitions (from one slide to another, or one thought to another) have to be smooth, logical, and powerful. It isn't enough to leave a topic and jump to the next. Your audience has to be coaxed to go with you on the journey....and nothing achieves that more efficiently than dramatic or compelling transitions. Use each transition as a type of intellectual bridge, taking you and your audience on an exciting trip, underscored by your unifying theme and reaching your logical conclusion.

Style

An important point of any presentation is the pictures and illustrations that underscore your text. It is another basic rule: graphics should support, (not fight) the content and the theme of the presentation. Graphics should always be tested against the following question: will this picture aid an audience learning or aid the presenter in presenting? Bottom line, graphics are incorporated in a presentation to aid the listener. When they don't, replace them with something that will.



Use an editor when you can. Be religious about eliminating any words or phrases that are grammatically questionable. And it should go without saying (but is still unfortunately necessary!) that running a spell-checker, and then having an excellent human speller review your presentation, is mandatory.

The need to rehearse is also paramount. Even the most practiced speakers need to test the timing, word choices, the diction and the phraseology incorporated in their presentations. The more you rehearse (with and without a "live" audience), the more fluid you become as a speaker; and the more dramatic and memorable your story will become, as well!

Here are some other important stylistic "rules" that we, at Onset Marketing, have found characteristic of the best sales presentations:

- Repetition is just fine and sometimes necessary ---- as long as it underscores and links back to the story and the unifying theme.
- Formal tone and manner is often the best route to take. It emphasizes the importance of what you are saying, and elevates that importance in the minds of your audience as well.
- An instructive (professorial) tone is often quite compelling. It can be very convincing, provided you hold the conviction of what you are saying, yourself! Some of the best reactions that you are striving for are to have audience members say "I learned a lot".
- Vary your timing, your tone, your words, your expression. Nothing can "turn off" an audience faster than a monotone presentation. This is a subject in which you are interested, so show it --- by your facial expressions, your delivery emphasis, and



your potential use of colorful words, strong adjectives, and convincing (perhaps even mellifluous) phrases!

- Avoid slang.
- Avoid colloquialisms.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms. Too often, presentations, particularly those of a technical nature, are filled with jargon and acronyms. Sometimes, this can't be avoided but it should be minimized, as much as possible unless the alternative is totally unacceptable.
- And avoid profanity.
- Use humor when you can; but ensure that it is humor that is universally acceptable (and not mean or derisive of a person, an idea, a group etc.)



Above all, TELL A STORY. You have a story to tell, complete with anecdotes, similes, and examples. That is why you are selling your product/service; you believe in it, and it is the basis of the very best kind of story ---- one that should/could bring enormous benefits to your audience. So tell your story; and expect a Happy Ending!

About the author:

Kathleen Norton-Schock is Director of Business Development for Onset Marketing LLC,, responsible for developing new client opportunities, and delivering fully-integrated campaigns for a select set of clients. Prior to Onset Marketing, Mrs. Norton-Schock was the Great Lakes Region Market Director for CA (formerly Computer Associates International) where she managed all regional advertising, public relations, trade show activity, events, and integrated marketing campaigns for a diverse team of sales, service, and support professionals.

With a 28 year career in executive management and marketing, Mrs. Norton-Schock was President and General Manager, and Director of Marketing, for Telecorp Products Inc., a Michigan contact center software company for three years. She was also Regional Vice President of Sales for market research vendor Mentis Corporation (purchased by the Gartner Group); and Worldwide Product Line Manager, global financial market solutions, for Unisys Corporation for almost a decade. At Unisys, she and her team achieved a 570% global increase in Unisys revenue from financial hardware/software solutions. Having obtained her Bachelor of Arts Degree from New York University, Mrs. Norton-Schock began her career as a Market Research Associate/Focus Group Facilitator for Quantum Science Corporation, one of the first research companies to serve the information technology industry, in its infancy.

In her community life, Mrs. Norton-Schock serves as Vice President of Marketing, and on the board, of the Michigan Council of Women In Technology Foundation. She belongs to GLIMA (the Great Lakes Interactive Marketing Association), the Michigan chapter of the American Marketing Association, NAWBO, and Inforum (formerly the Detroit Women's Economic Club).

About Onset Marketing:

Onset Marketing is a full-service marketing company, established in early 2003, and serving hundreds of clients in the United States.. Our logo expresses our approach to marketing: it is an equal balance of focus, innovation and execution. Our current and completed engagements reflect this vision: they consist of a balanced mix of strategic market planning, marketing materials development, branding and lead generation programs.

For more information, please visit www.onsetmarketing.com

Onset Marketing LLC, 37899 W 12 Mile, #110, Farmington Hills, MI 48331
P: (248) 596-9788 E: service@onsetmarketing.com W: www.OnsetMarketing.com