

How to Do a SAD (bad) Demo

1. Show the same demo, regardless of the Customer's Depth of Interest: "One for all..."

Ignore the fact that the VP in the room only wants a top-level overview of your offering and that the managers in the room are interested only in their portion of the process. Instead, choose the lowest-level users' scenario for your demo.

This will ensure that the senior members of the customer's team grow bored and leave the demo early (~fifteen minutes after the meeting began). They'll never see anything that compels their interest, requiring either a second demo meeting (unlikely), or a loss to your competitor, or "no purchase" situation.

Similarly, the customer managers won't be thrilled with what they see – your software will look too long, too detailed, and too complex for them to use comfortably.

In the end, you'll have done a fair job training the target end-users, but the training won't be necessary since you won't get the deal! An awful waste of time for everyone involved.

2. Let Questions interrupt and take control of your demo: "But what about...?"

You've started your demo and things are going well when, after five minutes, someone asks a good question. You stop your demo, take a few minutes to answer the question and turn back to your laptop. The customer asks a follow-up question which you dutifully address in more detail, taking another few minutes. The customer considers your answer, then asks for more details...

In the meantime, what has happened to the rest of the audience? They've checked-out. They're having side-conversations, checking email on their Blackberries, or are leaving the room – and you've barely gotten started!

Letting questions divert your demo is an excellent way to ensure that you lose the customer's key players early in the meeting and run out of time before you've gotten to your key points.

Another terrific strategy for failure is to allow the Hostiles to take control of the meeting – these are the people who don't like you, don't like your company, or simply believe it is their purpose in life to torture the vendor. Let them take control and you'll enjoy the same negative results... They'll consume the time, bore the balance of the audience, and you'll never get to deliver your message they way you'd desired.

3. Let Bugs and Crashes consume you: "Gee, it's never done that before..."

Here are two wonderful ways for you to show your software in the worst possible light:

- First, call attention to cosmetic bugs (poor screen repainting, cursor not changing, "graphics garbage", etc.). Make sure to point out, "See that? That shouldn't be there...!"
- Second, when you do run into a bug, say "Gosh, I've never seen that before." Then try the same operation again to ensure that you run into the same bug twice! The wonderfully SAD result will be your audience thinking, "Their software doesn't really work and their best technical people don't even know it!" Very convincing.

As an added SAD bonus, when a crash or very serious bug has occurred that requires re-starting your software or rebooting, make sure that the balance of your team is sitting in the rear of the room doing email on their Blackberries – or better, out in the hall making calls. This ensures there is no way they can help manage the audience while the demo machine recovers.

4. Limit the time you show your big Pay-Off Screen: "Ta-da... Any questions?"

You've been demoing along for twenty or forty minutes and you finally get to your big pay-off screen – the key message. You present it for 500 milliseconds and then move swiftly to a PowerPoint slide that says, "Thank you for your time – Questions?"

This is a SADly terrific way to ensure that your audience never remembers your key message. While you may have seen that pay-off screen hundreds of times, this is the first time your audience has ever seen it. Showing that screen for a fraction of a second puts your message in the long list with all the other 3000 marketing messages your customer will see that same day... Good luck!

5. Avoid Summarizing: "And the next thing is..."

Roll along from section to section, through segment after segment, in a continuous verbal assault. Leave no pauses, offer no introductions and, by all means, don't summarize after you complete an important segment.

This SAD tactic contributes wonderfully to grow confusion, add complexity, and generally bore the tears out of your audience.

For maximum SAD effect, use this tactic in conjunction with long, linear, non-componentized, multiple-player, multi-product, multi-hour demos. You'll have your audience examining their watches or the insides of their eyelids in no time!