



The Presentation Paradox

A White Paper from
Eyeful Presentations Ltd



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75%

of all presentations
forgotten within 4 hours

Cliff Atkinson, Sociable Media

£75,000 p.a

lost by the average business
due to bad presentations

Cliff Atkinson, Sociable Media

Executive summary

Converting a lead can be one of the most expensive, time consuming and labour intensive pieces of work your organisation does, yet it's almost always the most important and lucrative. As a result, organisations spend vast amounts of time and money on a long process, from developing cold leads through the sales cycle and converting them into new customers. Yet there is an unspoken and potentially **fatal flaw** in the chain that threatens to **waste thousands and even millions** of pounds for companies.

This **fatal flaw is the sales presentation** at the very end of the process. The paradox is that not only is this pitch is so often the 'clinchier' in the process, it also takes place after all the money has been spent. Academic research continually highlights that the vast majority of presentations in business today are not up to the job. Add to this the anecdotal hang ups of "Death by PowerPoint" and the impact of the problem reaches crisis point. Ultimately, compared to the professionalism that precedes most presentations, they are **weak and not reflective at all** of the organisation using them.

Through this paper we'll see just how stark this contrast is and then importantly, look at some ways to rectify this chasm in quality.



Driving your pipeline straight down the drain

The amount of money that organisations spend taking cold leads and turning them into genuine opportunities is vast. Not just the financial cost but the people and technology you plough into these activities makes for heavyweight investment.

But then what happens..?

...Usually, it all gets ruined by lacklustre presentations that are extremely poorly structured, funded and developed. **You may as well pour the money straight down the drain.**

Want to understand just how bad this is? Let's look at the effort put in right up until that vital, and awful last step...

Product development – building for the needs of your customers

Today's business world demands a quality and speed to market like never before. Delivering competitive products, whether based on product differentiation or price leadership, requires serious investment in the shape of cash, technology and people.

A cursory glance at the basic steps within Product Development shows the stages that are required to deliver quality products:

Product research

Build & testing

Market testing

Product branding

Licensing & protection

Each of these steps carries significant cost and time pressures – and today's businesses have built significant teams around making sure that their organisation does this better than their competition.

Marketing – creating relationships

A top quality product only takes you only so far – you need to find customers to get the product to be used. The Art of Marketing is both long established and constantly evolving. The fluidity of this marketing mix covers a number of areas:

Advertising, Print & Online

Public Relations

Direct Marketing & mail

Marketing collateral

Exhibitions & trade shows

Viral marketing

Networking & Affiliate marketing

The list can be long and complicated and the demands on the marketing function high. Inevitably and unfortunately the demands are invariably so high that there's rarely sufficient time or energy to focus properly on the sales presentation.

People – the resource ingredient

People within an organisation are expensive, and rightly so. The ongoing training and development of people is also expensive – this is after all why so many organisations credit the difference they have over their competitors as their people.

The investment required to build a professional sales team is certainly interesting:

Pure salary

Bonuses & commissions

Recruitment

Training – money and staff time

Company cars

Equipment

All these ingredients go into making your people the right people – but it all comes at a cost. That cost, however, is justified as people are a key ingredient of any business.

But what now – all that effort, all that cost and it all leads to one final part of the jigsaw. One final opportunity to justify all the effort and cost that has gone before. One opportunity to turn that potential client into a real revenue generating customer.

The final presentation

And now it all goes horribly wrong. The final piece of the jigsaw is not just out of shape – it is in a terrible state. Most sales presentations are unbelievably bad and suffer from at least one of the following traits:

Home grown (and normally there's been some bad growing)

Created ad-hoc with no defined requirements let alone objectives

Lack any form of consistency

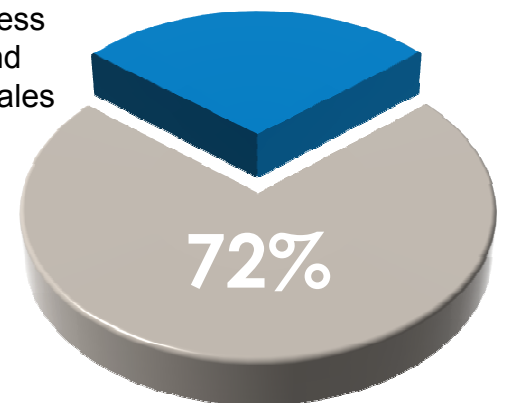
Lack all credibility

Have no design clarity

Suffer from a complete absence of any key messages

No clear understanding of purpose

In the UK today 72 % of businesses have NO formal process for reviewing and updating their sales presentations.



PowerPoint in the UK survey,
Eyeful Presentations, 2006

To put all this effort, resource and money into the process to then be let down by a poor presentation is essentially **commercial suicide**.

That's almost three quarters of all businesses without any sort of process – the statistics beggar belief and starkly highlight the way in which this crucial phase of the sales cycle has been ignored, undervalued and downright abused.

Taking the last step and getting better

There are certain fundamental parts of any presentation that, if managed correctly, can bring this final stage in line with your other structured business processes. By working through these steps, you will start to climb out of the horrendous quagmire that is today's sales presentation.

It's time to start using the 4 stages of PowerPoint resurrection:

1. Look and feel

A classic starting point and most often the finishing point as well. Looking good is important and can be a great place for a quick initial overhaul. But looks aren't everything and the underlying message will not come across if you are focused solely on the look and feel.

Getting this piece sorted is important but it is only one part of the jigsaw.

2. Clarity of message

Your presentation is there for a purpose – so focus and make sure your presentation is getting that purpose and all key messages across clearly.

You must understand what you want your audience to take away from your presentation and then focus on writing something that delivers. The “Rule of Three” can be used to great effect in presentations. Research has proven that people remember information better in threes – use this tool to aid you in getting your key message not just understood but also retained by your audience.



3. Creating the story

The structure of your presentation is vital to its success. Whilst your audience will not necessarily realise what the structure is – without it you can fall apart.

Storyboarding is an important way of ensuring your delivery is successful. It does however rely on careful planning and then first class execution to ensure your audience takes in and remembers your message.

4. Preparing for all eventualities

We all know that sales presentations can take unexpected turns. The best presenters do not just have a standard set of slides, they have a full set that covers nearly all eventualities. Whilst they may not all be used they are there to show your potential customer just how good you are.

Now is the time to stand up and make amends for previous sins. Genuine professionals have been forced to work with awful presentations for too long. Now is the time to take your industry by the scruff of the neck and send a clear message to your competitors and clients, prospective and current alike.

Now is the time to finally bring the last part of your sales process into line with the professionalism of the rest of your organisation.

It's time to step up or fade away.

Which way are you going to go?



Eyeful Presentations is a leading, dedicated presentation consultancy firm. Eyeful's depth of experience in this specialist area provides its customers with a proven consultative approach to develop and deliver successful presentations.

Eyeful's fresh and innovative approach equips its clients with groundbreaking presentations that really make a difference. This in turn improves customers sales performance, maximises market opportunities and shortens the sales cycle.

For more information, visit Eyeful via the web at www.eyefulpresentations.co.uk or call 0845 056 8528.