



## The Second Derivative

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### **Selling to Your Sales Force – The Toughest Customer of All! Demos for New Products and New Releases**

Cries of “Who cares?”, “So what?” and “No more features!” issue from the more vocal members of the audience – and everyone else appears to be apathetic. Bad news!

The situation? You are demonstrating your new, earth-shattering, game-changing product at the annual sales kickoff meeting – but it is *not* going well. This is your key opportunity to “sell to sales” and put your new product foremost in the minds of the sales team – and they’re not responding as you’d hoped.

Most demos to the sales force of new products and new releases of existing products are un compelling, unconvincing and fail to generate the desired excitement in the sales team.

What’s going wrong and what can you do?

Here’s a rapid answer: capture, test and communicate Customer Success Stories or Use Cases to generate a vision of how your customers will benefit from using your new offering. Start with your customers’ business issues, present these up-front and then map the balance of the demo to the specific capabilities customers need to solve their business problems.

The result? You gain sales force “Share-of-mind” – and achieve your roll-out objectives!

#### **The Problem – A Lack of Vision**

Most demos of *new products* are all about certain key features. Most demos of *new releases* are all about the new features. Product Managers live and breathe their new products over a period of months or years. They know their new offerings intimately – every new feature, every detailed implementation, every bug, blemish and missing feature – and generally have a strong vision of how customers *should* use the new offering in their minds. The question is: does this vision coincide with reality?

When Product Managers demo their new products, they tend to focus on the key and new features, show how they work and all of the cool options available. However, they often fail to build a vision with their salespeople of what good things these new features will enable for the customers – and that is the missing element in their demos.

The key to a successful product launch or new release demo is Vision Generation. You must build a vision in your salespeople's minds of how your offering will help your customers solve their business problems.

## **Vision Clarified**

Why do you build and sell software? Two answers:

1. To make a profit.
2. To help your customers solve their business problems.

When you "sell" to the sales force you need to keep both of these in mind. Your sales people will preferentially sell the products that are easiest to sell and easiest to buy. Most typically, new products are not the easiest to sell, in comparison with existing offerings.

Salespeople know that new products will often have bugs, warts, major blemishes and are lacking certain important functionality. New products also often suffer from the challenges of "Crossing the Chasm" – they may have a limited initial audience of interest in the customer base. Salespeople may choose to keep on selling existing, proven products, in order to make their quotas as comfortably and predictably as possible.

Put yourself in their shoes: you are in the audience and another product manager is demoing his new product. Over a period of 50 minutes he shows a pile of "really cool" features and options. He used a set of fictional characters, "Susan, the Manager", "John, the user" and "Bob, the IT guy" to tell a story. By the end of the 50 minutes (or longer!) you've seen a lot of screens and dialog boxes, but you are more confused (or bored!) than anything else. You certainly don't have a strong vision of what the new product can do for you or your customers...!

Now contemplate the following scenario: move the clock fast-forward one year. You are listening to a sales success story for your new product at the next year's sales kickoff meeting. The successful sales person is relating why the customer made the purchase and shows a slide with the following information:

- Title and Industry: VP of Sales, Acme Software
- Critical Business Issue: Concerned about achieving forecasted revenues
- Reason(s): Forecast data sits in local, regional spreadsheets, requiring hours of manual "roll-up" work from reps, regional heads, and admin staff each time the forecast is updated.
- Specific Capabilities Needed: A way to aggregate the disparate data and generate up-to-date reports, on-demand, right from the VP of Sales' laptop computer.
- Delta: 18 person-days saved each time the forecast is updated.
- We Sold: 200 licenses of our new Forcaster product, plus services, for a total order of \$575,000.

The other salespeople in the room get excited and start asking for more details. Why? Because they have similar customers with similar situations and realize, rapidly, that your company can provide the capabilities these customers need. They realize that the slide is a terrific Customer Success Story, a compelling and successful way to introduce the new product to customers.

The discussion continues and the other reps ask for the presales Sales Consultant to demo the capabilities that were provided, so that the reps can see them in the context of the Customer Success Story. The Sales Consultant does so – and takes about eight minutes to show what is needed.

The reps are now excited and ready to go sell your new product. They have a clear vision of:

- ✓ Who are the target customers.
- ✓ What problems can be addressed.
- ✓ The underlying reasons for these problems.
- ✓ The specific capabilities provided by your new product to solve the problems.
- ✓ The value of the solution, in your customers' minds.
- ✓ The size of the sale, for them.

Good stuff! Now, contemplate how you might have *accelerated* the sales of your new product if you'd provided this information at the sales kick-off meeting...

### **One Conversation Could Be Worth a Thousand Sales**

When presenting and demonstrating to your sales people, you need to make your new product as attractive, easy to communicate and easy to sell as possible.

For existing products, Customer Success Stories are often the best way for salespeople to engage and begin a sales process with a customer. However, new products often don't have the benefit of Customer Success Stories – so what do you do?

First, if you have any pre-release customers who used your product, interview them to generate reasonable Success Stories. Ask them:

- [List their job title and industry]
- What problems are now being addressed using your new software?
- What were the underlying reasons for these problems?
- Which specific capabilities from your new product are they using address the problem?
- What is the value of the solution, from their perspective (in terms of people, time or money saved)?
- [List the size of the sale or expected sale]

“Sanitize” as necessary and you have a good Customer Success Story for your new product launch.

If you don’t have any customer experiences that you can harvest, then you need to create fictional or “suppositional” Success Stories. These should be based on your expected high-probability Use Cases. Create these fictional Success Stories from the following questions:

- What is the Target job title and industry?
- What major business problems do you *expect* your new product will address?
- What do you expect are the underlying reasons for these problems?
- Which specific capabilities from your new offering do you expect will be used to address the problem?
- What is the expected value of the solution (in terms of people, time or money saved)?
- What is the expected size of the sale, including product and services?

This is an effective and compelling starting point for helping your salespeople sell.

### **Vision Clearly Communicated**

Now, back to our sales kickoff meeting... Instead of flogging your sales team with a long, detailed demo of the new product, start with building a vision.

Begin your presentation with a set of existing or fictional Customer Success Stories. These will clearly illustrate the opportunities represented and provide the top-level information to qualify customers. You’ll want to provide a series of Success Stories like a menu, so that the sales team can see the depth and breadth of the customers the new offering can help.

You then follow with a demo that shows examples of the outcome for each Customer Success Story, from the customer’s perspective. For example, in our VP Sales case above, you would start your demo by showing the completed forecast, to prove that it can be done and to generate a vision of the solution right up-front. Then you would show the specific capabilities needed to create that forecast, using the fewest number of steps or mouse clicks in your demo.

Keep it short, simple, and to the point. In most cases, you can easily relate a complete Customer Success Story and show its accompanying demo in less than eight minutes!

### **Vision Achieved and Amplified**

By presenting your new offering in the context of Customer Success Stories, your sales organization can begin to sell your product right away. You’ve succeeded in

communicating how customers can use and get value from your product – via real-life usage situations.

You've amplified your messaging as well: you've transferred the knowledge of how to communicate your product's key uses from a single person (you) to the entire sales force in a way that is compelling and resonates with the sales people. You've also built a vision of what good things selling your offering will do for the sales folks, themselves!

The result? You've equipped your sales team with the three most important concepts possible:

1. Your new product will be compelling and easy to introduce to target customers.
2. It will be easy to prove and demonstrate – to move the sales process forward.
3. The sales team can achieve their numbers by selling your new offering.

Easy to buy, easy to sell!

### **Assess Your Own Demos**

To see how you are doing and compare with your peers, perform an assessment of your own demos at [www.SecondDerivative.com/Assess.html](http://www.SecondDerivative.com/Assess.html).

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