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GreatDemo!

Rescue – From the Tyranny of Traditional Demos, by Peter Cohan

Ask yourself:

- Have you ever felt like you have *far* too much to show in a demo – and insufficient time to show it?
- Have you ever said, “I’d like this to be interactive...” but you don’t get many questions?
- And when you ask, “Any questions so far?” you hear, “Nope, we’re good...”
- Have you even run out of time before you got to the best stuff?
- Have you ever felt like your audience just didn’t “get it”?

You are likely suffering from the tyranny, the terror, and the trap of traditional demos.

The Tyranny

Traditional demos force us to present as much as we can in the allotted time. We talk rapidly, mouse vigorously and cover as much demo territory as we can. There is *so* much to show – and an hour is simply not enough time...

And it gets worse with each new release – all of those new capabilities to highlight!

The Terror

Has this ever happened?

“I promised them an overview demo...” reports the salesperson, “...and it’s a *huge* opportunity!”

We respond, “What do we know about the customer?”

“They are *really* interested...” is the response, “and they need to see a demo right away!”

We jump onto a web session and start our demo, only to realize that the customer is *completely* unfamiliar with our offerings and we know very little about them... We pump up the energy in our delivery to try to connect with the audience, but they aren't very responsive... It feels like the more we show, the less they respond – we've entered terrifying territory – a place without time or dimension – we've entered The Traditional Demo Zone...!

The Traditional Trap

When a demo is first created for a new product, it is typically short and well-focused – there's simply not that much to show. With each successive release, demos get longer as new capabilities and workflows are added.

Don't we want to show the new stuff that's just been released? Don't we want to show the latest and greatest? Oh, and the slightly older stuff is also good, and the earlier stuff has some really cool capabilities and...

Release after release, year after year, our demos grow inexorably...! And what fit nicely into an hour originally couldn't *possibly* be done in an hour – so now we'll do an hour-long overview and then schedule a deep dive...

But wait, there's more terror in this trap...

Each time we hear a question that is asked by more than one customer, what do we do? We add the answer to that question to our growing talk-track. Not only do we need to cover more features and functions, but we also need to address all the questions we've heard more than once.

We're trapped! There's just too *much* to demo to do it well...!

And Our Customers' Perceptions?

What about our customers – what are *they* thinking during these demos?

“Wow – this looks really complicated...”

“This is more than we need...”

“Where is this going...?”

“I just got lost – what are they talking about now?”

“Hmmm – just got a text I need to respond to...”

“And might as well check email...”

“Did they just ask us something? Must have missed it...”

“Is this an hour meeting?”

“I wonder what I'll have for lunch...”

Oh-oh... And what are they saying *after* the demo, when we (the vendor) are gone?

“Well, that’s an hour I’ll never get back...”
“They don’t understand our business at all...”
“I got completely lost...”
“It looked really complicated and confusing...”
“Who invited those guys in...?”

Not good. How did we get into this predicament? We built traditional demos, that’s how...

The Traditional Approach to Building the Traditional Demo

The customary approach for creating demos is to outline a long story – “end-to-end” – designed to cover all of the workflows and capabilities, using a handful of fictional characters to tie things together. Demos become training sessions, describing how to navigate the interface, how to customize for specific user types, how to set up forms, dashboards, create and edit records, enter and update supplementary data, walk through multiple interrelated workflows and (eventually) customize and run reports. Very little is left out – “we need to communicate the full value of our offering...”

Intricate interdependencies seek to link disparate parts of the demo together:

We say, “Remember the record that we created for ‘Jane’ an hour ago?”

Customer thinks, “Nope...”

We plunge on, “Now we’ll show how to take that information and edit it as Jane’s manager Jack and then pass it on to John and Jill in marketing and accounting...”

Customer is checking phone...

We say, “There are several ways you can do this...”

Customer wonders, “Is there a way out of this room?”

These demos often show *multiple* ways to accomplish individual tasks (why would a user want to see anything but the *fastest* possible way?). Traditional demos attempt to show *way too much* – and strangely, *not* enough of what the customer actually wants to see.

Wasted Time, Wasted Demos

And it gets worse...! In theory, the more demos we do, the bigger the pipeline, correct? Well, in theory...

But let's examine. How many demos that we deliver we *know* were simply a waste of time? 25%? 33%? 50%? (Please don't say more than 50% - that's simply too painful...)

So we do more and more and more demos to try to fill the pipeline. And the faster we go, the behinder we get (to paraphrase Lewis Carroll). Our true productivity is frankly pretty poor – but it is *not our fault!* (Or is it, at least partly?)

We are caught in the terrible, tyrannical trap of traditional demos. There must be a way out...!

A Refreshing Approach – and Rescue

First, let's invest a few healthy minutes in doing Discovery, before offering any substantive demo. That alone would be a huge improvement...

But our sales colleague said they want a demo *right away*...! We understand that – but let's push back, gently but firmly, and use part of that “overview demo” meeting to do enough Discovery to enable a focused, customer-centric demo to be put together.

Let's stop guessing. Let's stop assuming that one demo fits all users.

Let's use the [Menu Approach](#) to help our customer understand what high-level solutions are *possible* and enable them to self-qualify by letting them choose the Menu items of most interest to them.

Once they've selected a few topics, we'll share brief [Vision Generation Demos](#) to provide our customer with a vision of what is possible – and to enable the Discovery conversation to take place.

And during our Discovery conversation, we provided some intriguing insights that lead to capabilities [competitively biased](#) in our favor. Now we've got what we need to put together a truly Great Demo!

We know what Specific Capabilities we need to show in the demo – so we can leave out everything else that is not of interest to the customer – how refreshing!

We know what key deliverables the customer wants to consume – so we show those right up front, to engage our customer and begin a real conversation – and make our demo truly interactive. How wonderful!

By knowing what is important for the various players, we can [manage questions](#) to avoid being dragged down rabbit holes or get lost in the weeds. How delightful!

And we can [organize our demo](#) in accord with the relative importance and availability of the key players, engaging executive first, then middle managers, staffer/users and ultimately administrators and super-users. How elegant!

Now our demos are crisp, prospects' needs are clearly addressed, and the sales process moves forward productively. And we've reduced the number of wasted demos substantially. How productive!

And our lives take a pleasant turn for the better, as well – and since we do many fewer wasted demos, we have more time to prepare for the demos that really matter. Rescue is at hand!

Excelsior! Forward! Banish the Traditional Demo Tyranny!

If you seek liberation from the tyranny of traditional demos, consider making a change. And not a small, incremental, *get-a-little-bit-better-but-still-do-largely-the-same-things* change – make a *real* change. A *step* change – a *substantive* change that will likely change your life...

Throw off the shackles of the old traditional approach – embrace a new, delightfully effective approach to creating and delivering demos.

When you do, you'll hear your customers say to you, "Wow – that was a Great Demo!"

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