



Demos for dollars

Close more sales with product demonstrations

by Phil Sasso

Want to sell more? Do more demos. The more products you demonstrate, the more products you'll sell. I call it "Show and Sell" demos.

A few years ago, my wife, Beth, and I saw a very effective demo at a local hardware store. The demonstrator filled a large glass with water. Then he added a scoop of black grease and some hair clippings from a local barber-shop. As he stirred the gross concoction, he explained that this was the kind of stuff that tends to clog the pipes in your home. Then he took a tablespoon of his "non-toxic, septic-safe" drain cleaner and stirred it in. Within seconds, the hair and grease dissolved and the water in the glass had turned clear. He explained it was also a powerful preventive maintenance tool.

Beth and I were entertained. But, more importantly, we were sold. We eagerly snatched up a jar of this high-priced, high-tech, bio-organic drain cleaner.

I realize, unlike this demo, most of your equipment demos won't be as flamboyant as a David Copperfield magic trick. But I assure you even the most boring technical demonstration will do more to sell a product than just showing someone a picture of it.

If all Beth and I had seen was this plainly packaged jar of no-name drain cleaner on the store shelf, we wouldn't have even noticed it, much less paid a premium for it. But that's the power of a good "Show and Sell" demo.

Time, money and demos

You probably already do several tool demos a week without thinking about it. That's because a tool demo is usually quick and you have the tool on hand. But you probably don't do nearly as many equipment demos. That may be because you think equipment demos take a lot of time — and you only stock a few pieces of equipment.

Let's deal with the second problem first. I understand you can't inventory every piece of equipment you sell. The cash outlay would be enormous and it would be a headache to store it all. So rather than selling your first-born child and renting an industrial-sized warehouse, what if you form a "demo partnership" with other nearby jobbers in your network?

It would work like this: Contact two or three other jobbers and agree to swap equipment for demos. List the equipment you each currently own. Chances are you have some products they don't have and vice-versa. Next, swap your nitrogen generator for their A/C exchanger (or



whatever) for a week or two. Then make it a point to do as many demos as you can while you have that borrowed machine.

If one of your customers is interested in a piece of equipment you don't have, ask around to your demo partners and others in your network. If you can't find a unit, consider buying one — especially if it's a popular product. If you don't have the capital to put out for the product, try using a video demo. (Check out *Professional Tool & Equipment News'* Video Network online at www.pten.com/video/network/.) It's not as effective as a personal demo, but much better than pointing to a piece of literature and trying to explain how it works.

You may be concerned that demos take a lot of time out of your already busy schedule. Or you think demos are just a waste of time. Instead of looking at the time they take, look at the revenue they can generate. How much do you make for a few minute tool demo? How much could

you make with a few minute equipment demo?

With practice you can do an initial demo for most products in just five to 10 minutes. If your customer shows interest, take some extra time to highlight a few other features and benefits and try to close the sale. If they're not showing any buying signals, tactfully cut your demo short and hand them a piece of literature. You're only wasting both of your time if you're doing a full presentation for an uninterested customer.

Making your demos more effective

If too few of your demos turn into sales, don't blame demos. The problem may not be demos in general but the specific technique you're using. You may be wasting a lot of time on a push-button demo and not pushing the prospect's hot buttons.

The biggest mistake I've seen salespeople make doing a demo is just jumping into a cookie-cutter presentation. That's more like reciting a script than selling. You might as well play a video. What makes a one-on-one demo better is that you can customize your demo to the prospect, saving time and increasing your effectiveness.

If you're presenting one-on-one or to a small group of techs start by asking a few questions to determine how you'll customize your demo. Following are a few questions off the top of my head. *If you think of others, email me at sassback@shaboom.com.*

1. Have you ever used this type of equipment before?

Is this their first unit or are they replacing an existing one? If it's a replacement or they've used someone else's unit ask what brand and/or model. If they know the equipment, you can often shorten your demo time. If they already have a smoke machine for instance, don't waste time showing them how it makes smoke. Instead, point out the benefits of this model over their previous one. However, if this is a first-time user, focus on basics and look for buying signs before you get too deep into a long demo.

2. What things do you want to know about this machine?

Once you know what they're interested in, you can make sure you cover it and not waste time showing features that


don't matter. Of course, there are some areas you want to cover in every demo, like exclusive features the competition doesn't have. But other than that, sell to their need. Demo what matters to the customer.

3. Do you think you'll be buying one of these in a month or so?

If they don't expect to buy it soon, give your Reader's Digest-condensed version of a demo. Hit a few key points and hand them a piece of literature. Chances are if they aren't buying for a few months, you'll need to do another demo when they're ready to buy. Save your time.

Once you've given a demo, ask for the sale. And follow-up if they don't buy. As I've said before, big ticket items are a big decision for your average tech. Keep asking for the sale until you get it, or they buy from someone else.

Use these techniques and I think you'll see how demos can be a powerful selling tactic.

After all, seeing is believing. 

Phil Sasso is the president of Sasso Marketing, an aftermarket advertising and public relations agency. He is also a speaker, trainer and consultant. Get his free marketing tips at philsasso.com/blog.





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