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# Five Rules for Creating Automated Demos

By Amy Gesenhues

Software demos are the cornerstone of any comprehensive sales process and play an integral role in high-level marketing strategy. A live demo can effectively move prospects further into the sales cycle, moving hot leads closer to the purchasing decision. But how do you discern the hot prospects from the cold prospects?

By offering up a snapshot of your software at the frontend of the sales process, an automated demo can save your sales team from spending too much time and too many resources on cold prospects. A professionally-produced, product-centric, automated demo can deliver a hot prospect before your sales rep picks up the phone or sends an email.

The one catch is that your automated demo has to shine to get the job done. Here are five quick rules to create an automated demo that initiates the sales cycle and delivers quality leads:

## **Rule 1: Make the demo product-centric.**

Creative, flashy demos with animated graphics and moving text may look cool, but rarely do they win leads. Prospects want to see your software; they want know what your interface looks like and how it works. If you can deliver these specifics before asking a prospect for a scheduled face-to-face sales call or an online conference meeting, then you have created an opportunity for your software to resonate immediately with the prospect.

An automated software demo should be product-centric, focusing on your software's look, feel, and functionality. If you have a robust software product, concentrate on the top three unique features

that set it apart from the competition. Also, for robust software applications, divide your automated demo into modules or sections to showcase different functions of the software. Provide prospects with a menu bar to navigate easily between the sections.

Once prospects see your software and have a general understanding of how it works, they will be ready to move further into your sales cycle armed with informed sales questions.

**Rule 2: Make the demo professional.**

Just as easily as a demo can initiate the sales conversation, it can also end it. Never underestimate the power of a software demo to underscore your software product. The more professional your demo, the better your product looks. Use clean, crisp shots of your software synched to a professional voiceover to narrate the function you are demonstrating.

Write the script with your audience in mind (if you sell to the financial services industry, you may want to use a different tone and different language than if you are selling to the construction industry). Hire professional voice talent and record the audio using professional recording technology. Your CEO may be great at giving speeches, but using his voice for the demo could be a mistake. Too many pauses, frequent “ums,” and once-in-awhile throat-clearings are not allowed in the field of professional voiceovers.

No matter how well-built your software is, how easily it can be implemented, or how much time and money it saves users, if your demo looks amateur, nobody will want to see the real thing.

**Rule 3: Keep it short, no more than six-minutes in length.**

An automated demo has a definite sweet spot when it comes to how long it should run. Do not produce an automated demo that is more than six-minutes in length if you want prospects to view it in its entirety. In fact, the closer you can get to the four to five-minute mark the better.

During the initial stages of the evaluation process, your prospects want a quick and clean snapshot of your software before moving forward. An automated demo offers prospects the perfect chance to take a peek before committing more time to learning about your application. Keeping your automated demo in the four to six-minute range gives them a taste without giving up too much information. It triggers their interest without confusing them or, worse, turning them away.

**Rule 4: Leverage it across multiple platforms and within various campaigns.**

A key benefit of an automated demo is that it can serve your marketing and sales needs more effectively than any other sales and marketing tool if leveraged correctly. Because an effective automated demo is primarily product-centric, it can be used in multiple campaigns throughout the year. Email blasts, Adwords landing pages, direct mailers, online marketing campaigns—they can all be used to direct traffic to your automated demo.

If your company exhibits at conferences and trade shows, a product-centric, automated demo can be looped on an oversized monitor in your booth to attract floor traffic. Your trade show sales team can use the demo in the booth as an easy and accessible demonstration tool that keeps everyone's selling message consistent and on-point. Be creative and save the demo to flash drives that you hand-out as trade-show giveaways so that every prospect leaves your booth with a four-minute overview of your software in their pocket.

**Rule 5: Use it to generate qualified leads that are ready to move further into your sales cycle.**

While you want as many prospects as possible to view your demo, you also want it to generate quality leads. Placing a registration page at the beginning or end of the demo can help you pull leads and increase your automated demo's overall ROI. The quality of your lead depends on where you place the registration page and how involved you make the registration form.

A hard registration, a registration that is put on the frontend of the demo and only allows prospects that have entered valid information to view the demo, will pull fewer—but usually more qualified—leads. A soft registration follows at the end of the demo and is an open invite for the prospect that wants more information.

When creating your registration page, regardless of where you place it, it is always best to limit the amount of information you request. Prospects are much more likely to complete the registration form if it asks only for necessary contact information. In other words, don't use your demo's registration form to create prospect demographic reports.

A live demo serves a specific need within an extended sales cycle with prospects that have already been qualified. An automated demo can do the work at the beginning of the sales process so that your sales force can concentrate on selling instead of spending all of their time prospecting. With the right automated demo, your team will get more done in a shorter amount of time—selling more software and generating more revenue.

**About the Author**

Amy Gesenhues is the Director of Marketing for Autodemo LLC, the leading developer of software demos. Her company has focused solely on product-centric, automated demos since its start over ten years ago. Autodemo works with hundreds of software companies, from startups to Fortune 500 organizations. You can view samples of their work at [www.Autodemo.com](http://www.Autodemo.com).

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Brian Lawley is the CEO and Founder of the 280 Group ([www.280group.com](http://www.280group.com)) and former President of the Silicon Valley Product Management Association ([www.svpma.org](http://www.svpma.org)). During his twenty five year career in Product Management he has defined, launched and marketed over fifty successful products. He is the author of the Books "Expert Product Management: Advanced Techniques, Tips & Strategies for Product Management & Product Marketing" and "The Phenomenal Product Manager". In 2008 he won the Product Management Excellence Award for Thought Leadership by the Association of International Product Marketing & Management. Mr. Lawley is a Certified Product Manager (CPM) and Certified Product Marketing Manager (CPMM). He earned an MBA with honors from San Jose State University and Bachelors Degree in Management Science from the University of California at San Diego.

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