

You can increase your software sales without increasing your selling and marketing expenses thanks to the design and strategic use of excellent demos on demand, live Web demos and demos in person. This white paper outlines how you can achieve this objective in just three steps:

1. **attract** more clients;
2. **convert** more clients; and
3. **build** more client **loyalty**.

Introduction

The Demo: The Moment of Truth

The software demonstration in person is a decisive moment for any B2B software company. These 30 minutes represent the outcome of considerable efforts: software development, various promotions, preparation and delivery of the demo. Because of these efforts, every demo involves major direct costs, salaries and lost opportunities, which are often lost forever if the client does not buy the software.

Reasons for Failure

Each year, software companies lose millions of dollars due to demos in person that do not pay off. And all too often, they do not know why. Here are the most common reasons:

- non-qualified client;
- deficient assessment of its needs;
- non-targeted demo;
- poor presentation of the message.

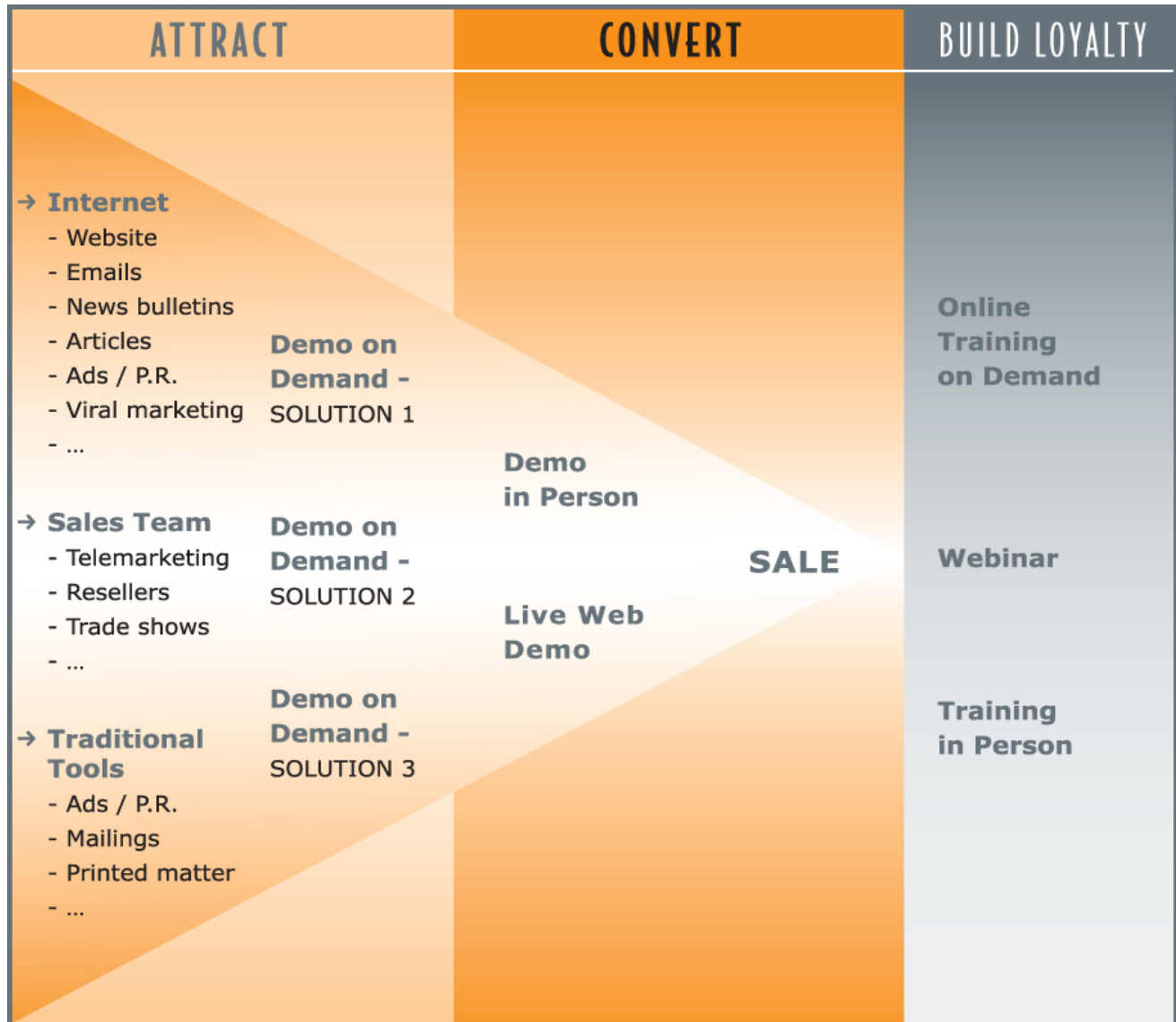
An Effective Demo

Therefore, the most effective demos are those carried out before a pre-qualified client, for whom the representative has taken the time to previously assess their needs. These demos precisely fulfill the client's needs, no more and no less. And last but not least, the message must be well presented, summarizing the highlights and interacting with the client. This white paper deals with these four key success factors.

The Right Demo at the Right Time

There are three main phases involved in the selling process: attract the client, convert the client and earn the client's loyalty. To increase software sales without increasing selling and marketing expenses, the right demo must be used at the right time.

<p>Legend</p> <p>Demo on demand: Web demo available at any time</p> <p>Live Web demo: Web demo offered live</p> <p>Demo in person: demo carried out in person</p>



The client channel at a glance:

<p>Clients learn of the existence of the demo through the Web, the sales team and traditional marketing tools. They convey their interest to the software company.</p>	<p>Knowing that a potential client is serious, the company prepares and carries out a personalized demo. The solution corresponds to the client's needs and wishes, and the sale is concluded.</p>	<p>The company offers training to strengthen its relationship with the client and optimize its recurring revenues.</p>
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1. Attract More Clients

a. Demo on Demand: The Ideal Tool

A software demo on demand is an ideal tool to attract potential clients because it:

- shows the product in action;
- influences Internet users' behaviour;

An audiovisual presentation has three times more impact on Internet users' behaviour than a static message.
 Source: *Google/Double Click*

Three times as much information is retained from an audiovisual presentation than from a visual message.
 Source: *The Weiss-McGrath Report*

- is appreciated by clients;

More than 60% of buyers regard a Web-hosted software demo as the most compelling means of communication when it comes time to choose a supplier.
 Source: *SiriusDecisions*

Potential clients take an average of four times as much time to view a demo on demand than they grant to representatives who solicit them by telephone.
 Source: *Wainhouse Research*

- benefits from a high viewing rate;

According to a survey of some 12,000 Internet users, 91% of them had viewed the demo on demand after their registration, whereas just 28% of them had tuned into the live demo.
 Source: *Accela Communications*

- broadcasts a constant message;
- is compatible with 98% of computers;
- enables serious potential clients to express their interest (see section c. below);
- enables the sales team to further dedicate themselves to converting potential clients; (read the post – French: [Case Study – Lower Marketing Costs Using a Software Demo](#))

The business model of software companies less and less justifies hiring personnel responsible for presenting demos live or in person, which accounts for the increasing use of demos on demand. These thereby are quickly becoming a significant, if not the primary component of the sales strategy.
 Source: *The Second Derivative*

- offers wide distribution (see section d. below).

b. Meaningful Content

Every day, we are solicited by some 3,000 marketing messages of all kinds. How to get the attention of potential clients? By providing them with the solution to their problem, possibly by means of a scenario (a story) they can relate to. It is no longer enough to describe the products and services offered and to hope that clients find something meeting their needs.

At this stage of the process, the software company does not wish to talk to all its potential clients and can therefore not identify their particular needs. The subjects targeted by demos on demand therefore stem from market surveys, case studies and discussions with the sales team. Once all this information is compiled, the profiles and needs of the principal buyers must be drawn up, solutions meeting those needs must be formulated, and the savings arising from the implementation of these solutions must be assessed.

Now, how can a demo's effectiveness be optimized? By showing the solution from the outset, which will catch potential clients' interest and curiosity. This solution can be in the shape of a report, a chart, a spreadsheet, an illustration or any other output produced by the software. The content of a great demo on demand therefore consists of the following:

- Introduction
- Solution
- How the solution is obtained
- Summary and conclusion

The demo should only last for four to six minutes. It is often tempting to describe accessory functional features, but that makes the demo too long, complex and boring. Potential clients have just one objective: to find out whether the software suits their situation, no more and no less. The faster and more simply the demo does so, the more likely it will give rise to a call to action. With that in mind, sometimes several demos matching different client profiles have to be prepared.

However, this method does not always work for certain more generic applications, such as those targeting a horizontal market. If that is the case, the key distinctive features and benefits of the solution might have to be highlighted. One interesting way of showcasing them is to design the demo in the form of a story.

c. Call to Action

By clicking on a demo on demand button, potential clients can:

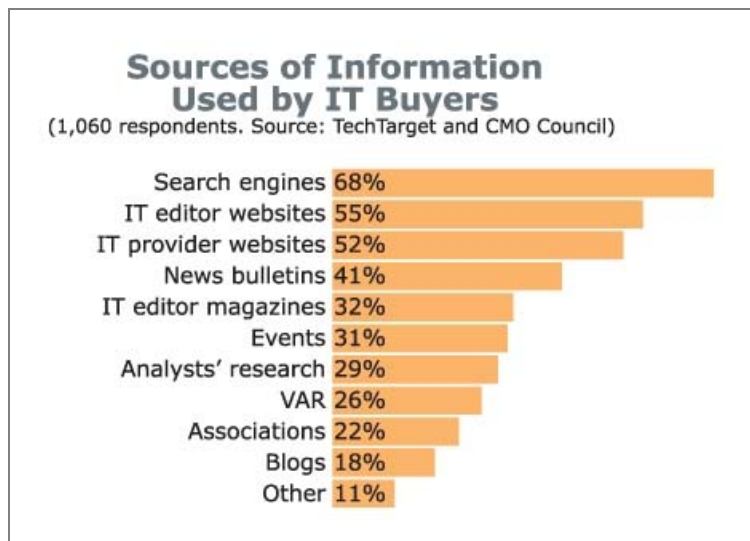
- view more detailed demos;
- consult complementary materials: case studies, technical descriptions, etc.;
- send an email to the sales team;
- fill out a form;
- download a temporary version of the software; and even
- buy the software online.

These calls to action lead to serious potential clients, almost without intervention.

d. Widespread Distribution

To favour the viewing of the demo, it must be incorporated into various Internet tools and marketing strategies (read the post - French: [Optimize the Distribution of Your Web Presentation](#)). It can be:

1. integrated into the following Internet tools: Website, IT editor portal, email campaign, online advertising and media relations, news bulletin, electronic article, technical presentation, blog, personalized email and viral marketing (read the post - French: [Make the Most of Viral Marketing](#)), etc.;
2. used for: telemarketing, representation/training, trade shows, etc.
3. announced using: advertising, public relations, postal mailings, printed materials.



2. Convert More Clients

Serious potential clients have now made themselves known. How can they be converted into clients? By establishing a solid link between the solution and the needs to be met. To tailor the software solution to their specific needs, a client's situation must first be properly identified.

a. Demo in Person or Live Web Demo

In addition to its content, which is dealt with below, the success of a conversion demo depends on the interaction with the potential client. In this regard, the demo in person is clearly the best option.

A live Web demo offers a worthwhile interaction (read the post – French: [Web Presentations: Live or on Demand?](#)), but it is definitely more limited than a demo in person. Among other things, it is harder to keep clients' attention, to adjust the discussion based on their non-verbal reactions and to convey enthusiasm. Furthermore, clients tend to ask fewer questions and to do something else at the same time. If a live Web demo is the only possible option because of time and money constraints, here is some advice to retain clients' interest and attention:

- indicate, highlight and put various features in bold;
- regularly ask questions;
- be enthusiastic, expressive and sometime amusing;
- sometimes hand control of the mouse over to participants;
- regularly sum up (with supporting visuals); and
- ideally, never present a live demo to several potential clients at once.

b. Meaningful Content

The plan of the conversion demo content, whether it is a demo in person or a live Web demo, should proceed as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Solution
3. How the solution is obtained
4. **Detailed explanation of how the solution is obtained and summary**
5. **Questions and answers**
6. Summary and conclusions

Note:

- Words in bold correspond to additions to the demo on demand made to attract clients.
- If more than one solution is to be displayed, steps 2 to 4 must be repeated for each of them.
- Given the nature of some software, such a structure might not correspond to the ideal scenario. The solution(s) must then be replaced by the relevant distinctive feature(s), which are determined based on the benefits for the clients.

An effective demo helps demystify the software in the client's mind. The various summaries allow the latter to better grasp the presented information, to ask informed questions and to clearly understand that a solution is being presented.

Now, how should the demo be prepared? Here are the major steps:

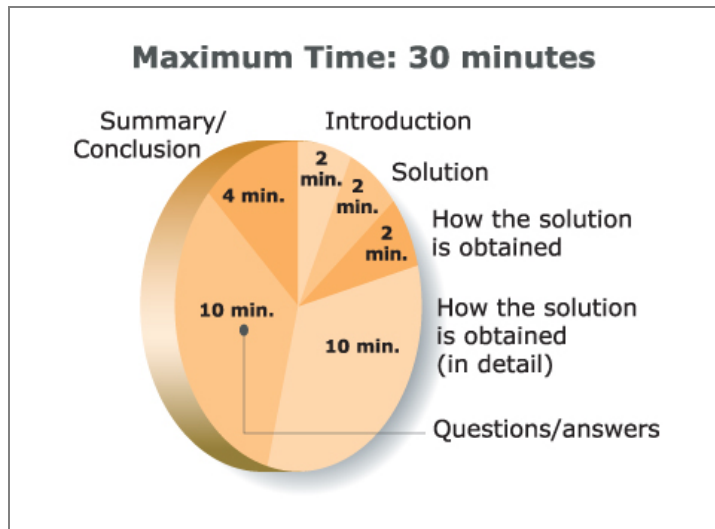
1. determine who will attend the demo;
2. define the situation to be improved using the software;
3. establish the principal objectives of the demo, based on point 2;
4. develop the solutions that will be shown, based on point 3;
5. prepare the introduction, the summaries and the conclusion, based on point 4.

To prepare a personalized solution, the following information should be obtained from the client: processes, data and reports; and desired improvements. These improvements can take the following shape: achieving savings, getting better results, accelerating certain functions or executing tasks until then impossible. Once this information is compiled, the representative is better equipped to show the proposed solution and its advantages, ideally quantified in time and in money.

c. Conveying the Message

Conveying the message is an important component of an effective conversion demo. Here is some advice in this regard:

- Of course, perfectly master the software;
- Practice the personalized demo several times before presenting it;
- Ensuring that the technical component is flawless;
- Make use of the best presentation practices: slow delivery, the right tone, enthusiasm...
- The most powerful message is limited to the solution and its benefits; it should take no more than 30 minutes. Consequently, it is useless, and even detrimental, to talk about functional features simply because they are part of the latest upgrade.



- Clients do not want to hear qualitative statements about the software's added value, robustness or user-friendliness. Conversely, they appreciate concrete, empirical, factual data and statistics based on case studies, market analyses, analysis reports...
- Immediate answers must be provided to the questions that confirm the effectiveness of the presented solution, whereas the others should be dealt with during the question period. The representative can also ask "strategic" questions, knowing that the answers highlight the presented solution and set the software apart from competing applications.

3. Build More Client Loyalty

Client loyalty gives rise to recurring revenues (licences, upgrades, technical support...) at little cost. Satisfied and loyal clients are also likely to recommend their provider, which is a highly effective type of marketing (read the post – French: [The Six Most Effective Marketing Tools for Selling Software](#)). In fact, it costs six times less to retain a client than to obtain a new one. All in all, enhancing client loyalty is highly profitable.

After-sales training is an excellent loyalty-building tool. In fact, it enables clients to better master the software, optimizes its benefits and increases their satisfaction in regard to the provider.

One day after in-class training (or a demo by a representative), participants remember close to 80% of the information, if it is not applied. One month later, this rate falls to 10%! To optimize learning, it is therefore preferable to offer tools enabling participants to regularly update their skills.

Source: *Forrester Research*

What subjects should be focused on? Major problems encountered by clients, most complex and under-utilized functional features and all other subjects they are interested in. The technical support team can provide precious assistance in this regard.

The same three approaches can be used for training purposes:

a. Online Training on Demand

Online training on demand is highly appreciated by clients.

Clients appreciate online training on demand six times more than Webinars.

Source: *Computer Reseller News - Riding the eLearning Curve*

To ensure this approach is cost-effective (mainly fixed costs), this training must be viewed by many clients, however. Online training on demand ideally met the needs of certain companies, as attested to by this post – French: [Case Study – Lower Technical Support Costs Using Software Demos](#).

b. Webinars

Training is still the most widely used application of live communications Web platforms. As it produces few fixed costs (but sometimes significant variable costs), this approach lends itself perfectly to training small groups of clients. The subjects dealt with can be more targeted and participants are more inclined to actively participate.

c. Training in Person

Training in person, ideally at the client's premises, is second to none. This type of training is more costly, but the exercise is often highly profitable. Clients can often easily talk about their problems and their wishes, and obtain advice and tips tailored to their situation. Such an approach also enables the representative or trainer to gain more in-depth knowledge of users' needs and to strengthen relationships with clients.

To Sum Up...

The design and strategic use of effective demos on demand enables businesses to **attract** more serious potential clients, virtually without intervention. Such an online tool is more important than ever since software buyers consult the Web more than any other source today. Demos on demand simply and rapidly illustrate the concrete solution to their problem.

As they are less busy reaching, informing and qualifying potential clients, representatives can further dedicate themselves to **converting** serious potential clients. By being more aware of their needs, they can design better conversion demos, convey a more meaningful message and increase their success rate.

Finally, by means of the appropriate training, businesses can build further client **loyalty**, favour recommendations and lower their prospection costs.

All in all, the design and strategic use of excellent demos enables businesses:

- to take full advantage of the scope and interactivity of the Internet;
- to assign their sales teams to more strategic and profitable tasks; and thereby
- to increase their software sales without increasing their sales and marketing expenses.

About the Author

Simon Hénault (M.B.A, B.Comm.), President of POD Media, has more than 12 years of experience in corporate communications. Since 1999, he has headed a multidisciplinary team that has produced hundreds of communications tools on behalf of some 100 corporate clients, including Web presentations, annual reports, press releases, websites, flyers, white papers... His experience and background enable him to rapidly grasp a company's challenges and to develop powerful communications tools.

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About POD Media

POD Media specializes in the production and marketing of software demos on demand. Its team of writers, editors, graphic artists, narrators, sound technicians, website designers, Internet marketing specialists and public relations officers assumes responsibility for their full production and marketing. POD Media offers: the best audiovisual Web technology, a proven production process and an experienced team of writers, combined with a highly effective marketing/PR team.

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