



5 Ways to Deliver Lousy Virtual Presentations

And How To Avoid Them

Sensory selling is using as many of our senses as possible on a sales call. Email uses one: sight and a phone call uses one: sound. Videos and virtual presentations can use both of those. Face-to-face calls can also include touch and showing up with doughnuts can allow for taste and smell. How can you make your virtual calls stand out from others while using only two senses?

Virtual presentations are becoming the norm for more and more organizations. Buyers and sellers are the primary inter-corporate users of this technology. Face-to-face sales calls will be limited since one or both parties will often be working from home. Making traditional face-to-face calls in the client's building may prove to be uncomfortable when wearing a mask or trying to do a demo under their social distancing rules.

Virtual Best Practices. VBPs, are emerging as processes and associated technologies are introduced and mature. **Virtual etiquette** standards vary from organization to organization so salespeople need to be sensitive to the requirements or expectations in their contacts' organizations.

There are unintended consequences and unexpected benefits with virtual presentations.

For instance, the quality of post-call critiques can increase dramatically when the virtual call is recorded. The salesperson as well as their managers and peers can find ways of improving the calls by reviewing the recordings. However, some clients may have restrictions governing digital recordings of their employee conversations. Learning that a salesperson has recorded an interaction without permission could lead to embarrassment or worse.

Here are the five most violated VBPs in reverse order, David Letterman style.

Number 5: Don't Bother Preparing



Contacts will know when the person hosting the virtual call is not prepared. The lack of preparation may send a subliminal message that the call is not all that important to the initiator. The person on the other end may not decide it is not important for them either.

Preparation and practice are important in three areas: **Content**, **Delivery** and **Technology**.

Content

Greeting the others and establishing rapport are important but must be brief. “Zoom fatigue” can begin here, especially when people join late or need technical assistance to join the call. Prepare for this by having less content than the time allows. Yours may not be the first virtual call of their day and they may have other pressing issues in front of them. Keys to great virtual content:

- **Keep it brief** – the greeting, your primary message, etc.
- **Tell them the purpose and desired outcome upfront** – use the “tell them what you’re going to tell them; tell them; and then tell them what you told them” approach.
- **Have open-ended questions** to
 - Involve the customer or others on the call
 - Determine their priorities
 - Uncover potential distractions
 - Confirm the available time and other housekeeping issues

Delivery

Talk to the camera! Smile or at least look pleasant. Have your opening remarks, questions, etc. in your mind so you do not have to look at your screen or notes. Have a notepad or clipboard to take notes as others speak. If using visuals, do not focus on them, only glance to see if the correct visual is onscreen and look back at the camera.

Technology

There are three primary areas to consider with your virtual technology: **Video**, **Audio**, **Media**. These include yours and those of everyone else on the call. Know how to mute and unmute yourself and others. Be on the call at least fifteen minutes prior to the planned start time to accommodate anyone having issues logging on. For some, a virtual call may be a newer experience.

Video

Video loves light, but not too much of it. Natural light can change during a call as clouds move overhead. Sitting in front of the light, like having a window behind you, will leave

you in silhouette and leave your facial expressions difficult to determine. When using a web cam or laptop camera, make sure the camera is at eye level. Some laptops have the camera close to the keyboard and will give the audience a clear shot of your nostrils. Consider investing in desktop tripods for your camera and lights.

Audio

Most computers have okay microphones. For better resonance and clarity, consider investing in a quality mic. A lavalier, one that can be pinned to your clothing is better since it will stay near your mouth when moving around during the call.

Media

The best approach for using graphics, audio and video in your virtual call is to keep it as simple as possible. Virtual calls are subject to the delivery system which means the bandwidth available to each person on the call determines how your media will be presented to them. When asking, “Can you see my screen?” some attendees will answer yes, others no because it has not appeared for them yet. Keep media files small by using lower resolution videos and images. And, of course, be prepared to make your presentation without any media if circumstances require it.

Number 4: Don't Control the Environment

Working from home results in business interrupting home life sometimes and home life interrupting business other times. Avoid the latter one. It can be costly. Barking dogs, active children and neighborhood events can change a professional meeting into an amateur one quickly.



Most work-from-home professionals have developed house rules for the working parent. They need to be revisited from time to time to ensure no changes need to be made.

When setting up for your virtual presentation, check the video image you are sending out. Look closely at what is behind you. As we speak, people will only maintain eye contact for less than a minute. Then they will naturally look in another direction and then back at the speaker. Make sure there is nothing that will cause them to tune you out and try to figure out what's on your wall or shelf.

Use sound-dampening materials to prevent echoes. Every Zoom conference I have been on with CEOs and senior executives has had at least one attendee in their kitchen. There are too many hard surfaces in some rooms, kitchens are on the top of that list. A rug on hardwood floors, drapes on windows and even blankets hung on walls can go a long way.

Number 3: Just Talk, Talk, Talk



Interaction is mandatory in virtual presentations.

Your client has agreed to a thirty-minute virtual presentation, but they arrived fifteen minutes late. You now have fifteen minutes to give your message. There will be a temptation for you to download as much information as quickly as possible. While you may meet your quantity objectives, the quality of your presentation will suffer.

Instead, be prepared to do an abbreviated session with a Plan B objective. If Plan A was to close the sale, Plan B is to intrigue the customer enough for them to give you more time or another opportunity to present on another day.

Professional speakers face this regularly when their sixty-minute keynote slot is shortened to forty-five at the last minute. Here are some techniques we use to accommodate time issues.

- **Have an abbreviated but not rushed opening.** If it is a sales call, ask open-ended questions but control the time the customer takes to answer them.
- **Have the key points prioritized** so that the most important or critical ones can be handled first.
- **Have a brief version of every point**, especially the final ones so they are not ignored, nor do they consume much time. Use the “state and elaborate” approach; make a statement and be prepared to elaborate when necessary.
- **Have an abbreviated close** and include a call to action.
- When possible, have a **digital asset** the audience can access afterwards.
- Offer to address their questions in a **Q&A session** later, by email or by phone.

The single, most important function of sales is to teach. However, salespeople should try to listen more than 50% of the time on virtual calls. Even if the time is cut short, let the prospect do at least half of the talking.

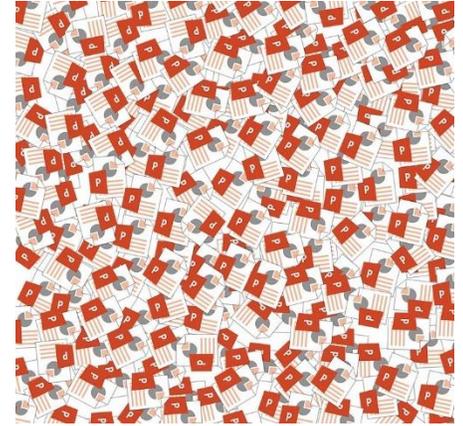
Try this technique. Say something like, *“To make the best use of your time, I had prepared X issues for us to discuss. They are: [LIST THEM]. Which of these should we discuss first in case we cannot get to all of them?”* They will tell you which one is most important to them – something you need to know anyway. Your response to that one should be of a high enough quality for the customer to willingly give you more time to address the other issues.

It is both tempting and easy to verbally assault people on a virtual conference in an attempt to make all of their points. This creates “Zoom fatigue,” and fails to get your message across.

Number 2: Use Every PowerPoint or Keynote Trick

At SaleSSuiteS we produce some of the most advanced PowerPoint presentations for ourselves and for others. When a new feature is announced to the public, we have usually been aware of it and have probably used it many times already.

We do not use the advanced features in virtual conferences. They work against us. Most sophisticated animations and transitions translate poorly in a virtual conference. Some rules:



1. Use only basic animations and transitions – stick to “Fade” to be safe.
2. Do not slow down the animations for effect; the virtual presentation platform will slow it down even more.
3. Use the build feature for points and bullets. The more words you put on the screen at any one time, the longer the viewer will tune you out and read them.
4. Use hyperlinks to be able to easily navigate within your presentation to address questions and to save time when necessary. It is amateurish to have to stop a presentation, find the right slide and start again.
5. Follow all other professional PPTX protocols taught elsewhere.

Number 1: Use a Virtual Background

The first indication of inauthenticity is a virtual background.



The attendees know you are not in Hawaii or sitting high atop the Golden Gate Bridge. In addition, when you turn sideways, part of your face disappears like a scene from a horror movie. Rotating holograms in the foreground are interesting for about a minute. Keep it simple; see Number 5 above.

Virtual backgrounds distract and should be avoided if there is any way possible. If not,

- Use a plain background with your name or company logo on it. Any marketing person can create this in about two minutes. This is what I use on when traveling and the hotel room configuration and lighting restrict my options.
- Use a physical green screen before inserting the virtual background. Be sure the screen is wide enough to block your actual background without having to be too close to you; there needs to be distance between it and you. Light the green screen evenly to avoid ghosts and backlight yourself to eliminate halos.

Summary

Virtual presentations are going to be a vital resource for most of us. The competition is improving their virtual game every day; you need to do the same. It is not enough that your product or service is better or that your organization is best-in-class. What matters is the customer's perception of who you are and what you have based on your presentation.

Want to “Out-Zoom” Your Competitors?

The key to out-Zooming the competition is having the appropriate content and delivery. Both of these are taken to the next level in the **EXselling Course**.

What you and your team will learn is how to use the latest technologies and processes to focus on two important elements of virtual presentations: **Interaction** and **Outcome**.

Interacting with the viewer eliminates “Zoom fatigue” by keeping them engaged. Knowing the customer's desired outcome will allow you to develop your desired outcome for each encounter.

Here are some of the many ways EXselling can help with content and delivery:

- **Blended Selling** will teach you how to develop and use a digital library filled with interactive tools that are perfect for virtual presentations.
- **Business Function Selling** will take your consultative selling skills to the next level. You will be able to engage your contacts at deeper levels and often attract higher-level contacts in your client's organization.
- **The Power of 3** will give you the ability to ask deeper and more meaningful questions in order to make the best use of the time available on the call.
- **Supply Chain Selling** will help you and your clients find new opportunities in rapidly changing marketplaces.
- **Kaizen/Lean for Sales** gives you the tools you need to restructure your sales cycle and sales processes. You will find ways to make better sales calls faster and with reduced expenses.
- **Cost Justification** teaches how to overcome or eliminate the price justification and meshes perfectly with **P.L.U.S.H. Selling**, the powerful sales process methodology also included in the course.

Begin developing advanced, professional virtual content now and let your unique delivery be a part of your differentiation.

Check out the full course or individual lessons at www.ChuckReaves.online

A corporate license is \$2100 for the entire course and includes one seat; unlimited additional seats are available for only \$600 each. Only? What is one additional sale worth to each person on your team? What is the value of retaining one account? What would one competitive win-back mean for you?



See the content at www.ChuckReaves.online
See an overview: www.EXselling.com

My Zoom Room

There may be some ideas here that can help; everyone has their own needs and preferences. Professional speakers who present frequently modify their front-of-the-room training and experience to produce a quality experience.

Environment

My office was designed and built to double as an audio and video studio. Ten attractive three-foot by five-foot acoustic panels hang on the walls and the floor is carpeted to create the best sound.

I stand as I present and use a padded mat for longer presentations. Behind me is a paneled wall, a tree and a white board within reach but not in the initial view. My laptop sits on an elevated music stand to allow me to easily glance down on a short distance from the camera lens when I need to see the screen. Operating the laptop requires me to take a step forward which gives a 3-D effect for the viewers and a much-needed stretch for my muscles.

Technology

A professional video camera is used to create the best possible image. The HDMI output on the camera is fed through a simple video capture card and into a USB port on the laptop. Using this camera allows me to see the screen on the camera while I am presenting to make sure the viewers are seeing what I want them to see. The camera remote allows me to zoom in and out which is handy when using the white board and for creating different angles. While screen sharing, the camera angle can be changed so that when the screen sharing ends, I reappear with a different look.

Another benefit of this configuration is that I can video everything that happens in the studio in high definition. The virtual screen is bypassed. Later, the video can be edited to include any of the graphics that were used and add more content as needed. There is no need for permission from the viewers since none of their images or voices are on the video. You can use this when doing a product demo to create a video for your web site.

I use a quality wireless microphone that feeds directly into the camera. When moving around, the mike is always the same distance from the mouth. Use this when you move around during a session.

Lighting is controlled by using the ones designed and built into the room as well as professional lights when needed. They are easily set up and taken down and stored in a nearby closet. Typically, only one or two is needed, usually an up light and a halo. While the office has windows, the lighting primarily comes from the studio lights to avoid the changes that occur in natural lighting.

Consider modifying a room in your home or in your corporate office that can be used to create quality virtual presentations.