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Leveraging Your Software Demo to Achieve Maximum ROI

By JC Stites

When it comes to creating an effective software demo, building it is only half the battle. For a demo to achieve maximum results, it must be leveraged across multiple platforms. It's no secret that the more often you can use your demo, the more you are going to get out of it. But how do you build a single demo that can be used for a variety of marketing and sales initiatives?



As my company's CEO and lead executive producer, I've had the fortunate experience of producing demos for hundreds of software companies. Our diverse client list includes all shapes and sizes, from small, start-up organizations to large, Fortune 500 corporations. One of the most common mistakes software marketers make is not leveraging their product demos to receive maximum ROI. Here are three easy rules that you can apply to get the most out of your software demo.

Rule #1: Build It for Everyone

You should build your demo using streaming technology and make it automated. It is important that the application you use to build your demo has a high adoption rate so that prospects can view it from their desktop or laptop at their own convenience regardless of where they are sitting in their office, at home answering emails, or waiting to board their next flight.

A compelling demo includes professional voiceovers synched with actual product screens that offer the viewer an opportunity to see your software at work. There are two approaches for automated demos: product-focused and scenario-focused. A product-focused approach showcases specific features or benefits of your product. A scenario-focused approach uses a storyline to mirror a typical situation involving your product. With either approach, your automated demo should run no more than four to six minutes in length. It is rare that you will keep someone engaged past the six-minute mark.

Rule #2: Give It a Home

Once you have built the perfect demo, don't save it. Put it out in front and let it initiate the sales cycle. Your demo's first home should be on your site using a contextual link that is easy to

find. What is a contextual link? Clear and concise language that tells prospects exactly what they are about to view. Simply titling your demo link "Product Tour" is not compelling and will not pull as many leads.

Your demo's link should receive prime real estate on your site. By driving prospects to the demo, you are not only initiating the sales cycle, but shortening it as well. When prospects can view your software within one click of visiting your site, you have gained extraordinary ground in your sales process-the sooner a prospect can view your software, the closer they are to making a purchasing decision.

Rule #3: Use It Everywhere

Many software marketers fail to realize their demo's full potential because they do not use it within traditional and online marketing campaigns. Putting your demo on a marketing CD can serve as an effective direct mail piece that doubles as an inexpensive leave behind your sales force can use time and time again. Looping your demo on a monitor is a much more dynamic way to generate interest at a trade show than static product literature and cheap, useless giveaways.

If your company publishes an online newsletter for prospects, placing a link to the demo within your newsletter is an easy marketing tactic that can quickly generate leads. Search advertising has become a large part of software marketing budgets. By placing a link to your demo on search ad landing pages, you can maximize your search advertising dollars and help increase your conversion rates. Driving prospects to your site is smart, but driving prospects to view your actual product is genius.

Another great place for a link to your demo is in employee email signatures. Imagine the level of product awareness you could generate if every email sent from your network included a link to

your automated demo. A side benefit of high accessibility to the demo both internally and externally is consistent messaging. There is a good chance that each sales person in your organization is selling a different product when you consider their individual sales approach. An automated, product-centric demo that showcases your key selling points helps keep everyone speaking the same language-from sales to HR.

Some Final Thoughts to Consider

Remember, the job of your demo is to bring your product and prospects closer together. Overloading your demo with PowerPoint screens and hollow marketing language can detract the viewer and reflect poorly on your product. Making your demo product-centric adds value to your sales cycle and overall marketing initiatives.

An automated demo offers a unique sales and marketing tool that can provide significant ROI when implemented across the board. It seems a waste to put the time, money and effort into building a professional demo and then giving it a limited range of use. When you open up your demo to be used in various marketing campaigns and sales initiatives, it becomes immediately more valuable.

About the Author

JC Stites is the founder and CEO of Autodemo LLC (www.autodemo.com), the leading developer of software demos. With more than fifteen years experience building product-centric demos, JC is an expert when it comes to the design and production of automated demos. Founded in 1998, Autodemo helps software companies initiate the sales cycle, generate leads, and increase marketing ROI. You can find Autodemo at SLAM Conference 2006 in booth 205.