

SellingPower®

The Wow Factor

Presentation technology offers dazzle value for your presentations

Convincing chief financial officers to dip into corporate coffers to purchase financial analysis software is no easy task. Just ask Jim Reid, vice president of Sales at PROPHIX Software. The Mississauga, Ontario-based company develops software that helps companies with budgeting, forecasting, financial consolidation and management analysis. When PROPHIX needed presentation software, however, they were so accustomed to the benefits of technology no one needed to convince them of its power. For years, the PROPHIX sales pitch consisted of a string

reigned supreme, many salespeople are looking to break the mold and move beyond PowerPoint's standard limitations. Trading in cookie-cutter demos for one-of-a-kind presentations, however, can place an enormous burden on sales force productivity. After all, dedicating hours to the creation of state-of-the-art slides is time that could otherwise be spent chasing important leads and satisfying customer needs. Fortunately, presentation technology from such vendors as Autodemo, Business Objects and Ontra Presentations promises to help.

PROPHIX closed 11 deals, generating \$330,000 in revenue.

"Autodemo has been a very successful experience for us," says Reid, noting that PROPHIX has witnessed a 30 percent increase in revenue as a direct result of Autodemo.

Autodemo isn't the only presentation technology helping companies drive revenue and impress customers. Business Objects' suite of Xcelsius software applications allows salespeople to convert run-of-the-mill spreadsheets into interactive data presentations and Excel dashboards. Adding punch to data-driven presentations has always been a high priority for Carol Gallegos. Gallegos is a managing partner at Poe, Gallegos and Company, an Irving, TX-based sales management company. The consultant presents sales data and quantitative sales metrics to executives, so they may make critical decisions regarding sales processes and team management.

For years, Gallegos relied on Excel spreadsheets to chart a client's prospecting behaviors. However, creating a comprehensive presentation to show how often a sales team attempted to contact prospects, the number of prospects reached by telephone and the number of cold calls that have culminated in meetings proved impossible. That is, until Gallegos enlisted the help of San Diego, CA-based Business Objects.

Using Business Objects' Crystal Xcelsius, Gallegos can now convert Excel spreadsheets into a visually compelling, interactive dashboard based on a combination of sales data and Macromedia Flash. Featuring visual sliders and dials on the screen, the dashboards also allow Gallegos' clients to easily alter data in order to gauge the impact of changes made in sales processes.

Being able to offer clients data-driven presentations detailing their sales activities is "a unique selling proposition" according to Gallegos. While many sales manage-

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of live, one-on-one demonstrations. Desperate to shorten this lengthy sales cycle, Reid turned to Autodemo for its presentation technology and expertise.

With its team of writers, developers and producers, Louisville, KY-based Autodemo creates comprehensive product demos in as few as three weeks. By harnessing Flash and JavaScript technology, Autodemo allows companies to deliver content to the widest possible audience using a selection of delivery options including Web and CD-ROM. The result is a customized product demo that is more likely to generate a return on investment and less likely to drain a company's internal sales and marketing resources.

It's no wonder an increasing number of companies are turning to high-tech presentation technology. As the battle for customers heats up in today's competitive marketplace, salespeople are searching for new ways to dazzle prospects and win over customers. Although PowerPoint has long

Using Autodemo, PROPHIX was able to replace its time-consuming series of separate demos with a seven-minute demo that can be emailed immediately to important decision makers who might not be available for a live demo. Sales reps need only follow up with a phone call to address questions and concerns.

By replacing its live demo with one that Autodemo created, PROPHIX eliminated a total of 400 two-hour demo sessions. The sales team immediately gained 800 more hours per year to handle more prospects. What's more, when PROPHIX leveraged the new demo in a broadcast email to cold prospects, it landed \$330,000 in sales in less than a month. At the time, PROPHIX had a pool of approximately 600 prospects that had dropped out of its sales cycle. Armed with Autodemo, PROPHIX emailed these prospects a link to the new demo. In fewer than four weeks, 100 of the cold prospects had viewed the demo, and

ment consultants simply perform sales training and sales process development without offering any real proof of financial expediency, Poe, Gallegos and Company's weekly Xcelsius dashboards illustrate the financial impact the consultant is having on its clients' sales teams and how this impact is helping to drive revenue.

Says Santiago Becerra, Business Objects' CEO, "A presentation that includes return-on-investment numbers is an extremely powerful way to engage clients and get them to open their eyes [to your products and services]."

Opening actual presentations – not eyes – was the primary obstacle facing Michael Yavorsky. Situated in New York City, Yavorsky is the vice president of ad sales marketing for two network brands at Scripps Networks: Food and Fine Living. The Scripps Networks portfolio of lifestyle television networks also includes Home and Garden Television, DIY Network, Great American Country and HGTVPro. Yavorsky says PowerPoint's technical limitations often prevented the Scripps Networks sales teams from creating the high-impact, multimedia presentations needed to pique the interest of advertisers.

"When you opened up a 30-page PowerPoint presentation with video, there was so much memory used that half the time the computers would crash in the middle of a presentation," says Yavorsky. "We knew from a technical standpoint that we had to evolve."

So Yavorsky sought the services of New York's Ontra Presentations. The software applications from Ontra Presentations allow users to create media-rich, network-based presentations. With Ontra, salespeople can play multiple full-screen video files, animation and high-resolution images without having to wait for pages to load or risk a system crash. Users can also access a local corporate library where thousands of pre-approved sales slides are stored. Individual sales reps can organize and customize presentations to suit their specific needs. Ontra's networked solution ensures that everyone in an organization can log on and download the latest information from anywhere in the world.

Yavorsky says that in the past, the overall sales department at Scripps Networks functioned as a handful of independent teams. "If I worked for the Food Network, I really had no access to an HGTV presentation," says Yavorsky. However, by granting salespeople on-demand access to an exhaustive library of slides from

PRESENTATION POWER TOOLS

Manufacturer: Autodemo

Product: Website and Software Demos

Description: Autodemo's team of writers, developers and producers create clear and concise demos that emphasize a product's key features and allow prospects to view the demo independently of a sales rep.

Website: www.autodemo.com

Manufacturer: Business Objects

Product: Crystal Xcelsius

Description: By combining your critical enterprise or BI system data with the interactivity of Macromedia Flash™, Crystal Xcelsius gives you the power to create visually stunning, interactive executive dashboards – with point-and-click ease.

Website: www.xcelsius.com

Manufacturer: Ontra Presentations

Product: Ontra Software

Description: A powerful suite of multimedia presentation software tools that allows salespeople to wow audiences with an unlimited amount of media in a presentation including video, animation, pictures, diagrams and charts. Ontra's networked application allows users to give the most up-to-date presentation anywhere, anytime.

Website: www.ontrapresentations.com

each and every one of the brands at Scripps Networks, Yavorsky says Ontra Presentations technology has opened the doors to crosspromotional opportunities.

That's not all. Ontra also maintains a log of who presented, the audience, the date, time, the specific topics (i.e. slides) discussed during a presentation and how much time was spent on each slide. Salespeople can input notes during a presentation for accurate review and follow-up later. In addition, sales teams can collect the logs and notes from every sales presentation to track and monitor what is happening in the field.

Today's high-tech presentation tools may help salespeople pool resources, speed up sales cycles and demonstrate a proven return on investment, but Dianne Durkin warns that it takes more than gadgetry to win over audiences. Durkin would know. She is president of Loyalty Factor, a Portsmouth, NH-based training and consulting firm. Loyalty Factor's Prepare, Present and Persuade training program teaches sales reps how to develop presentations that will lure new customers and enhance relationships with existing clients.

"It's your energy, your passion and your belief in the subject that you're talking about that is going to make the most impact on your audience," says Durkin. In addition to gaining an in-depth knowledge base of the products and services

you're offering, Durkin recommends conducting research to identify and understand audience backgrounds and then tailoring presentations accordingly. After all, says Durkin, prospects won't be interested in listening to a lecture on a product's latest-and-greatest features if the presenter fails to clearly communicate "what's in it for them."

Although a well-written presentation is key, Durkin says only 7 percent of a presentation's effectiveness comes from words. As a result, she recommends that sales reps make effective use of voice techniques, as well as leverage physiology and audiovisual stimulation to engage audiences. For example, Durkin says that presenters should always attempt to keep their hands in the upper-body area in order to maintain an audience's focus on a presenter's mouth and facial expressions.

Even the best-made slides, says Durkin, can undermine a salesperson's ability to impress audiences. Detailed charts, interactive demos, Flash files and streaming video may pack punch, but they're more likely to overwhelm prospects and clients if a presenter fails to strike a balance between substance and style.

Says Durkin, "Presenters often feel they have to put everything up on the slide; they don't recognize the fact that the real knowledge base is in them."

– CINDY WAXER