7 tactics for winning more customer pitches (even when you're the underdog)

You're at your desk, slide deck open, staring at the presentation you'll soon present to a new customer in a competitive sale.

"How important is the presentation?" you wonder, thinking about the questions you should ask before, what's important to contextualize during, and how you should follow up after.

To bring you answers, we caught up with thought leader, seasoned executive, and top mentor-trainer of sales leaders Scott Leese. We asked Scott for real, in-the-trenches advice—the kind you won't find anywhere else.

Here's what he shared.

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Whether you're competing against another person, another company or internal ideas and resources, customer presentations are always competitive. Many times, you're also competing with inertia, where your prospect's options are to do nothing or to do something very, very slowly.

The following seven tactics, born from my experience, will help you create, present, and follow-up with presentations in ways that bring you more wins and less losses.

1

Master the competitive landscape. The best presentation I've ever experienced came from a deep understanding of what options the customer had and how those options told their stories. Market research, understanding your prospective customer and their pain points, and deeply knowing your solution are only part of the prep. Knowing your competitors is a key piece of walking into the room and presenting with confidence.

2

Set traps for your competitors to walk into. The best defense is a good offense. Raise doubt in your competitors by using a consultative selling approach where you add value to your prospect during the buying process. Consultative selling works because it helps the customer understand their needs and desired outcomes in a way that will be uniquely enabled by your product or service.

3

Go First. The power of position is real. Pre-frame your prospective customer by telling them what competitors will say. This method is especially potent when the information comes from a customer who chose your company over that competitor.

4

Align Values. Uncover insights into your prospect's concerns about a competitor and tie those insights back to your prospect's corporate or personal values. Use competitors' broken promises to forecast chokeholds, breakdowns and risk. This technique works very well when you're entering a situation with companies that've been with their current provider a long time.

5

Tell a Story. Before you pitch, know if you're walking in as the underdog or as the favorite. Rather than pitching your product, tell a few compelling customer case studies. Pitch how your customers chose you over a competitor, their positive outcomes and what the quantifiable impact has been since you started working together. Remember, buying your product or service should always improve your customer's internal currency.

6

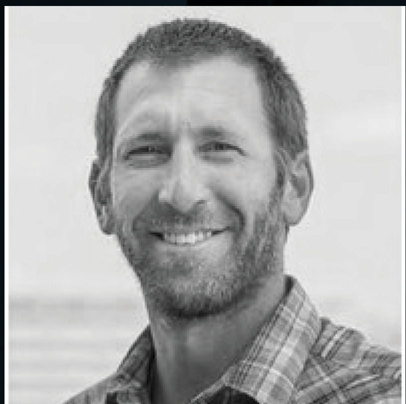
Be the authority. After you've delivered your presentation and pitch, continue to calmly and confidently communicate information that suggests you're on top of your market, and that your competitors are just going through the motions. Share insights, offer value, and remind the customer in subtle ways WHY YOUR COMPANY and WHY NOW.

7

Do the basics really well. Be straightforward and efficient with everyone's time. Do what you say you're going to do when you said you would. Be impeccable with your word. And stay on top of the inbox: send the deck before and again after so they don't have to search for it. The work of selling is always a balancing act between their desired timeline and your attempt to compress that timeline.

Bottom line? The story's important. The slides are not. If you master these techniques, and keep your eye on your competitors, the slides will take care of themselves.

About Scott Leese



Thought leader Scott Leese is a seasoned executive, a mentor/trainer of sales leaders, and one of the top startup sales leaders in the country. Working as both an operator and domestic and international sales consultant, Scott has trained an army of salespeople thousands strong. He puts his more than 14 years of sales and leadership experience to use as the founder of both Scott Leese Consulting, LLC and Surf and Sales dot com. He also serves as Senior Vice President of Sales for Qualia Labs, Inc. With his proven record of success building startup sales teams from the ground up, Scott is a highly sought-after consultant, advisor, leader, and trainer.

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