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Burlington, Mass.,
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Plan! PAGE 38

Show Time!

The demo process can make or break the sale. It helps for hybrid dealers to have a plan for what to show and what to say. **by Mark Elson**

For the client, the most memorable part of a sales presentation will probably be the product demo. This is when he gets to sit in a comfortable chair and watch a scene from a DVD. This is when his product knowledge, or lack thereof, matters least. This is when he gets to decide if he likes it.

For the hybrid dealer, the demonstration is a critical process—and he is responsible for more than just pressing “play.” The sale might depend on how the process goes. Was the right material used? Did the salesperson ask the right questions? Did he point out the right features?

To be successful, most hybrid dealers need to learn to provide a controlled, predictable presentation. There are certain elements that can help hybrid dealers execute a well-rehearsed demonstration.

One element that the hybrid dealer can control is the environment in which the demo will take place. It should be a dedicated area, apart from where products are generally displayed.





The environment, including lighting, ambience, comfort and cleanliness, all have an effect on the quality of the demo and, ultimately, whether a sale will be made. The room should be neat. A dirty carpet, smudges on glass, dusty components, shoddy signage, hanging wires, and soda cans can all leave the client with a negative impression. This goes for the salesperson's personal presentation too. Appearance matters. The more obstacles a salesperson presents to the client, the tougher the sale. The area doesn't have to be extravagant, but it must be presentable.

Choice of Material, Scene Selection

For a salesperson to know the right emotions to trigger in the client, he needs to ask about viewing habits. For example, it's not enough to ask: "Do you like sports?" Follow it up with "What sports do you watch mostly?"

If a salesperson shares the client's enthusiasm for a particular type of viewing, this would be a good time to react favorably. It's a good rapport-builder, as long as the reaction is genuine. The salesperson needs to find out exactly

what kind of material the client watches. Most dealers don't stock 50,000 DVDs in their demo library, but they should have a wide enough assortment to get as close as possible. It's important to have a broad selection of genres and a good mix of classics and current films. Some hybrid dealers subscribe to an online DVD rental service or keep a library of sure-fire hits.

It's important to know what scenes to show and for what reasons. Material must be in good taste or the demo may backfire. The scene in "Jerry Maguire," when

| Equipment Demos

Cuba Gooding Jr. screams, “Show me the money!” is effective, but it also has language some clients won’t like.

Some say a demo should last “as long as it takes” and others say less than 10 minutes. Either way, salespeople should make sure the demo has a defined time frame and doesn’t serve as a distraction from important conversation after it’s over.

The salesperson shouldn’t talk over the demo. The client’s complete attention should be on the screen. When the scene is over, the salesperson will have the client’s complete attention for the one-on-one conversation.

Hybrid dealers should select scenes that are highlights and stand on their own, as if they were clips on a TV show, used to plug the film. They should build to a high point. Then when right when the client’s interest is peaked, the salesperson can shut it off and turn up the lights.

Commanding Attention

A home-theater demo is similar to an audiophile demo. A pure listening demonstration takes the listener literally into the recording studio, revealing the definition and resonance of instruments and expression of voices. When a salesperson points out what to listen for, it takes the listener inside the performance. It’s what high performance is all about. This is also true for home theater demos.

Before starting a demo, salespeople should explain what the client will see and hear in the scene. If it’s a movie the client has seen before, even better. The salesperson has the opportunity to point out subtleties within the scene that will take the viewer to a different level of experience. And, of course, it goes without saying that the higher the caliber of components, the more revealing the material will be.

Not that salespeople should necessarily memorize a script, but they should have an idea of what the presentation might sound like. One example of what a hybrid dealer might say prior to a demonstration follows: “OK, everyone comfortable? How do you like these seats?

Nice leather. We’re actually a dealer for them and you can get them in a bunch of different colors and styles. But more on that later.

“Now as I play this scene, I want you to pay attention to several things. First, you’ll notice the surround speakers come alive when the attack jets pass by and it’ll really give you the feeling of being inside an acoustic bubble. Then, notice the fine details like facial complexion and expression, every strand of hair blowing in the wind, the texture of the clouds and the ripples in the ocean when they hit the water. OK, fasten your seatbelts. How’s the volume? UP? Got it.”

Post-Demo Wrap-Up

After these events take place, the salesperson should check in with the clients. “Did you see what I mean?” It’s crucial that they report back that they experienced what they were supposed to experience. That confirms it is an effective demo.

By their reaction, salespeople can gauge their enthusiasm and the likelihood of a sale. Another good gauge is to ask what else they noticed in the scene. Reacting with interest to their observations is another good rapport-builder.

The mission of the salesperson is to first move them emotionally and get the “wow” reaction. It may not be necessary to analyze the audio or video, or to compare image quality among video displays. It’s movies, not spreadsheets.

Another popular demo scene is the one from “Cast Away” in which the character is attempting to escape the island on his flimsy raft. It’s beautifully shot and, unless they live on a tropical isle, the blue ocean water takes viewers out of their normal environment. The sounds of the waves are powerful and the viewer hears them crashing over them through the surround. There’s no blood and nobody gets offended.

These are the hallmarks of a successful demonstration. **CPR**

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