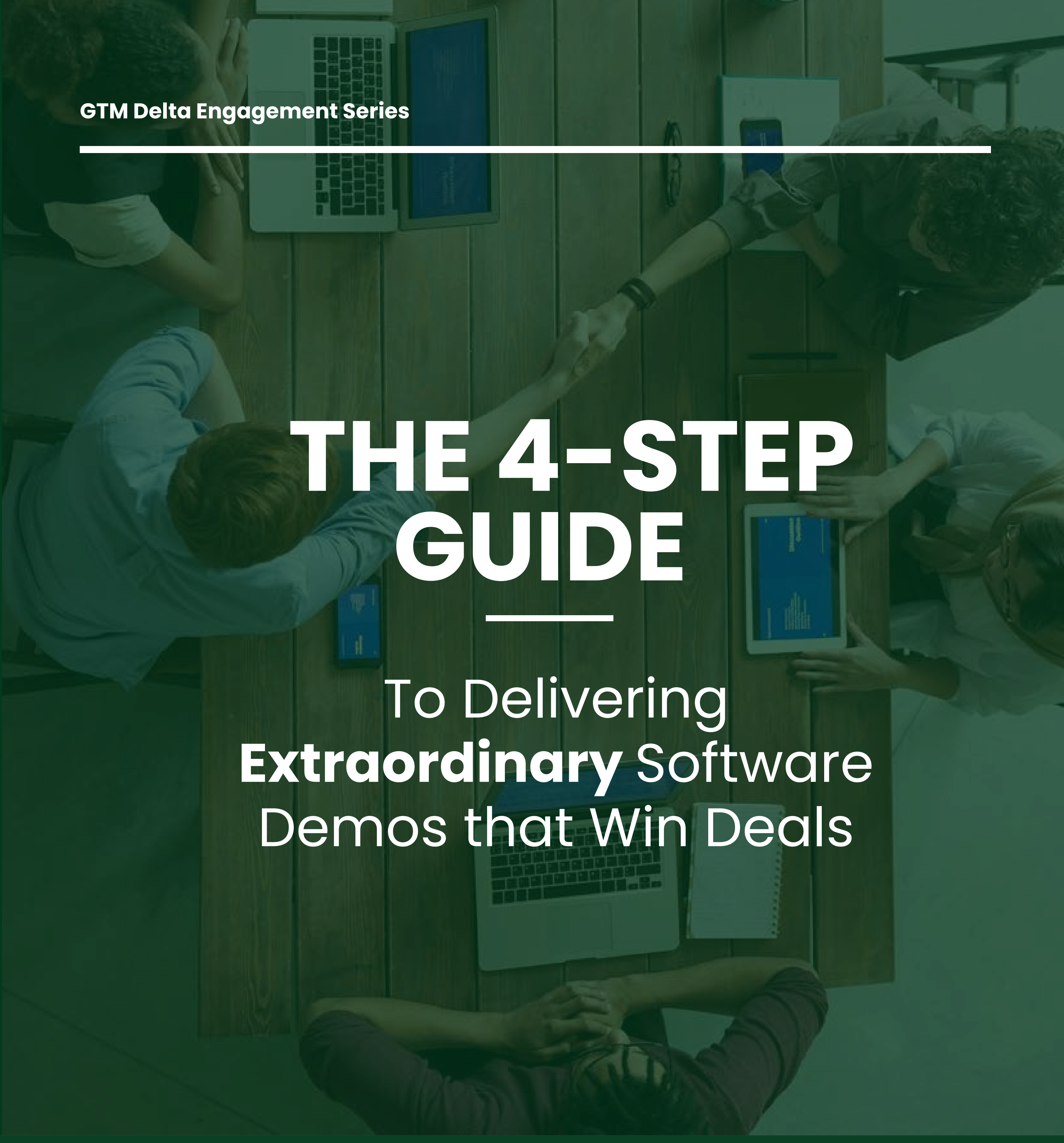


THE 4-STEP GUIDE

To Delivering **Extraordinary** Software Demos that Win Deals

GTM DELTA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Congratulations, you have started your journey to creating and delivering technical software demos that win deals.

There's no need to bombard you with 400 unnecessary pages when the methods here are concise, proven, and battletested in thousands of product demos.

You are proud of what you and your company have built, but you're having trouble getting from first meeting to close for one key reason: your demos do not tell the story that matters to the customer.

You're here because you want to win deals, and something is missing in what you're doing today. Let's fix that together!

If you follow this guide and practice the tips inside, you will be on the way to a proven method that will take your software demos to the next level.

This guide gets right to the good stuff and flows across 4 simple steps:

- Setting the stage
- Delivering the winning demo
- Outcomes and dealing with objections
- Progressing the deal

Let's get started!

About The Author

I have been building and teaching software product demos for the past 6 years successfully because I am the target audience. My background as a systems architect and having lived a couple of decades in technology while launching a successful blog, podcast, and mentoring practice.

Learning and Leading by Example

Using that experience and my own field work has led me and the folks I have trained to make the jump from boring or disconnected demos to highly engaging, business outcome focused demos that lead to closed deals.

Doing What Matters

As the co-founder of GTM Delta, I am focused on the outcomes of a growing community of people who I coach and mentor. This book is the culmination of proving out the processes in business and directly coaching and advising startups over the course of the last decade.

Eric Wright

"The key is not the will to win... everybody has that. It is the will to prepare to win that is important."

BOBBY KNIGHT

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE STAGE

How to prepare you and the audience for the ideal demo meeting

Setting The Stage

Your demo is part of a complete plan. You will get a much better engagement and outcome when you begin the entire process with both a social lead-in.

Something as simple as checking with the team on weather, their local sports teams, something you did that you want to share with them. Setting up the meeting as a conversation will get things rolling in a much more interactive way.

Before the Demo

We aren't going to go through the whole sales process here. The focus of this guide is precisely targeted to turning demos into deal closing tools by following a few simple but fundamental techniques including:

- The fabulous four-minute discovery
- Setting the stage and defining the agenda
- The art of continous discovery
- Interactive and adaptive demos
- Acknowledgement and Alignment

Combining the techniques here will turn your demos from feature walkthroughs into unstoppable sales success stories because of fundamental human behavior that you will unlock at every step of the way.

There is no better way for getting to yes than letting the prospective customer give you the answers that you are going to nail every single time. They literally open the door and tell you the path if you do this right.

Customers Buy Outcomes, Not Features

I know you're excited about what you've got inside your product that is some unique and exciting list of features that you are sure are going to make anyone jump up and cut a PO. The truth is that nobody buys based on features alone.

What you're going to do in your demo is to show your future customer how only your product has the required capabilities to achieve the positive business outcome they desire. The biggest mistake that technical sales and systems engineers make is to dive in on the features and lose track of why they matter.

How do you make sure that you're going to be able to prove your solution is THE one they need to reach their business goals? It's as easy as sticking to this plan. It starts with the critical opening technique that is a must-have for your sales engineer.

The Formula For Rapid Sales Success

There is a simple formula to creating the ideal positioning for your product. Your sales collateral, process, and messaging are profoundly affected by your ability to deliver in this flow.

You'll see this throughout the book in how we describe your demo, positioning, and objection handling.

Positive Business Outcomes
Mrs/Mr customer, you've identified that you have these specific positive busines outcomes you need to, but are unable to achieve with the current tools and methods.

Required Capabilities and Ineffective Alternatives
What I'm going to show you is how our product will deliver a solution to help you and your team achieve those outcomes by providing the required capabilities and a differentiated approach.

Customer Proof Points
that is proven by these customer stories which I can also make available to you with references

The Formula For Rapid Sales Success

Let’s use a real example to be more specific about how the formula conveys the strength of your positioning for the customer and the competition.

Positive Business Outcomes
Thank you for the great info, Jack. You’ve identified that your team needs to be able to build and deploy infrastructure more quickly AND more safely to meet the needs of your developers while also making sure that you don’t introduce risk which will impact the business.

Required Capabilities and Ineffective Alternatives
What I’ll show you in our platform is precisely how can help you solve that and also some additional capabilities that will extend the power of the platform for you

Customer Proof Points
and how this resulted in huge gains for other customers who face the same challenges, plus I’ll show you why our solution has been the top choice for teams because of the way that we do it and how much of a difference it makes.

"Leaders must get across the why as well as the what."

JOHN DOERR

This is where you make sure that you get an acknowledgement and agreement on the goal of the demo, but you know you'll introduce more in the process which makes you an even more compelling solution.

Don't front-load the process by iterating over your bonus features at this point in the conversation. You want to have lots of wow and aha moments as you go through the demo. A common problem is that sales engineers love to lay out all the cool capabilities early, but it's much more meaningful and impactful when you do it through the demo process.

The Fabulous Four-Minute Discovery

A four-minute process of doing very quick discovery helps to preload some content for your agenda setting and for the demo.

Four minutes is just enough to not seem like an inquisition, and it helps to learn the mood of the team you are demoing for and some of the team dynamics.

It's great to start with a relatively open-ended question like...

- What the biggest challenge your team has now as you head into this part of the year?
- What is the thing that you and the team struggle with the most?

Open ended is critical. NEVER lead with a question that has a yes or no answer. People love to talk about their problems and their wins.
Opening up on their challenges lets you create opportunities later in the meeting to learn about what the team does well and praise them for their wins. It gives a nice little dopamine hit for everyone and helps set a positive mood.

PRO TIP: Don’t Lead The Witness

It’s very easy for you to try to set up the challenge for the prospective customer. This is a huge mistake. You already have a sense of their challenge, but you need them to feed it to you, not the other way around. Using open ended questions creates the opportunity for them to give their interpretation of their challenge and their needs to you.

Once you have a sense of their challenges it’s time to deliver the most important stage setting question:

What’s your familiarity with our product and our company?
If they have some familiarity, then you want to set the stage for a complementary discussion:

“Excellent! Since you’ve got familiarity, let’s make sure that you tell me to speed up or slow down as you need because I don’t want to repeat stuff you already know, but since the last you’ve looked at us there has actually been a lot of great updates. Make sure to remind me to also see if we can connect you with some other folks who can share how they’re using us which could be very helpful to realy ramp up the value you and the team can get.”

If they aren’t at all familiar, then you set the stage for a great listening session from both sides:

“Excellent! Since this is a fresh look at our product, I’ll make sure that we are able to really spend the time on specific targeted areas you want to explore after I give you a really quick introduction into the challenges we solve and how we do that for other customers, plus I can also share some contacts with you as references at the end if you wish”

What you’re doing with either of these statements is showing that you’re excited, they are in a perfect position for the demo, and that you’re letting them choose the outcome they want. You also set the credibility by suggesting that you can let non-staff product users connect with them.

Allowing reference customers and other technical champions to be available helps boost your credibility is actually rarely used. You can even follow with ***“It’s always best when you hear it from folks who are actually using the product, so you don’t have to take my word for it.”***

Setting A Clear Agenda

You should be setting the flow of the meeting and being laser focused on the words that you use to describe the outcomes. Everything must be in customer language! The way you define the flow is also critical.

Example:

"You've identified some pretty significant challenges that you need to overcome by moving to better processes for managing your cloud deployments, so I'm going to show you through the demo how our platform will help you do that and to be able to deploy faster, more safely, and to hit your mandated targets"

Remember the simple formula: You have a problem.

We have a solution that will help you solve that problem which leads to your positive business outcomes.

The most important thing you are setting up with your agenda is the specific use-cases you want to cover (not withstanding stuff that comes up along the way) and an agreed upon set of outcomes that the audience wants to achieve. You always want them to acknowledge what the planned outcome is so you can close with the same acknowledgement that you've hit the mark.

Leave time for open discussion and encourage continuous conversation as you go to make sure that you aren't just leaving all the question taking until the end. By capturing learnings and questions all the way through you make it a more interactive experience. It also tells you that you're capturing their attention and creating interest.

CHAPTER TWO

DELIVERING THE WINNING DEMO

Everything you need to ensure the best, interactive demo for your customers

Delivering The Winning Demo

What I really want you to do is to throw away your demo script. You're reading this because something isn't working, or it isn't working consistently for you. It usually starts with a script that is not natural and doesn't have your signature on it.

More importantly, it doesn't have your customer as the center of the demo. Most demos that I see are done as if they are from a script being read while doing it, or worse, like they are being delivered from memory without the emotion needed to entice the customer to be involved.

Now is your chance to unlock the best demos that you have in you, so you can deliver extraordinary software demos, regardless of what your product is. It starts by how you set up the customer as the main player.

I Want This To Be Your Demo

There is no better way to start your interactive, customer- focused demo than with the words “I want this to be your demo”. Even more importantly, you want to begin by letting them know “Feel free to jump in with questions, slow me down, or tell me to speed up…I want this to be your demo”.

This simple setup lets your prospective customer know that they are in charge of the flow. The reality is that you already know where to take things but giving their team the sense of control is important in building the relationship. It’s based on the concept of reciprocation. Giving the upfront control to the prospective customer means they have a subconscious readiness to cede control of the conversation to you. It’s a beautiful bi-directional win this way.

Asking The Right Questions

The format of a question is vital to the flow of the conversation. Here are examples of great questions and not so great ones.

How is your team dealing with that today?

Excellent use of an open-ended question. Context, customer language, and also time-specific which may lead them to share more information

Does that sound like how your team does it today?

This question will put them on the defensive, plus it's a yes or no answer which stops the conversation.

What do you like about what I just showed you, and what's missing that you would like to see?

Another great open-ended question that gives them the chance to be candid, beginning with what they liked and inviting commentary on what business need they want satisfied.

Has what I showed you covered what you want to see?

While this looks similar to the question above, it is a yes or no answer and does not invite open dialogue. It also sounds like you're saying "the demo is done now" by the way you describe it in the past tense.

Creating Credibility and Trust

One of the best ways to build a business relationship is with credibility and trust. The most sought after positioning you have as a vendor is the "trusted advisor" role. That comes in your experience from the industry that led you to the moment of your demo.

What if you haven't had a long time in the industry? This is where I remind so many of my newer sales engineers that every customer you sit with and every demo you deliver gives you experience. That experience **COUNTS AS CREDIBILITY**.

Some of the best SEs in the industry haven't even set foot in a data center or operated production environments. What they have is the ability to use empathy and listening to learn from customers and prospects about how they operate their environments including all the successes and challenges.

If you've become close to your customers and have learned and advised them through production changes, that should become your experience. This is where you can create experience and it creates credibility. Don't overextend, but don't waste an opportunity to share "in the environments that I've done this for and the teams I've been working with" as you explore features and use-cases in your demo.

"Don’t find customers for your products, find products for your customers."

SETH GODIN

The Art of Continuous Discovery and Interactive Demos

You should know a lot about your customer already from researching their website, press releases, blogs, 10-K filings, etc. That's the subject of a separate training topic which we won't dive deeply into here. You also want to use hints and info you know to lead the customer into guiding you towards how you can help them.

Now is where you get to unpack the organizational relationships, and the real psychology that drives the day-to-day operations of the company. Lots of this is also non-verbal so keep your attention on how people behave and interact with you and with each other, so you don't get lost in the words, but rather you hear the cues and idiosyncrasies that come up throughout the discussion.

A demo is a conversation. It just so happens that the conversation occurs while navigating through your product as you show how you're going to do well together in a business relationship.

You should kick things off with your elevator pitch, but it has to be in their customer context, always! Phrasing should always be centered around their use-cases as you do the walk throughs of different sections and features.

PRO TIP:

Lots of non-verbal communication will open Lots of non-verbal communication will open up a deep understanding of how your prospective up a deep understanding of how your prospective users and buyers behave. This will help you with the users and buyers behave. This will help you with the entire sales process. It's important to do the demo entire sales process. It's important to do the demo with video if possible but listen for non-verbal cues with video if possible but listen for non-verbal cues even in the way people pause, how fast they answer even in the way people pause, how fast they answer questions, how they cut you off, and intonation in their questions, how they cut you off, and intonation in their voices throughout the conversation. voices throughout the conversation.

"When reps take the role of a curious student rather than an informed expert, buyers are much more inclined to engage."

JEFF HOFFMAN

The Presentation In-and-Out

What's the right way to leverage presentations as a demo lead-in?

If you're starting with a presentation, speed through the slides and tell them "I won't spend any more time in a presentation because it's better if we just show you exactly how it works right in the platform. I bet you've seen way too many presentations already so I don't want to waste your team's time."

One of the best slides you should have up as you jump to the demo is your customer slide. We call the NASCAR slide because it's just a sea of logos like advertisers skinned across a race car. Again, use simple conversational techniques like this:

"I won't spend time here, but you can see that we have a lot of customers who are leveraging us already today and I'll be happy to connect you with some folks so you can hear from them how well it's working for them."

We call this the in-and-out because you want to show it but not show it. In other words, go out of your way to say you're avoiding it, all the while the logos are sticking in their minds. It's like if I say to you "whatever you do, don't think about a white polar bear"....guess what just happened?

Demo Techniques for Continuous Engagement

First thing you do is reiterate your value proposition right in the UI.

"As you know from what we talked about at the start, our product solves this specific problem by doing X and you can see right here how your team will be using it"

That is your launch point. It begins by hitting on four key elements:

RESTATE

Restates the business value you want them to buy for

VISUALIZE

Draws them into the "we will" and "you will" which is visualizing future work together

ENGAGE

Pulls their attention into the visual flow in the UI

SETUP

Sets up the use-case driven demo

Delivering the Use-Case Demo

Mirroring Words: You should listen for words and phrases the team uses and put them into your demo. Ask about product names, critical processes, and other business-specific language they use. Inject these into your demo flow to personalize the demo and help them identify strongly with you.

Your use-cases that are illustrated in the demo flow should always begin with "so you have a problem or situation you need to deal with…and your team would come here and this is how you begin". Always use phrasing that is putting them in the situation and then you show the solution in the product.

Another key tip is to finish each little use-case section with more credibility statements like:

- "I know when I was doing this, I sure could have used this to save me a ton of time"
- "most of the folks using us would have bought just for this alone"
- "I'm betting this looks like you'd rather do it this way than the way you're stuck having to do things now, right?" These credibility builders give context and create trust. The last one also lets them agree with you and then you can let them share more info. Most likely if you're getting their attention it will start a real conversation.

These credibility builders give context and create trust. The last one also lets them agree with you and then you can let them share more info. Most likely if you're getting their attention it will start a real conversation.

Creating Engagement

If you don't get much interaction every step of the way, that's okay. There are ways you can spur it more easily along the way if they are a quieter crowd at the start.

Here are a few simple tips to also make sure you keep the right level of attention as you go:

- DO keep your mouse moving – by doing this it maintains attention on the movement. Don't move too fast. Just enough so you pull their eyes through the flow and keep their attention
- DO focus verbally on key members of the team - continuously engage with them verbally and leave room for their acknowledgement. Use names and a slow verbal cadence and then speed up with excitement to see how they respond with you.
- DON'T say things like "let's keep moving" or "let's move on to the next part" because that sounds like you're just pushing through a script
- DON'T be monotone with your speech. Keep your excitement level up and treat it like a symphony that rises and relaxes to create a genuine flow of attention towards crescendos

In-person bonus tips which can really differentiate how you engage with everyone in the room:

- Use eye contact with the team to maintain focus - pull them into your words by using eye contact across the group and then move your eyes back to the screen which makes the entire room follow you back to the demo
- Focus visually key on members of the team - Same as above. Keep engaging your champion and your buyer visually throughout the meeting.

The Interactive Demo

This is one of the best parts of a demo! You get to have your prospective customer unpack a whole host of information about their business, their organizational flow, their technology and lots more, all while sounding like you are just filling in a few small gaps in the conversation.

Begin

I want to do a specific thing that has proven to help others like you with this problem...so that you get something that you need that solves that problem...so this will show how we can do that and we can explore further from there

Show | Ask | Acknowledge | Show

Don't start with an inquisition. Sprinkle in questions along the way in the context of where you are in the product demo.

- SHOW a feature or UI element
- ASK how it relates to them based on their desired business outcome
- ACKNOWLEDGE how others also have the issue as well
- SHOW how you solve it with the product

Relate to your customer

How do you do this today...what would success look like for you?

Every time you relate the feature to the positive business outcome you will also give them the context of how they will be using your product to get there.

If you don't mind me asking...

Throughout the conversation you have opportunities to squeeze in some discovery questions. Here are some examples:

"Actually, good chance to check what kind of other software you're using now in the team..."

"as you can see here...actually, what kind of servers are you using today if you don't mind me asking?"

"this is where you will connect up to your cloud platform...good time to check which cloud tools your using today..."

Notice the way that these are phrased. I call this the "if you don't mind me asking" question. You want it to be like a small favor among the conversation, almost like a throwaway. Because you don't put much attention to it and you ask nicely, they are more likely to just answer without feeling like you're laying down a checklist of questions.

The other important part of the way you ask is by giving it a "who and when" context. By asking "what you're using now in the team" you will probably get an answer about not just what they are using now, but what they want to use in the future. They will also be more likely to say things like "well, our team is using product X, but the development team uses something different". Boom! You are getting much better info then if you just gave them some monstrous quiz all at the beginning.

The other fantastic way is to just add on "I'm just curious" to the question. It makes it like you're just keen to find out, and not that it's a leading question that you're going to use as part of the sales process. Using this very relaxed phrasing will help to lower their guard. Remember, they are trying to control the conversation which will include withholding information so as not to open up too much to be sold to.

That's a Great Question...

Acknowledge every question they have for how valuable it is to the conversation. Pause for a moment and say "that's a great question" or "excellent question and thank you for asking...this is important and let me show you why". You're giving them an acknowledgement and a positive reaction which lights up a rather enjoyable dopamine response for them.

What about tough questions that you can't answer? Acknowledge them even more happily. "that's a really great question. I actually don't have an answer for you, but what I'll do is make sure that I dig in with my engineering team and get you an answer". The best thing you can be is honest, and it sure helps when you're excited while you're doing it.

PRO TIP:
When you don't have an answer, or you have a challenging question, follow it up with a question like "do other tools you have do this?" or "how often does that situation come up in your team?" in order to disarm any competitive issues and also to find out how important it is. You may find the answer they give you is "not important, I was just seeing whether you had that option available".

Be Genuine

It goes without saying, but it's important to remember that the best thing you can be is genuine. If you don't know something, be honest and genuine and ask. If you want to spur on some conversation, be genuine and ask. Just being genuine in your interest in the answer helps to put the team at ease and makes them more likely to share information, to be conversational, and it will build trust.

Another huge winner for keeping the openness to the conversation is when you cheer them on. After they share information with you, give a strong reaction like "nice! I always love seeing people actually doing that successfully because it's not easy" which gives them a nice, well-deserved ego boost and opens up the chance for them to brag and share a bit more. Win-win.

Leave Air Gaps

Another common issue I see in a lot of product demos is that they are rushed, one-sided, and don't leave room to create interaction. You should be amped up and excited when you're showing something powerful, but then dial back the cadence to slow it down and let them take it in.

You should always be leaving air gaps between sections as a natural break. This opens the door for the prospective customer to jump in. If you don't hear anything during a long pause, you can also say something like "we've covered a lot and I want to make sure that this is hitting the target of what we wanted to cover. What are some of the things that you want to see that we haven't shown you yet?".

Remember to use those open-ended questions. Never say "does this make sense so far?" or something with a clear yes or no answer. It's like hitting a brick wall. If they are at all disinterested, you are giving them permission to just say "yes" to move you along.

By asking "what are some of the things you want to see that we haven't shown you yet?" you are literally letting them guide you to what matters, and if they are not at all interactive you uncover that you have a potential deal issue because you may have the wrong audience in the meeting. It's good to identify those blockers (both people and business timing) that can be found all the way through the demo process.

Always Demo by Positive Business Outcomes

Beware the functional demo. You should never be showing things that could be delivered in a 2-minute how-to video.

You are connecting the core value of your company to the core value and desired positive business outcomes of the customer.

- Nobody buys you for features - they buy you because of what outcomes you bring them - features help to tell the story
- Use scenarios and use-cases to drive the demo “so, your ops team gets a call that X happened and they need to know how to do something...here’s what that looks like..”
- Keep reinforcing with “what does that process look like for your team today?”

Now we want to get to how you handle the difficult parts of the demo.

CHAPTER THREE

ALIGNING ON OUTCOMES AND DEALING WITH OBJECTIONS

Focusing on customer outcomes and delivering a story of differentiation

"Every sale has five obstacles: no need, no money, no hurry, no desire, no trust."

ZIG ZIGLAR

“Entrepreneurs naturally focus on what they know best – their plans and actions and the most immediate threats and opportunities such as the availability of funding. They know less about their competition and therefore find it natural to imagine a future in which the competition plays little part.”

DANIEL KAHNEMAN

Aligning on Outcomes and Dealing with Objections

You are going to get objections. If they aren’t pushing you at all, they aren’t engaged. Objections will range from technical to budgets and organizational and political challenges. You need to be ready for some verbal and psychological Jiu jitsu or else your prospective customer will never become a customer.

My entire goal as a systems architect was to control the IT environment and vendors within it. Remember, I am your customer! This is how I know these techniques work because I have used them both on the customer side and as a vendor building and delivering successful demos that close deals.

How are You Different Than...?

This one puts a lot of people on their heels. It's actually why the prospective customer asks you and wants to put you on the spot. The good thing is that they are acknowledging your value, testing it against a competitor they most likely have looked at already, and it lets you set your product up for the win.

Stick to the value of your product, and use required capabilities to differentiate. Let's say Product X is your competitor and are a close match. You want to first acknowledge that and the identify the differentiation:

"That's a great question! We do see Product X sometimes, but usually in customers who aren't as advanced as you, or when we do, it's because they've already found the limitations their product has. What we do is to solve the problem, whereas they are a specific tool that solves a different problem"

Next is the context question:
"Have you looked at Product X already. I'm just curious if you've been able to get past the challenges that we've seen their customers hitting"

This is the differentiation opportunity. You solve a different problem or solve something similar in a more effective way. It's subtle wording that will be important. Remember that you want to show that there are required capabilities that are needed which you have and that are not available in the ineffective alternatives in the market today.

The last bit is the bonus of which is also known as the backhanded compliment:
"they're actually really good at <something else they do> but we've never found them to be really competitive because they can't do what we do"

You're giving them kudos while also putting them in the proverbial box. You can also drop some little spike strips for the competitor like pricing differences, ease of implementation, or other ROI numbers that help you with the competitive differentiation.

So what?

This is the question you should ask yourself every step of the way. If you don't, the prospect will be asking it for you. Everything you show should have a clear positive business outcome attached to it and have a tie back to a required capability which separates you from the competition.

Every time you start your feature demo you should be delivering it with a clear use-case in the customer language. By giving it customer context and a use-case that is a familiar scenario, you bring it more emotionally close to what matters to your potential and current customers. I say current customers here too because you also have to upsell you existing customer base as new capabilities and product lines open up in your company.

We have something that does this already...

You may find yourself up against a stack of tool and processes that the customer is sure is working already. You want to give them a chance to defend their current way of trying to solve the problem.

The ultimate competitor is “because we’ve always done it this way” or “we have a process in place that handles that”. Status quo is not an easy thing to pull customers away from. Be very careful how you differentiate from this because this could also involve people and effort investment that they value. Nobody wants to be told they are “not able to do this”, so we change it to “wouldn’t you rather be doing X instead of spending your time doing this”

There needs to be a lot of complimenting (and complementing) in this conversation.

“You have a great team and it’s rare to have gotten this far this well. What we’re showing you is not replacing the people but taking the process and removing the need for your team to spend unnecessary time and effort, plus you gain the pace of innovation of our entire customer community, so we all win together”.

If other tools can’t be unsold or removed, you’re going to have to show a complementary value:

“We’ve worked with Product X in a few customers already and have been able to give a huge value by integrating or working alongside it so that even if you can’t get rid of Product X, there’s no need to because we can deliver value together.”

The ultimate way to differentiate with the existing process or competitive product is to ask them: “what do you love about that product/process today?” They will inevitably jump to the defense and share some feature they really enjoy, but give it some air and you will also find they add on “...but what we really wish it had was...” as the share with you.

It’s not easy to give the conversation the space it needs at this point. You want to have silence to help draw them into filling the space. It’s a beautiful technique that inevitably causes them to start sharing more information than they normally would.

If you don’t get any negative from their product or process response, you can ask them “I’m just curious, what would you love to see in our product or in their product that you haven’t been able to get up to now?”. Again, this is a disarming way of having them spoon feed you their required capabilities to meet their business outcomes. Then you just need to adapt your language to fit their needs based on
your product’s capabilities.

Beware the Sunk Cost Fallacy

I highly recommend you research the **Sunk Cost Fallacy** which is what you will inevitably run into in many customer environments. Sunk cost is the money, effort, and time that has already been spent tackling a problem that you are going to be compared against.

How it plays out for you is that you have to demonstrate a significant gain over a competitive alternative, including "doing it the way we always have". This is why one of the crucial questions you ask during your demo is "how is your team handling this process today?" which gives them a chance to defend and ultimately uncover how you can help them.

If a competitive product is part of an enterprise agreement then you have to compete against the fact that they already own it, even if they aren't using it. Every time that team needs to buy something new, they need to justify to themselves and their management that they aren't using or getting value from what they already own.

It's not just a matter of getting one-to-one replacement value either. The Sunk Cost Fallacy requires that you deliver greater than the perceived value of the incumbent product or process. You also have to use the technique of creating loss aversion by keeping other tools and not using yours. This is where customer examples are also hugely powerful.

"I know that you've got Product X today, but we can also show you how in these similar customers that we delivered ROI and then a huge positive payback to the business despite Product X being a perceived competitor. In other words, they already own it and we still deliver a huge value to them"

Your choice of words is important. Keep separating yourself from the competition every step of the way.

"Nobody likes to be sold to, but everybody likes to buy."

EARL TAYLOR

FINAL REMINDER: Stop Asking Questions with Yes or No Answers

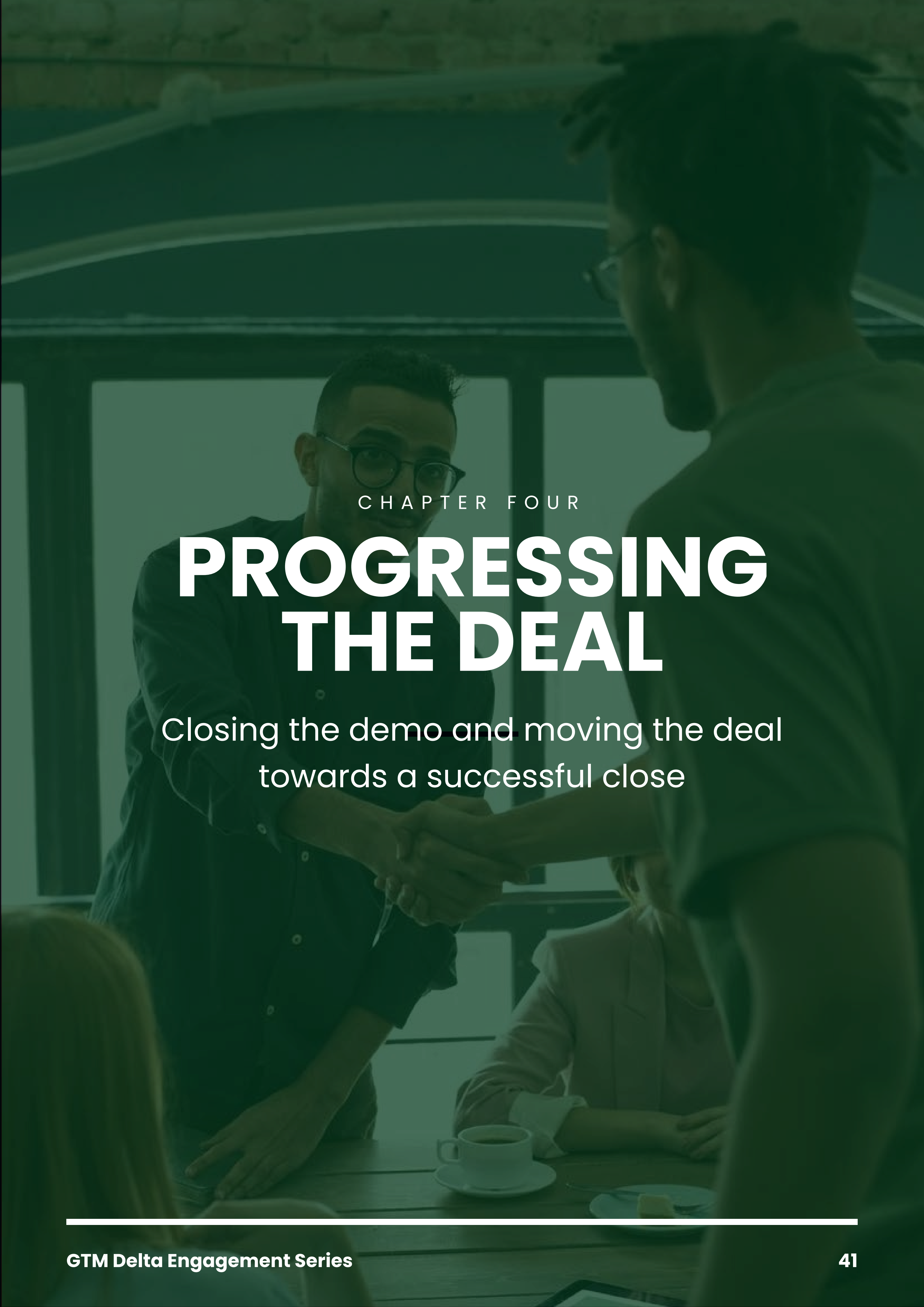
This is an easy trap to get caught by. Always ask questions that have a narrative answer UNLESS you are looking to influence a decision point.

Example:

"If we could do this for you, would that be compelling?"

"Does what I've just shown you get you to where you need to be to be successful?"

That's a perfect setup to moving out of the demo and into the deal discussion.



CHAPTER FOUR

PROGRESSING THE DEAL

Closing the demo and moving the deal towards a successful close

"All things being equal, people will do business with, and refer business to, those people they know, like, and trust."

BOB BURG

Recap and Move to the Close

You've done a great interactive demo. You have done additional technical discovery for laying down what the future will look like with you and the customer.

Now we close out the demo and build on what we learned.

Every great demo is a part of a total meeting and value flow. You set the stage, delivered a specific set of examples showing your product's required capabilities that differentiate you from the ineffective alternatives in the market, and the customer proof points that back up those claims.

This is how we make the transition to next steps:

"Now that I've shown you that we can achieve that outcome for you, what's our next step to getting you up and running in the platform?"

The close will come as a result of both the outcomes you demonstrate you can reach and the team (aka you and your brand) that will be trusted to get them there. Having analyst and customer proof points are incredibly valuable here.

Before we dance to the prospective customer's accounting department, you have to close up the great demo meeting you just led them through and seal the deal using their usecases and their positive business outcomes.

Acknowledge and Align

Deals close (and don't close) for may reasons. There must be a combination of awareness, understanding of need, understanding of your required capabilities, competitive differentiation, and most importantly that they are in the buying window.

Recapping your session is a good time to let them lead you through what worked and what's missing. This way you can deal with any outstanding issues and objections here and in any follow up sessions. You need to make sure that they are delivering you the information, not the other way around.

The greatest demo also needs the trust of your brand and the availability of funds. Even if this demo didn't seal the deal, it's creating awareness and clearly marking you as the differentiated solution for when the buying window opens up.

Use the info you gathered through your continuous discovery to feed your business impact presentation that will go out in your follow up. Be specific to the Positive Business Outcomes that were given to you and acknowledged as you set the stage and closed the demo meeting.

The Final Coaching Tips

Here are some bonus tips that will be helpful as you keep working through your demo flow using this guide. I've built this to be a short, specific, and concise read so that you can re-read and continuously revisit your flow. I know that it works because I've built and used these techniques thousands of successful product demos at this point. I still revisit and re-read to make sure I stay on track and learn continuously.

Words Matter

The phrasing you use is more important than you may realize. You want to always refer to the potential customer as "your team" and "the team" so that you keep a collective reference as a group. Partnering is about using "we" and "our" as you describe how the future relationship will work.

Key things to always sprinkle throughout the conversation include:

- Your team
- We are an extension of...
- I know your pain because I lived it myself
- Others in the community and customers I'm working with

You'll notice that I haven't referred to "prospects" here. That's on purpose. I know that we do use the phrase prospects a lot but when you're speaking amongst the sales teams internally.

When you are speaking to a prospect, the last they want to be called is a "prospect". This is why you should use things like "folks who are in the process of becoming customers" and "folks in the community" which are much more customer-friendly (and people-friendly) phrasing.

One of the most important things to do is also to remove gender from your descriptions. Regardless of your audience profile, use more open pronouns like "they" and "folks" to make sure you are more open in your description. You also want to use both female and male names when you walk through scenario discussions.

Keep it Fresh

The best demo is only as good as how well it's adapted to a continuously changing marketplace and customer base. You should re-read this guide and practice your demo repeatedly. Keep testing your phrasing and flow and make adjustments as you evolve the way you tell the story and show the products.

The worst thing you can do is lock in on a specific flow and not revisit and run repeated health checks. When you're on auto pilot, you start to miss potential opportunities for interaction.

Lessons that Feed Your Future Successes

Every meeting should have a follow-up with your internal team to make sure you hit your meeting objectives. Getting feedback from everyone on the meeting including sales partners and outside contributors will help you.

Ask yourself these sometimes-difficult questions as you go:

- Did you meaningfully increase awareness of the platform and company?
- Did you present your product features as required capabilities?
- Did you tie your demo and features to positive business outcomes?
- Did you continuously engage the audience and get feedback?

Even the most seasoned sales reps and SEs will still miss every once in a while. You should always be evaluating to make sure you constantly learn and adapt.

The One Thing that Kills Any Demo!

This happens way more than it should. I sit on demo calls all the time and hear the same mistake happen, especially with SEs who are fairly fresh to the team. You've got a script in mind and you may still have trouble leaving the script.

Here's what the scenario sounds like:

You are demoing your software to Elaine (the economic buyer) and Sarah (the prospective primary user) when this happens:

YOU: "You will come here in this view of the platform, click this button, and it literally is that simple to complete this work. No more care and feeding and it allows you to do things in real-time across teams. But that's not all. Let's keep going to the next step..."

ELAINE: "Wait, so I can use this across teams and they all have the same view, and the same data so we can collaborate? Sarah, isn't that one of the issues you've been fighting with?"

SARAH: "Definitely. I want to dig more into this because this is like my nemesis every day with this stuff"

YOU: "Great. Well, let's keep going with the demo and we can cover this more in the Q&A at the end"

NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

What you just did was let your script override the natural interaction that occurred. It's really difficult to catch sometimes, so you have to always be prompting for good interaction.

This is why we coach how to ask the right questions that don't have stiff, one-word answers. Never ask a yes or no question unless you know how to take that answer in the right direction.

Now What?

You have all the tools you need with this guide and you're core product knowledge. Now it's a matter of going from here to executing on these tactics in the field.

Practice Until Smooth and Then Practice More

It's not just the amount of practice, but how you practice that matters:

Don't read like it's a script
Use points and flow notes only

When you are scripted it will be detectable. There's nothing wrong with those early sessions that you have some sections that you lean on the notes for while you get your familiarity with how a good demo flow goes.

Just make sure you don't sound like you're reading a teleprompter. Unnatural speech flow will really take the audience out of the conversation.

Use other members of the team to capture some notes as you go. Keep track of where you gained and retained attention, and where you lost it. Learn where you speed up and slow down, what works and what doesn't as you do that. The timing and duration is also something you need to learn about which only comes with practice and repetition.

Be Ready to Fill Time, But Try Not To

If you have a 30-minute demo slot, be ready to take the full duration just in case. If you use the methods in this guide you won't ever have this problem!

Assuming you're delivering the demo without much reaction and interaction, it will probably look like:

- Introductions (5-8 minutes)
- Challenge setup (2-5 minutes)
- Demo (15-20 minutes)
- Closing section (3-5 minutes)

If the audience is interactive, be ready to deliver the full value demo within 10 minutes and use the rest for interaction and to cover questions as they come up.

It's ideal to have a full hour session for your demo, but you should be able to nail the demo in under 10 minutes while opening up the door for more follow up. Imagine you're at a tech expo and have to do a booth-style demo. You should be able to pitch from start to finish in under 10 minutes.

Share and Learn with your Team

The adage you may know is that “practice makes perfect” but the real truth is that “perfect practice makes perfect”. By honing your craft and using the proven techniques we have put in this guide, you can adapt based on your flow and your phrasing choices.

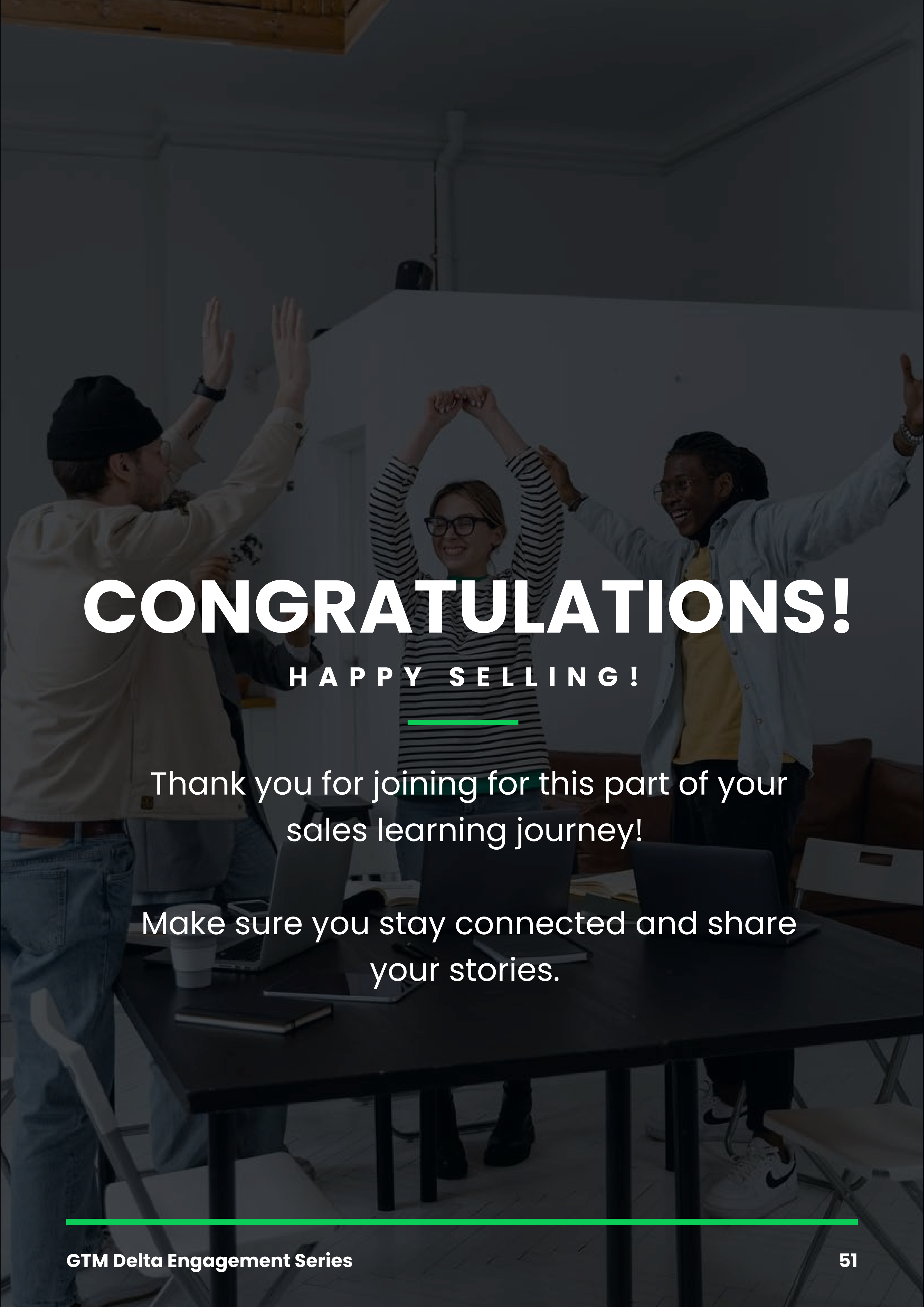
This is why recording your demos and letting your team analyze and advise is a massive boost to the success of the overall flow and getting more closed deals.

Listen to old recordings for specific moments. It’s just like how sport coaches always re-watch the old plays to evaluate what happened relative to what should have happened.

Using this technique lets you:

- Spot where you stepped on the audience
- Listen for verbal crutches you have, and want to avoid
- Learn which questions get better responses, and why
- Listen for the “aha!” moment

You have all the tools in your toolbox now. It’s just a matter of putting it into practice and you are now on your way to delivering extraordinary software demos that win deals.



CONGRATULATIONS!

HAPPY SELLING!

Thank you for joining for this part of your sales learning journey!

Make sure you stay connected and share your stories.