

WHITE PAPER

The Seven Elements of a Powerful PowerPoint Presentation

by **Bree Basham**



Part of my role in taking companies through a rebrand is to audit and assess their current brand materials. I'm not in sales, but as a marketer and consumer, I'm both a brand builder and brand enthusiast. And I have to say, the PowerPoint decks I see during brand audits are, simply put, horrific.

Often a sales deck is the first part of your brand a customer sees. And, as we all know, you never have a second chance to make a first impression. Your sales presentation may well determine whether a potential customer buys from you or from your competition. Still, most presentations I encounter lack impact, brand continuity, and are seldom compelling enough to motivate a buying decision.

I can't fathom why sales teams and marketers do such a poor job with their decks. Cramming in all they can fit on a page, having no informational hierarchy, inserting displeasing, unprofessional imagery, and overlooking any kind of design thinking. In many cases, it is the sales teams or even an administrative assistant who puts these together. They do the best they can, but clearly have no guidelines.

A sales presentation is an important part of your overall brand experience. As such, it should be an intentionally designed series of moments.

The PowerPoint should show understanding of your potential customers' needs. Then it should show how you, the presenter, are uniquely qualified and able to satisfy those needs in the best way. Offering the most valuable benefits to be realized by your solution. This, of course, should all be encompassed within your brand.

Just as your business cards, your lobby signage, your corporate brochure, or your website are part of your brand experience —your sales presentation should be, as well. It should come straight from your brand's foundation, highlighting your brand's differentiating qualities. Then and only then, will you be telling your story and creating a truthful, authentic brand experience that sells your product or service.

The 7 Steps to Creating a Powerful Sales Presentation:

1. Structure and simplify your message.
2. Tell your brand story.
3. Highlight your brand differentiation.
4. Enhance your story.
5. Showcase your experience.
6. Be interactive and transparent.
7. Have a clear call-to-action.

1. Structure and Simplify Your Message.

The more complex your product or service, the more a need for simplicity. You've ideally gathered a good amount of insights and information prior to your presentation. But if you try to share it all, your audience will hear nothing. It's easy to get lost by over-explaining or discussing topics that aren't relevant when you don't have a solid structure to follow. Editing is key. And you must have a hierarchy, a structure. A good structure, (and a good copywriter!), will help you prioritize and organize information so it will have the greatest impact on your audience. Without a clear, easy-to-follow, consistent structure, a presentation can make your product seem even more complex than it is. Instead, work toward a structure that makes your product or service appear seamless and easy to understand.

2. Tell Your Brand Story.

The BOLTGROUP definition of a brand story is: "A narrative that conveys why the brand exists, as portrayed through the voice of the brand, supporting the purpose and promise to drive meaning of the brand to an emotional level with its constituents." People love a good story. Tell it in the context of their needs. They want to understand how your value proposition is going to enhance their business and affect their bottom line.

Your sales presentation is a natural vehicle to get this done. In fact, it may be the best chance you have to demonstrate exactly why your product or service is perfect for the prospect.



A good story takes your audience on a journey that leads to a logical conclusion. Yet, because buying decisions are rarely based on logic alone, your story should make a strong emotional case as well.

Add a little drama. Set the stage for a big introduction to your brand. Make a claim about why the audience will thank you for this product. Sell it in a way that makes the audience believe the story can come true.

NOTE: This works best when everyone tells the same story!

In order for sales teams to be successful, the entire organization must align around the narrative. Key stakeholders of your organization should all have been a part of the foundational reset. Capitalize on the alignment reached during those meetings by sharing the new brand foundation through a Brand Roadshow and provide a Brand Expression Handbook for each employee. These are important tools that can get the entire team excited about where the organization is headed. They will align your team in sharing your message out to others.

3. Highlight Your Brand Differentiation.

Showing value, also vital to your presentation, is accomplished through brand differentiation. By differentiation, we mean setting your brand apart from the competition via relevant associations or the net value of customer perceptions of your brand, product, or service.



Customer value can come in the form of speed of the solution, cost, opportunity, or a variety of other factors. Regardless, if people do not understand the value you bring to the table, and why it is relevant—especially relative to other competitors—you are less likely to stand out.

4. Enhance Your Story.

People consume information differently. Some like words and bulleted information, some like charts and graphs, some respond to photos, and some to videos. Since your audience varies, so should the way you present information.

The phrase, “a picture is worth a thousand words” was never truer than in a sales deck. Pulling in compelling photography



to enhance your presentation is a must. Using your own photography that aligns with your visual brand language is ideal. This recommendation typically includes hero product photography, in-use product photography, and photography showing the experience and emotion associated with the brand. Of course, in addition to your brand photography library, stock photography is a great way to set the scene and tone up front, make impactful statements through metaphor, and add visual interest throughout.

It's well known that **images carrying information** capture a reader's time and attention better than reading text. What's more, when people hear information, they're likely to remember only 10% of it three days later. However, if a relevant image is paired with the information, people retain 65% of the information three days later.

5. Showcase Your Experience.

Along with a great story, supported by a strong brand foundation, you need supporting evidence that you can deliver your promised solution. Here, nothing works better than actual case studies and relevant work. Case studies can be very compelling in showing prospects how others in a similar industry have benefited from the same product or service.

As much as possible, precisely tailor your story to the audience you're trying to reach. Filter what you show by similar industry, company size, location, etc.

Talk about the client's inherent needs and how the solution was reached. Connecting on a pain point will immerse listeners in your story. Be sure to emphasize specifically how those pain points were addressed in reaching a solution. This will highlight your best qualities.

Lastly, always include results with actual numbers when you can get them, and, if possible, a testimonial.

6. Be Interactive and Transparent.

We've all been in presentations where the person drones on about their product or service, their capabilities, themselves. Me. Me. Me. They mention the brand's challenges without really speaking to what's important to the audience. As the online world has opened up bi-directional engagement between customers and companies, a good sales presentation should do the same.

The sales presentation has evolved from a monologue to a dialogue. Be a good listener and ask thoughtful questions.

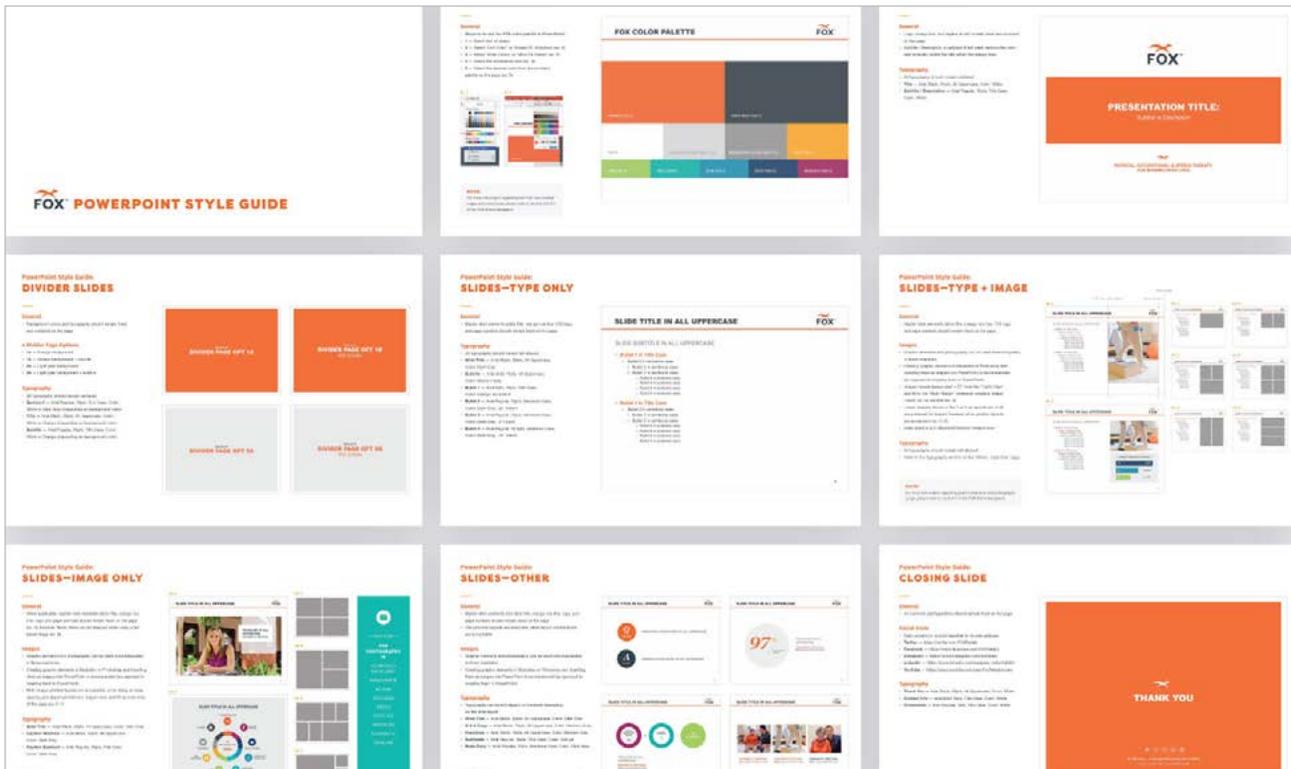
If your voice monopolizes the entire presentation, how do you know what your customer is struggling with or what pain points

they are experiencing? Make it your business to understand your potential customer's challenges. Then use that information to connect those challenges to solutions offered by your products or services.

In addition to being interactive, be truthful and transparent, empathetic, and even a bit personal. It will help your audience warm to you and your presentation. Customers place a great deal of value on authenticity. In fact, 87% of global consumers say it's important for brands to **"act with integrity at all times,"** while only 72% call innovation essential. Brands that are authentic are ones that have great customer loyalty and repeat customer experiences. While you may associate being a good listener and being your authentic self with lessons from grade school, versus sales presentation tactics, the power of how those qualities can help you make a human connection should not be underestimated.

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7. Have a Clear Call to Action.

Getting feedback and next steps from your audience is a vital sales presentation conclusion. At the very end, be sure to ask for something. Whether it's for their thoughts, to schedule a follow-up call, to speak with other team players involved in the decision, or by directly asking for the business, don't close without this critical step. It sets up goals and expectations to move the conversation forward.

These suggestions will help you craft a compelling presentation. But that's not enough. Documenting the presentation format will prevent reinventing the wheel each time. Otherwise, it's easy for the person putting your next presentation together to get off-brand. You wouldn't send someone your company logo without giving them direction on how to use it, so why would you leave a presentation in an admin's hands with no guidelines? By creating a set of visual and verbal guidelines around your sales presentations, you control the look, structure, tone, and manner. Employees using this guide are empowered then to make choices relevant to the outcome of the presentation that also align with the very important foundation of the brand.

Maintaining, controlling, and presenting your brand through every one of your sales presentations is crucial to ensuring

an overall brand experience. Make this essential element of your brand ecosystem a priority. Give it the attention and level of brand guidance it deserves. Because the right kind of first impression might well be your insurance that there will be a second impression. ■



MEET BREE

With over 15 years' experience in advertising, brand strategy, brand building, and marketing in CLT/NYC/LA both on the client side and in large and small agencies—Bree Basham leads BOLTGROUP's creative team. Her varied experience includes work in B2B and B2C for industries ranging from manufacturing to consumer goods to fashion retail. Bree is active in the design industry and gives back to the community by mentoring, volunteering, and serving as President of AIGA Charlotte.