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Ignition Demos – A Rather Huge Unmet Need and Opportunity

Synopsis

Prospects that are "Just Browsing" are underserved in traditional sales approaches yet consume valuable and expensive presales resources.

We propose:

1. A new type of Vision Generation Demo: "Ignition Demos" to provide the spark for the engine that drives the prospect's journey to becoming a customer;
2. A new type of customer-facing staff member: A "Browsing Consultant" to deliver that spark, engaging the prospect in an initial conversation.

Advantages:

1. Valuable presales resources are not wasted delivering overview demos to prospects who are "Just Browsing" and have no intention of buying in the short-term.
2. BDR's and SDR's don't waste time trying to qualify and set meetings for their corresponding salespeople with these "Just Browsing" prospects similarly.
3. Salespeople don't waste their time in meetings set by BDR's and SDR's with "Just Browsing" prospects who passed the qualification criteria.
4. Entry-level presales and customer success staff start as Browsing Consultants and:
    - Learn to engage prospects in low-risk engagements;
    - Learn to articulate the high-probability use-cases for their offerings;
    - Learn to engage prospects in meaningful conversations;
    - Achieve basic competency with their products and systems (e.g., their CRM);
    - As these staff members mature, they can be "harvested" into active sales and post-sales projects as presales and customer success team members.
5. A reasonable amount of prospect Discovery information is collected early – well before the prospect engages in a buying process.
6. Prospects feel appreciated – and will have a positive bias towards the vendor.
7. Marketing has clearer insights into nurture/trickle/drip marketing approaches for these prospects, enabling more rapid and/or more certain movement towards purchasing.

The Rationale

Consider: 50% of the leads you generate are qualified, but are not ready to buy right now…

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- How do you handle prospects who aren't ready to buy in your sales processes?

- How many demos do you deliver that are largely a waste of time for you – demos to prospects who simply want an education – those who are "Just Browsing"?

- How often do you deliver demos that you repeat over and over and over – that could probably have been recorded and played back for these prospects?

Here's a provocative idea: invest a small amount of energy in these prospects – just a spark – to satisfy these prospects *and* begin to move them towards a buying process.

Get Fired Up!

What is needed are demos that ignite a spark in the prospect's mind – "Ignition Demos" – that generate a small flame. Continued encouragement through nurture/trickle/drip marketing fans the flames, adds kindling and eventually develops a fire that demands attention – and becomes a *real* opportunity.

These important demos are poorly supported or not supported at all in most organizations – they are traditionally known as marketing and educational demos.

> "What?", I hear you cry… "I thought you specifically told us *not* to do educational demos and harbor tours…?"

Indeed – and that is still correct.

Skilled presales personnel should not be investing one-on-one time with prospects on educational demos – but *someone* or *something* should.

Traditionally, this is marketing's job, but most marketing organizations don't have the bandwidth or personnel resources to engage prospects directly. Prospects today are typically presented with:

1. A website-hosted recorded demo that assumes that all customers are the same (and is typically insufficient for prospects seeking to learn about the vendor's offering);
2. A website "Contact Sales" form that triggers an SDR/DBDR qualification process;
3. A website "Book a Demo" button" that *also* triggers the same SDR/DBDR qualification process.

Here's what typically happens for our "Just Browsing" prospects…

It's All About Sales, Right?

Most live demos focus on moving the customer through a sales process and assume that either:

Case 1: The customer is actively pursuing a solution, or
Case 2: The customer *needs* to be actively pursuing a solution.

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In the first case, the customer engages one or more vendors well into the buying process, looking to compare solutions, price, fit, vendor credentials, etc. This is typical for inbound sales processes where the customer is actively pursuing a solution.

In the second case, a salesperson or BDR/SDR works to convince the customer that the customer *has* a problem that demands a rapid solution, with an expectation that the customer will enter into a buying process once the realization of the problem's magnitude and time criticality becomes clear. This is typical of outbound sales processes.

Both cases presume that the customer will pursue a purchasing pathway through one of the following outcomes:

1. Buying from us.
2. Buying from someone else.
3. Choosing to do nothing ("No Decision").

Accordingly, when a customer clicks on the "See a Demo" button on a vendor website, the assumption is that the customer is in a buying process (Case 1: actively pursuing a solution). On the vendor's side, the next step often has an SDR or BDR contacting the customer to qualify the opportunity, set a meeting with a salesperson, and move the customer through the vendor's sales process.

In Case 2, if the vendor's sales team is successful in convincing the customer to explore addressing a previously unknown or lower-priority problem, then a similar sales trajectory is pursued.

But what about Case 3 – "Just Browsing"? What if the customer is simply exploring "what's out there"? What if the customer is simply looking to gain an education of what is possible?

We then wondered, "How big a problem or opportunity is this?" It's big…

Are the Majority Ready to Buy?

Nope – or *not yet*. Consider:

> "Up to 95 percent of qualified prospects on your website are there to research and not yet ready to talk with Sales, however up to 70 percent will eventually buy from you — or your competitors."
> – Brian Carroll, author of Lead Generation for the Complex Sale

Similarly,

> "According to Gleanster Research, 50% of the leads you generate are qualified, but not ready to buy right now."
> – Business.com

And,

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> "Gartner research shows the majority of technology buyers (59%) that regularly make purchases will “always” or “often” respond to vendor marketing campaigns when they are *not* in an active buying process."

Sounds like it’s a *big* problem (or a big opportunity)!

Clearly, the majority of website visitors who click on the “Book a Demo” button are *not* ready to buy – and sales processes seek to disqualify them as rapidly as possible (through SDR/BDR qualification calls), leaving prospects who are interested in learning about the vendor’s offering with three options:

1. Move on to another vendor and try again.

   Result? This vendor loses the possibility of a customer, perhaps forever…!

2. *Lie* to the SDR/BDR regarding qualification questions, so that the prospect can get the education and information desired.

   Result? The vendor wastes time doing a demo for a prospect not yet in a buying mode.

3. The prospect answers truthfully – and is disqualified without getting the information desired.

   Result? The prospect is (hopefully) added to a nurture/trickle/drip marketing list and is provided with periodic marketing materials designed to nudge the prospect towards an active buying process. But the prospect doesn’t get to see a demo and is dissatisfied!

Interestingly, it’s still largely about *seeing* a demo:

> "Demonstrations remain popular with prospects, as buyers often choose a demo as a quick way to figuring out what a solution offers. A call to action that mentions a demo likely will get interest, as 58% of buyers cited “demonstrations” as a call to action they would respond to in a marketing campaign."
> – Gartner

Summing up:

- In two of these three cases the prospect never sees a demo from the vendor;
- And in the third case, while the prospect *does* see a demo, it is often considered a wasted effort from the vendor’s perspective.

Three negative outcomes. Let’s propose some solutions…!

An Elegant Approach to Embracing “Just Browsing” Prospects

There is a HUGE gap in our current sales and marketing processes, accordingly. There needs to be a way for prospects to see a brief demo of what’s possible – an Ignition Demo – but without consuming SDR/BDR, sales or presales time.

We need to find a way to embrace the 70% – the “Just Browsing” prospects.

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Here are three approaches:

1. No Touch – using automated demos – Automated Browsing Consultants
2. Low Touch – using junior-level resources – Browsing Consultants
3. High Touch – using presales, customer success or specialists, specifically trained

No Touch – Automated Demos

This is a simple, very elegant approach to address your "Just Browsing" prospects – provide them with a crisp overview of your offering via recorded Ignition Demos.

> Great Ignition Demos crisply identify the problems that can be addressed and the high-level solutions – with an emphasis on the *deliverables*. For example, showing *what* in the software would address or enable the following:
> - Visibility improvements via reporting, dashboards and alerts
> - Waste elimination and reduction of resource consumption
> - Opportunity exploitation
> - Exception exploration
> - Efficiency and productivity improvements
> - Risk reduction
> - Root-cause identification
> - Communication improvements
>
> Recordings a few minutes in length are likely sufficient for simpler offerings. Live versions would follow similar guidelines but seek to engage the prospect in a conversation as well.
>
> Note, however, that Ignition Demos need to actually show your software – they can't be pure "explainer" videos.

For vendors with concise, focused solutions, recorded Ignition Demos are a summary of the problems addressed, along with the key capabilities, key screens, and key deliverables provided by the offering.

> The main challenge for effective Ignition Demos is to create the recording with the *customer* perspective in mind, first addressing *what* the offering provides, and only sharing as much of the *how* (process execution) as is appropriate. Deliverables first; workflows steps are secondary.

Vendors that have multiple solutions and/or solutions that address multiple sets of needs (e.g., ERP and CRM vendors) should prepare mini-demos for each solution area and/or job title.

Access needs to be guided accordingly, by solution, job title or other similar mechanism to enable prospects to self-select their interests. Lengths for each mini-demo should likely be a few minutes each.

> (Note that a "one-size fits all" overview simply does not work in this case – you are back to producing hour-long "harbor tours", but in a recorded format…!)

After a no-touch demo, the customer is presented with two buttons:

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1. “This looks really interesting – I’d like to engage in a sales call” (“Yes, I’m in my evaluation and buying process and would like to engage with you…” or similar.)
2. “This looks interesting – but likely for the future” (“Can you please keep me informed of changes and updates as your offering evolves and my needs solidify…?” or similar.)

Consensus offers a truly terrific no-touch solution for vendors, providing an intelligent automated demo capability that maps to job titles, followed by offering a list of topics to choose from along with selecting the level of importance for each topic. The resulting “demo” is assembled from pre-built demo fragments, mapping precisely to what the prospect requested – and all of the prospect’s choices and actions are captured for use by the vendor’s sales and marketing teams.

> An Automated Browsing Consultant. It’s as simple as ABC – delightful!

Note that if a prospect chooses all topics in a Consensus automated demo as “important”, the resulting aggregated demo is likely about 10-14 minutes in length.

Who should create these assets? Presales or customer success, not marketing.

> Why? Because presales and customer success teams are most intimate with typical customer use-cases. Marketing should be in charge of capturing the recordings, from presales or customer success, and hosting these assets on websites and providing them in the form of email response templates, with appropriate tracking for both cases.

Reconsider: Investing a few hours in creating these mini-demos vs. the hours (and hours and hours!) wasted delivering traditional overview demos to “Just Browsing” prospects…!

Low-Touch – Live Browsing Consultants

For organizations that want to engage human-to-human for a range of possible reasons, including a desire to do real Discovery and/or actually *help* prospect get what they want, consider training and devoting specific resources to these “Just Browsing” prospects.

Junior-level staff and new hires targeted for presales or customer success roles may be perfect for the Browsing Consultant role. (Note – larger organizations with presales “academy” training programs could use the Browsing Consultant position as the first customer-facing position – a stepping-stone for responsibilities requiring more experience).

Browsing Consultants in low-touch operations would require training similar to that provided to SDR/BDR’s and junior-level presales and customer success staff:

- Basic product knowledge
- Basic Ignition Demo presentation skills
- Reasonable understanding of the high-probability use-cases for the offering(s)
- Very basic Discovery skills
- Basic understanding and use of the appropriate tools (e.g., CRM system, scheduling tools, etc.)

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In a low-touch scenario, Browsing Consultants would engage prospects with just a few questions followed by an Ignition Demo – a brief, purposeful summary of the problems addressed by the offering and the high-level capabilities provided by the solution.

Low-touch Browsing Consultants would then offer three choices to the prospect:

1. "Would you like to speak with someone in sales?" ("Is this something you'd like to pursue in the short term, now that you've had a taste?")
2. "Would you like me to add you to our emailing list?" ("Would you like to receive periodic updates and information on the offering and related?")
3. "Anything else?" ("Are you something other than a "Just Browsing" prospect – are you looking to be a partner or reseller, are you an analyst, media, etc. – I can connect you.")

Low-touch Browsing Consultants would likely invest 15-20 minutes per prospect. Using tools such as DemoFlow or DemoDesk, all of the assets they need would be provided in a fully enabled environment – and their interactions would be automatically recorded in the CRM.

Reconsider: Investing in these lower-cost resources vs. the hours consumed wasted delivering traditional overview demos to "Just Browsing" prospects…!

High-Touch – Live, Experienced Browsing Consultants

For organizations more complex offerings and/or long buying/sales cycles, a high-touch approach might be appropriate. The objective in these cases is to engage the prospect in deeper Discovery discussions interspersed with appropriate Ignition Demos, yielding richer information for both parties.

This is a more consultative approach, requiring Browsing Consultants with more experience, deeper product knowledge, and sharper Discovery skills. Advantages of this approach for the vendor include gaining much richer Discovery information early in the prospecting process – and nurturing in accord with what was learned. Prospects would also likely bias a purchase in favor of the vendor that makes this investment with them.

Organizations could periodically cycle experienced presales or customer success staff into this position (and back) or train and develop specifically for the role.

Clearly, organizations could experiment with one or more approaches, including combinations of No-Touch automation and Low- and High-Touch teams.

Summary

We see an opportunity – a very *large* opportunity – to reduce waste and improve customer experience by applying this Browsing Consultant concept and Ignition Demos.

Let us know your thoughts!

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The Backstory – Try This Yourself…!

Here is an example that you can test for yourself – see what happens first-hand!

Qualified Out or In

Let's say you are a presales manager interested in exploring calendaring tools for your team of 25 folks. You note that everyone is setting meetings with customers via email exchanges that often go back and forth – it's frustrating and you know it is inefficient, but it doesn't appear to be negatively impacting team performance.

As a good manager you decide to explore what is possible in the calendar automation space.

You reach out to several calendaring software vendors, review their websites, explore what you can online, but you really want to get a feel for what is possible with the software. Accordingly, you click the "See a Demo" button on one of the vendor websites.

What happens next?

Well, *you* are now the customer being contacted by a BDR/SDR, who schedules a 15-minute call to "explore". The BDR/SDR's objective is to either qualify you out (to avoid wasting valuable sales time) or qualify you in and set a meeting with a salesperson.

You begin the call and the BDR/SDR asks, "is this an active initiative?"

You quickly realize that if you say "no", you'll never see the offering – you'll be qualified out. You'll be added to the vendor's nurture/trickle/drip marketing list and will receive periodic marketing whitepapers, updates, and offers. But you won't have accomplished *your* objective, which is to get a sense of what is possible. So what do you do?

You lie.

You respond, "Why, yes, this is an active initiative…" (Not a complete lie, frankly, if you stretch at bit…!) BDR/SDR then asks, "Are you the decision-maker?"

> "Yes, I am," you state proudly (and inaccurately).

"Is budget allocated for this project?"

> "Yes, of course," you respond, as you cough quietly and somewhat uncomfortably to yourself…

"Tell me about some of your pain points," asks the BDR/SDR.

> You say, "Well, we have lots of inefficiencies with our current processes…"

BDR/SDR suggests, "Well, let's set a time to explore further with our salesperson…" to which you agree (because you haven't seen anything yet of their solution).

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And on the vendor side a virtual bell sounds “Ding Ding Ding” as another “qualified” lead moves into the pipeline – you’ve been qualified as a sales-ready lead.

So far, the vendor investment is a 15-minute call with a BDR/SDR – and your investment is similar, but you have received *zero* value in the interaction. Think about that…

It’s an Opportunity!

Congratulations, you have entered the “funnel” as a qualified prospect. You have your very own record in the vendor’s CRM system – and your responses to the BDR/SDR questions have been dutifully logged.

A day before your call with the vendor salesperson, you receive a friendly reminder that you have a meeting tomorrow to explore solutions. Note that this reminder is largely done to

a) Make sure you don’t forget (and waste the vendor salesperson’s time)
b) Give you the opportunity to cancel (to avoid wasting the vendor salesperson’s time)

Tomorrow arrives – and it is time for your call. You join a Zoom (or whatever) session and go through a few pleasantries, after which the salesperson *repeats* many of the questions you already answered. (Did they not read the notes in the CRM system?)

The salesperson asks a few additional questions, consuming a bit more time, after which (with Discovery considered “complete”) the salesperson launches into a traditional overview presentation, then turns the “host” role over to a presales resource to present an overview demo.

(See “Stunningly Awful Web “Overview” Demos – The Gruesome Anatomy of a Traditional 1-Hour Web Overview Demonstration – And Some Solutions” and see how this sad example compares with *your* experience…!)

Sadly, most of what is presented is blah blah blah – it could have been condensed to a few minutes of vision generation. What consumed an hour could have been accomplished in 20 minutes!

But wait – did you notice that presales is now *also* involved on the vendor side.

Impact?

For you, not that much, other than you invested 1.25 hours for 20 minutes of useful content.

For the vendor? Similar, but:

1. This opportunity will be pursued as “active” until, well, who knows?
2. The sales team (salesperson and presales person) each invested 1+ hours in an opportunity that will likely not go anywhere in the short term.

That’s direct waste and opportunity cost as well (since they could have been working an opportunity that has a rational probability of closing).

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Now, think about your organization – how do your processes compare? Perhaps the Browsing Consultant and Ignition Demos concepts are worth a try!

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