

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 2:

HOW TO DEMO YOUR PRODUCT WELL

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Several times a year a group of executives from startups do a six-minute demo of their products to an audience of venture capitalists, analysts, and journalists. This name of the event is, logically, **DEMO**. It's a great occasion—especially if you understand the dance that's going on: Entrepreneurs acting as if they don't need venture capital, and venture capitalists acting as if they don't need entrepreneurs.

Create something **worth demoing**

If you want to be a demo god, create a great product to demo. Demos are excellent PR opportunities, but use them when you're ready, not when an opportunity occurs. If your product is mediocre and you don't do a demo, only you will know that it's unremarkable. If you do a demo, the whole world will know it.

Bring two of **everything**

There is one place for duplication: equipment. Expect everything to break the night before you're on stage, so bring two, maybe even three, computers, phones, thumb drives, whatever you'll need for your demo.

Get organized **in advance**

You should never futz around during a demo—for example, looking for folders and files on your hard disk. You have weeks to prepare for these six minutes; you're clueless if you haven't set everything up in advance.

Eliminate the factors that you **can't control**

Should you assume that you'll have Internet access during your demo? Yes, but have a backup anyway. Sure, the hotel has Internet access, but what happens when hundreds of people use it at once? Better to simulate Internet access to your server by using a local server. You don't have to show the real system. This is, after all, a demo.

Start with **"shock and awe."**

I stole this from my buddy Peter Cohan, author of [Great Demo!: How To Create And Execute Stunning Software Demonstrations](#). He believes, and I second it, that you have about one minute to captivate your audience, so don't try building to a crescendo. Start with "shock and awe"—the absolute coolest stuff that your product can do. The goal is to blow people's minds right up front.

Cut the **jokes**

If you're wondering if your jokes are funny, they aren't. Few people are funny enough to pull off jokes in a demo. The downside of a failed joke—a loss of confidence and momentum—is much greater than the upside of a successful one.

Do it **alone**

A demo god works alone. You may think it's powerful if the two co-founders do the demo together, and you may think it will show the world how they're getting along so well. But it's hard enough for one person to do a demo. Trying to get two people to do an interactive demo is four times harder. If you want a duet, go to a karaoke bar.

Cut the **jargon**

The ability to speak simply and succinctly is the best way to go. You may have the world's greatest enterprise software product, but the consumer-device partner of your dream venture capital firm is in the audience. If she can't understand your demo, she's not going to tell her counterparts about it back in the office. What the audiences sees, not hears, should do the impressing.

Don't take any **questions until the end**

At Demo there's no time for questions—thankfully. But in all cases, you should always take questions at the end because you never know what people will ask you—their questions could take you down a rat hole so deep that you'll never come back up.

End with an **exclamation point**

Start on a high. Once you've blown their minds, then you work backwards and show them the "how." Not only is the "what" fantastic, but the "how" then makes it possible for mere mortals to understand that they can do it, too. Then end on a high. This was Steve Jobs's keynote trick; he always had **"one more thing"** in his bag of tricks.

I've given this advice to hundreds of startups, and hundreds of thousands of people have read it online, but most demos still suck. This is because people think this advice applies to the great unwashed masses who don't have a curve-jumping, paradigm-shifting, patent-pending product like they do and are not gifted presenters like they are. You may believe you're one of them. You're wrong. You are the intended audience, and you're going to learn the hard way.