How to Sell your Boss

Please print this out, we know from testing that people read 25% faster on paper then on a screen so hit file/print.

This will take about 15 minutes to read but it will give you valuable tools. The task of selling .NET may seem daunting but we have included all the real world tools you will need to succeed. For example, we didn’t email the marketing dept and say: “come up with a PowerPoint demo for .NET”. We went to a geek who had successfully built a PowerPoint show that convinced the bosses of his multi billion dollar company to move ahead with it. Everything we offer you comes from the streets. We worked hard to provide this for you because we think you will find it helpful and because part of our mission statement is to help the developer community. We think something like this is long overdue.

What you will learn here can have a major impact on your career. If anything is confusing or needs explanation, PLEASE feel free to call me/us directly for help. Making a move like this is not like selling lemonade, it requires preparation, patience, learning and some skill. However it could be the most successful career decision you propose and we will help you with the tools you’ll need to succeed. Many of your peers have found .NET to be a great resource.

The thought of becoming a sales weasel (like me) may be downright offensive. Not to worry, you won’t. However we will share techniques that you’ll find comfortable which will help sell your boss on .NET and training. You have learned scores of dev tools to make life easier, think of this as one more tool. We’ve organized this information so you can get either a high level, or deeper “more scientific” view. There is powerful stuff here but you won’t appreciate its power until you try it out. Simply put, it works so go for it. Selling your boss on .NET while helping the company (and your career) will make your job easier, enhance your position in the company, and improve your position with your peers. Besides, they may provide a pizza party in your honor when the technology succeeds (and we will help you make sure it succeeds). For the sake of the following analogy we use masculine pronouns.

Sales of this type can be broken down into several simple steps.
  1. Development of basic product knowledge
  2. Discovery of need(s) within the organization
  3. Identify solution and outline path to success
  4. Explain benefits of solution and organize consensus
  5. Ask for close and begin implementation.
These steps are pretty intuitive and may not be new. Anyone can learn these 5 steps. What follows will detail what you will use to deal put these into practice and face any challenges that come up.

**First** - approach selling your boss like dating. Don’t go for a home run on the first try unless you are absolutely sure that you have a willing (and able) partner. Don’t feel that you are being sneaky by following these techniques, it is all straightforward. This is not a blind date, you will want to discover as much as possible before moving. Your job is to present your goals wisely, with integrity and not to push it too fast. If you push too fast or don’t build the groundwork for success you will get the wrong decision.

Make lots of eye contact with your listener(s). This will help engage their attention and demonstrate your confidence but even more importantly, if you watch their eyes you will get many clues about your progress. If their eyes start to glaze over, you are losing them. If it happens, break things up. Stop for a second and check for understanding with statements that don’t allow a yes or no answer. Make them reflect. i.e., “What do you think so far?” or “Do you see ways that this can help solve X problem?” Then return to your notes/presentation.

The most successful sales people sell from a place of honesty and integrity (seriously). I am a terrible liar and therefore try to be scrupulously honest. You should too. Your knowledge or lack of it will be obvious, don’t sweat if they stump you with a question, and remember you are looking for training so you can’t know everything. Don’t be afraid to admit when you don’t have an answer. Simply assure them that you will get the answer ASAP, (call us for help).

You will face one of two types of bosses: The **Technical Manager** and the **Non Technical Manager**. The techie boss typically came up from the developer ranks and advanced to management. The non technical type was probably given your department as part of a larger set of responsibilities. He may even know a bit about what you actually do (but not likely).

How you present to each of these bosses will be slightly different. Give the **techie boss** the kind of technical detail he will understand but always summarize each technical point with a common sense conclusion: i.e., “.NET will develop our applications up to 75% faster--- which means that we get the product to market faster with no staff increases”. Do **not** assume he will draw the conclusion you want, **state the obvious benefits**.

**Understand the difference between features and benefits.** A 2.2 gig processor is a **feature**, but “Your graphics programs run blazingly fast” is a **benefit**.
A basic corporate stratagem is that you don’t buy your first delivery truck until you need two. Plan to establish the most compelling case you possibly can. Saying: “It’s cool” isn’t likely to win the day.

With the **non techie boss**, proceed directly to the conclusions about .NET’s benefits and leave out the technical details no matter how enticing they may be. What then are .NET’s benefits? Microsoft’s site has pages of them. We also outline a number on our enclosed PowerPoint presentation. One simple point for you to know is that of the hundreds of developers we have trained, none have rejected .NET in favor of the older technology. You **will** love it so study the benefits well enough to be able to give them off the top of your head.

Btw, never be afraid to sell to a salesman, they are well known to be the easiest people to sell to in the world.

**Building knowledge and the Discovery Process**
Management is more easily convinced by seeing information in print. Use reports to support your statements. Keep an eye out for short case studies and impartial reviews of successful implementations of .NET in other businesses, especially your competitors. Build your credibility by verbally outlining a .NET advantage then a day or so later present the report that backs it up. For example: re: .NET’s acceptance, we know that despite its complexity and the challenging economy, already 41% of developers are using .NET for development projects. ([InfoWorld](#) 9/29). This is a compelling fact. If I had framed it in simple “marketese” such as: “I understand that .NET is now well accepted as a development tool”. This sounds much less convincing then when you footnote it and frame it as a research statistic or place the article on his desk after mentioning its acceptance in a meeting.

We have a number of .NET implementation **success stories** available for download. They’re written by regular developers who attended our VB.NET master class and then successfully created great apps. Share these and other reports with your boss.

Nothing sells like enthusiasm, so pause before every pitch and enter with excitement and a smile. Think back to how you felt when you watched your first program run flawlessly, then approach your boss.

Where possible, focus on learning the competitive advantages that .NET will bring to your business. Points like how fast applications run under .NET are often less impressive then things like empowerment of staff, speed of development, productivity, faster time to market, cost savings, security, improved customer interfaces and availability of data. Discover the Hot Button needs that concern the people in your office. Is it potential staff cuts, access to a remote database, a particular accounting/sales integration, B2B integration, web site functionality?
Be sure to clearly address how .NET can solve these issues; never assume that they will infer the solutions. If you are stuck understanding how .NET can solve a specific hot button/need, feel free to call us.

The non-techie manager probably thinks you can already do the many things that .NET offers. For years software companies have over-promoted product capabilities to the point that management believes that most business software problems have been solved. From the business perspective, it is true. From the technical perspective however, we know that many of these older solutions were often cumbersome at best, and at the worst totally unmanageable. .NET represents a tremendous leap forward in technical functionality but you will need to offer specific example to explain this; try not to get too technical. Consider mentioning examples about prior challenges in security, ASP controls and dev times, deployment costs, remote data access etc. Go back to the examples and success stories you have reviewed. This can be awkward but in the interest of honesty, it should be stated.

**Let’s review.** You have demonstrated/discovered some business needs, you have begun to learn about .NET capabilities, you have presented printed materials about solutions (and determined that it was read and understood). It doesn’t feel like you have consensus yet, or to use the analogy, your date isn’t happy to hear that it is you on the phone. No problem, we’ll give you the tools to move ahead.

**If you want to get into the science of selling – Read on. Otherwise, skip to The End.**

Some people downplay the science of selling but most good sales people have to learn their skills. Developers are not usually natural salesmen so take this time to learn a little selling/people science to help your skillset.

Books about the science of selling contain chapters on How to:
- Establish credibility,
- Outline the benefits,
- Understand and appeal to personality,
- Mirror characteristics and speak the language,
- Ask for the close.

These all have validity. I am assuming that you have credibility because they hired you. You now understand how to outline benefits, but the personality profiling and psychological aspects of selling have a steep learning curve so we’ll only touch on enough points to succeed. If you want more support with this please contact me but the sales approach I will outline allows you to get by without it.
First off, Body Language is a great information source. Be aware of comfortable postures, engaged postures, distancing postures. When you see them “removing” themselves, it is a good time to stop and ask for their opinions. Trust your instincts; humans have millions of years experience understanding body language with a comparatively short time getting verbal clues. When you sense problems, stop your pitch and ask things like: “are you with me, am I not being clear, do you have to be somewhere?”

If .NET is a simple sell for you then you are lucky but most people will get some rejection. If so here is:

**How to deal with NO!**

It is OK to get a “No”, even to get shut down early on but if you do, follow it with a statement like: “I understand your position. In fact to be honest, I am learning about this technology so if I find more information that may help the company, may I pass it along to you?” No intelligent manager can afford to ignore potential cost savings, improved efficiency, improved customer experiences etc. Frame your questions to keep the door open.

A great way to avoid “No” is to use what master salesmen call the “Ben Duffy” approach. It deals with the “no’s” upfront. Of all the sales techniques, I believe you will find this tool effective and comfortable. It is honest, open and addresses technical and emotional issues. This approach is also a little counter-intuitive so you won’t sound like a used car salesman with a pitch.

**Ben** looked at each potential sales challenge and created a list of the top reasons why the customer would **not** buy his product.

In your case it might be:

- It’s not in the budget/can’t afford it.
- We are happy with what we have, why change?
- Can’t afford the time to adopt new technology.
- The last upgrade you recommended blew up.
- If I train you in this new technology, you will leave for a better job.
- Will it require new hardware?
- Our office staff may require new training and they hate that.
- We think Java works better.

Ben believed that when people are being “pitched” they instinctively come up with reasons why NOT to buy the product. If money is an issue for example, throughout your presentation they will continue to think: “This is fine but we can’t afford it”. As long as these barriers are “top of mind”, Ben believed that customers could not hear his pitch. He felt that if he honestly presented the barriers and dealt with them upfront, then he was more likely to have a customer with an open mind.
Prepare yourself to present the problems/barriers at the beginning of your formal pitch. Begin with: “First, let’s all look at the barriers to adopting .NET and .NET training!” Be straightforward and honest. Get them to come up with some barriers, make it interactive.

Before the meeting, be sure to identify the problems from your boss’s point of view, and prepare good reasons why they are not barriers. If you cannot come up with a strong answer or are confronted in the meeting with a tough one, then here is an example of the approach to take: “I expect that you think the cost will be prohibitive, it may well be but for the moment, let’s assume that we can afford it and we will come back to it later.” Use this approach for any big problem. In the cost example above, hopefully once you explain the cost savings and benefits they will see that they cannot afford any other course then .NET. Be sure to return at the end and check for understanding on the postponed barriers or you will lose your credibility. At the least, say: “Would anyone like to review the barriers we noted at the beginning?”

This may sound a little trite but it is a simple tool that is powerful. What it does is allow them to set aside the objection in their own minds and keep a more open mind. This approach also says: “I am concerned about what is best for the company and I am proving it by exposing potential barriers you may not have even considered.” Hopefully they will join into the “discovery of barriers” and become allies. Even if you end up deciding against the training, you come out of it with your credibility enhanced by demonstrating your objectivity. If they decide to move ahead, then they do it knowing all the potential pitfalls and are better prepared for success.

This method will help your boss(s) form the attitude that you are collaborating rather then confronting. As a collaborator he is naturally more open to the benefits of what you are presenting. In fact if you truly engage them they may help you discover new advantages to .Net. If you find them helping you overcome the barriers (and be sure to let them have the chance) then you are in great shape.

Presenting the barriers is likely to be the most difficult part of the sales process. As you make your points be sure to “check for understanding”. Ask questions like:

“Does that answer your concerns about the technology (or whatever)?” “Was that an adequate explanation?” “Are we agreed that this is a viable solution?”

If possible, do not move on until they seem comfortable with the answers (remember to observe body language) but if it is obvious that you are not going to convince them after two tries on a particular issue, do not beat a dead horse. If you are presenting to a group, don’t hold out for universal approval. Simply say: “Ok, I understand your thoughts about X, but for now let’s set it aside, and come back to it later.” If possible set up an ally ahead of time, prime him/her with solutions and barriers and let them lead the consensus.
Don’t be afraid to use your own words to phrase questions like: “Please help me to understand the basis for your resistance to this product.”

**The End**

Once you have dealt with the barriers/objections, (setting aside the ones to revisit) then move on to your PowerPoint or formal presentation, checking for understanding after each point.

- Outline the benefits of .NET
- Review potential cost savings
- Review success stories,
- Review the hot button and general issues it will address.
- Offer potential opportunities .NET can offer going forward.

If you still find resistance just remember that you want a willing date, interested in the same outcome! Before you get to the second date, where you plan to invite her upstairs to see your new computer, you need to have built a reasonable level of understanding. Be sure that you demonstrated your integrity on the first date and if she agrees to come, then you must scrupulously honor her by just showing her the computer. If she cannot yet trust you, you have not done a proper job demonstrating your integrity OR, you may simply be moving too fast. Checking for understanding will tell you what you need to do to proceed smoothly.

Once you have established the need for change, and have some consensus about .NET, you need to go for the close to get your training.

Here are a couple of points you may wish to make.

One of the things that Microsoft does not make obvious is that .NET represents a quantum technology leap that requires training to take advantage of its improvements. If Microsoft told everyone that before you can take advantage of .NET you must get trained, it would be a much tougher sell.

I have spoken with many of the .NET Guru’s (the speakers and authors) and they have all had .NET training. .NET is complex, but once you learn it and you will, it is incredibly powerful. Learning .NET represents a challenge but view it as a hurdle and like any hurdle, once you clear it you will be dashing to the finish while the followers struggle to climb it. It REALLY is an opportunity to differentiate you from the competition. Time and again we have seen that the more you use .NET the more empowered your business will become.

To help you with your presentation, we provide a PowerPoint presentation that was successfully used to convince a multi billion dollar corporation to adopt .NET. Plan to edit it to make it suitable for your use. We did pull out some “hot buttons” that were specific to their needs but otherwise it is intact. You will need
to be reasonably knowledgeable about the topics. Again CALL us with questions. In addition to the slide show we offer several more FREE tools you can share with your boss:

- **Selling .NET** is a PowerPoint slide show that a developer used to convince a multi billion dollar company to adopt .NET.

- **Selling Training** is a 3 slide study from that the American Society of Training and Development that compares the bottom lines of companies that support training with ones that don’t. The study makes dollar suggestions for training budgets based upon these successful companies.

- Our zip file of “Success Stories” from developers we trained who went back to their companies to create great apps. (picture yourself in the next batch of success stories!).

- Our humorous 5 minute video “What is .NET” on www.franklins.net.

- Testimonials and unsolicited comments about Franklins Net along with our customer list (look for your competitors on the list).

- .NET Rocks! - Listen to: the “Success Stories” show, the Pat Hynds show for a review of Java vs. .NET, Dan Appelman’s show moving to .NET, Michelle Leroux-Bustamente discusses Java Vs. .NET from personal experience. Scott Stansfield discusses the Pet Shop Java benchmark application and how .NET outperformed Java. Nearly all of the shows will have some information about successful implementations. Unless your boss is a techie though be careful what shows you recommend.

- The MS and MSDN sites have reams of case studies and potent .NET benefit statements for reference. We tend to think that “independent” studies like ours have more impact but you may feel otherwise.
  - .NET Developer Related Information [http://www.gotdotnet.com](http://www.gotdotnet.com)

**Final Review:** Don’t be afraid to prepare a professional presentation but don’t flood them with info on the first date. You need to do some discovery about their barriers first. A good presentation at the right time will demonstrate your commitment. Also remember to check for understanding and give your boss a summary sheet that focuses on benefits, if he needs to pitch someone else. Come from a place of integrity, with your company’s best interests in mind, believe in the technology and know that if we train you then we will be behind you during implementation. Finally once all the pieces are in place you should ask for the close. A sample close might be: “If we agree that .NET is the right direction for us, can I schedule some Master Class training with Franklins Net?” If
you get “slapped” at this point in your pitch: drop back, check for understanding, examine the barriers and try again. If you don’t get the close you want, try to leave the door open for re-examination.

A final statement just before you ask for the “the close” might use the following statement in your own words.

**We are convinced that .NET’s advantages are too compelling to ignore and it is only a matter of time before (your company) adopts it. If you accept the fact that it reduces costs and development times while extending functionality then what is the value in waiting any longer?**