

SJODIN COMMUNICATIONS

# The State of Sales Presentations

Research Study Results

Phase Two

An exploration of the common mistakes professionals make  
when presenting via video conferencing platforms



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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- 3** Introduction  
The State of Sales Presentations 2022
- 5** Key Findings and Observations
- 8** Methodology
- 9** About the Researchers
- 10** How We Help Sales  
Professionals and Organizations
- 11** Copyright and Usage

# The State of Sales Presentations 2022

## Phase Two Study on the Common Mistakes Professionals Make When Presenting Via Video Conferencing Platforms

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Exploring what makes a winning presentation is a passion and a mandate for Sjodin Communications as we consult with sales organizations on how to expand their reach while adapting to the ever-changing marketplace.

This national study builds on our previous work in the area of sales presentations and is the second installment of a three-part research project to further examine the art and science of crafting an effective message to move a transaction forward. Our new findings are already helping people avoid critical presentation pitfalls and improve their results. We are pleased to present this important research for your review.

*Despite advancements in video conferencing, selling and presenting is still a human contact sport. Human-to-human communication is vitally important, and it remains the best way to persuade a person to move forward or take action.*

### **Problem Statement**

**Q:** *Does making a sales presentation mistake via a video conferencing platform impact the outcome or the ability to move a transaction forward?*

**A:** *Our research says yes.*

### **About Phase One of the Study**

*The first phase of the study, released on March 4, 2020, examined the habits of more than 2,500 sales professionals whose livelihoods depend on their ability to build and deliver persuasive presentations. This research helped clarify the different types of presentation mistakes made and their relevance in today's professional sales environment. The findings of this report provide empirical support for twelve common presentation mistakes professionals make and their implications for buyers and sellers. The findings reflect an entirely pre-pandemic work environment.*

# PHASE TWO STUDY OBJECTIVES

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Leaning into the Phase One data, we observed that video conferencing platforms were emerging as the dominant presentation tool, and we could begin to see additional data that deserved exploration. We designed a second phase of the study, and the objective was to gain a greater understanding of the impact of the most common presentation mistakes made within a predominantly virtual work environment. This installment also looks at comparisons between the Phase One and Phase Two results.

## WHAT MAKES THIS RESEARCH UNIQUE?

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### **Participants**

The research survey solely targeted business professionals whose livelihoods depend on their ability to build and deliver persuasive presentations, whether they promote a product, service, or cause.

### **Transparency and Narrow Focus**

The entirety of the data on sales presentation mistakes was self-reported by sales professionals. The survey questioned participants about the practice of delivering and observing sales presentations.

### **Timing**

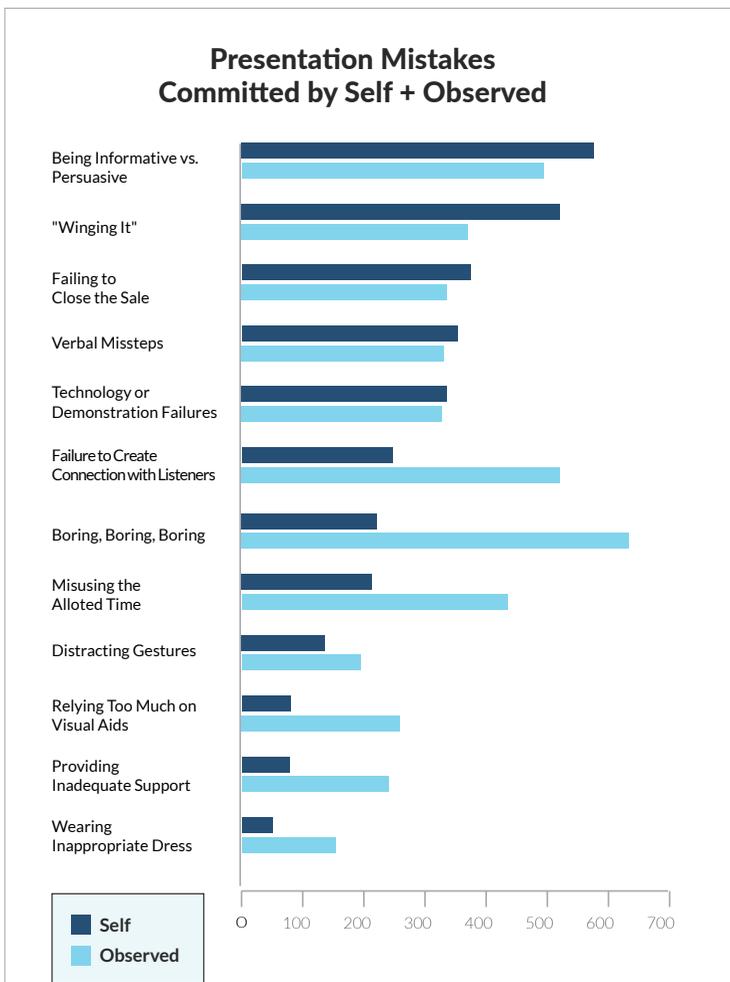
The coronavirus pandemic dramatically changed how sales professionals work, and the necessary adjustments changed the frequency and importance of virtual presentations. The study, which spans the period from June 2020 to April 2022, offers unique insights into adjustments made during the coronavirus pandemic. Over this period of almost two years, Sjodin Communications held persuasive presentation skills workshops virtually and collected data from sales professionals working in a predominantly virtual environment. These findings provide groundbreaking insights into the effectiveness of presentations by professionals in a virtual work environment.



# KEY FINDINGS

## Self-Reported Presentation Mistakes

A total of 1,038 individuals completed the survey. Participants were asked to self-report which of the twelve presentation mistakes they recalled making virtually over the last six months. Participants were allowed to select as many or few as they had experienced. How often participants self-reported committing each of the Presentation Mistakes is as follows:



## Frequency Report

Mistake	Self	Observed
Being Informative vs. Persuasive	577	493
"Winging It"	512	374
Failing to Close the Sale	382	337
Verbal Missteps	353	340
Technology or Demonstration Failures	339	331
Failure to Create Connection with Listeners	243	517
Boring, Boring, Boring	215	632
Misusing the Allotted Time	206	425
Distracting Gestures	128	198
Relying Too Much on Visual Aids	89	261
Providing Inadequate Support	87	230
Wearing Inappropriate Dress	46	151

- Sales professionals continued to make all twelve mistakes in a virtual work environment, using video conferencing platforms—regardless of their gender, generation, or whether they were selling a product, service, or cause.

- 99.9% of participants self-reported making at least one presentation mistake, and on average, participants reported making three presentation mistakes over the past six months.

- One participant reported making zero mistakes.

- The top three presentation mistakes, ranked by frequency, are:

1. Being Informative versus Persuasive
2. "Winging It"
3. Failing to Close the Sale

**NOTE:** No change in the top three most common sales presentation mistakes that participants self-reported making in a virtual work environment when compared to an in-person work environment.

- The rankings of the mistakes: Verbal Missteps (4th), Technology or Demonstration Failures (5th), and Failure to Create Connection with Listeners (6th) were higher in reported frequency in virtual/video conference presentations (Phase Two) when compared with in-person (Phase One).

**NOTE:** There might be a psychological explanation, known as the third-person effect, underlying the result that participants reported themselves as being overly informative but others as boring.

- 78% of participants reported feeling that making a presentation mistake has, or probably has, impacted moving a transaction forward or achieving their goal.

- 77.2% of study participants reported that seeing someone make a presentation mistake impacts their wanting to work with *that person*.

- 75.7% of study participants reported that seeing someone make a presentation mistake impacts their decision to buy or move forward with *that company*.

**NOTE:** 51% of the study participants reported receiving little to no presentation skills training over the course of their careers.



# OTHER OBSERVATIONS

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- Verbal missteps were more frequently identified by listeners in Phase Two—when the presenter was on a video platform.
- Participants shared that they were more lenient of presentation mistakes in a virtual work environment early in the pandemic lockdown but became less forgiving as video conferencing platforms become more widely adopted over time.
- Participants consistently expressed challenges with the close/the ask when presenting via a video platform.
- Witnessing Technology or Demonstration Failures was found to have the single most significant impact on whether a person wants to work with the presenter, to buy, or move forward with the company.
- Wearing Inappropriate Dress was often noted as “presenter dressed too casually/informal.”



# WHAT'S NEXT?

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While the technology behind video conferencing has certainly existed for a while now, its use has become universally adopted—and more importantly, expected—in private homes, small businesses, large corporations, associations, and government agencies. As a result, the art of presenting, the science of selling and the modern tools of technology are merging, and we as sales professionals must face it head on and figure out how to best approach opportunities in the future.

Whether speaking one-on-one, to a small group or a larger audience, selling and presenting is still about human interaction, relationships, and understanding. The catch is trying to deliver your message in the most clear, concise, and compelling manner while connecting with your listeners through a video platform.

Simple? Yes. Easy? No.

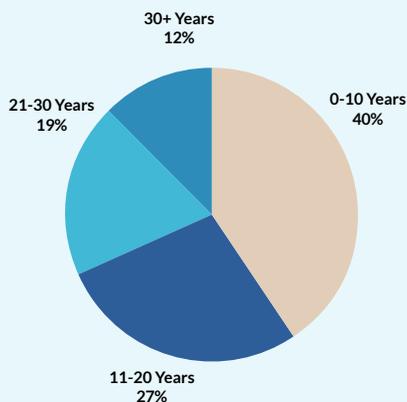
The good news is it can be done well. And with this research, we are simply cutting to the chase and pinpointing the most glaring problems. Our findings, which are rooted in the self-identified mistakes of active business and sales professionals who present, as well as the observations of others, can help all professionals up their game.

Phase Three of the research study is now in underway and will provide empirical clarification on business and sales presentations in a post-pandemic world. Additionally, the third report will examine the presentation mistakes' overall prevalence and impact across in-person, virtual, and hybrid settings. Finally, the longitudinal approach of this three-part study will provide greater understanding of how sales professionals are adapting to a continually changing work environment.

# ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

## Sales Experience

The majority of participants (59%) had over 10+ years of sales experience, with the sales breakdown as follows:



## Sales Classifications

The study's participating sales organizations were classified based on whether the organization sold a product, service, or cause.

- Product (208, 20%)**
- Service (803, 77%)**
- Cause (27, 3%)**

## Gender

Participants identify their gender as follows:

- Female (590, 57.3%)**
- Male (434, 42.2%)**
- Transgender (1, .1%)**
- Other (1, .1%)**
- Preferred not to respond (12)**

# METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the survey was to examine the extent to which sales professionals commit the Twelve Presentation Mistakes. The final survey was created and implemented using SurveyMonkey. Participants were recruited using non-random convenience sampling. A survey was included as part of live, virtual training workshops and seminars for businesses and sales organizations hosting a Sjodin Communications program between June 2020-April 2022. When the company administrators were willing to share the link with their employees via e-mail, the SurveyMonkey link was sent before, during and/or after the Sjodin Communications virtual lecture. Otherwise, the survey link was provided via QR codes, and Bitly links were made available to audiences at the lecture's conclusion. During this time frame, twenty companies hosted events with Sjodin Communications for a total of twenty-three workshops and seminars; these companies were provided detailed reports of survey results for their employees, teams, and associates. A total of 1,038 participants completed the survey. The data in this report reflect the self-reported responses of those participants. Given the large, non-random sample, statistical interpretations required the confidence level for determined significance to be 99% confident in order to infer a meaningful relationship. All findings reflect that level of confidence.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Both quantitative and qualitative survey results were analyzed by San Diego State University researchers for this study. Quantitative results were analyzed using appropriate statistical tests, as reported above. The data analyst for the Phase Two project was Giuliano McDonald, while he was a graduate student in the School of Communication at San Diego State University.

# ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

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We are dedicated to helping individuals and organizations communicate more effectively through the development of persuasive presentation skills.



## TERRI SJODIN

Principal + Founder of Sjodin Communications.

Terri Sjodin is the Principal and Founder of Sjodin Communications. She is an award-winning speaker who has specialized in helping people deliver more effective presentations for over 30 years. She is the author of five books, including *New Sales Speak*, *Scrappy* and the New York Times Best Seller, *Small Message, Big Impact*. Terri earned her bachelor's degree in Speech Communication from San Diego State University.



## HEATHER E. CANARY

Professor + PhD, Arizona State University.

Dr. Heather Canary is a professor and director of the San Diego State University School of Communication. Prior to this role, she served on the faculties at Arizona State University and the University of Utah. She earned her PhD from Arizona State University. (Research Project: Phases One, Two, and Three)



## RACHAEL A. RECORD

Professor at SDSU + PhD, University of Kentucky.

Dr. Rachael Record is an Associate Professor in the School of Communication at San Diego State University. She has a bachelor's degree in Communication from SUNY, University at Buffalo and her master's degree and PhD in Communication from the University of Kentucky. (Research Project: Phase One)



## GIULIANO I. MCDONALD

Lecturer at the University of Miami + Master's Degree From SDSU.

Giuliano McDonald is a current doctoral student and lecturer in the School of Communication at the University of Miami. He has a bachelor's degree in Communication from Chapman University and a master's degree from San Diego State University. (Research Project: Phases Two, and Three)

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# HOW WE HELP SALES PROFESSIONALS + ORGANIZATIONS

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## About Sjodin Communications

Founded in 1990, Sjodin Communications is a public speaking, sales training and consulting firm, based in Newport Beach, California. Our mission is to provide clients with training and development programs that help them to deliver more polished, creative, and persuasive presentations that generate results.

## Interested in booking Terri to speak at an upcoming event?

### Programs

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- ▶ Keynotes & Breakout Sessions
- ▶ Live Virtual Events and Webinars
- ▶ Half-Day Seminars
- ▶ Small Group Workshops
- ▶ Train-the-Facilitator Program & Course Content (Coming soon)

### Products

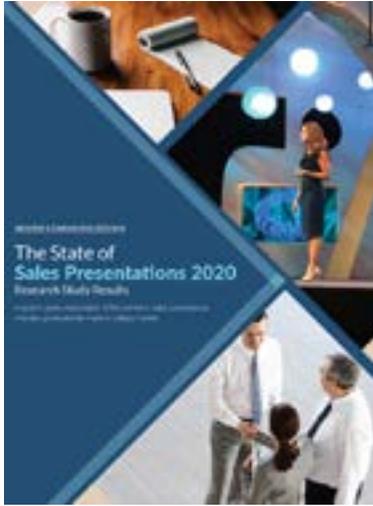
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- ▶ Books
- ▶ Workbooks & Study Guides
- ▶ Video Courses

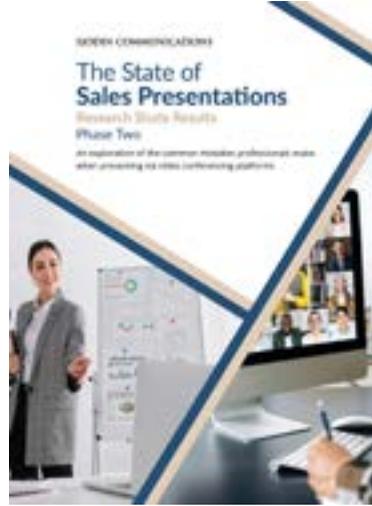
We are here to help! Terri and the entire Sjodin Communications team welcome the opportunity to learn more about the meeting or event you are planning.

All programs can be customized to meet the needs of your organization's audience size, time requirements, schedule, and level of experience.

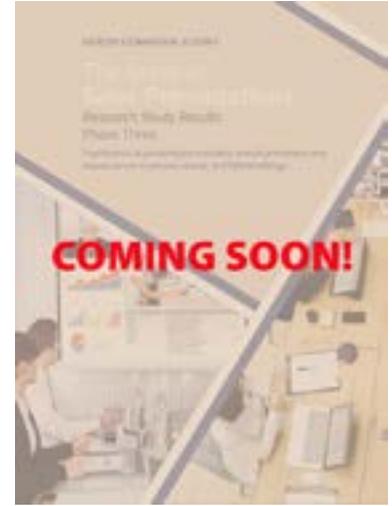
We invite you to review the program descriptions, on our website at [www.sjodincommunications.com](http://www.sjodincommunications.com) or call us directly at (949) 723-3132.



Phase One:  
Now Available



Phase Two:  
Now Available



Phase Three:  
Coming Soon 2023

## COPYRIGHT AND USAGE

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Printed in the United States of America.



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