Quick Answer: How to Choose the Right Interactive Demo Technology

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Initiatives: Demand Generation

> The interactive demonstration application space is growing and evolving quickly, with a variety of technical approaches and numerous use cases. As prospective buyers struggle to select the right vendor, this research will help product marketers select the right demo technology for their use cases.

Quick Answer

How can I determine the right interactive demo technology for my needs?

- Recognize that various interactive demonstration types address different audience needs and/or different points within a buying process.

- Pinpoint the most critical use case that represents the most value for your organization in driving initial consideration.

- Solve for a single critical use case first, but consider vendors that can also address other important use cases.

More Detail

Interactive demonstration applications — also known as demo automation applications — represent an exciting new application category for simplifying and scaling the provision of self-service or sales-driven product experiences to prospective software customers through website visits or campaigns. These applications also appeal to sales teams — SDRs, presales and account executives — because they are much easier to create and modify than product instances in demonstrations.

Several methods are used by interactive demonstration application vendors to create a variety of product experiences. But the rapid growth in the number of vendors in the space, along with the varied nature of demo creation methods they use, has made it difficult for buyers to select vendors appropriate to their needs.

The 2023 Gartner TSP Interactive Demos Survey provided a snapshot of user/buyer awareness of the providers in this space. When technology and service providers (TSPs) were asked to list the top three vendors they considered for interactive demonstration applications, respondents identified a total of 19 vendors, indicating a quickly evolving but fragmented and potentially confusing market.

- Arcade

- Consensus

- Demoboost

- Demostack

- Hippo Video

- journy.io

- Lancey

- Loom

- Navattic

- Walnut

- Reprise

- Saleo

- Snackwyze

- Storylane

- Tango Technology

- TechSmith (Camtasia)

- Tourial

- Vidyard

- Vivun

Respondents also appeared to have different views on how "interactive demonstration" is defined or evaluated, as they chose a wider variety of provider types than those we consider as "interactive demonstration" providers (e.g., pure video, documentation and product-led revenue). You can find Gartner's market definition and representative vendors in the Market Guide for Interactive Demonstration Applications and Gartner Peer Insights for Interactive Demonstration Applications (for more information on Gartner Peer Insights, see About Gartner Peer Insights section).

The following actions will help technology marketers match the appropriate providers to their needs.

Recognize That Various Interactive Demonstration Types Address Different Audience Needs and/or Different Points Within a Buying Process

The aim of a demonstration is to tell a story about your product and offer proof that it can provide the value promised in your messaging. Depending upon the product itself and its intended buying audience, the type of demonstration may vary. For example, business buyers may want to understand basic capabilities and whether your product can deliver their desired outcomes early in a buying process. But more technical buyers or users may wish to see how your product will accomplish specific tasks or activities in use-case contexts.

Further, demos typically take place at different and multiple points in a buying process: in the early stages, high-level storytelling and differentiation through a product tour embedded on a website might be enough. Later in the process, or to create advocacy among users, a real-time demo by a sales executive using synthetic data might be necessary.

Because various interactive demonstration applications employ different methods of demo creation, and sometimes more than one method per vendor or product, you should be careful to match your requirements with the types of demos that will provide your intended audience(s) with the best product experience at the right points in their buying processes.

Pinpoint the Use Case That Represents the Most Value for Your Organization in Driving Initial Consideration

As not all products support the full variety of customer use cases, it's important to determine the major opportunity and/or source of your primary challenges with creating and delivering demos to drive initial consideration and selection. The vast majority of use cases are one of two types:

- **Marketing-oriented**: focused on providing demos or tours on websites, through campaigns for demand generation, and (like other forms of content) as part of initial engagement and MQL-driving activities.

- **Sales-oriented**: focused on saving presale resources and sales engineers' time and effort for (typically) live or synchronous demos with prospective buyers.

There are certainly other important use cases — such as product management and early product/feature showcasing, customer success and user guidance, channel enablement, and sales enablement — but as we noted in Don't Miss the Growing Momentum of Interactive Demonstration Applications, the two listed above are dominant.

Fortunately, there's a clear ROI with each use case, but decisions may be driven by those holding the budget, which function moves first, or whether someone has prior experience with the technology. Product marketers, who may manage the creation of sales demos in some organizations, will typically be most sensitive and attached to marketing-oriented needs. Benefits include higher MQL volume, a degree of self-qualification by visitors that step through tours, and shortened sales cycles by avoiding emails to schedule demonstrations. That said, if and when the technology catches on (and Gartner's anecdotal data says that it often does), other functions will want to use it to support other demo types and use cases.

Solve for the Single Critical Use Case First, but Consider Vendors That Can Also Address Other Important Use Cases

As with any platform or product supporting multiple use cases, the most obvious or critical pain point is the one for which a solution is typically purchased. While supporting other use cases adds flexibility, lack of need to learn about other products and potential vendor leverage, starting with one use case and then expanding makes sense, particularly in the current state of economic uncertainty. However, if and when other use cases become targets for implementation, the initial vendor selected should be able to address them. This "future-proofing" is important to consider given our expectation (and experience among clients) of the ability of a product to spread across functions.

In some cases, this may not be necessary given the low switching costs and low price points of some vendors (for example, Arcade's middle "growth" tier is $42.50 per user per month; Navattic's platform price is $1,000 per month, and Storylane's growth tier is $500 per month for five users). Vendors that are front-end cloning only (such as HowdyGo or Walnut) can be applicable across use cases assuming they possess certain enabling capabilities. However, there are several vendors that provide multiple creation technologies and thus may possess broader price and use-case flexibility, such as Consensus, Demostack, Guideflow, Reprise and Storylane (see Table 1).

We anticipate this trend of multiple technology approaches serving multiple use cases will continue among the vendors. This is also likely a key for such vendors to win larger, more strategic deals.

Table 1: Interactive Demonstration Creation Methods and Related Vendors

(Enlarged table in Appendix)

Demo Creation Base Method	Description	Use Case(s)	Vendors That Offer This Method
Front-End Cloning	Captures the front-end code and scripts and, in some cases, back-end calls of the application to create a synthetic version of the product (in some instances, similar to a sandbox)	■ Live prospect demos ■ Demo complex products and integrations ■ Demand generation ■ Website embed	■ Demostack ■ Guideflow ■ HowdyGo ■ Lancey Software ■ Navattic ■ Reprise ■ Storylane ■ Vivun ■ Walnut
Interactive Video	Uses recorded videos to create an interactive path users can take through a product tour or demonstration	■ Demand generation ■ Website embed	■ Consensus ■ ScreenSpace
Live Product With Simulated Data	Intercepts calls to the back end of the product to allow custom demos using synthetic data to be created and shared	■ Live prospect demos ■ Demo complex products and integrations	■ Demostack ■ Reprise ■ Saleo
Screen Capture	Uses screen capture (typically via a Google Chrome extension) to design a custom demo narrative	■ Demand generation ■ Website embed	■ Arcade ■ Consensus ■ Demoboost ■ DemoEasel ■ Demostack ■ Guideflow ■ Reprise ■ Saleo ■ Snackwyze ■ Storylane ■ StoryScale ■ Supademo ■ Tourial
Other Methods and Related Use Cases	Demos, videos and other content provided through a custom portal tailored by AI-driven indexing and search	Sales	Omedym
	Sandboxes typically directed at customer education	Customer Education	Instruqt
	Synthetic data over production systems meant for user education (customer education)	Customer Education	ReachSuite
	Category-specific product sandboxes made available by sellers or via website for comparative evaluations	Marketing and Sales	TestBox

Note: Demand generation and website embed are examples of marketing use cases; live prospect demos, demo complex products and integrations are examples of sales use cases.

Source: Gartner

In addition to use cases and creation methods, there are numerous other criteria to consider and evaluate with each vendor. Figure 1 notes criteria within products and beyond capture methods that were most important to respondents of our survey. The "orange" color items are capabilities with the highest response rate in each category. While speed and ease of demo creation are paramount, integrations are critical for marketing and (increasingly) sales automation, but an "unsung hero" is analytics.

Interactive demonstration applications allow demos to not only be used as content but also collect data from their use by prospective users and buyers. The intent signals identified — ranging from which demos or product tours have been used, to which screens or paths were taken, to which people in an account they were shared with — are of high value to marketers and sellers. Further, demo usage by sellers can indicate lead or opportunity progress as well as seller and pipeline activity, which are important indicators for sales management.

Figure 1: Decision Criteria for Interactive Demonstration Application

Decision Criteria for Interactive Demonstration Application

Capture/Creation Method	• Ability to create an interactive demo using screen captures (52%) • Ability to create an interactive video or demo using video (32%) • Ability to create an interactive click-through demo via "cloning" (25%) • Fidelity of the resulting demonstration relative to the actual product (18%)
Demo Customization and Editing	• Speed and ease of demo creation and customization (82%) • Team creation and management capabilities (16%)
Integrations	• Integrations with other applications (e.g., sales engagement, marketing automation) (34%) • Integrations with customer relationship management (CRM) (25%)
Demo Experience/ Use-Case Support	• Demos can be recorded and then embedded or distributed and run asynchronously from the creator (41%) • Demos are run synchronously between the creator and prospects (viewers) (14%) • Vendor- or product-supported asynchronous and synchronous usage (5%)
Analytics	• Analytics available, resulting from distribution and use of the demos (61%)
Other Decision Criteria	• Price and pricing method of product (36%) • Stability of the vendor (customers, financial status, investment, etc.) (18%)

n = 44; technology service leaders familiar with, considering or implemented interactive demonstration applications, excluding "Not Sure"

Q: Next, imagine you are about to make a decision or have decided to use interactive, or automated, demonstration product(s). What would be your top five decision criteria?

Source: 2023 Gartner TSP Interactive Demos Survey

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Product marketers and their colleagues in other functions should note that this market is evolving extremely quickly. Most vendors are less than three years old, and the products are evolving rapidly, with new feature announcements coming regularly from most vendors. For the most part, however, particularly for the lower priced offerings, there's very little risk involved in an initial decision and some vendors even offer freemium pricing in product-led growth (PLG) go-to-market models to incentivize usage. This should encourage prospective users and buyers to try the technology immediately.

Evidence

2023 Gartner TSP Interactive Demos Survey. This survey was conducted online from 28 February through 20 March 2023 to understand the prevalence of interactive demonstration technology usage among TSP leaders and how they are deciding on products/vendors. In total, 45 technology leaders who are familiar with, are considering or have implemented interactive demonstration applications participated. Twenty were members of Gartner's TSP Research Circle, a Gartner-managed panel, and 25 participated via an external survey link shared via social channels and analyst contacts. Research Circle participants were from North America (n = 8), EMEA (n = 10) and Asia/Pacific (n = 2). Disclaimer: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

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