



The Presales Guide to Running a Killer SKO in 2025



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Sales Kickoffs (SKOs) are all about empowering sales. While presales teams haven't always held a starring role in the past, they can and should use SKOs as an opportunity to reframe their role as strategic experts.

Demos are at the center of this problem. Too often, presales teams waste precious resources attending demos for early-stage, unqualified opportunities. They build custom demo environments that never get used again. And they spend countless hours cleaning and maintaining expensive demo tenants. Meanwhile, sellers don't have the tools to run their own demos.

SKO is the ideal time to reset this dynamic, and a "demo program" is the best way for presales to arm sellers for success. A demo program gives sales a library of demo environments that are reliable and repeatable. Presales should take advantage of SKO — a time when sellers are the hungriest for new assets and the most likely to adopt them — to roll out these demo environments. With these new demos in hand, sellers will be eager to run their own meetings and free up presales for higher-value work.

In this eBook, we'll give you the tools and session templates to implement a demo program any seller in the organization can use. This proactive demo strategy can not only save solution engineers (SEs) time on demo building and maintenance — but also serve as a valuable sales enablement tool.

Companies that set themselves up for success with a demo program can train and empower account executives (AEs) to run demos throughout the early stages of the funnel, letting presales focus where they're needed most — custom solutions, proofs-of-concept (PoCs) and late-stage, high-value opportunities.

Let's take a deeper look at demo programs, with practical tips on how to implement one at your own 2025 SKO.

Putting Presales on Center Stage with a Demo Program

Maybe your presales team's role today is that of a supporting character. You're brought into far too many early calls with prospects, or constantly cleaning and maintaining your demo environment. If you feel like you're on this treadmill, you're not alone. According to the [Presales Landscape Report](#), typical SEs spend 21 days per year on demo environment cleanup alone! Not to mention, for 23% of SEs, more than half of their demos are unqualified.

A demo program gives your team the opportunity to plan more strategically for your team's 2025 demo needs. By preparing a library of demos and custom datasets in advance, you can equip your sales and marketing team with assets that meet buyer demands throughout the sales cycle. That might include:

- Guided product tours for top-of-funnel prospects who want to self-serve
- Live demos for all of your buyer personas or industry segments
- Sales leave-behinds for enterprise buying committees
- Event and tradeshow demos
- And more.

Why SKO is an ideal time to roll out a demo program

SKO is a perfect time to show sales the power of a demo program. Demo templates and custom datasets can empower AEs to create their own live demos for any prospect — with minimal-to-no presales involvement. Even with a limited set of assets to start, sales will become more self-sufficient. As they start seeing the benefits — faster sales cycles and more closed deals — they'll rely less on presales as an administrative resource.

SKO is the biggest opportunity to instill reps with this confidence. With a demo program, sales will learn to use presales resources strategically for technical prospects and more complex PoCs that require their dedicated expertise.

Setting up your demo program

Start with finding the best demo creation platform for you. Instead of manually creating assets, these tools let you capture your product and turn it into reliable demo environments. They centralize demo development, management, and distribution, allowing presales to create reusable libraries while empowering sales teams to customize demos independently. The right platform also provides governance tools and analytics to refine demos continuously.

Read more: [Which Demo Tech is Right for You? The Complete Buyer's Guide](#)

Once you have a demo platform in place, it's time to get started. Let's break down the next steps.

1. Aligning with your stakeholders

Stakeholder buy-in is crucial to a successful demo program. To ensure alignment, decide who are the key players across presales, sales, product, and marketing teams. Each group benefits from a demo library tailored to their specific needs.

From there, highlight some of the demo program's key benefits:



Enablement:

Equip teams with customizable demo assets to craft tailored product stories.



Efficiency:

Replace one-off demo creation with reusable templates, saving time and resources.



Consistency:

Align messaging across buyer personas, industries, and verticals.



Scalability:

Free up presales for high-value, late-stage opportunities.

Building an impactful demo program involves four key steps

1. **Aligning with stakeholders**
2. **Choosing how you want to create demos**
3. **Organizing demo content**
4. **Establishing governance for continuous improvement**

Stakeholder roles:

- **Owners:** Drive the program vision, manage budgets, and set objectives.
- **Users:** Include power builders (SEs), content reviewers (product marketing), demo presenters (sales), system admins, and deployment teams.
- **Consumers:** External audiences, such as prospects or partners, who interact with the demos.



Strategic planning:

Discuss where and how demos will be used across the buyer journey. Define the core messages and audiences for each demo and establish KPIs. For example, you may want to track how specific demos impact sales win rates or marketing conversions to measure their success.

2. Choose how you want to build demos

Once you determine your key stakeholders' use cases and messages, it's time to start building. There are many different technologies to build demos, but generally speaking, it's best to consider demo software that's purpose-built for live demos as opposed to product tours.

Many teams choose to start by building a simple demo environment for first calls and live demos. A self-contained demo environment that's separate from your production environment can remove some of the risks of demoing your live app (for example, app instability or issues from concurrent users tripping over one another). Find a simple demo flow that introduces prospects to the differentiating value of your product — without falling into the trap of demonstrating every little feature.

From there, you can verticalize this initial template to create demos for different prospect personas, use cases, or industries. You can do this in a few different ways.

- **Data injection:** If your demo platform provides data injection capabilities for your live app or self-contained demo environment, you can create custom datasets to inject directly into your demo template. Data injection will provide realistic, relevant datasets for each prospect — from there, you should only have to make minor edits to text and logos to customize a demo to each prospect.
- **Demo templates:** If you don't have this capability, you can create separate, customizable demo templates for each audience.

2. Organizing demo content

Create a system to structure content, so it's easily accessible and scalable.

Organizing your demo library:

Structure your demo library for the most intuitive navigation.

For example, consider organizing demo and dataset templates by:

- **Demo Type:** Short, single-use-case demos vs. comprehensive product overviews.
- **Buyer Journey Stage:** Align demos to early, middle, and late-stage needs.
- **Vertical or Persona:** Address industry-specific or role-specific challenges.
- **Sales Play:** Support strategic sales motions
- **Product Line:** Showcase key products.

Use folders, tags, or naming conventions that resonate with your team's workflows. For instance, a folder named "Enterprise Buying Committee" might house leave-behind demos for large accounts.

59% of companies have used a demo library for their GTM team, or are considering it. 41% aren't using demo libraries.

Lifecycle management:

For each demo, assign roles for development and review:



Storyboard:

Led by demo owners.



Approval:

Managed by product marketing or sales leadership.



Script and Build:

Handled by SEs and power builders.



Deployment:

Overseen by system admins.

Demo Types

Standard demos

e.g. first call demos

Specialized demos

e.g. by vertical demos

Bespoke demos

e.g. for an opportunity

Organization Tools

Folders

e.g. individual or shared

Tags

e.g. approved/not approved

Naming

e.g. label per feature

Demo Lifecycle

Storyboard

Content approval

Script development

Demo build

Demo approval

Demo deployment

4. Establishing governance for continuous improvement

Without proper governance, even the best demo program can become chaotic. A governance model ensures demos remain relevant, effective, and easy to manage.

Best practices for governance:



Role-Based Access Control

(RBAC): Restrict editing permissions based on roles to maintain content integrity.



Content Updates:

Schedule regular updates (e.g., quarterly) to refresh templates and incorporate feedback.



Analytics:

Use demo performance metrics to guide refinements. For example, track which demos drive the most conversions or yield the best engagement.

Success metrics to track:



Demo Success:

Identify which demos close deals or convert leads.



Engagement Analytics:

Understand how prospects interact with online demos or leave-behinds.



User Performances:

Recognize top demo creators and presenters to encourage program adoption.

Maintenance cycle:



- Define cadence
- Set feedback loops
- Implement improvements

Performance assessment:



Track

- Demo Asset Performance
- User Performance
- Program Performance



Incentivize

- Builders
- Top Demo Users
- Demo Promoters

Only 8% of companies measure the success of their demos with demo analytics.

53% don't measure success at all, while 39% rely on anecdotal feedback from sales.

Using SKO to Elevate Presales' Role as Strategic Partners

After you have your demo program foundation in place, it's time to roll it out at SKO. Introducing a strategic initiative like a demo program can help shift your team away from the reactive "treadmill" approach we talked about earlier. Instead, presales can be seen as an effective partner in developing the right product narratives to reach prospects and close deals.

Here are a few examples of how leading companies have used SKO and similar events as jumping-off points for their enterprise-wide demo program.



Databricks' Field Engineering team piloted their demo software at their annual Field Engineering Bootcamp. All presenters were given the option to demo either their actual product or use a demo environment. Feedback from both presenters and field engineers in the audience was overwhelmingly positive. "[Adoption of the demo environment] took off like wildfire from there," said their head of demo strategy. Explore Databricks' demo library for yourself [here](#).

Make it actionable: Have AEs test-drive your demo templates at SKO to drive adoption in the field.



A Fortune 500 cloud company's solutions consulting staff built a centralized "demo hub" of 300+ demos that sales and presales consultants could easily search through to find the right ones to use in the early stages of sales cycles. The demo hub enabled them to create favorites and access live demos in a single place. Their demo program was so successful that in February 2024, leading up to their SKO, they launched an internal "Share the Love" campaign to highlight the best demos in the field to help win opportunities. They announced the winning demos during SKO as a way to drive even greater adoption and momentum.

Make it actionable: Roll out your initial demo hub at 2025 SKO and keep track of which demos win the most deals. Share a leaderboard of winning demos at 2026 SKO and ask for feedback on which demos are most needed in the field.



Shopify ran an internal roadshow, during which they held a competition where SEs had to discern: "Is this a demo environment or the actual product?" The SEs were fooled – It was a clever way to showcase demos from their demo program, and to foster momentum by shining a light on how close their demo templates were to their real product.

Make it actionable: Make your demo program rollout fun and interactive by trying to see if your sales team can distinguish a demo environment from your live product. Take an interactive poll to see how many of them are right.

Pitch these three SKO sessions to roll out your demo program [Templates]

Now that we've seen how top enterprises have rolled out their demo programs, we've created some SKO session templates you can make your own. Use these templates to pitch presales-led sessions that can both train the team and position your team as a strategic partner to sales

Demo Program Implementation: Empowering Sales Through Efficiency

Imagine a world where every sales rep can confidently deliver a tailored, engaging demo without relying on presales to create it. That's the vision behind our new demo program. During this session, presales will guide the sales team through the mechanics of the program, showing how these demos can accelerate sales cycles and win more deals.

We'll start by introducing the demo program itself, breaking down how it simplifies sales motions by providing ready-to-use assets. These include demo templates and custom datasets designed for specific personas, industries, and stages of the sales cycle. Presales will demonstrate how the demo library works, walking sales reps through how to search for assets, customize demos, and even inject live customer data for a personal touch.

To ensure the session is as hands-on as possible, we'll move beyond theory. Presales will showcase a live demo, demonstrating how seamlessly a dataset can be injected into a self-contained demo environment. Sales reps will have the chance to try it themselves, with presales coaching them through the process. By the end of this session, sales reps won't just understand the value of the demo program; they'll be equipped to use it immediately to speed up deal cycles and deliver personalized experiences to prospects.

Product Deep Dive: Mastering the Tools of the Trade

To truly sell a product, you need to understand its value inside and out. This session will immerse the sales team in the latest updates to our product, arming them with the knowledge they need to engage customers confidently. Presales will begin by showcasing the most critical product features, tying each to a real-world problem it solves for customers. This isn't just a technical overview — it's a storytelling opportunity that highlights how these features create tangible benefits for our prospect personas.

Next, we'll explore what sets the product apart in the market. Presales will dive into the competitive landscape, sharing examples of how our offering outshines competitors. To make this relatable, we'll share success stories that highlight innovative use cases, showing how customers have leveraged our product to achieve their goals.

But the real highlight will be the interactive demo. Presales will deliver a live demonstration of a customer success story, walking sales reps through the features that made a difference and the story arc that tied it all together. Sales reps will then collaborate with presales to brainstorm how they can use similar narratives and templates from the demo library to tailor conversations for their own prospects. By the end, the team will walk away with both the knowledge and the confidence to apply it.

Deal Strategy and Execution: Unlocking Collaboration for Better Outcomes

Great deals are built on strong strategies, and this session is all about honing those skills. Presales will begin by sharing examples from 2024, showcasing what worked — and what didn't — when it came to deal strategy and execution. These real-world examples will highlight the critical role presales plays in crafting successful strategies, from tailoring demos to addressing late-stage objections.

This session will open the floor to the sales team, inviting them to share feedback on their collaboration experiences with presales. This open dialogue will help uncover pain points and spark discussions about mutual solutions. Together, we'll explore how to strengthen the partnership between sales and presales to create a seamless, efficient deal process.

To tie it all together, the session will include a group exercise. Sales reps and presales will work side by side to outline a strategy for a hypothetical prospect. Presales will offer live feedback, suggesting ways to refine the approach and choose the right demo assets to support it. By the end of the session, the team will have a stronger understanding of how to leverage presales expertise, ensuring every deal has the best possible chance of success.

Amplify Presales Value in 2025

Rolling out a demo program in 2025 is one of the most concrete ways presales can make an impact on influencing GTM strategy. By driving the narrative, enabling sales and marketing, and proving success, presales can evolve past the role of transactional resource toward a valued, essential partner for the entire organization.

We hope that you've found this eBook helpful to get you started. If you want even more guidance on how to build a demo program for your organization, Reprise has helped hundreds of customers take a similar approach.

Reach out to us!

Jumpstart your demo program 

