

4 BEST PRACTICES FOR RUNNING POCs AND POVs THAT WIN DEALS

The Proof of Concept (POC) or Proof of Value (POV) is the most critical step in the sales cycle for many B2B technology companies. When done right, your POCs/POVs win deals. When not, they suffer from scope creep, increase deal risk, extend sales cycle durations, reduce customer goodwill, and waste time and effort.

POC vs. POV

While the presales activities for running POCs and POVs are essentially the same, the objectives of a POC vs. a POV are quite different.

PROOF OF CONCEPT (POC): Prove that your solution satisfies your buyer's requirements based on test cases and success criteria.

PROOF OF VALUE (POV): Prove that your solution delivers the value your buyer needs based on use cases and success criteria.

Whichever version you run, your objective is to run it well, keep it in scope, keep it on track, finish on time, and get the Technical Win.

#1 → DESIGN POC/POV EVALUATION PLANS THAT GET TECHNICAL WINS

An Evaluation Plan brings structure to your POC/POV and aligns you and your buyer on the definition of success.

It documents the set of use/test cases (what needs to be shown and tested) and the corresponding success criteria (how do both you and your buyer know that they were shown and tested satisfactorily).

Well-designed Evaluation Plans avoid costly scope creep and keep POCs/POVs on time and on track.

Well-run POCs/POVs win deals.

CREATING AN EVALUATION PLAN

Creating an Evaluation Plan can be challenging:

- Customers may not know what their use cases should be.
- Customers do not always know how to test their use cases.

- Customer are busy with their regular job activities and do not have time to figure out the best way to test your product.

Show your customer that you are experienced and value their time by recommending a list of use cases that will demonstrate how your product solves their business problems.

Your Evaluation Plans should lead customers to test the most valuable features of your product.

If your POC/POV is part of a competitive deal, include special use cases for which you know you will excel and your competitor(s) will struggle. Highlight your key differentiators.

GETTING BUYER BUY-IN

You want explicit buy-in and approval from your buyer on the Evaluation Plan *before* you begin the POC/POV.

They should agree upfront that if you complete the Evaluation Plan with demonstrated success, then you will be the 'vendor of choice' (VOC).

If they do not agree to that upfront, then your Evaluation Plan is not yet complete. Ask what else must be included before they can agree. This is the primary way to avoid scope creep in your POCs/POCs.

A well-designed evaluation plan brings your POC/POV to a logical conclusion as quickly as possible with demonstrated success. Congratulations! This is the very definition of the Technical Win.

EVALUATION PLAN TEMPLATES

Codify your standard steps, tasks, test/uses cases, and success criteria into reusable Evaluation Plan Templates. Create Templates for setting up new

POCs/POVs, closing them down, and everything in between.

Know that your team is being consistent on every POC/POV and following a repeatable process based on your best practices.

#2 → MANAGE POCs/POVs AND RELATED DATA IN A CENTRALIZED WORKSPACE

Centralize all information, data, activities for each POC/POV in a dedicated presales workspace.

This gives everyone instant access to every detail about every POC/POV whenever you need it, whether you need weekly status updates or whether a teammate needs to take over a POC/POV while the lead SE/SC/SA is out on vacation.

Presales workspaces keep everyone organized, on track, and on task on a POC/POV, including the Evaluation Plan, technical attributes and related info, warning signs, highlights, follow-up action items, feature requests/product gaps, and call/meeting notes.

Share your POC/POV data with other teams:

- Keep your sales team informed on POC/POV progress and technical risks.
- Notify your product team about critical product gaps learned during a POC/POV.
- Bring your post-sales team up to speed on everything that was done in a POC/POV.

#3 → INTERACT WITH YOUR BUYERS AND JOINTLY TRACK POC/POV PROGRESS

Share your POC/POV Evaluation Plans with your buyers via digital and interactive collaboration

tools, the best of which are the new purpose-built presales applications that have built-in 'customer portals' for POCs/POVs.

Using digital, interactive technology enables you and your buyer to:

- Jointly and digitally track progress of every step, task, and use/test case in real-time.
- Get automated alerts on issues and 'blockers' (i.e. you or your buyer are stuck on a step or there is a failing use/test case).
- Document the details of your progress with notes and back-and-forth messaging.
- Know if you are making progress or if a POC/POV is stalling out.

At the end of your POC/POV, share a POC/POV summary report of what was done, what was tested/proved, and the results.

#4 → GET REAL-TIME VISIBILITY INTO THE STATUS EVERY POC/POV

Whether your team runs fewer-but-complex POCs/POVs or many-but-simpler POCs/POVs, you need to keep track of all of them, all the time.

Leverage real-time dashboards to monitor the status, progress, and health of your POCs/POVs.

Alert teammates and managers to blockers and warning signs about POC/POV health so you can intervene and course-correct before it is too late.

Report on the information that you have learned during a POC/POV such as the technical details, implementation 'gotchas', and feature requests/product gaps.

Understand your time and effort investment on any given POC/POV and overall across all your POCs/POVs to determine how best to allocate everyone's time and effort.

Discover how to boost POC/POV performance by analyzing your POC/POV activities and technical profiles to see what is working and what is not.

Share POC/POV status and health information with sales leadership and become a valuable contributor to your sales forecasting process.

SUMMARY

When your POCs/POVs are well-designed and well-run using these 4 Best Practices, you prevent scope creep, remove deal risk, reduce sales cycle durations, improve customer goodwill, and eliminate wasted time and effort.

Bottom-line: You win more deals, more quickly.

ABOUT HOMERUN PRESALES

Homerun Presales is the presales workspace that gets you through your day with one place to track, manage, organize, and inform your presales efforts.

High performing presales teams such as CData, Demostack, AppViewX, JupiterOne, Graylog, Ascom, and others use Homerun to:

- Increase in deal win rates (20%)
- Decrease sales cycle durations (15%)
- Avoid wasted time (4-8 hours per sales engineer per week)
- Reduce ramp time for new hires (4 weeks)

Homerun integrates with Salesforce, HubSpot, Consensus, Jira, Slack, Google, Outlook, Okta, and other sales tech stack applications to keep your data and teams in sync.