

Mastering Technical Sales

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White Board Session #1: Drawing The Cloud

Design Your Own Cloud

The cloud is hot! Meteorologists may be the only profession to disagree with that statement. It seems that right now, in 2015, every single hardware, software and services company has their own “cloud play”. Yet – I am amazed at how poorly vendors explain the cloud, and how they differentiate their offerings from their competitors. Once you get past the basic taxonomy of public, private, shared, hybrid etc – how is **your** customer going remember what **your** cloud strategy can do for them, and why it is different?

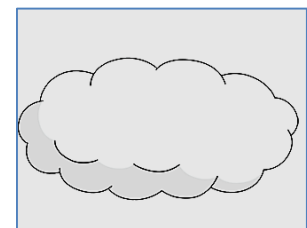
Here are my premises. You need to make your explanation simple enough so that it can be understood (and repeated) by your customer. You need to make your explanation memorable, without masking the complexity of the solution. You need to make your explanation different, so it stands out from everyone else.

PowerPoint won't make it happen! Try a customized White Board instead.

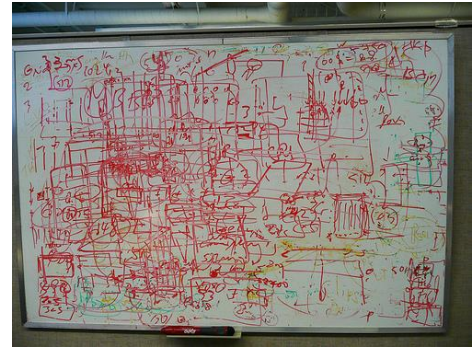
Here are some thoughts and ideas I've gathered over the past 7 years teaching nearly 10,000 SE's the best practices of whiteboarding.

Configuring and Comprehending The Complexity Of The Cloud

1. **Design A Standard Cloud.** The cloud is now one of the basic shapes you need to master when designing and drawing a whiteboard. That means you need to practice it so that you have consistency. As it is the center of attention during your pitch, make it look good. The one-pager attachment shows a simple cloud-drawing scheme.
2. **Give The Cloud Substance.** Make the cloud lines solid, and don't leave any gaps. The more psychologically concrete you make the cloud, the easier it is to grasp.
3. **Make The Cloud Big Enough.** When using the cloud to wrap around words (such as services, storage, compute power, files..) write the words first – then draw the cloud. No more crunched up letters because you didn't leave enough space. The cloud is technically boundless and limitless – so don't pack your “stuff” into a confined space.



4. **Every line has a purpose.** Looking at this in the negative light – don't do this!! Once you are done – could the customer replicate the majority of what you've drawn? If you leave the completed WB behind, could the customer walk through it with someone who wasn't in the room?



5. **No Blah.** If all you do is to draw a few boxes and clouds on the board, and then write words in them – you may as well use PowerPoint. Think about how to support your diagram with some icons, and a mnemonic. Unless you are giving a Cloud 101 pitch (unlikely for an SE) – you need to show some pain around current state, and how to fix it with the cloud in the future. That means a few numbers, creative use of colors.

6. **Get Your Head In The Clouds!** Once you have mastered the basic cloud – start looking for some variants to spice up the board. You can throw in some flat-bottomed clouds (which is what most real-life clouds look like),



have some fun with secure clouds and then add some weather effects such as rain, lightning or the sun shining through.



7. **Don't Forget The People.** When you are finished step back and look at your board. Do you have any people in the diagram? These can be smiley faces, stick figures, organizational charts, more complex people drawings. If you don't then it's a fair bet you have spoken almost 100% about technology, and close to 0% about the customer and the problems their staff have today and what they'd do in the future. It's a useful measure.



Putting It Into Practice

1. Practice! Seriously! SE's associate whiteboards with "ad-hoc" presentations. Don't make your cloud an ad-hoc event – plan it out.
2. What's different? Is there a hook in the drawing? Something that the customer will remember and associate with you and your solution.
3. If they cannot repeat it – then they do not get it. Can your customer replay back to you your main message and evidence points?
4. Make it legible. Take the time to be neat.
5. Video your session. Be critical. Repeat and improve.

My Pitch

I do this for a living. There is a complete best practice for planning and framing the content of a visual sales pitch. Should you need advice and training to create, deliver and train your teams on a memorable, but simple cloud whiteboard – [contact me](#).

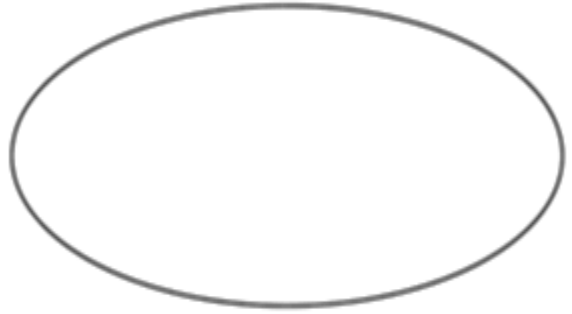
"A drawing is simply a line going for a walk"

Talking Points is a monthly column authored by John Care, Managing Director of Mastering Technical Sales. For more information on this and other Sales Engineering topics visit the website at www.masteringtechnicalsales.com.

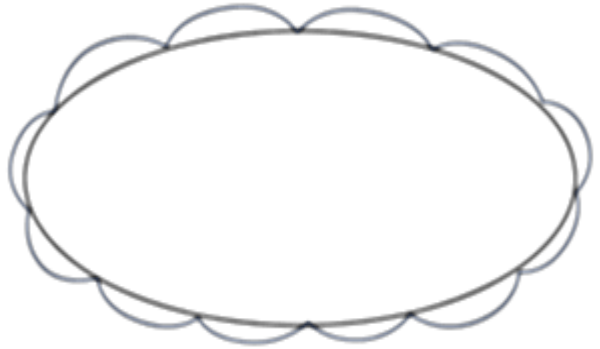
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CLOUD DRAWING 101

1. Draw An Oval. You can actually draw almost shape you want, but since most clouds seem to be oval shaped we can start with that. For poster boards or napkins use pencil to get your start. On a WB, once you've done this a dozen times you won't need the oval any more.



2. Draw The Humps and Bumps. Now draw a number (6-12 based on size) of humps on the oval. Start at a point on the oval and randomly change the size and spacing. Make them similar but not identical. These bumps are what will give the cloud its fluffy-ness. Clouds are not perfect, so yours doesn't have to be a geometric beauty.



3. To make the cloud concrete it needs to have some depth. So pick a few of the humps and randomly extend their lines to different depths inside the original oval you drew. You can stop at this point and you'll have a great cloud. If going for an "arty" cloud that isn't going to have much inside it – you can add a couple of emphasis 3D lines inside as I have.

