Consulting Culture

New Hire Orientation

(Version 2021-03-04)

Agenda

- Who We Are / From the Clients' Eyes

- NTC Consulting Culture and Tenets

- Client Meeting Considerations

- The Art of the Demo

- Where to Learn More

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Who: Network to Code - Our Company

Heritage matters. Clients respect visionaries that anticipate and drive the future.

- Founded in 2014

- Network Automation Solution Provider
  - Next-gen consulting and training company
  - Focus on Network Automation Solutions Design, Development, Enablement and Transformational Services

- Consultative & Vendor Neutral Approach
  - Infrastructure (Cisco, Juniper, Arista, Palo Alto, F5, etc.)
  - Open Source Tools (Ansible, Salt, Python, StackStorm, Puppet, Terraform, Jenkins, etc)
  - IT Operations Software (ServiceNow, Remedy)

enterprise networking

NETWORK TOCODE
Unlocking IT
Innovation through
Automation

THE CHANNEL CO.
CRN
NEXT GEN
25

Gartner
COOL
VENDOR
2020

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Who: Network to Code - Our Team

Diversity of experience and opinions is a strength. It models how our clients must adapt.

Diverse skill set delivering network automation solutions:

- Network Automation Developers

- Network Automation Engineers

- Software Engineers

- Former Fortune 500 Enterprise Engineers

- Network Engineers

- Leadership team from major manufacturers, integrators, and top tier consulting firms

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Clients' Eyes: Network Automation Community

NTC is viewed as one of the original proponents for Network Automation.

- 17,800+ members in Network to Code Slack community
  slack.networktocode.com

- Open Source contributions
  - Ansible, Nornir, Napalm, Automation Modules, NetBox, NSOT, Trigger

- Commercial vendor involvement
  - Building integrations for major vendors

- Conferences, Meetups, focus groups, online communities
  - Interop, DevNet, CiscoLive, NANOG, ONUG, PacketPushers, Tech Field Day

We believe in the value network automation brings to our customers and share our knowledge with our community.

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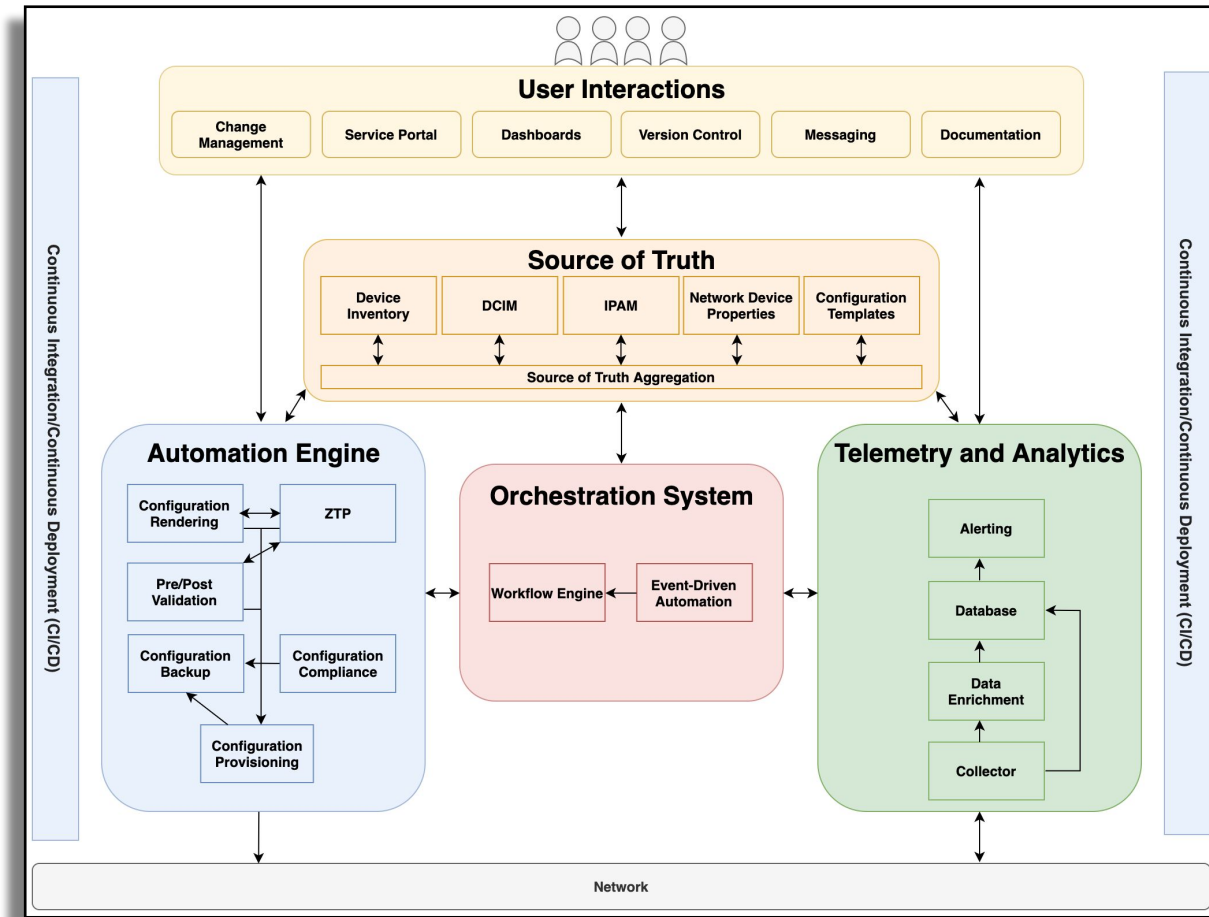# Clients' Eyes: Experts to Build a Platform

NTC holds the keys to build an enterprise platform, not another disparate power tool.

Platform

- Nucleus for all network & security automation
- Extensible and modular
- Enterprise controls
- A modern, closed-loop automation system

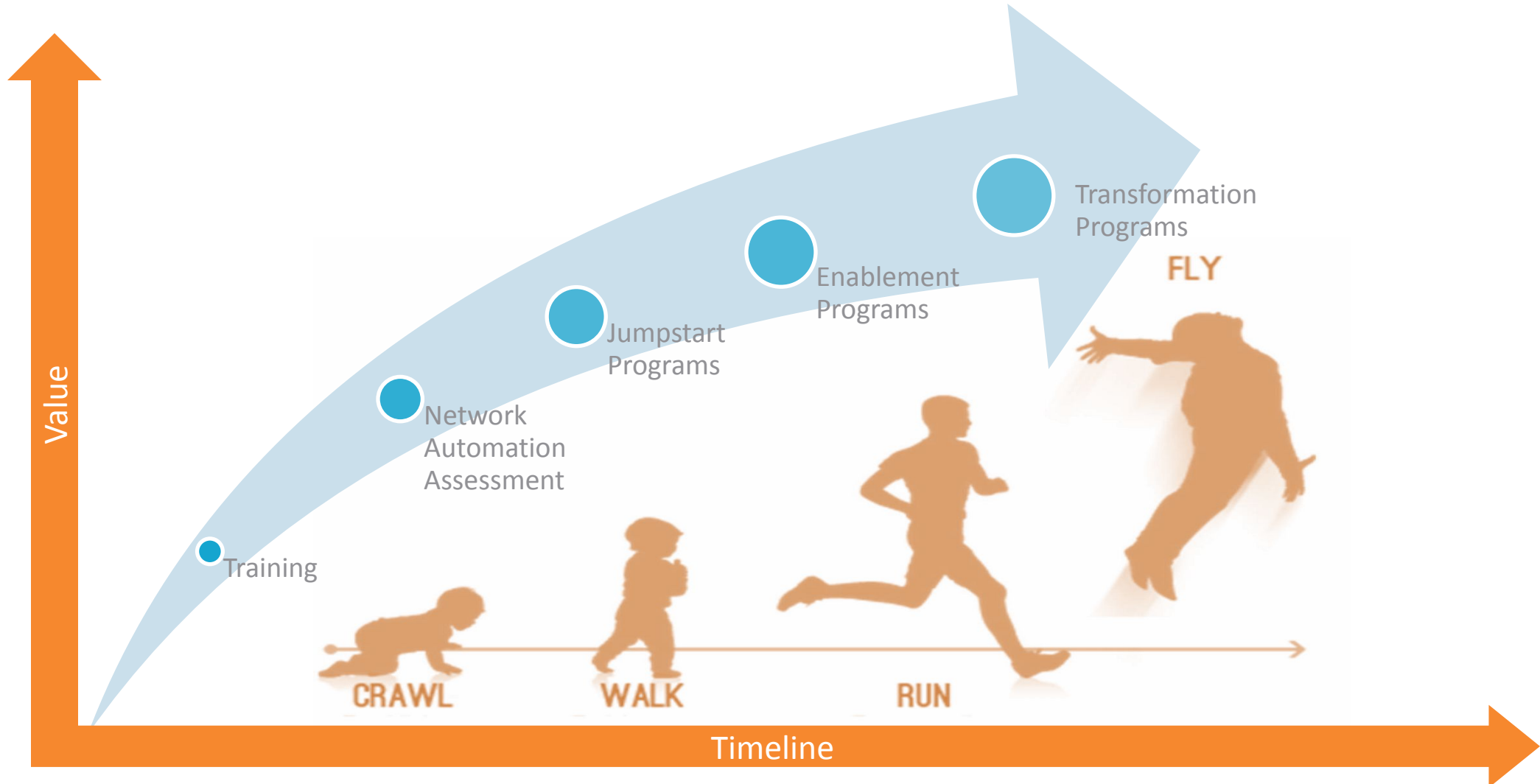## Power Tool

- Makes tasks easy for admins
- Disparate scripts
- Limited to no data integration

User Interactions

Change Management · Service Portal · Dashboards · Version Control · Messaging · Documentation

Source of Truth

Device Inventory · DCIM · IPAM · Network Device Properties · Configuration Templates

Source of Truth Aggregation

Automation Engine

Configuration Rendering · ZTP · Pre/Post Validation · Configuration Backup · Configuration Compliance · Configuration Provisioning

Orchestration System

Workflow Engine · Event-Driven Automation

Telemetry and Analytics

Alerting · Database · Data Enrichment · Collector

Continuous Integration/Continuous Deployment (CI/CD)

Network

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Clients' Eyes: NTC Enables Them to Evolve

NTC works with clients of all sizes and capabilities to move to the next level.

Value

Transformation Programs

FLY

Enablement Programs

Jumpstart Programs

Network Automation Assessment

Training

CRAWL WALK RUN

Timeline

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Know What We Do

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To revolutionize the way networks are built, deployed, and managed while enabling the network engineer of the future.

What: Holistic Transformation with NTC

Our holistic focus is a differentiator in the network automation industry.

Empower employees with extensive knowledge, learning and development.

Enablement

Deep inspection of existing policies, codify and optimize manual processes with the new automation platform.

Service Catalog

Deploy the latest tools and techniques in a modular, scalable, and extendable network automation platform.

Platform

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What: How will you describe what we do here?

Everyone should memorize an 'elevator pitch' of NTC value in their own words.

We help clients deploy and operate automation to improve the performance and reliability of their networks.

We deploy automation that reduces costs and enables IT teams to deliver services faster.

We … ?

NTC Consulting Culture and Tenets

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Culture: Transformation is about People

- Tech is the enabler, but people make transformation succeed. People bring digital thinking, tools, and processes together.

- Only deploying the latest network automation technology - is a failure.

- Partnering with the people at a client to learn, understand, develop, deploy, operate and further improve their own business processes with the latest tools and techniques for network automation - is a win-win!

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Tenet #1: Know the objectives.

- Why are we here? What are NTC's objectives?

- Why is the client here? Ask to validate their objectives.

- Start every interaction with a clearly stated purpose, and keep this intention in mind to steer the discussion - don't let things stray too far off topic.

- You should still be open to listening and learning from the client - don't be so rigid as to miss an opportunity to learn unexpected but valuable information.

- You lead the engagement to achieve the objectives.

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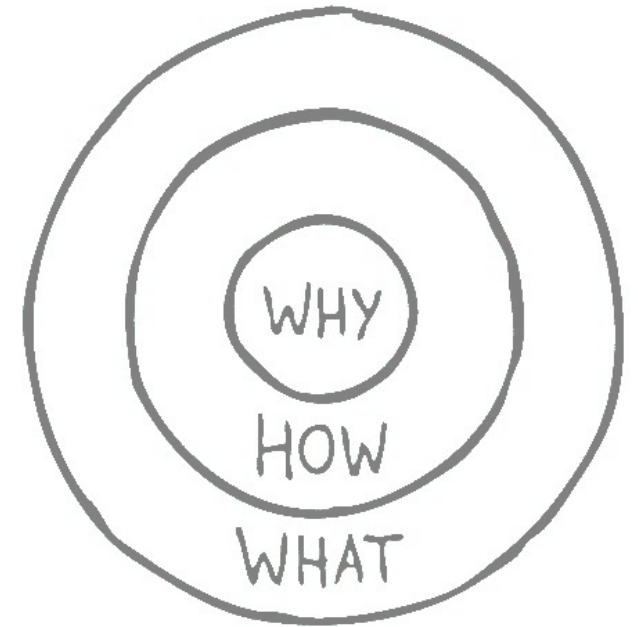
Tenet #2: Listen more than you talk.

- This cannot be overstated, most attempts at short-handing the conversation or jumping to conclusions end up being counterproductive.

- Most people have an "itch" that needs to be scratched, by not letting someone else complete their thought they are still left with that itch.

- A listening first mentality will help avoid confusion by truly understanding the ask or requirement.

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Tenet #3: Don't just listen, but hear.

- Imagine the topic from their perspective, have empathy for their point of view.

- Write down key points. Read them back to the client for confirmation - "It sounds like you said X, is that correct?"

- Dig deeper. Ask informed, probing questions to motivate them to share more details. "Tell us more about that." or "Why is that?"

- Nothing in consulting is more powerful than reusing a client's own statements to build a case to rationalize your recommendations.

- Flow of conversation should be dynamic, based on what the customer is telling you, on the fly.

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Tenet #4: Learn to live in your client's world.

- Be conscious of the terminology a customer is using - from personal roles and titles to organizational teams, physical office locations, and tools or systems deployed. Note it, research it, and begin to use it yourself going forward.

- Some tools will be internal, it's a good idea to preface calls with the customers to call out any internal terminology as they are using it.

- Take time to know or ask how to pronounce and spell someone's name in the form of that they prefer. Do they go by Bob or Robert?

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Tenet #5: Know your audience.

- What organizational level are they?

- What are their personal motivations?

- What level of detail is appropriate for them?
  - Executives: High level benefits to business?
  - Directors: Rank among all team initiatives?
  - Manager: How to operationalize and deliver this?
  - Individual: What are the parts and pieces to make this work?

- Read the room - tone, body language, and tailor your message to the situation.

- When in doubt, start high. Let them ask for lower levels of detail as their interest drives the discussion. Meet them at the level they take you to.

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Tenet #6: Be specific.

- *"Specificity is the sign of an intelligent mind."*

- Avoid pronouns to prevent confusion. "~~We'll have it done next month.~~" "NTC's Engagement Manager will deliver payment milestone #4 to the client procurement office by end of the day on Monday, June 23rd."

- Avoid non-quantifiable words such as, soon, quick, a while, take some time, easy, hard, etc... Unless you need time to do the appropriate research to return an educated answer with a timely follow-up.

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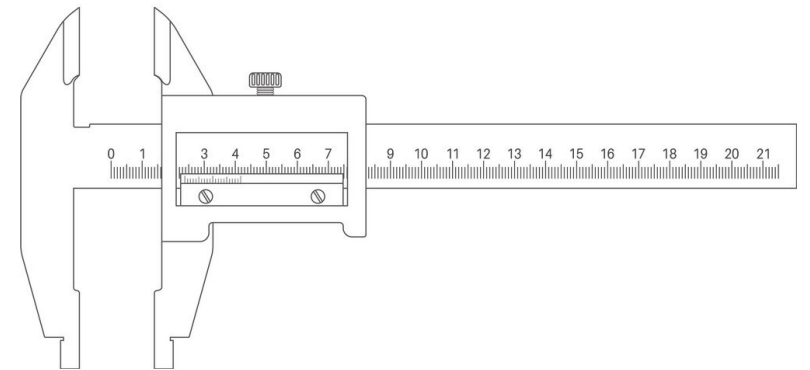
Tenet #7: Be a team, not an individual.

- Use 'we' over 'I' and 'us' over 'me'.

- When speaking of NTC, clients want to know the value we bring as a company, not as individuals.

- When speaking of the project, it communicates that we (client and NTC) are all on the same team, and we're all in this together...

- By including the client, you're also sharing the responsibility and burden with the client, the successes and failures of the project as equals - it helps to avoid finger-pointing or 'fault' situations during challenging times.

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Tenet #8: Be open, positive and constructive.

- Take all suggestions away for consideration. Encourage interaction - don't shoot ideas down at liftoff. Use follow-up to rule them in or out.

- Avoid "can't" or "impossible"; consider acknowledgements such as "we'll look into that" or "let's see if that's possible."

- Be accepting. Clients use many tools. "Flaming a tool" publically may be counterproductive. We don't have background on why it is here.

- In general, take the high road, focus on the positives of the suggested path rather than the negatives of the alternative. You never know when we might need to interact with the other path or person in the future.

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Tenet #9: Avoid technical rabbit holes.

- Anticipate endless technical debates. Learn deflection techniques to table or follow-up regarding distractions from our primary objectives.

- There is so much technology to learn, one "little addition" can often lead to hours or days of additional work.

- Don't stay stuck; use our internal resources to get out.

- We are viewed as "the experts," as such please exhaust your internal resources before asking in public forums.

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Tenet #10: Understand context.

- Know the customer and their situation before making recommendations.

- Recommending an Automation platform
  - Does the customer have existing contracts in place?
  - Does the customer have the skill set to maintain a given framework?
  - Does the customer have the skill set to build their own?

- Open Sourcing a tool poses several interesting questions
  - Are we giving our competitors access to our IP?
  - Do we own the IP of a tool written for a customer?
  - Will this help us from a marketing perspective?
  - Will this become a resource drain to maintain?
  - Will we get help in developing from the community?

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Client Meeting Considerations

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Meeting: Preparation is Essential

- Sit with a PM or Senior leader to understand the scope, stakeholders (technical and private), and contextually relevant information.

- Identify each NTC meeting attendee, their topic responsibilities and planned speaking points.

- When going on-site, verify the location and gather security requirements (building access, etc) beforehand.

- Arrive early to handle guest entry requirements prior to the meeting time (drivers license scan, visitor document signatures, visitor badge photos…)

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Meeting: Execution

- Virtual is the new normal. Respect video calls as equal to a site visit.

- Dress as appropriate for a given customer. Unless specifically told otherwise, never below business casual, with your shirt tucked in, no hats!

- Always take detailed notes during client meetings. Appoint one attendee to consolidate all notes and post in shared project records after the call.

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Meeting: Messaging

- Avoid jumping immediately to a solution within a client, this will likely need more fact-finding, internal review, and is not meant for the general audience.

- With any solutioning there is usually no reason to immediately commit, letting the customer know that a day or two is needed to digest, and review is fine.

- When giving next steps verbally, it is helpful to write your interpretation down and send back, as some context is often lost through verbal communication channels.

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Art of the Demo

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Demo: Pointers

- Practice, practice, practice - collect peer feedback - practice again.

- Consider presenting to internal NTC Knowledge Sharing sessions, or at industry conferences (INTEROP, NANOG) or local MeetUps to hone your skills.

- Mute notifications. Recommend to share only application (not entire screen).

- If sharing entire screen, sign out of chat, disable iMessage pop-ups, and remove potentially embarrassing content.

- It does not have to be flashy, but take UX into consideration

- Know your talking points, and go into it feeling confident of success!

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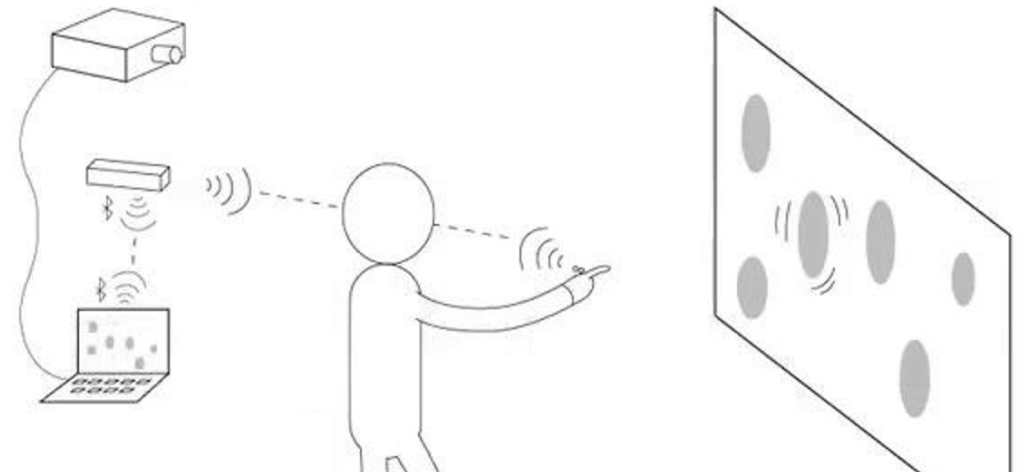
Demo: Content

- Customize content to be as client- and industry-specific as possible.
    - Understand the customer's requirements
    - What demos have they seen already
    - What they have not been able to see yet

- Use examples that are relevant to Networking
    - Do not use examples that utilize foo, bar, sample, test, etc...
    - Instead use switch, interface, routing protocols as an example

- Use simple and plain language over complex
    - Break things out in simplest form and explain in clear terms

- Tailor your message and demo to the audience. Having executive and technical staff version of material prepared is encouraged.

- Refrain from using shortcuts such as aliases. Prefer long form over short.
    - E.g. "ansible-playbook --forks=4" over "ansible-playbook -f 4"

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Where to Learn More

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Where to Learn More

- [8 Characteristics of Great Consultants](#)

- Video: [11 Laws of Likeability](#)

- Document: [NTC Consulting Culture](#)

Consulting culture examples from our thought leaders:

- YouTube: ['Network to Code' channel](#)

- Blog: [https://www.networktocode.com/community/](#)

- Podcasts: [https://networkcollective.com/](#)

- Book: [Network Programmability and Automation, O'Reilly Press](#)

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