

PARLOR EXCHANGE GLOBAL

CLOSE IT.

The Sales Guide

How to have a sales conversation that doesn't feel like a sales conversation. The psychology of buying. The structure of the sale. How to handle every objection without manipulating or folding. How to ask for the sale without apologizing for it. And 28 of the most common rebuttals — with exactly what to say.

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Part of the Parlor Exchange Global Build It • Protect It • Grow It Methodology

SECTION 1 — THE TRUTH ABOUT SELLING

Most people who are bad at selling aren't bad at selling.

They're bad at a specific version of selling — the pushy, manipulative, corner-someone-at-a-party version that most of us grew up watching and hating. And because that version is what comes to mind when someone says 'sales,' a lot of genuinely talented people avoid it entirely — and end up undercharging, underserving, and wondering why the business isn't growing the way it should.

Here is what selling actually is: helping someone make a decision they already wanted to make by removing every obstacle between them and that decision. That's it. If someone has a problem and you have a solution, selling is the bridge between those two things. You are not convincing anyone of anything. You are connecting a real need to a real answer — and making it easy for them to say yes.

You are not asking for something. You are offering a solution to a problem that already exists. That is not a transaction. That is a service.

SELLING vs. CONVINCING — THE LINE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Convincing means getting someone to do something they don't want to do. That requires pressure, manipulation, and persistence against resistance. It produces buyers who feel regret, ask for refunds, and don't come back. Selling means helping someone who already wants a solution find the right one and commit to it. That requires listening, clarity, and trust. It produces buyers who feel good about the decision and refer their friends.

MARKETING vs. SELLING — WHERE ONE ENDS AND THE OTHER BEGINS

Marketing creates awareness and interest. Selling converts that interest into a decision. Marketing brings someone to the door. Selling opens it. The mistake most people make is expecting their marketing to do their selling for them — or expecting great sales skills to compensate for weak marketing. They are sequential, not interchangeable.

TRANSACTIONAL vs. CONSULTATIVE SELLING

MODEL	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	BEST FOR	BUILDS
Transactional	Fast exchange. Set price, buyer decides yes or no. Minimal conversation.	Retail, e-commerce, low-cost products, impulse purchases	Volume. Speed. Repeatability.

Consultative	Discovery-first. Understand the problem before you present the solution. Relationship-based.	Services, high-ticket products, B2B, anything requiring trust	Loyalty. Referrals. Higher average sale value.
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WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

The best salespeople ask more questions than they answer. The average salesperson spends 80% of the conversation talking about their product. The great ones spend 70% of the conversation listening to the customer. The information the customer gives you in discovery is the exact language you use to close them. You can't get that information if you're the only one talking.

SECTION 2 — THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BUYING

People do not make buying decisions rationally. They make them emotionally — and then construct rational justifications afterward. Understanding why people buy is more important than knowing what you're selling.

THE SIX CORE BUYING MOTIVATIONS

GAIN	The desire for more — more money, more time, more status, more results.
HOW TO USE IT	<i>Lead with what they get. Quantify the outcome wherever possible.</i>
FEAR OF LOSS	The fear of missing out, losing ground, or staying stuck.
HOW TO USE IT	<i>Help them see the cost of not solving the problem. Make inaction feel more expensive than action.</i>
COMFORT	The desire to eliminate friction, stress, difficulty, or uncertainty.
HOW TO USE IT	<i>Show how your solution makes their life easier. Emphasize simplicity and support.</i>
STATUS	The desire to be seen as successful, sophisticated, or ahead of others.
HOW TO USE IT	<i>Position your product or service as what serious people use. Social proof matters here.</i>
CONNECTION	The desire to belong, to be aligned with values, to work with someone who gets them.
HOW TO USE IT	<i>Your story, your mission, your authenticity. This is why who you are matters as much as what you sell.</i>
CERTAINTY	The desire to know it's going to work — to feel safe making the decision.
HOW TO USE IT	<i>Guarantees, testimonials, case studies, clear process, and transparent expectations all address this.</i>

WHY PRICE IS ALMOST NEVER THE REAL OBJECTION

When someone says 'it's too expensive,' they are almost never saying 'I literally do not have this money.' They are saying one of these things: 'I don't see enough value to justify this price,' 'I'm not sure it's going to work for me,' 'I don't trust this enough yet,' or 'I can't prioritize this right now.' Each of those is a different objection — and each requires a different response. Treating all of them as a price problem leads to discounting, which rarely closes the sale and always erodes your margin.

The most important truth in sales psychology.

People buy based on how they feel about the decision — not the facts of the decision. The facts support the decision after it's been made. Your job is to make the person feel understood, confident, and safe before you give them anything to justify with logic. If they don't feel right about it, no amount of data will close them. If they do feel right about it, they'll find their own justification.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

Decision fatigue is real. The more options you give someone, the harder the decision becomes — and harder decisions get deferred. Present a maximum of three options. Lead them toward the one that fits them best based on what they told you in discovery. The person who can't decide is not indecisive — they're overwhelmed. Simplify the choice.

SECTION 3 — THE SALES CONVERSATION: FIVE STAGES

Every effective sales conversation — whether it's a 10-minute phone call or a 90-minute in-person meeting — moves through the same five stages. The time spent in each stage varies. The order doesn't.

01 CONNECT

Establish rapport. Create safety.

People buy from people they trust — and trust begins in the first 60–90 seconds. This stage is not small talk for the sake of it. It's the moment where you communicate — through your energy, your questions, and your attention — that this is a conversation, not a presentation. Mirror their energy. Ask about something real. Be a human being before you're a salesperson.

QUESTIONS FOR THIS STAGE

- *'How did you hear about us / what brought you here today?'*
- *'Tell me a little bit about what's going on in your business right now.'*
- *'Before we get into the details — what would make this conversation most useful for you?'*

WATCH FOR

If someone is guarded or rushed — slow down, not speed up. Rushing through rapport to get to the pitch signals that you're there to sell, not to help. The guard goes up and rarely comes back down.

02 DISCOVER

Understand the real problem — not the surface one.

Discovery is the most important stage in the entire conversation. This is where you earn the right to present a solution. Your goal is to understand not just what they're dealing with, but why it matters, how long it's been a problem, what they've already tried, and what solving it would change. Ask, listen, ask again. Do not present anything yet.

QUESTIONS FOR THIS STAGE

- *'What's the main challenge you're trying to solve right now?'*
- *'How long has this been an issue for you?'*
- *'What have you already tried? What happened?'*
- *'If we solve this — what does that change for you specifically?'*
- *'What's the cost of this problem staying unsolved — in time, money, or stress?'*
- *'What does success look like on the other side of this?'*

WATCH FOR

The thing they say twice is the thing they care most about. The emotion behind the words tells you which buying motivation is dominant. Write down their exact language — you'll use it when you present.

03 DIAGNOSE

Reflect back what you heard. Confirm before you present.

Before you ever mention your solution, summarize what you heard — in their language, not yours. This accomplishes two things: it confirms you understood correctly, and it makes the person feel heard in a way that builds significant trust. 'Based on what you've shared with me, it sounds like the biggest thing is [X] — and the impact of that has been [Y]. Is that right?' Then stop and let them confirm, correct, or add. Only move to the presentation after you've confirmed.

QUESTIONS FOR THIS STAGE

- *'Based on everything you've shared — is there anything else I should know before I walk you through what we do?'*
- *'It sounds like the real issue is [X] — would you say that's accurate?'*
- *'If I could solve [specific problem they named], would that move the needle for you?'*

WATCH FOR

If they say 'yes, that's exactly it' — you have alignment. Present now. If they add or correct something — that's the real issue. Update your understanding before you proceed.

04 PRESENT

Connect your solution directly to what they told you.

Now — and only now — do you talk about what you offer. Not a full product walkthrough. Not a feature list. The specific parts of your solution that address the specific problems they named. Every sentence of your presentation should trace back to something they said in discovery. 'You mentioned [X] — here's how we handle that specifically...' This is not a pitch. It is a mirror reflecting their own words back as your solution.

QUESTIONS FOR THIS STAGE

- *'Does this match what you were looking for?'*
- *'Based on what you told me, this [option] seems most aligned — does that feel right?'*
- *'Is there anything in what I've described that doesn't fit your situation?'*

WATCH FOR

Watch their body language and engagement level. If they lean in or ask questions — they're interested. Go deeper. If they go quiet or look away — something isn't landing. Stop and ask what's on their mind.

05 CLOSE

Ask for the decision. Clearly. Without apology.

Most sales are lost here — not because the presentation failed, but because the seller never actually asked. Closing is not aggressive. It's respectful. You've listened to their problem, understood their situation, and shown them how you can help. Now you give them the opportunity to say yes. Don't trail off. Don't say 'so let me know if you want to move forward.' Ask directly.

QUESTIONS FOR THIS STAGE

- *'Based on everything we've talked about — does this feel like the right fit?'*
- *'Are you ready to move forward?'*
- *'What would you need to feel confident making a decision today?'*
- *'The next step would be [specific action] — does that work for you?'*

WATCH FOR

After you ask the closing question — stop talking. The silence after the close is the most important silence in sales. The first person to speak loses. Let them answer.

SECTION 4 — THE DISCOVERY: THE MOST IMPORTANT PART

If you only master one part of the sales conversation, make it discovery. Great discovery makes everything else easier — the presentation writes itself, the objections are fewer, and the close feels natural because you've already connected your solution to their specific words.

SURFACE PROBLEMS vs. REAL PROBLEMS

The problem someone presents in the first two minutes of a conversation is almost never the real problem. It's the most comfortable version of the problem — the one they've already decided it's safe to say out loud. The real problem — the one that keeps them up at night, the one that's been there for years, the one that has an emotional charge — lives underneath. Your job is to get there through questions, not assumptions.

WHAT THEY SAY	WHAT'S ACTUALLY GOING ON
'I need more clients'	'My current clients pay late and I'm afraid to fire them because I don't have replacements'
'I need to get organized'	'I'm losing money because I can't track what's coming in and I'm terrified to look at the books'
'I need a better website'	'No one takes me seriously because my online presence looks amateur and it's affecting my confidence'
'I want to grow my business'	'I'm working 60 hours a week and making the same money I did when I worked 40 — and I don't know how to change it'

THE BUDGET QUESTION — HOW TO GET THE NUMBER WITHOUT ASKING FOR IT DIRECTLY

Asking 'what's your budget?' early in a conversation puts people on the defensive. It signals that you're going to price to their ceiling rather than their need. Here are three ways to get the budget information you need without that dynamic:

- Range anchor: 'For this type of work, we typically work with clients who invest anywhere from \$X to \$Y depending on scope. Does that feel like the right ballpark for what you're looking to do?'
- Priority question: 'When you think about solving this — is the priority to get it done as efficiently as possible, or to do it comprehensively?' Their answer tells you how much they'll invest.
- Investment framing: 'To make sure I'm presenting the right option — have you thought about what you'd want to invest in solving this?' Investment, not cost. The word matters.

THE MOVE

Write down the exact words your prospect uses during discovery. Not summaries — their actual language. When you present your solution, use their words, not yours. 'You mentioned you were exhausted from chasing invoices — here's how we eliminate that specifically.' Hearing their own words reflected back to them in your solution is the fastest path to 'yes, that's exactly what I need.'

SECTION 5 — PRESENTING YOUR OFFER

The presentation is where most people spend too much time, say too much, and lose the sale they almost had. Less is more. Specificity beats comprehensiveness. Connection beats information.

FEATURES vs. BENEFITS vs. OUTCOMES — THE THREE LEVELS

LEVEL	WHAT IT IS	EXAMPLE	WHO IT'S FOR
Feature	What the product/service has or does	'We include weekly check-in calls'	Engineers, technical buyers
Benefit	What the feature means for the buyer	'You'll always know where your project stands'	Most buyers
Outcome	What their life or business looks like because of the benefit	'You stop waking up worried about whether things are on track'	Emotionally-led buyers — most people

The rule: always land on the outcome. Start with the feature if needed. Move through the benefit. End with what their world looks like when the problem is solved. That's what people are actually buying.

STATING THE PRICE — THE MOST FUMBLING MOMENT IN SALES

Most people are afraid of the price moment. They hedge before they say it, over-explain after they say it, or drop their voice like they're confessing something. All of that signals to the buyer that even you don't think it's worth it.

The right way to say the number.

State the investment clearly, in context, and then stop talking. 'Based on everything you've shared, the investment for this is [amount]. That includes [two or three things they specifically cared about from discovery].' Then stop. Do not add 'but we can work something out.' Do not say 'I know that might seem like a lot.' Do not immediately offer a discount. Say the number. Stop. Let them respond. Whatever you say after the number before they respond undermines the number.

THE RULE OF THREE — OPTIONS WITHOUT OVERWHELM

Presenting three options gives people a sense of choice and control without creating decision fatigue. Structure them so the middle option is clearly the best value — most people will land there. The highest option makes the middle look reasonable. The lowest option anchors that there is a floor.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

Never present your full menu of services in a proposal or sales conversation. Present the options that are relevant to what they told you they need — and nothing else. Every additional service or option you add is another decision point that slows or kills the close. The best proposals are specific. The worst are comprehensive.

SECTION 6 — ASKING FOR THE SALE

The close is not a trick. It's not a tactic. It's a respectful, direct request for a decision from someone you've spent time helping. Most sales are lost because someone never asked.

THREE CLOSES THAT WORK WITHOUT PRESSURE

The Direct Close

The cleanest and most underused close. You simply ask.

'Based on everything we've talked about — are you ready to move forward?' Then stop. Do not add anything. Do not soften it. Do not give them an out. Ask the question and wait for the answer.

The Summary Close

Recap what they told you, recap your solution, then ask.

'So you're dealing with [problem]. We solve that by [solution]. The investment is [amount]. Does that work for you?' This close works because it ties everything together and makes the decision feel logical after everything emotional has already been established.

The Next Step Close

Move forward without making the decision feel like a major commitment.

'The next step would be [specific, small action]. Does Thursday work for you to get started?' This works when someone is interested but hesitant to commit to a big decision. You're not asking them to sign a year contract — you're asking them if Thursday works. Small yeses lead to big yeses.

THE SILENCE AFTER THE CLOSE

After you ask the closing question — stop talking. This is the hardest thing in sales because silence feels like rejection and the instinct is to fill it. But the moment you speak after the close — before they answer — you have broken the close. You've given them something to respond to that isn't 'yes or no.' Ask the question. Shut up. Wait. The first person to speak after the close question loses the leverage. Don't be that person.

WHEN THEY SAY YES — DO THIS IMMEDIATELY

- Confirm the next specific step — date, action, document
- Send the contract or invoice within the hour — momentum dies when you wait
- Confirm via email with a clear subject line: 'Your next step with [Business Name]'
- Don't over-celebrate in front of them — stay professional and confident

- Start delivering value immediately — the first impression post-sale sets the tone for everything

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

The revenue you lose by not asking is permanent. The discomfort of asking lasts about three seconds. After the third time you ask for the sale and someone says yes, the discomfort disappears entirely. It's replaced by the understanding that asking is the most respectful thing you can do for someone who came to you with a problem they want to solve.

SECTION 7 — 28 REBUTTALS AND HOW TO NAVIGATE EVERY ONE

An objection is not a rejection. It is a request for more information, more clarity, or more trust. The person who is still talking to you — still asking questions, still pushing back — is still engaged. The person who has truly decided no goes silent. Treat every objection as an invitation to continue the conversation.

The universal objection framework — before any specific response.

Step 1 — ACKNOWLEDGE: Show that you heard them and take it seriously. Never argue with an objection before you've acknowledged it. Step 2 — CLARIFY: Ask what specifically they mean. Don't assume you know — the objection they stated may not be the real one. Step 3 — RESPOND: Address the real concern — not the surface statement. Step 4 — CONFIRM: 'Does that address what you were concerned about?' Then move forward. Do not stay on the objection after it's resolved.

#01 It's too expensive.
PRICE OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

One of these is true: they don't see enough value, they don't trust it'll work, they don't have the budget right now, or the timing is wrong. Almost never: they genuinely can't afford anything at any price.

SAY THIS

'I hear you — and I want to make sure I'm presenting the right value. When you say it feels expensive, is it more about the total investment, or about whether you'll see the return on it?' Then address whichever they answer.

NOT THIS

'Let me see what I can do on price.' Never reduce the price without reducing the scope.

#02 I can get it cheaper somewhere else.

PRICE / COMPETITOR OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They may be right. Or they may be using a competitor as a negotiating lever. Either way, they haven't left yet — which means something about you is still compelling.

SAY THIS

'That's worth exploring. The difference with what we do is [specific differentiator]. For some people, the lower price is the right call. For people who need [outcome they care about], the difference in what you get is significant. Do you want me to walk you through what that difference looks like specifically?'

NOT THIS

'We'll match any price.' Competing on price alone destroys your positioning and your margin.

#03 That's out of my budget right now.

BUDGET / TIMING OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Right now is doing real work in this sentence. They may have the money — the timing or priority just isn't there. Or they genuinely have a budget constraint and want to solve it.

SAY THIS

'I completely understand — and I don't want to put you in a tough spot financially. Is it more a timing issue, or would it help to look at a version that fits a tighter number right now?' Then either explore timing or offer a reduced scope — not a discount on the same scope.

NOT THIS

'Don't worry about it' or immediately offering a discount without understanding the constraint.

#04 Can you do it for less?

NEGOTIATION OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They're testing your confidence in your own pricing. This is a negotiation move, not a budget crisis in most cases.

SAY THIS

'I can — but I'd want to adjust what's included so the math still works. What's most important to you in this? We can build something around that.'
Reduce scope before you reduce price — always.

NOT THIS

Immediately saying yes without adjusting scope. That tells them the price was inflated.

#05 Is that the best you can do?

NEGOTIATION OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Same as above — a confidence test. They want to see if you believe in your own price.

SAY THIS

'It is for the full scope we discussed — yes. If budget is the main thing, tell me what you're working with and I'll tell you honestly what we can do within that.'

NOT THIS

Immediately backing down. It signals that every price you give is a starting point, not a real number.

#06 I need to think about it.

DELAY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

This is the most common stall in sales. What they're thinking about is almost never the price — it's usually a fear, an uncertainty, or an unanswered question they don't know how to articulate.

SAY THIS

'Of course — this is a real decision. Can I ask what specifically you want to think through? I want to make sure you have everything you need to feel confident either way.'

NOT THIS

Saying 'okay, let me know!' and walking away. You just gave up the sale.

#07 I'm not ready yet.

TIMING OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Something is blocking them — could be money, could be fear, could be something else on their plate, could be genuine timing.

SAY THIS

'I hear that. What would need to be different for the timing to feel right? Is it about [the investment / something happening on your end / wanting to see something first]?'

NOT THIS

Accepting it at face value without exploring what 'ready' actually means to them.

#08 Can we start next month?

TIMING / DELAY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They're interested but creating distance. Next month often becomes next quarter if not addressed.

SAY THIS

'Absolutely — I want this to work for your schedule. Is there something specific that makes next month better, or is it more about giving yourself time to think it through?' If they have a real reason, honor it. If not, explore it.

NOT THIS

Just saying 'sure, I'll follow up then' without understanding why the delay.

#09 I need to wait until after [event/season/quarter].

TIMING OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

This may be completely legitimate — or it may be a comfortable delay. Either way, get a specific date and a commitment.

SAY THIS

'That makes sense. So [specific date] would be when you'd want to revisit this. If I reach out then, would you be in a position to move forward?' Get a yes or no to that question.

NOT THIS

Accepting an indefinite delay. 'After the holidays' is not a date.

#10 I need to talk to my spouse / partner.

THIRD PARTY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Sometimes real — sometimes a delay tactic. The question is whether they're asking for permission or for input.

SAY THIS

'That makes complete sense — especially for a decision this size. What would be helpful to share with them? Would it make sense to schedule a time where all of us can connect so I can answer any questions directly?'

NOT THIS

Accepting it without asking whether a joint conversation would be helpful.

#11 I need to run this by my boss.

AUTHORITY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They're not the decision maker — or they're not confident enough to decide alone. Your job is to help them champion it internally.

SAY THIS

'Absolutely — what information would be most helpful for that conversation? I'm happy to put together something specific for them, or if it helps, I could connect with both of you directly to answer questions.'

NOT THIS

Just sending a proposal and hoping they sell it internally without help.

#12 We have a committee that makes these decisions.

AUTHORITY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Now you need access to the committee — not just this person.

SAY THIS

'Understood — and I want to make sure the committee has everything they need. What's their biggest concern likely to be? And is there an opportunity for me to present to the group directly, or would a written summary be more appropriate?'

NOT THIS

Pitching the gatekeeper and hoping they can carry it to the committee successfully.

#13 How do I know this will work for me?

TRUST / CERTAINTY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They need proof specific to their situation — not general testimonials.

SAY THIS

'That's the right question. Let me share a specific example. I worked with someone in a similar situation to yours — [brief case study]. Their outcome was [specific result]. What's unique about your situation is [X] — here's how we'd address that specifically.'

NOT THIS

Generic testimonials that don't match their industry or situation.

#14 I've tried things like this before and they didn't work.

SKEPTICISM / PAST EXPERIENCE OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They've been burned. This is fear dressed as skepticism. Your job is to understand what went wrong before — and differentiate without dismissing their experience.

SAY THIS

'Tell me about that — what happened? [Listen fully.] That makes sense given [what they described]. The difference with how we approach this is [specific differentiator]. Can I show you specifically how that changes the outcome?'

NOT THIS

Immediately saying 'we're different' without understanding what went wrong.

#15 I've never heard of you / your company.

CREDIBILITY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They don't know you well enough to trust you. This is an information gap, not a value gap.

SAY THIS

'Fair — we haven't been around as long as some. What I can share is [specific proof]. [Client name / result / tenure in the industry]. Would it help to speak with one of our current clients directly?'

NOT THIS

Getting defensive or listing credentials without addressing the underlying trust gap.

#16 How long have you been in business?

CREDIBILITY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They're evaluating risk. They want to know you'll be around and can handle it.

SAY THIS

If established: '[X years] — and in that time, [specific proof of longevity and results].' If newer: 'We're [time] in — but I've been in [industry] for [total experience]. What matters more than how long we've been open is [specific capability]. Let me show you why.'

NOT THIS

Apologizing for or minimizing the tenure.

#17 Can I see some references?

TRUST OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

This is a buying signal — they're doing due diligence, not stalling. Make this easy and fast.

SAY THIS

'Absolutely — I'll send three right now. These are clients in [similar industry / similar situation to yours] so the context will be relevant. Is there anything specific you want them to speak to?'

NOT THIS

Hesitating, saying you need to check, or sending generic references that don't match their situation.

#18 I don't think I need this right now.

NEED OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They haven't connected the problem to the cost of not solving it.

SAY THIS

'I hear you — and I don't want to push something that isn't the right fit. Can I ask — [problem you identified in discovery], is that still something you're dealing with? What's that costing you in [time/money/stress] right now?'

NOT THIS

Immediately backing off without reconnecting them to the problem.

#19 We're already working with someone else.

COMPETITOR OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They have an existing relationship. Your job is not to trash the competitor — it's to understand the gap and position against it without attacking.

SAY THIS

'I respect that — how is that going for you? [Listen.]
What would make you consider expanding or switching at some point?'

NOT THIS

Immediately attacking or dismissing the current provider.

#20 I can just do this myself.

DIY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They believe the gap between doing it themselves and hiring you isn't worth the price. Your job is to show what that gap actually costs them.

SAY THIS

'You absolutely could — and some people do. The question is usually what that time is worth and what happens when [specific challenge]. Most of our clients tried it first and came to us after [specific scenario]. What made you start thinking about getting help with this?'

NOT THIS

Arguing that they can't do it. You'll come across as condescending.

#21 I don't see what makes you different.

DIFFERENTIATION OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Your presentation didn't land the differentiator clearly — or they're actively comparing you to alternatives.

SAY THIS

'That's fair — let me be specific. The main difference from [competitor or generic alternative] is [one specific thing]. For someone in your situation where [their specific problem], that matters because [reason]. Does that feel relevant to what you're trying to solve?'

NOT THIS

Listing multiple differentiators. Pick the one that's most relevant to them specifically.

#22 Just send me some information.

AVOIDANCE STALL

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They're ending the conversation without deciding. Information requests are often a polite way to disengage. Most people who ask for information via email never become clients.

SAY THIS

'Of course — I'll send that over. What specifically would be most useful to include? And rather than leaving it in your inbox, can we schedule 15 minutes next week to walk through any questions? I find that's usually more useful than email.'

NOT THIS

Saying 'sure' and sending a generic PDF with no follow-up plan.

#23 I'll get back to you.

AVOIDANCE STALL

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Same energy as 'send me information.' Without a specific commitment, this ends the opportunity.

SAY THIS

'I appreciate that — I don't want to lose track of this either. Can we put something on the calendar right now so it doesn't fall through? What does [specific day] look like for you?'

NOT THIS

Saying 'great, looking forward to hearing from you' with no date or follow-up anchor.

#24 We're in a freeze on spending right now.

BUDGET / ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Could be real. Could be a comfortable no. If real, your job is to plant the right seed for when the freeze lifts.

SAY THIS

'I completely understand — that happens. When do you expect the freeze to lift? I'd rather reach out at the right moment than have you have to start over with someone new. Is it okay if I follow up in [specific month]?'

NOT THIS

Accepting it and disappearing. A freeze is temporary — your relationship doesn't have to be.

#25 We already have something like this in place.

STATUS QUO OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They think they've already solved the problem. Your job is to find the gap in what they have.

SAY THIS

'Good to know — how well is it working? [Listen.] What would it look like for this to work even better? The reason people still reach out to us even when they have something in place is usually [gap]. Does that resonate?'

NOT THIS

Accepting it at face value without exploring what 'something like this' actually means.

#26 We don't have the bandwidth for this right now.

CAPACITY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They're worried about the time and effort required on their end — not necessarily the money.

SAY THIS

'I hear that — and most of our clients say the same thing when we first talk. The reason they moved forward anyway is that [your solution actually reduces their load]. What would we need to handle on our end to make this as light as possible for you?'

NOT THIS

Accepting the bandwidth objection without addressing whether your solution reduces or adds to their load.

#27 Now isn't a good time — we're going through some changes.

INTERNAL UPHEAVAL OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

Transitions create both chaos and opportunity. Sometimes this is a real barrier. Sometimes it's the exact moment when they need you most.

SAY THIS

'Change is usually when the right kind of help matters most. What kind of changes are you navigating? [Listen.] Given what you're going through, it sounds like [specific value] might actually be especially useful right now — would it be worth a quick conversation about how we could fit into that transition?'

NOT THIS

Backing off entirely because change sounds complicated.

#28 I need to do more research first.

INFORMATION / DELAY OBJECTION

WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN

They haven't made the emotional decision yet — so they're substituting more information for it. More research rarely closes a sale. Only a decision closes a sale.

SAY THIS

'Absolutely — what are the main things you're still trying to figure out? I'd rather help you get to clarity faster than have you spend weeks researching things I could answer right now. What's the biggest open question?'

NOT THIS

Sending more information and waiting. You'll lose them to inertia.

SECTION 8 — FOLLOWING UP WITHOUT CHASING

80% of sales require five or more follow-up contacts after the initial conversation. 44% of salespeople give up after one follow-up. That gap is where most of your revenue is hiding.

THE FOLLOW-UP CADENCE

TOUCH H	TIMING	FORMAT	WHAT TO SAY
Touch 1	Same day or next morning	Email	Thank them for the conversation. Recap what you discussed. Attach any promised materials. Clear next step.
Touch 2	3 days later (no response)	Email or text	Brief check-in. Add value — an article, a stat, a quick insight relevant to their problem.
Touch 3	1 week later	Phone call or voicemail	Direct: 'I wanted to follow up on [X]. I have time this week — does [day] work?'
Touch 4	2 weeks later	Email	Case study or testimonial directly relevant to their situation. 'Thought of you when I saw this.'
Touch 5	1 month later	Email or LinkedIn	Check in on the situation: 'Has anything changed with [specific problem they mentioned]?'
Touch 6+	Quarterly	Email, LinkedIn, or text	Seasonal relevance, new offering, or a genuine reason to reconnect. Stay in their orbit.

THE VALUE-ADD FOLLOW-UP

The most effective follow-ups give something before they ask for something. An article relevant to their industry. A tool they'd find useful. A resource that addresses something they mentioned in the conversation. A brief insight that shows you were listening and you're still thinking about their situation. Every value-add follow-up reinforces that you're someone worth doing business with — and makes the eventual ask feel earned, not pushy.

THE LAST FOLLOW-UP — THE DOOR THAT STAYS OPEN

When to stop following up — and what to say when you do.

'I've reached out a few times and I don't want to keep filling your inbox. I'll take this as a sign the timing isn't right — but the door is always open. If anything changes with [specific problem], reach out and we'll pick up exactly where we left off. Wishing you all the best in the meantime.' This message does two things: it ends gracefully and it plants a seed. You would be surprised how many people respond to this message specifically because the lack of pressure finally made it safe to engage.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

Most people follow up once with 'just checking in' — which is the least compelling phrase in the follow-up vocabulary. Checking in does nothing for the other person. Every follow-up should have a reason — a new piece of information, a relevant story, an answer to something they asked, or a direct next step. 'Just checking in' tells the other person you have nothing to offer and just want to know if they've made your decision yet.

SECTION 9 — BUILDING A SALES PIPELINE

A pipeline is every active sales conversation in your business — organized by where each person is in the process. Without a pipeline, you're always reacting. With one, you're always moving forward.

THE THREE PIPELINE STAGES

LEADS

They've expressed interest but you haven't had a real conversation yet.

Source tracking, initial outreach sent, discovery call not yet scheduled.

PROSPECTS

You've had at least one real conversation and there's a legitimate opportunity.

Discovery completed, proposal sent or scheduled, actively in conversation.

OPPORTUNITIES

They're close to a decision — close has been attempted at least once.

Proposal reviewed, follow-ups active, decision expected within 30 days.

THE CONVERSION MATH — WORKING BACKWARDS FROM YOUR INCOME TARGET

How many conversations do you actually need?

Target monthly revenue: \$10,000 Average sale value: \$2,500 Sales needed per month: 4 If your close rate is 25% (1 in 4 proposals closes): Proposals needed: 16 If 50% of discovery calls result in a proposal: Discovery calls needed: 32 If 30% of leads book a discovery call: Leads needed per month: 107 Now you know your number. Not 'I need more clients.' You need 107 new leads per month, 32 of whom book calls, 16 of whom get a proposal, and 4 of whom say yes. Work on every stage — not just getting more leads.

SIMPLE CRM OPTIONS — TRACK WITHOUT ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE

- Google Sheets — A simple spreadsheet with columns for name, source, stage, last contact, and next step. Free and functional for most early-stage businesses.
- HubSpot CRM — Free tier is genuinely capable. Tracks contacts, deals, activity, and has a visual pipeline board. No excuse not to use it.
- Notion — Build a custom pipeline database with status, contact info, and notes. Good for people who live in Notion already.

- HoneyBook / Dubsado — Built-in pipeline for service businesses. Tracks leads from inquiry through close. Already in the Service Business Guide tech stack.
- Close CRM (close.com) — Designed for sales teams. More powerful. Justified when you're managing high volume across multiple salespeople.

SECTION 10 — SALES FOR PEOPLE WHO HATE SELLING

If you've read this entire guide and still feel resistance to the word 'sales,' this section is for you. Because the resistance is real — and it's worth understanding instead of just pushing through it.

Why hating sales usually means hating one specific version of it.

The version of sales that most people hate is real and it's bad. It's the high-pressure, manipulate-them-into-it, overcome-every-objection-by-being-relentless version that was taught in the 1980s and is still being practiced by people who haven't updated their approach. That version is bad for buyers and bad for sellers. The version in this guide is fundamentally different. It starts with the customer's problem. It requires listening more than talking. It asks for a decision only after trust has been earned. If that version still feels wrong to you, the resistance isn't about sales — it's worth examining what's underneath it.

Let your results do the selling: referrals, testimonials, and proof.

The best salespeople in the world are their own best customers — they get results so consistently that their clients become their sales team. A strong referral system, a visible bank of testimonials, and documented case studies can reduce the amount of direct selling you ever have to do. Build the proof. Let the proof do the initial convincing. Your job becomes confirming the fit — not creating the interest.

Structures that reduce how much selling you have to do.

Retainer clients eliminate the constant cycle of finding new revenue. Recurring revenue models — memberships, subscriptions, maintenance contracts — mean each new client you bring in compounds your monthly base instead of replacing last month's project. The business that requires you to sell every day from scratch is exhausting by design. Build recurring revenue wherever the model allows it.

Automation that sells while you sleep.

Email sequences, nurture content, social media presence, SEO, and funnels all generate interest and move people toward a buying decision without you being directly involved. This is the investment of building your marketing infrastructure correctly — so that by the time someone gets on a call with you, they're already 70% decided. The sales conversation becomes a confirmation, not a persuasion.

The business that can't sell is at the mercy of everyone who can. Learn this — not to become a salesperson, but to stop leaving your business's future in other people's hands.

THE MOVE

The fastest way to get comfortable with sales is to shift the focus from yourself to the person you're talking to. When you walk into a sales conversation thinking about your close rate, your revenue goal, or whether they're going to say yes — you're thinking about yourself. When you walk in thinking about their problem, what they've tried, what it's costing them, and what solving it would change — you're thinking about them. That shift changes everything about how the conversation feels. To you and to them.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

The money you're not making right now is sitting in conversations you haven't had, questions you haven't asked, and closings you haven't attempted. Not because the opportunity isn't there. Because nobody taught you that asking for the sale is the most respectful thing you can do for someone who showed up with a problem you know how to solve.

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