The Founder-Led Sales Playbook

Introduction

Over the last 6 years, I've directly helped over 250+ startup's find strong indications of PMF, and hit their first $1M in ARR — with a select few knocking on the door of unicorn status.

This condensed playbook you are about to learn are not only the lessons of those 250+ clients, but the 20+ years of sales experience I've used to get consistent and predictable results for clients. These are the same processes I used in my early days of finance, and in 2018 to have a massive exit.

These are tried and battle tested frameworks that have yielded incredible results for many clients. Success in our program is contingent upon you being coachable and trusting the process. If you do that, we can almost guarantee that you will be successful. What you will learn in this playbook is transferable into anything you build now or in the future. Here is a tiny sample of some of the clients we've helped and what they've had to say about their experience with Rampd.

Enjoy,

Darren

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RAMPD

Why You Should Sell Before You Build (with sales framework included)

I cannot tell you how many clients have come to Rampd after months, or even years, of struggling to pivot their business. My first question is always, "What took you so long to figure this out?" Their typical response is, "I'm not sure" or "I was uncertain if coaching would be able to help with my product." Procrastination is the thief of all profits.

The common factor among nearly all of them was they decided to focus all their effort on building the "perfect" minimum viable product (MVP) before learning how to test their hypothesis. Unfortunately, this approach usually ends in a lot of burned cash and false hope.

I will share the Rampd framework you can use to test your hypothesis before writing another line of code.

The framework discussed below will save you hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, in wasted cash, heartache, and pivot hell. Unfortunately, I continue to see many founders do the opposite, mostly because they don't understand how to sell, or the idea of scaling something that does not yet exist seems crazy. Today we're going to change that.

If You Build Before You Sell It Will Lead To Higher CAC, Lower LTV, And Accelerate Burn Rates On Cash

If you haven't read Peter Zhou's (Co-Founder / CEO of Rutter) Twitter thread on what he learned in pivot hell, I highly recommend it. You can read it here.

Let's take a high level look at the framework we use to help clients test their hypothesis before focusing any more efforts on building.

Step 1: Discovery (qualification)

The purpose of a discovery call is to identify how they currently manage their workflow, and ideally how they'd like to be managing their workflow. This is done through BANT (budget, authority, need, timing) framework.

Step 2: Demo

The purpose of the demo is to take the needs / use cases they shared on the discovery and show them how your product can help solve them.

Step 3: Scoping Call

The goal of a scope is to understand what success criteria would look like at the end of a POC. In other words, what are they looking to validate with your technology before moving forward as a customer.

Step 4: Paid POC

The goal here is to validate that your technology can solve their needs / use cases.

Step 5: POC Recap

At the conclusion of the POC you set up a call to recap their success criteria to identify whether or not you were able to achieve their objectives.

Step 6: Negotiation / Close

If you've achieved technical validation, then next steps are negotiating on price, coming to an agreement, and closing the deal.

Here's a short list of benefits that will come from selling before building.

- You'll keep burn rates low.
- You'll identify a real market need faster.
- You can iterate and adjust products a lot quicker.
- You're getting paid to build, rather than building to hopefully get paid.
- The feedback you get will be more impactful.
- Your early wins will help fund iterations.

How The Sales Flywheel Leads to Scale & Competitive Advantage

The primary reason our framework has successfully scaled many sales orgs from founder led to full out salesforce, is because our processes are rooted in the underlying concepts of the flywheel.

To the contrary, I've seen many processes that will work with early stage founder sales, but will not scale.

In order for you to get your first couple of customers I'd advise you to do things that do not scale, in conjunction with things that do.

The latter is what we'll discuss today.

Your goal is to build processes that are repeatable and predictable.

The flywheel concept was coined by Jim Collins in his book, "Good to Great," and was loved, and often shared by Jeff Bezos in his annual letter to shareholders.

The idea of the flywheel describes the cycle of growth and customer-centric innovation within a business / sales model. It refers to the interconnected system of activities and services that reinforce each other, leading to exponential scale and competitive advantage.

Let's take a look!

- The more **sellers** that come onto the platform, the bigger the **selection**.
- The bigger the **selection,** the better the **experience.**
- The better the **experience,** the more **traffic** it drives.
- The more traffic, the **lower the cost structure.**

- The lower the **cost** structure, the lower the **price** of goods.

How this applies to building out a sales process is very much applicable.

- The better the processes, the better the training.
- The better the training, the faster the ramp up.
- The faster the ramp, the higher the ROI is on a salesperson.
- The higher the ROI on a SP, the lower the CAC.
- The stronger your SP are, the stronger the talent you attract is.

The number one reason sales reps fail is due to poor training. If you bring on a rep with no processes in place and expect them to "figure it out," it will rarely, if ever happen. They'll eventually burn out and leave. The antidote here is having effective processes in place. When a rep is trained correctly on the right processes, their confidence will develop organically and that confidence is conveyed to the prospect as competence, and that is what closes deals.

Also when the right training protocols are in place, they will ramp up fast - the faster the ramp, the higher the ROI is on that rep. One of the best ways to determine the appropriate ROI multiple for your sales reps is by using a commonly used metric to evaluate sales performance: the Sales-to-Cost Ratio (SCR).

The Sales-to-Cost Ratio compares the revenue generated by a salesperson to the cost associated with acquiring and maintaining customers. A higher SCR indicates a more efficient sales rep, meaning they generate more revenue relative to the costs incurred. This is why having processes and training dialed in is so imperative.

Lastly, highly trained reps become A players, and A players hang out, and know other A players, so the talent you can tap into becomes much stronger, which corresponds to higher ROI, and lower customer acquisition cost (CAC).

Key Takeaways

Using the flywheel method to develop your playbook will lead to:

- Faster ramp
- Higher ROI
- Lower CAC
- Stronger talent

Learn And Master The Mental Game of Selling

There are rules created by humans, and rules created by the universe. The difference between the two is the latter doesn’t bend, it doesn't change, it is absolute. If you want to be great. If you want to be unfuckwithable - adhere to the rules of the universe. When you fully grasp this idea, life becomes a dance, a playground.

What do I mean by this?

Life is malleable. Your thoughts become words, your words become actions, your actions become your experience, your experience becomes your life. Observe the garbage that goes through your head on a daily basis and you’ll be amazed.

Most people, including myself, walk around with limited beliefs. Different ideas, both consciously and subconsciously that find their way into every aspect of life. These beliefs will either move you forward or backwards.

What I’m going to talk about is the most overlooked part of selling. The mental game. If you master this component. Every setback, every heartache, every fear will be made right. The dots will connect. You will be a force to be reckoned with.

When You Step Into The Sales Arena There is No Lying. You Will be Exposed For Everything You Are, And Everything You Are Not.

I’ve been fortunate to work with and learn from some brilliant individuals.

There are 3 distinct characteristics I've observed in these individuals.

They're 100% accountable and responsible for their actions.

They have intense focus and a willingness to endure massive suffering.

An innate ability to bend reality to reflect their desired outcomes.

Let's unpack this…

Accountability

I, like many people, have suffered my fair share of early childhood trauma. It took me years of understanding, therapy and self reflection to come to terms with it. But once I accepted it, and forgave those responsible, that same energy that used to deplete me, began to empower me. When you go through the fire and come out the other side there is something very real that happens. I realized that no one was coming to save me. Only I could. I became 100% accountable. There will be many situations in life that are outside of my control. It's not what happens, it's how I respond to what happens that I'm responsible for. That is 100% on me. Be accountable, and be responsible.

Focus / Suffering

If fortune favors the bold, then success favors clarity. When you are clear on what it is that you want - it will come. You will be tested. It wants to know what you are prepared to do in order to achieve it, but if you stay the course, it will come. There is real power in singleness of purpose. There's real power when you burn the boats. It's how you view and handle problems. When I was a stockbroker I knew in order to get 1 lead, I had to speak with 10 DM's. That means I would get rejected 9 out of 10 times. I never chased leads. I chased the No's. I needed 9 No's until I got a yes. That's what I chased. Look at things correctly. The sky is always blue behind the clouds.

Bending Reality

There is a real malleability to life. When you become crystal clear about what it is that you want, and are willing to go to any lengths to get it, something incredible happens. The right people come into your life. The right doors open up. The right opportunities fall into your lap. The universe will reconfigure itself to deliver what it is you desire. I don't know how, but I know it's true. I've seen it many times in my life. Conversely, if you haven't learned the lesson it's trying to teach you it will keep showing up in different people and different situations. I don't believe in luck. I don't believe in coincidences. I believe in cause and effect. There is an underlying intelligence that governs the world. That intelligence wants the best for you, for all of us. Tap into it. This is why thoughts, focus and accountability are so important. Get clear on the outcomes you want, and pursue it with vigor.

How does this all tie into sales?

Sales is the business of rejection. It will show you how well you are able to deal with rejection, pressure, uncertainty and negotiation. It's a pressure cooker. And pressure creates diamonds, but it also breaks pipes. Your outcomes are contingent upon how resilient you are mentally. This is why I made the statement earlier, that there is no lying in sales. It will expose you. It will expose you mentally, for everything that you possess and everything you do not. This is why learning frameworks, role playing, practicing your pitch and getting it dialed in is critically important. Because success breeds success, and it will improve your mental game around selling.

The Takeaway

Here's 3 practices that will greatly improve your mental game around selling.

1. Role play every day for 45-60 minutes with someone, preferably your co-founder. Go back and forth on the pitch in mock scenarios. Do this for 2 weeks every morning and it will change the game for you.
2. Know all the objections that a prospect can throw at you and how to address them with complete confidence.
3. Practice tonality and enthusiasm when you pitch. You want to emphasize certain points of the presentation and fluctuate your voice throughout. Enthusiasm is infectious. You've built something. Most have put their sweat and tears into it. Convey that!

How to craft an amazing offer

In the startup game, speed can make or break a company. Scaling too quickly can lead to a host of problems, including burning through a ton of cash and high customer churn due to an inadequate product. On the other hand, scaling too slowly can cause a lot of opportunities to go to waste and make it difficult to close your next funding round.

Your goal should be to scale quickly, but responsibly..

What does “scaling responsibly” mean? Scaling responsibly means growing the business in a way that enables you to extract impactful feedback from paying users, while also learning and iterating on your product from qualified opportunities that do not move forward. It’s a win-win regardless of whether you close or don’t.

I’m going to teach you what I’ve seen work, how to implement it, and the correct way to scale responsibly, through the art of crafting a killer offer.

If used correctly the strategy discussed will cut your sales cycle in half, increase conversions and validate your assumptions about market demand, customer use cases, and product-market fit.

Paid Pilots Are The Fastest And Most Responsible Way To Validate And Scale Your Product.

How do we scale responsibly?

The way to scale responsibly is by charging for the POC. I’m amazed at how many founders struggle with this idea. Regardless of whether you charge or don’t, customers churn for three primary reasons.

1. You didn’t deliver on expectations

2. Cheaper competitor with comparable value
3. Customer support / experience sucks

The message above was sent to me from a client. This is lazy advice and one of the reasons why founders become confused.

To be clear. A paid poc is not incentivizing customers to churn - a poor scoping call prior to going live on the POC is.

The fastest and most effective way to get someone using your product is through an offer. You create an offer that is impossible to refuse.

My dude Vito Corleone had it right!

If a prospect is willing to give you a vote of confidence and move forward on a pilot, they will likely want some assurances. Consider this: as an early stage startup with no track record, social proof, or validated technology, it is a big decision for them to make.

This is exactly where the offer comes in.

Here's how it works:

You present an offer (price) with 2 different guarantees to be delivered over a specified period of time. And if you can't deliver on the two guarantees, you refund the money and allow them to use the platform for free for the next 30 days.

You present the offer in a way that makes them feel special, like you're only extending this offer because you feel like you can crush it for them. And once you're able to deliver, you want two favors in return.

Here's an example of what this looks like.

One very important note. Prior to going live on the POC, you would have a scoping call to understand what they're looking to validate, or solve for with your technology. If you feel like you can't deliver on their expectations based on what's conveyed during the sope, you don't move forward on the POC.

Here are 6 reasons why this offer is so effective.

1. You completely mitigate their downside risk.
2. In many cases, your sales cycle will be cut in half.
3. You have 3 chances to validate and close opposed to one.
4. If the POC is a success, the customer is very likely to move forward.
5. You're getting paid to build, rather than building to hopefully get paid
6. Following the scoping call you can almost guarantee a successful POC.

This is how you scale responsibility.

How to Identify The Root Cause of Pain And Crush The Qualification Call

The art of uncovering pain and identifying use cases when speaking with prospects lies in your ability to ask the right questions in a specific sequence.

What I often hear is founders jumping from question to question without unpacking and addressing some of the key points the prospect just shared. You will never reach your true potential until you learn how to extract all the right information. This begins and ends with asking strategic questions.

Luckily for you, I'm going to show exactly how to do so.

Asking questions is a process of peeling back the onion.

The Triple III Framework.

The Triple III Framework is a comprehensive approach to identifying and addressing the root causes of a prospect's pain points. By asking a specific sequence of questions, the framework helps to not only understand the duration of the issue, but also to educate prospects about potential solutions and guide them through a process of envisioning what their life could look like after utilizing your product. This process is not just a series of questions, but rather a psychological journey that helps prospects to not only understand their challenges, but also to see a path forward towards a better future.

Triple III

1. Identify pain
2. Imply consequences

3. Imagine the problem solved

Identify pain:

These questions are broad based and start with these phrases.

I'd love to understand how you're currently managing this workflow now. What does that look like?

Imply consequences:

The goal here is to highlight consequences that are happening as a result of not dealing with the issue correctly. This is rubbing salt on the wound. Here you want to understand what they're doing, if anything, to solve the problem(s) they've conveyed. These questions would look like this.

How long has this been a problem?

- Was there an incident that has motivated you to take action now?
- Why is now the right time to address this?
- Why is this on your radar now?
- What type of resources have you thrown at the problem so far?
- What have been the likes and dislikes?

Imagine the problem solved:

The goal here is to have them envision what life would be like when they're in the driver's seat using your product. It's life before and life after using your tech. These questions would look like this.

If we were able to do ____________ what would that look like for you and your team?

What does the ideal situation look like for you when it comes to managing _______________? In a perfect world what would that look like for you?

Key Takeaways

- Ask questions to:
- Identify pain
- Imply consequences
- Imagine the problem being solved

A simple framework to find buyers and eliminate window shoppers.

The discovery stage of the sales process is the most important, because this is where you identify whether they have a need, and are a good fit for your product. If you butcher the discovery, the deal is almost guaranteed to stall, or ghost at some point in the sales process — usually at the bottom of the funnel.

The problem is there are so many different sales methodologies. Most are confusing and don’t need to be.

Whenever you add confusion or complexity to a sales process your sales cycle increases.

Deals are either won or lost on the discovery call.

Let’s dig in!

Think about it like this. If the sales process was a wheel, the discovery call would be the hub that keeps the deal moving towards the finish line, and the spokes would be other stages of the process.

There are 5 stages to most sales processes

1. Lead Generation (spoke)
2. Discovery (hub)
3. Demo (spoke)
4. Scoping / POC (spoke)
5. Negotiation / Close (spoke)

The qualifying framework we teach our clients is B.A.N.T.

- Budget. What is their budget? What resources have they thrown at the problem?
- Authority. How many DM's are there? And how do they make decisions as a team?
- Needs. What are the needs / use cases / pain points?
- Timing. If they like our offer, when would they be looking to move forward?

The goal of the discovery call is to extract this information. We then use all the information they conveyed to personalize the buying journey.

Here are the 5 steps of the sales framework we use to conduct the discovery call and identify BANT.

Step 1: The Preamble

Here we communicate the reason for the call and how we run prospects through our process. It's designed to gain control of the conversation, convey authority and provide visibility into what the customer journey looks like.

Step 2: Identifying B.A.N.T.

These are questions we ask designed to identify budget, authority, need(s) and timing.

Step 3: Reiterating the information

Once you've identified BANT, you want to reiterate all the information back to them — conveying you listened, you care, and you are aligned.

Step 4: Communicating Value

Now that you've listened and understand their needs better you can share how your product can help. Think of this as the trailer to the movie. The movie being the demo. You should spend no more than 3 minutes communicating value. The goal is to get them excited by providing a quick behind the scenes look at the software and to schedule the demo.

Step 5: Scheduling the demo

Schedule the demo. This is the close on the discovery call. Make sure you schedule it while you're on the call with them followed by a calendar invite.

Key Takeaways

- Use BANT to qualify deals.
- Create a discovery talk track using the 5 steps.
- All deals are won and lost on the discovery call.

How to master the demo

One of the most underrated parts of the sales process is the demo.

Throwing s**t against the wall and seeing what sticks, hoping one of your features will peak the prospect's interest, will not work.

This is why prospects ghost.

You're not in the business of selling a product. You're in the business of solving a problem. You solve problems by first identifying where the source of pain is coming from. This is the goal of the discovery (qualification) call.

If you want to close deals with more predictability, it's imperative you master the psychology of the demo.

I'm going to discuss how to structure your demo, what slides to include and how to get them to the next step.

A Highly Personalized Demo Will Get You a Lot Further Than Feature Dumping.

Let's dive right in.

Here is the cadence (flow) of what a deck should look like.

Slide 1: Your Logo + Their Logo

Underneath your logo put your one sentence value prop.

Slide 2: Current Situation

This slide is to itemize the challenges, pain points and use cases they are looking to solve for as conveyed on the discovery. It's the current way they're handling the situation now.

I frequently see founders add their bios and talk about themselves here. Don't do this. No one cares. Unless they ask you what your background is and why you started the company, feel free to share those details. If not, skip it. Prospects are interested in one thing - "How can you solve my problems, and how quickly." That's it.

Slide 3: Key Objectives

You itemize what their ideal situation looks like when it comes to managing the workflow. What are their goals? Anything they'd like to improve would go on this slide.

Slide 4: Demo Layout

Here you discuss how you're going to walk them through the demo. It should be based on their highest priority to lowest priority needs. In other words, if you have 5 key features and only 3 are applicable, don't discuss the other 2. Start with the 3 that are most important.

When you begin presenting, preface all the features you're about to show them by pointing to the pain they mentioned on the discovery, and directing them to the solution.

Here's an example.

Me: (Name), you mentioned on our previous call that one of your biggest bottlenecks is having the team manually doing this work, as it eats up a lot of time that can be utilized elsewhere, right? (Pointing to the pain)

Prospect: Yes, that's correct.

Me: Ok cool. What I'm about to show you is how (your product) will automate this entire workflow and eliminate all the manual work. (Directing to the solution)

Following slide 4 you are going to demo your software. This should not take more than 10 minutes. Once you are finished showcasing the product, you will land on slide 5: Onboarding, and proceed through the rest of the deck.

Slide 5: Onboarding

Discuss what onboarding looks like. For ex: If the customer was to move forward, what would you need from them and what would getting started look like on their side.

Slide 6: Expected Results

Add an itemized list of what the expected results would be when using your product. If possible use a mix of qualitative and quantitative results. See my example below for some ideas of what the slide should look like.

Slide 7: Pricing

Show the pricing tiers and make a recommendation on what tier would be the best fit based on the needs they conveyed on the discovery.

Slide 8: The offer

The offer would go on this slide. Anyone who has just subscribed, you can find the issue where I discuss how to craft a killer offer here.

Slide 9: Next Steps

Add what the next steps would be from this point forward. There are typically 2 options. (1) They'd like to move forward to the scoping call, or (2) they need to circle up internally and discuss if they're going to move forward. Regardless, make sure you book a follow up call with a day/time with a calendar invite.

Here Are Five Important Takeaways:

1. A demo call should never be over 45 minutes.
2. Do not add bio slides to the deck. No one cares.
3. On slides 2, 3, and 6 go through one bullet point per slide.

4. When you present, point to the pain and direct to the solution.
5. Less is more. I've seen clients close 6 figure deals with simple decks.

Use These 5 Levers to Negotiate And Close More Business

It is rare that a deal will close without some sort of negotiation. Any informed customer is going to try and squeeze as much juice out of the deal as possible. If you do not understand how to play the negotiation game you'll walk away with suboptimal outcomes and missed opportunities.

The problem I see is founders are willing to move forward with almost any terms in order to just close the deal and get the revenue. This typically happens for 2 reasons.

They do not know how to negotiate correctly.

They fear that by negotiating they run the risk of losing the deal.

I'm going to show you how to make sure this never happens.

The Fastest Way To Increase Margins is by Learning How to Negotiate.

Some of the biggest advantages to improving your negotiation skills are:

- Higher margins
- Gives you more confidence
- Eliminates more of your risk
- Builds your reputation / brand

- Fosters stronger relationships
- Better and more favorable terms
- Gives you an advantage over competitors

Let's dive into the five levers…

Understand what the needle movers are for the prospect.

Identify what the most important parts of the deal are for the prospect, and use it as leverage. This is the "must haves," opposed to the "nice to haves."

Ideally, this should be understood during the discovery stage.

Know Every Negotiation Component of The Deal.

There might be multiple components.

For ex: Maybe you charge an implementation fee, a fixed price per seat up to a certain headcount, and charge a higher per seat price for any additional users. These are all individual components of the deal that can be negotiated.

Play The Long Game

My idea of the long game is to maybe offer a sweetheart deal where the margin isn't as great, but by associating your brand with the logo, you will create a lot of buzz. This buzz can generate social proof that you can use to close more logos. By deferring gratification, you can leverage something much more powerful in the long term.

Be Flexible

Their goal is to negotiate the deal with more favorable terms for them. When they make proposals, or requests, don't decline. Instead, use other levers to negotiate. The idea is to counter their request with something in return. Always be flexible.

For example, a customer may request a lower price. You could counter by saying, "We're willing to offer you the service at that price for the next 6 months, but after that, you'll be retroactively put back onto our standard pricing. Or you can guarantee the price for 2 years, and incorporate an opt out clause where they could walk away from the deal after 12 months if they weren't completely satisfied."

Know Your Floor And Ceiling / Stand Your Ground

- Floor - The price you are not willing to go below.
- Ceiling - The ideal price you'd like to get for your product.

Let's say the ceiling (what you want to get) is $50,000, and the floor (what you will not go below) is $30,000. In between the two is where the negotiation happens. And if the deal economically and socially (proof) doesn't make sense, and they are unwilling to play ball, then you need to know when to stand your ground and walk away.

Key Takeaways

- Understand the needle movers
- Know the negotiation levers
- Play the long game
- Be flexible
- Know your floor and ceiling

How to Pitch With Confidence And Excitement.

If you get this piece dialed in, it will have a huge lift in your ability to close.

What am I talking about?

Tonality and voice fluctuation.

Why is this important?

Because people buy excitement, they buy enthusiasm, they buy conviction. This is all conveyed in the tone of your voice.

The problem I often see is founders pitch in a monotone voice with very little excitement or voice fluctuation. This is wrong and hurting your sales. A prospect perceives this as a lack of conviction in your product. Why? Because, emotions add depth and resonance to your communication, making it more impactful.

Don't worry, I'll show you how to execute this correctly.

Direct questions get direct answers.

Everybody has heard the expression: It's not what you say, but how you say it. This is partially true. It is what you say, and how you say it that drives home the message.

There are 3 areas you need to understand in order to execute here.

1. Tone
2. Pitch
3. Language

Let's take a look!

Tone

Your tone is how you convey meaning and conviction to your message. This will greatly impact your ability to influence and persuade during the sales process. Tone plays a crucial role in establishing credibility, building rapport, and capturing the attention of the prospect.

When your tone matches the intention behind your words, it creates a sense of authenticity and trustworthiness, making your message more persuasive and compelling.

I've always found that prospects will judge your engagement with them, and the opportunity you're offering, based on the conviction in your voice. They'll judge your sincerity and credibility by how you speak. This affects how they respond to you and your message.

When you pitch in a monotonous tone it can be misconstrued as you not being into what you're offering, and come across as a real lack of insincerity in the product. Conversely, an expressive tone conveys excitement and enthusiasm with the prospect. It carries emotion. Enthusiasm is infectious. When the prospects feels it, they believe the validity and authenticity of your product. And that's what sells.

When I was a stockbroker, I can't tell you how many times I opened accounts on a 100-share trade, only to have the prospect ask me after agreeing to buy, "What is the name of the stock we're buying again?"

It's wild, but it was a testament to them buying me and my conviction in what I was selling.

Pitch

When speaking about pitch I'm referring to the rise and fall (emotion) of your voice while speaking. It adds meaning, emphasis, and emotional expression to your words. What you want to do is raise and lower your voice throughout your presentation, based on where you are in the pitch.

For example, if I'm presenting the offer I want to sound really confident and like I'm doing them a huge favor by offering them this exclusive deal. If the prospect is sharing how they've had a bad experience in the past with another company your pitch should be low and convey empathy and compassion. You want to pay attention to your tonality during conversations. By varying your pitch, the pace at which you speak, and volume, you can make your speech much more engaging.

Language

At all times regardless of whether or not you're pitching you should communicate with strong language, and avoid sounding weak. This is a big problem on a lot of the calls I review. I hear founders constantly trying to be likable and agreeable. Don't do this. You convey authority, strength and confidence by doing the opposite.

Yes, it's important to build rapport, but if the prospect needs what you're selling based on the pain point they've communicated, and they're making excuses on why they can't move forward, push back, challenge them. People will respect that.

Here are the main culprits to weak language and how they are received by the prospect.

Is now still a good time to talk? = No, can we reschedule?

Did I catch you at a bad time? = Yes, can we reconnect over email?

Can I have your email address? = I don't like to give out my email.

Do you have a better number? = You can call this mainline.

Would you like to go ahead and… = Call me back, let me think about it.

Do you have any questions? = None that I can think of.

Could you tell me your budget? = I don't like to divulge that info.

No successful person will ever respect or take you seriously if you use this type of language. DM's want to deal with people on their level. This type of language projects insecurity and a lack of confidence. I get it, you might not have the confidence right now because you're new to the idea of selling. A good way to be more confident is by making sure you have your pitch mastered. This comes with repetition and role-playing. You have 100% control over this.

They say fake it to you make it. I say fake it until you become it. Do it until you believe it yourself.

And stop trying to be nice. Be a professional and be competent. If you're the authority and know your shit, speak with assertiveness and confidence. This confidence MUST be consistent across all lines of communication.

Here's the right way to convey confidence/assertiveness:

Example:

Wrong way: Did I catch you at a bad time?
Right way: I'll keep this brief - the reason for my call is…

Wrong way: Can I have your email address?
Right way: What's the best email address for you?

Wrong way: Do you have a better number?
Right way: What's your cell phone number?

Wrong way: Do you have any questions?
Right way: What questions can I answer for you?

Wrong way: Would you like to go ahead and…

Right way: I'm really excited to work with you. Let's get you started!

Wrong way:: Could you tell me your budget for…
Right way: What is your budget for…

Controlling the conversation and using assertive language will dictate the authority and engagement you command from the prospect.

Key Takeaways

- Accentuate your tonality based on where you are in your presentation.
- Spend 15 minutes everyday role playing your tone and delivery.
- Sell with excitement and conviction always.
- Direct questions get direct answers.
- Speak with strong language.

Use Price Anchoring to Eliminate Sticker Shock & Negotiate Smarter.

How to address the, “What is The Cost Question,” early on in the customer buying journey.

This question often comes up on the discovery call, and is most frequently where I see founders fumble and negotiate against themselves.

The problem is founders throw out an arbitrary number because they’re unsure of what pricing actually is at this point, and end up charging a lot less than what they can.

Today I’ll show you how to help solve this problem.

Price anchoring is used to influence the prospect’s perception of the value of your product.

Let’s look at an example of how it’s used in everyday life.

Let’s say I’m in the market for a new car and I walk into a dealership and the window sticker says $50,000. That number would be my price anchor.

The way the anchor works psychologically is people are by default automatically drawn to the highest price they hear, or in this case see.

The goal of the sticker price (anchor) is to lead me to believe that if I’m able to purchase the vehicle for below $50k, it would be a deal.

However, if I know the invoice of the car is let’s say $43,000 and they're asking $50,000, then my new anchor would be $43k. My negotiation room is now in between those two numbers, not down from $50k.

As discussed in “Use These 5 Levers to Negotiate And Close More Business.” One of the principles of negotiation is knowing your floor and ceiling.

The Floor is the price you are not willing to go below.

The Ceiling is the (anchor) ideal price you’d like to get for your product.

Here’s how to use it when a prospect asks, “What is Your Pricing?”

Find the ceiling, or your average contract value (ACV) you’d like to get for your product and anchor them on that price.

Example:

Let’s say you have 3 different pricing tiers that range from $25k - $50k, with your ACV falling somewhere in the middle of the two at $35k.

What you want to do is anchor them on that number.

So if they were to ask you, “What is Your Pricing?”

You'd say exactly this.

"I can't tell you definitively at this point because I'd have to figure out what needs to be done before I can share concrete pricing. I will say our pricing ranges anywhere from $35k - $50k, based on what the build would look like. Here's what I'd suggest, let's schedule the demo, and based on the information you shared with me on this call I can figure out exactly where you'd fall in that range, and following the demo if it makes sense we can discuss next steps from there.

Is that fair enough?"

Now, you notice my range starts with my ACV of $35k. The reason I start there is because when you provide a range people logically think they're not going to be at the high, or the low end so they'll fall somewhere in the middle. In this case the middle of $35-$50k is let's say $42k. There's the anchor. So when you come to them with a price of $35k, they believe they got a deal, because it's below $42k.

Key Takeaways

- People always anchor on the highest price they hear.
- You should always sell with pricing tiers. Ideally three.
- Know your ACV. If you're unsure, take a guess based on comp pricing.
- Anchor them on a range with your lower number being your ACV.
- Use the rebuttal provided above to address the pricing question.

How to Handle And Overcome Buying Objections

In a world where competition has become increasingly fierce, prospects have become alarmingly more stringent in their criteria when moving forward with a product.

I've listened to many calls where the prospect is literally telling the founder what needs to be done in order for them to move forward, and because of the founder's limited experience in addressing their concerns correctly, the deal fell through.

Once you're able to read between the lines on what prospects are trying to convey, and address those concerns — your close rates will go way up.

Learning the science of objection handling conveys competence and authority.

Before we dive in, I'll use the sport of boxing as a metaphor to frame how to think about this.

A boxer has 4 punches they can throw at you. A jab, cross, hook and an uppercut. There's various combinations they can throw, but there's only 4 punches.

A boxer's job is to understand the different combinations that can be thrown at him, how to slip each, and counter with his own to lower the chances of getting caught, and potentially knocked out.

As a founder you need to understand the punches (objections) a prospect can throw at you, and how to address them, so you do not lose deals that are closeable, and you increase your chances of closing. Usually, it's only four or five outcomes that play out consistently.

Let's take a look at the 5 most common objections and how to address them.

5 Most Common Objections

1. Too expensive / cheaper solutions
2. How are you guys different from competitors?
3. Timing is off / Not the right time.
4. Don't think the problem is big enough.
5. Build in house vs. outsource

4 steps you need to understand to handle objections.

1. Acknowledge
2. Isolating
3. Pain / Solution
4. Commitment / Close

Here's what it would look like addressing the "Too Expensive" objection.

Acknowledge

I understand your concern.

Isolating

Is budget the only thing that is preventing you from moving forward, are there any other concerns?

If No: There are no other concerns, proceed to Step 3: Pain / Solution.

If Yes: There are other concerns you need to identify each one of them and use this cadence.

Pain / Solution

Ok, on our previous call you mentioned that you were using 3 different pieces of technology and it required a lot of bandwidth and resources for your team to manage this workflow. Is that correct? (Pointing to the problem)

With us, we are literally removing that bottleneck because our solution automates the entire process for your team. Not only do you no longer have to duct tape different pieces of technology together, but we are giving you and your team back all that time to focus on higher priorities and ship faster. And the effort required to manage this is pretty much nonexistent. We do all the heavy lifting for you. That's why the investment might be slightly higher with our product, it's because our execution is significantly better than any other competitors. (Directing to the solution)

Commitment / Close

Now let me ask you this. If we could make this more economically feasible for you, would you consider moving forward?

If Yes: They would move forward, then offer them a better deal.

If No: They would not move forward, ask why.

Best Practices

Write down the most common objections you hear from your ICP.

Write out the rebuttals using the cadence mentioned above.

Study and role play the rebuttals so they can be delivered flawlessly when the objection comes up.

Key Takeaways

- Acknowledge the objection.
- Isolate the objection.
- Point to the pain and direct to the solution
- Get the commitment and close.

Learn These 6 Game Changing Principles And You Will Close Consistently.

If you want to get good at selling, stop reading books on sales and start paying attention to human psychology. When you begin to understand and incorporate the different psychological levers into your sales process it will drastically improve your ability to win deals.

The problem with most posts or books regarding founder sales is they focus on the execution, or the technique, without explaining the psychology of why people say yes.

Psychology leverages emotions, cognitive biases, and persuasive techniques to influence people to make purchasing decisions.

One of the best books ever written on the topic of persuasion is, Influence by Robert Cialdini. In the book he explains there are 6 principles that need to be engaged in order to close business. Those principles are:

1. Reciprocity
2. Consistency
3. Social Proof
4. Authority
5. Likability
6. Scarcity

I'm going to briefly break down each one of them and explain how we coach clients to implement and incorporate them into their process.

1. Reciprocity

As humans we are hardwired to reciprocate favors. The principle of reciprocation leverages the human tendency to feel obligated to give back when we receive something from others. It creates a sense of indebtedness and increases the likelihood of compliance or a favorable response to a request or offer. This is exactly what we want with selling.

Implementation

One of the highest compliments you can give to another human being is to genuinely listen to them. Listening demonstrates respect, empathy, and a genuine interest in understanding their challenges, feelings, and experiences. It raises the price of your stock, and makes the person feel more connected to you. During the discovery call, when you ask questions, get into the habit of always asking follow up questions to the answers they provide. This is demonstrating real interest. People do not care how much you know, until they know how much you care. You can only do this effectively if you listen. This is the principle of reciprocation. If they feel like you're listening, they are more inclined to divulge more and more information. The more information you have, the more leverage you have. The more leverage the higher the probability you close. Listen to understand, rather than listening to reply.

2. Consistency:

The principle of consistency highlights the human desire to be consistent with our past beliefs, commitments, and actions. Once people make a choice they tend to stick to it in order to maintain internal coherence. It's sticking to your word and following through on what you said you would do. Persuasion can be achieved by aligning your value prop with the needs of the prospect. This is why the discovery call is so important.

Implementation

Consistency is the key to the entire sales process. We achieve this by understanding the needs of the prospect and walking them through the process. Each time they proceed to the next stage they are making small commitments to themselves. Small commitments are them being consistent with what it is they need. In other words, as they move forward they are staying consistent with the problems they need solved and this conveys to us that our process is addressing those needs.

3. Social Proof

Social proof suggests that people tend to follow the actions or behaviors of others, particularly when they are unsure about what to do or how to act in a specific situation. We look for what others are doing, or saying to validate our thoughts. Reviews, case studies, logos, testimonials are all social proof. Landing one big logo can provide huge leverage in proving to prospects that you are credible.

Implementation

We incorporate social proof into the process through case studies and testimonials everywhere and anywhere potential prospects live. LinkedIn profiles, website, decks and any other customer facing collateral we add logos, case studies and testimonials. This is by far one of the biggest needle movers in gaining confidence and credibility.

4. Authority

People follow those who are perceived as credible, knowledgeable, or in positions of authority. This is the idea of uniforms. Police, firemen, doctors, lawyers, and security personnel wear uniforms to convey authority.

Implementation

Throughout the buying journey you have to convey you are the authority. This is done in 2 ways. (1) Knowing your shit. You've built a company around solving problem(s) in the space you need to be able to clearly articulate that. (2) Controlling the conversation by conveying assertiveness, and not being a pushover. I see this often. Clients are afraid to be assertive. They allow the prospect to control the conversation. Don't do this. They come to you because they have a problem and believe you can solve it. You're the one wearing the lab coat. That needs to be conveyed throughout the buying journey. People do business with other people who are assertive. This conveys confidence and competency, and confidence closes deals. Always be the authority by controlling the buying journey.

5. Likeability

People are more inclined to do business with people they like. By building rapport, LISTENING and establishing a genuine connection you increase your persuasive power. Your vibe attracts your tribe. Ideally your ICP should be your tribe. You need to understand them.

Implementation

The science behind selling is listening. When you listen, you can ask really good questions. Here are examples of how to begin questions.

I'd love to zoom in on ______ and better understand ______.

You mentioned ______, what does that look like?

When you say ______ how do you define that?

What do you see as being the______?

What do you think about_______?

Help me better understand_______.

Questions that begin with these statements build trust, competence and rapport in the eyes of the prospect. This is how you become more likable and moves you closer to the close.

6. Scarcity

The principle of scarcity suggests that people perceive something as more valuable when it is limited or scarce in availability. It creates a sense of urgency, fear of missing out (FOMO), and drives individuals to take action or make a purchase to secure the scarce resource, or opportunity before it's no longer accessible.

Implementation

This is why we created the offer. The offer is designed to do 4 things. (1) To generate revenue quickly. (2) To get them using and validating your product fast, with zero risk. (3) Identifying indications of PMF. And (4) creating scarcity (FOMO) that triggers them to make a decision quickly. Here's an example.

We are willing to extend you an offer that completely protects your downside risk and maximizes your upside. The caveat is we will only extend this offer to you for 2 weeks.

Would you like to hear it?

For $1000 we guarantee that we can deliver on _______ and _________ in the next 30 days, and if we can't deliver we'll refund you the $1000 for the inconvenience and allow you to use the platform for free for the next 30 days. Again, we'll extend this offer to you for the next 2 weeks. All we ask is once you've validated that our tech will work I want two favors from you (i.e. principle of reciprocation) (1) To move forward on an annual agreement. And (2) to use you as a case study to share with other potential customers. Is that fair enough!!

6 Takeaways

1. Reciprocity: Listening and asking great follow up questions.
2. Consistency: Having prospects make small commitments.
3. Social Proof: Sharing wins with case studies, testimonials and logos.
4. Authority: Controlling the conversation and conveying confidence.
5. Likeability: Build trust, rapport and competence by listening.
6. Scarcity: Make them feel special with a limited, exclusive offer.

How To Close The Deal After Getting The Verbal Commitment

The goal is speed.

Why?

There's a million and one reasons, but the biggest one is, "Time Kills Deals."

The more that time passes, the less excitement, and the more people default back to their habitual behavior. As humans we are constantly self justifying everything we do by rationalizing our way out of taking action towards the things that we should be doing.

Here's an example that I sometimes see in my business. I'll speak with founders who come in through a referral and are super excited about building out their sales GTM. But for whatever reason time passes and they know they should be moving forward with coaching, but they allow every excuse and self justification mechanism to prevent them from getting their customer acquisition process dialed in. They do the easy thing, the habitual thing, which is to default back to trying to figure it out on their own - repeating the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Again, this happens rarely, as many founders are good allocators of capital and understand how important sales is, but it does happen.

We can always find a way to not move forward. I've seen many deals fall apart even after the verbal commitment due to numerous reasons, but it always rolls up to a lack of next steps not being properly laid out. Which is exactly what I'm going to show you, to prevent this from happening.

'A deal is never closed until the money is in the bank.'

The number one reason our clients have so much success in selling is because the framework we teach them is designed to account for every possible path the prospect can take during the buying journey. We account for all the bottlenecks and doors the prospect can get out of during the process. This allows us to control every part of the journey that is within our control.

Here's how it works.

Automatically assume that if you let go of the prospect's hand during the buying journey they will get lost in the woods, and then it becomes your job to go find them and get them back on the path. This is why at the end of every step of the process there is a close - a next step with clear instructions to prevent this from happening.

Example:

At the end of the discovery, the deadline is to schedule the demo.

At the end of the demo, the close is to schedule the scoping call.

At the end of the scoping call, the close is to schedule the POC.

At the end of the POC, the close is to close them as a customer.

Issues happen when there is not a clear next step from getting them to signing the agreement after verbally committing to moving forward.

Here's the easiest way to fix this.

Let's say they go through a successful POC, and they commit verbally to moving forward. What you have to do here is schedule next steps, which could be onboarding. If onboarding is not applicable then you scheduled the go live date with a calendar invite sent. You then send the agreement.

Why this works is because they would have to sign the agreement prior to the, "go live date" you scheduled on the calendar. It acts as a deadline, or way to vet out any potential problems that may arise that can prevent the deal from moving forward. You want to get them to the next step as quickly as possible.

For example when someone moves forward with us, I schedule the kickoff call with a calendar invite, and then send the agreement and the retainer. If the agreement, or retainer, hasn't been paid by the kickoff date, there's a problem. The kickoff date acts as a deadline to have the agreement signed, and if not you'll figure out what the real problem is.

Key Takeaways

- Always remember, time kills deals.
- The goal of every call is to close on next steps.

- If the agreement isn't signed by the go live date, there's a problem.

Wrap Up

Now I know that was a fair amount of information, but I'll be honest, this was just scratching the surface when it comes to this entire process. That's not to say you won't get results, you absolutely will.

However, as the old saying goes "if you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far go together", so I have an offer for you. Every month we selectively work with 7 companies to help them achieve PMF and scale to their first 1M in ARR, so if that sounds like you then click this link and you can apply for one of those spots.

We can't guarantee a place in any cohort as they fill up quickly, but we do have a waiting list for companies committed to growing their business.

P.S. Finally, if you know anyone else who would benefit please share this playbook with them.