



Building a Sales Engine for Growth

A practical sales workshop for Help to Grow: Management Alumni - drawing on 20+ years of real-world selling across technology, automotive, energy, and innovation sectors.

HELP TO GROW: MANAGEMENT ALUMNI SALES WORKSHOP

COLM WATLING

Before We Begin

Every business is unique

Your customers, your market, your offer — none of it is identical to anyone else's in this room.

So is your sales process

There is no universal playbook. What works brilliantly for one SME may be irrelevant for another.

But common threads exist

Across sectors and business sizes, certain disciplines, habits and frameworks consistently separate high-performing sales organisations from struggling ones.

📌 One size does not fit all — but the principles we'll cover today are remarkably transferable.



About This Session: 25 Years of Selling – in 45 minutes

From consumer electronics at Dyson and Sonos, to automotive accessories for Triumph, lithium battery storage, university partnerships, and multi-million-pound innovation programmes — the lessons here come from the field, not the textbook.

What We'll Cover Today

01

Lead Generation & Marketing Basics

Value proposition, segmentation, targeting — and above all, measurement.

02

Building a Repeatable Sales Process

Mapping, documenting and managing a process anyone in the business can follow.

03

Measure What Matters

The key metrics that genuinely drive growth and improve conversion.

04

Scale Beyond Founder-Led Selling

Transferring knowledge and building capability across your team.

05

Using AI Sensibly in Sales

Where AI genuinely adds value — and where it falls flat.



CHAPTER 1

Lead Generation & Marketing Basics

Making the phone ring — and making sure it rings for the right reasons.

The Purpose of Marketing



One job. One measure of success.

Marketing exists to generate inbound enquiries. Full stop. If your current activity — social media, email, events, PR — is not driving qualified leads into your pipeline, you need to ask whether it is actually working.

If it's not making the phone ring, is it worth spending on?

Before you start marketing: Know Your Value Proposition

What problem do you solve?

Be ruthlessly specific. Customers buy solutions to their problems, not features of your product.

Who has that problem?

Segmentation and targeting. The tighter your definition, the more resonant your message.

Why you, not them?

Your unique differentiation. What makes you the credible, compelling choice over the alternative?

Measure Lead Quality, Not Just Quantity

Most SMEs count leads. High-performing ones qualify them. You need to track both the **volume** of enquiries coming in and the **quality** of those leads — are they the right sector, size, budget, and buying intent?

Chasing volume without quality is expensive and demoralising. Measure both, and adjust your marketing spend accordingly.

1

Volume

How many enquiries per week/month?

2

Quality

Are they the right fit for your offer?

3

Source

Which channel drove the enquiry?

Do What Works. Stop What Doesn't.

Track every lead source. Review regularly. Double down on what converts. Cut what doesn't — no matter how much effort has gone into it. This is the discipline that separates systematic growth from hopeful spending.



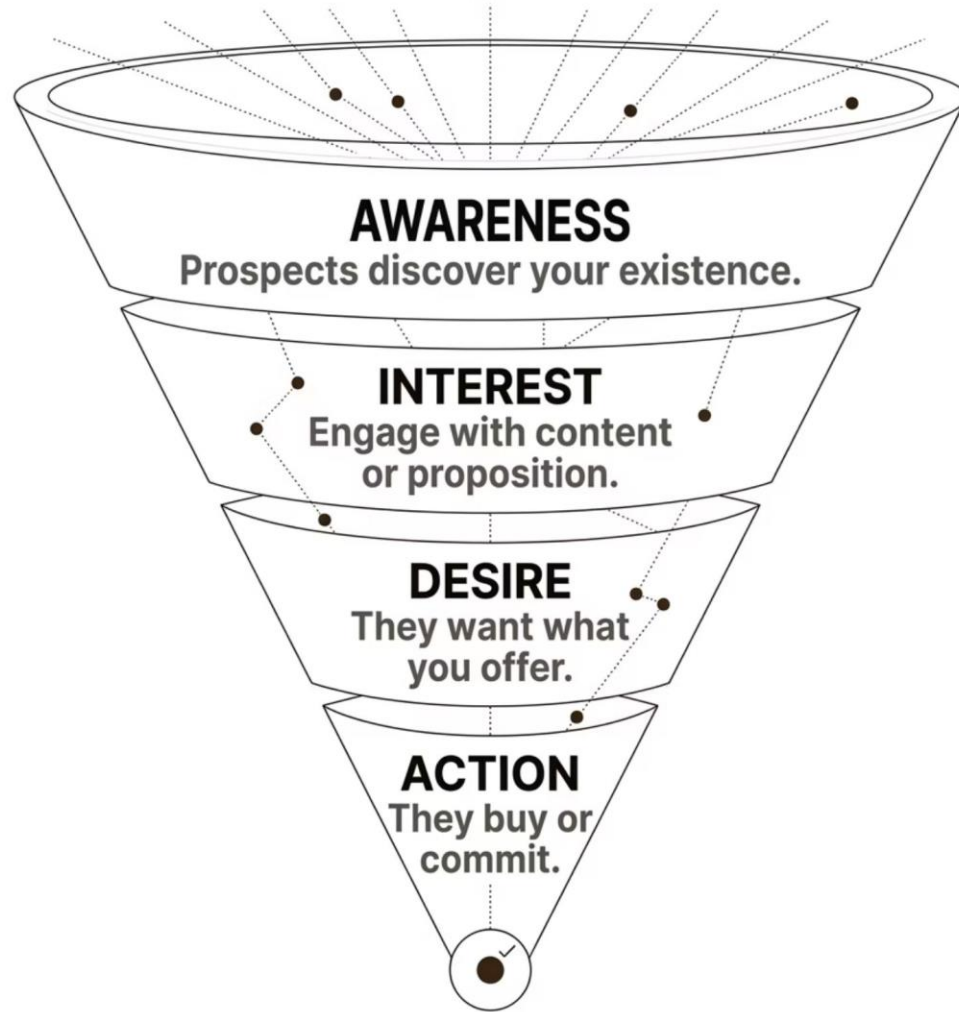
CHAPTER 2

Building a Repeatable Sales Process

If your sales process only works when you're in the room, it's not a process — it's a personality.

Its also a limit.

The AIDA Sales Funnel

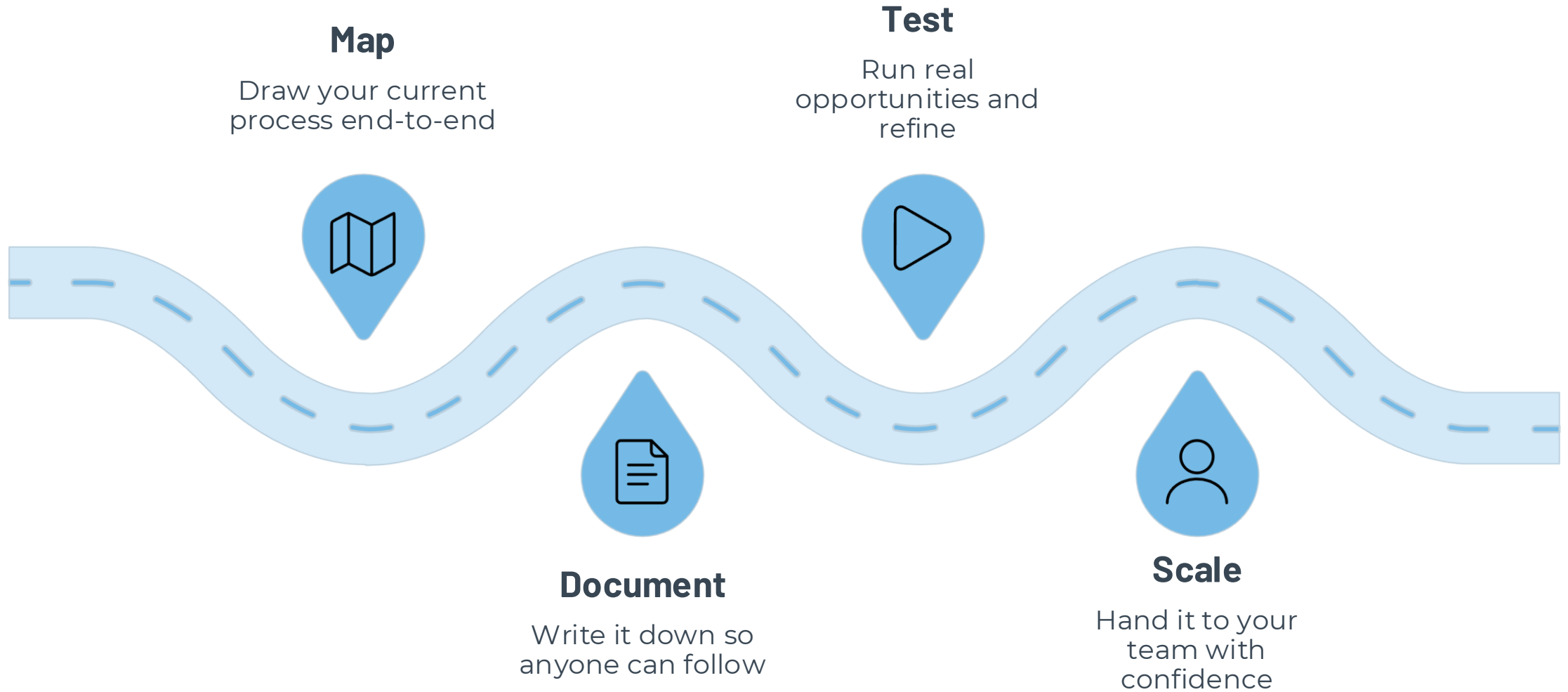


A simple model with powerful applications

AIDA is one of the most enduring frameworks in sales for good reason — it maps the buyer's journey from first contact to closed deal. Your job is to move prospects deliberately through each stage, with clear actions and metrics at every step.

There are many funnel models. The specific one matters less than the discipline of **having one and following it consistently**.

Mapping Your Sales Process



Start by mapping what you actually do today — not what you think you should do. Honesty at this stage makes the documentation far more useful.

A Process Anyone Can Follow



Write it down

If it only exists in your head, it cannot be taught, refined, or handed over. Documentation is the foundation of scalability.



Define each stage clearly

What needs to happen for a prospect to move from one stage to the next? Make exit criteria explicit — not just for wins, but for disqualification too.



Make it repeatable

Consistency is the goal. A repeatable process enables learning — you can only improve what you can measure, and you can only measure what is consistent.



CHAPTER 3

Measure What Matters

The metrics that drive growth — and the ones you're probably ignoring.

Key Sales Metrics Every SME Should Track



Conversion Rate

At every stage. Not just lead to close — stage by stage. Where are you losing people?



Pipeline Value

The total weighted value of live opportunities. Tells you whether you have enough in the funnel to hit your targets.



Win Rate

The percentage of proposals or quotes that result in a sale. A core indicator of sales effectiveness and proposition strength.



Sales Cycle Length

How long does it take to close a deal? Knowing this helps you forecast revenue and manage cash flow.



Customer Acquisition Cost

What does it actually cost to win a new customer? Compare this to lifetime value to assess profitability of growth.

Why Stage-by-Stage Conversion Matters



Fix the right leak, not the loudest one

Most SMEs focus on winning more at the bottom of the funnel. But a small improvement in early-stage qualification or mid-funnel nurturing often has a dramatically larger impact on revenue than closing harder at the end.

You cannot fix what you cannot see. Track every stage.

CHAPTER 4

Scale Beyond Founder-Led Selling

The moment your growth depends entirely on you, you've built a constraint, not a company.

The Founder-Led Selling Trap



Your biggest sales asset is also your biggest risk

Many SMEs grow brilliantly on the back of the founder's energy, expertise and personal relationships. But this model has a hard ceiling — your time, your energy, and your capacity to be in multiple conversations at once.

When the founder is the sales process, the business cannot scale, and it cannot be sold.

Transferring Sales Knowledge

1

Capture

Document what you know — objections, responses, stories, successful pitches.

2

Train

Role-play, shadowing, joint calls. Teach by doing, not just telling.

3

Empower

Give others the tools, scripts and confidence to run their own conversations.

4

Review

Regular pipeline reviews and deal debriefs keep standards high and learning continuous.

The Power of Referral Marketing

Your happiest customers are your best sales team

Referral marketing consistently delivers the highest-quality leads at the lowest acquisition cost. Ask every satisfied customer for a referral — and consider incentivising them to do so. A warm introduction closes faster, at better margins, with less friction than any cold outreach.



What Good Selling Actually Looks Like



Listen more than you talk

The best salespeople ask brilliant questions, then shut up.
Understanding the customer's real problem is worth more than any pitch.



Relieve pain, don't just create gain

Solving an existing, urgent problem is almost always more compelling than selling a future benefit. Find the pain. Fix it.



Process and repetition

Sales is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. Consistent activity, consistently applied, is what fills a pipeline.

CHAPTER 5

Using AI Sensibly in Sales

Where artificial intelligence genuinely helps — and where it quietly makes things worse.

Where AI Adds Real Value in Sales



Prospect Research

Rapidly summarise company backgrounds, identify pain points, and tailor your opening conversations.



Email Drafting

First drafts of follow-up emails, proposals, and outreach — edited by you, not sent blindly.



Bid & Tender Analysis

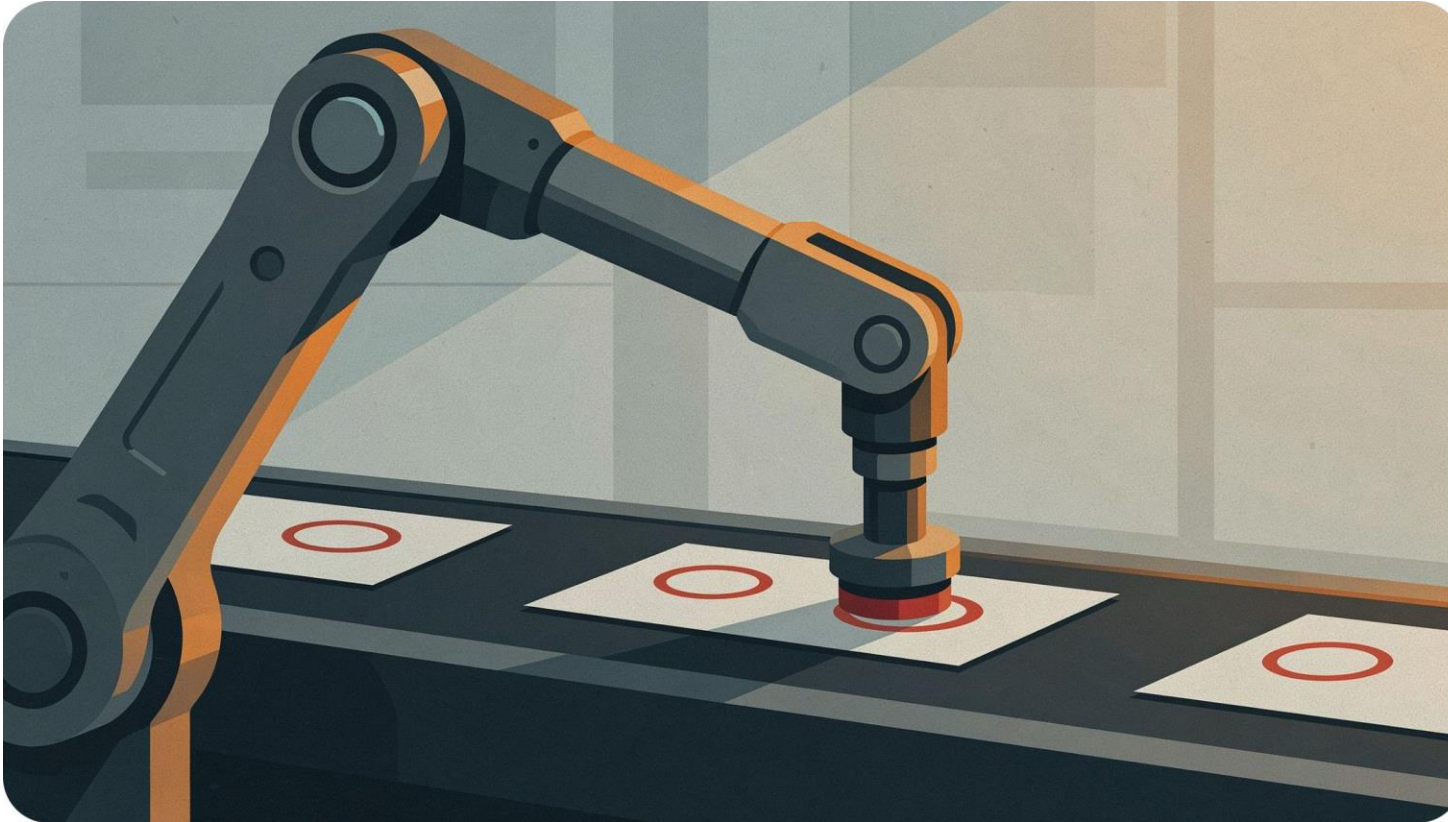
Parse lengthy tender documents, identify key criteria, and structure your response more efficiently.



Knowledge Management

Capture institutional knowledge — FAQs, objection responses, case studies — in a searchable format your whole team can use.

Where AI Falls Flat



Generic output is easy to spot – and easy to ignore

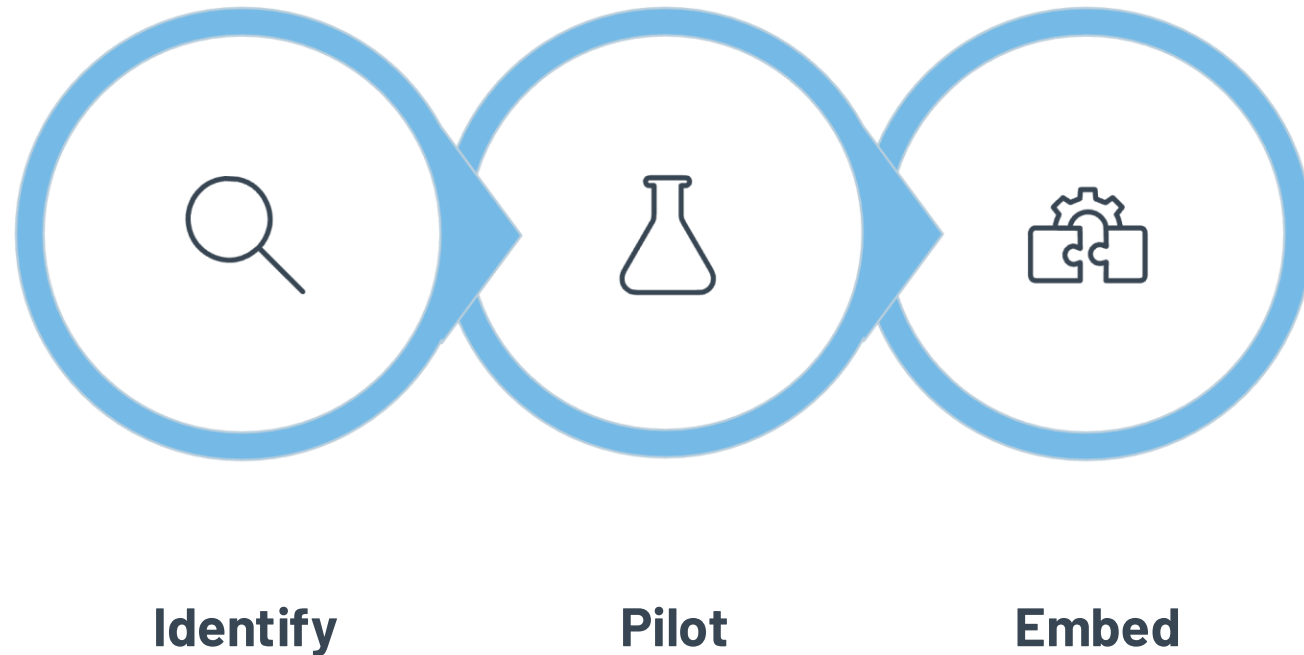
AI-generated marketing copy, presentations and pitches that haven't been properly reviewed and personalised are immediately obvious to experienced buyers. They signal low effort, not high efficiency.

✗ Unedited AI pitch decks and proposals

✗ Bulk AI-written emails with no personalisation

✗ Treating AI output as finished work

The Pragmatic Approach to AI in Your Sales Operation



Use AI as a productivity multiplier, not a replacement for human judgement. The best results come from founders who treat AI as a capable first-draft assistant that always needs editing.

CHAPTER 6

Lessons from the Field

Real-world insights from product, service, consultancy and innovation programme sales — £5M+ in combined contract value.

What Works in Practice

Referrals, always

Ask every satisfied customer for a referral. Incentivise them. A warm introduction almost always closes faster and at better terms than cold outreach.

Listening as a competitive advantage

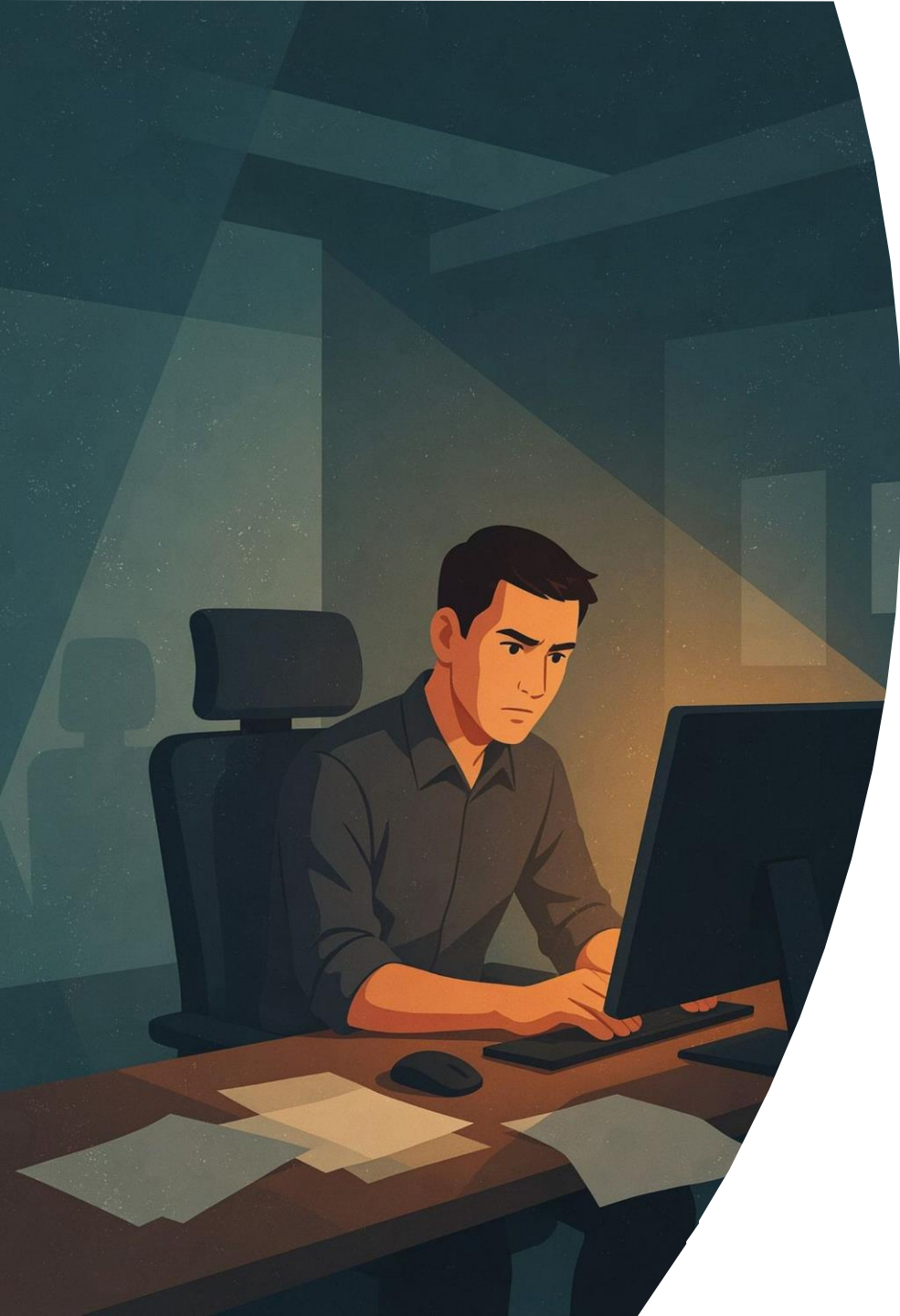
Most salespeople talk too much. The ability to listen deeply, ask the right follow-up questions, and reflect back what you've heard is a genuine differentiator.

Solving real problems

Relieving a customer's existing pain is almost always more powerful than selling them a vision of future gain. Start with their problem, not your product.

Process and persistence

Consistent daily activity — calls made, emails sent, follow-ups completed — fills pipelines. Inspiration plays a small role. Perspiration plays a very large one.



What Doesn't Work – Ever

Same process, expecting different results

If something isn't converting, continuing to do it harder is not a strategy. Change it.

Changing too many things at once

Alter one variable at a time. Otherwise you'll never know what made the difference — or made it worse.

Generic AI output

Buyers can tell. It damages credibility faster than a cold call ever could.

Giving up too soon

Most deals require multiple touchpoints. Most founders stop at one or two. The fortune really is in the follow-up.

Key Takeaways

01

Market with measurement

Track lead quality and source. Do more of what works. Stop what doesn't.

02

Build a process others can follow

Document it, test it, hand it over. Get out of the middle of every deal.

03

Track the metrics that matter

Conversion rates, pipeline value, win rate, cycle length, acquisition cost.

04

Use AI as a tool, not a shortcut

It's a brilliant assistant. It's a terrible salesperson. Keep humans in the loop.

05

Ask for referrals, listen deeply, solve real problems

The fundamentals haven't changed. They just need to be done consistently.



Now It's Your Turn

You leave today with practical frameworks, real-world examples and — most importantly — things you can do differently on Monday morning. Sales is not a talent. It is a discipline. Build the process, measure the results, and keep going.

- ❏ Questions, reflections, and open discussion — let's make the last few minutes count.