

The Worst 50 Sales Words to Use on Sales Calls

A practical guide to the words that reduce trust, lower authority, and stall deals.

519,000+

B2B sales calls analyzed

46% / 54%

Ideal rep-to-buyer talk ratio

11–14

Questions per discovery call

Why language quietly kills deals

Every sales team works on process, messaging, and qualification. But many deals are lost much earlier — in the rep's phrasing. A weak phrase makes a rep sound uncertain. A vague phrase blurs value. A pushy phrase triggers resistance.

The five damage patterns

1. The rep sounds less certain and less credible
2. The offer sounds less valuable or too negotiable
3. The conversation feels salesy or pressured
4. The buyer works harder to understand the value
5. The next step loses momentum and clarity

“If a phrase makes a rep sound uncertain, vague, pushy, or cheap — remove it.”

Small wording choices create large commercial consequences, compounded across every call.

How to use this checklist

Review your call scripts, discovery frameworks, demo talk tracks, objection-handling language, and follow-up sequences against the 50 items on the next pages. The goal is not to make reps sound robotic — it is to make them sound clearer, calmer, sharper, and more commercially credible.

8 categories covered on pages 2 and 3

- Trust-Damaging & Defensive
- Pushy / Manipulative
- Vendor-Centered Language
- Vague / Buzzword-Heavy
- Weak / Confidence-Killing
- Permission-Seeking & Low-Authority
- Discounting & Value-Eroding
- Weak Follow-Up & Next Steps

#	BAD PHRASE	WHY IT HURTS	SAY INSTEAD
TRUST-DAMAGING & DEFENSIVE			
1	To be honest / Honestly	Creates doubt — implies prior dishonesty A	State the fact directly
2	Trust me	Replaces proof with pressure A	Use proof or precedent
3	It's not a problem / No problem	Can dismiss a real concern too quickly C	Acknowledge and address specifically
4	But	Cancels what came before it U	Use "and" or separate the point
5	However	Sounds adversarial when overused U	Use simpler transitions
6	Does that make sense?	Crutch after unclear explanations U	Ask a better diagnostic question
WEAK / CONFIDENCE-KILLING			
7	Maybe / Probably	Weakens certainty and commitment U	Use a condition or direct statement
8	I think	Lowers authority on facts you should own U	Own the answer directly
9	Hopefully	Signals lack of control U	Replace with a specific plan
10	Kind of / Sort of	Blurs the point, sounds imprecise U	Say exactly what it does
11	Um / uh / like / you know	Too many fillers weaken delivery C	Pause instead
PUSHY / MANIPULATIVE			
12	Are you the decision maker?	Too blunt for modern buying groups A	Ask about the decision process
13	Do you have budget for this?	Too transactional, too early U	Ask about priority and funding path
14	You need to	Triggers reactance and resistance A	Offer a recommendation instead
15	You should	Prescriptive and self-important U	Frame it as an option
16	If I don't hear back from you	Sounds like a threat or guilt trip A	Leave a respectful path forward
17	I don't want to waste your time	Signals early retreat, low status U	Show confidence and directness
18	Quick question	Feels like a prospecting trick C	Lead with relevance
19	Can I just get 15 minutes?	Leads with your ask, not their value A	State the reason first
PERMISSION-SEEKING & LOW-AUTHORITY			
20	Sorry to bother you	Lowers status immediately A	Be respectful, not apologetic
21	I wanted to	Starts from your agenda A	Make it collaborative
22	Can I send you some information?	Passive and generic U	Send a specific, relevant asset
23	Thank you for your time	Frames the call as a favor to you U	Confirm usefulness instead

"Top reps do not sound more polished. They sound more believable."

Credibility is built through specific language, not confident-sounding filler.

#	BAD PHRASE	WHY IT HURTS	SAY INSTEAD
VENDOR-CENTERED LANGUAGE			
24	We provide	Starts with the seller, not the buyer A	Start with the buyer's outcome
25	Let me show you how	Pushes product before relevance U	Tie product to their issue first
26	Our company	Over-centers your business U	Shift to the buyer's team
27	Our platform	Tool-first, not outcome-first U	Talk in buyer terms
28	Repeating your company name too often	Makes the call about you U	Use it only when needed
DISCOUNTING & VALUE-ERODING			
29	Discount	Pulls attention to price, lowers value A	Trade terms, scope, or timing
30	Free trial	Cheapens the offer if used carelessly C	Use "pilot" with success criteria
31	Payment	More emotionally charged than neutral U	Use "monthly amount" or "commercials"
32	Contract	Feels heavier than needed U	Use "agreement" where appropriate
33	Implementation	Raises effort and change-management fears U	Use "getting started" or "rollout"
34	Price too early	Shifts discussion away from value A	Build the business case first
VAGUE / BUZZWORD-HEAVY			
35	Best-in-class	Empty superlative A	State the actual differentiator
36	World-class	Chest-thumping with no proof A	Use a specific proof point
37	Industry-leading	Generic claim without evidence A	Use a measurable statement
38	Cutting-edge	Says nothing about business value A	Explain the business outcome
39	AI-powered	Feature language without value U	Tie AI to a workflow result
40	Robust	Vague praise with no substance A	Name the specific capability
41	Scalable	Abstract unless defined U	Describe how scale works in practice
42	Seamless	Usually unbelievable without proof U	Describe what is actually easy
43	End-to-end	Catch-all phrase with low clarity A	State the actual span
44	Optimize	Vague improvement word U	State the exact improvement
45	Leverage	Corporate jargon that slows comprehension A	Use a plain verb
46	Overexplaining / Abstract hype	Weak core message masked by examples U	Lead with the relevant use case
WEAK FOLLOW-UP & NEXT STEPS			
47	Just checking in / Touching base	Adds no value, easy to ignore A	Re-engage with a specific reason
48	Let's circle back	Vague — no owner or date A	Lock a concrete next step
49	I haven't heard back from you	Adds guilt, not value A	Reset with relevance
50	It's on the roadmap	Sells future promises over present value A	Sell what exists; explain the gap

What These 50 Words Reveal

Most bad sales-call language fails not because it is obviously terrible — but because it quietly pushes the conversation in the wrong direction. Across all 50 phrases, the same patterns repeat.

1. The rep sounds less certain
2. The offer sounds less valuable
3. The buyer feels more pressure
4. The explanation gets less clear
5. The next step gets less concrete

*“Weak call language is not a copy issue.
It is a revenue issue.”*

Words compound across discovery, demo, objection handling, and follow-up.

What top-performing reps do differently

- **Sound direct without sounding aggressive**
No filler words, vague qualifiers, or overexplaining.
- **Lead with buyer relevance, not company language**
Outcomes, workflows, and problems before features.
- **Avoid pressure — keep buyer autonomy intact**
Guide the process instead of forcing it.
- **Replace buzzwords with operational clarity**
Explain what changes, for whom, and when.
- **Lock specific next steps**
No "circle back" or passive follow-up.

Practical takeaways for sales teams

1. Review top discovery and demo calls for the phrases in this checklist.
2. Remove weak, vague, apologetic, and price-eroding language from scripts first.
3. Coach reps to replace generic wording with buyer-specific rewrites.
4. Tighten follow-up language so every message has a reason, not just a nudge.
5. Treat call language as a conversion lever, not just a style preference.

Want your team to practice stronger call language?

Use AI role-play to catch weak phrasing and coach reps on what to say instead before it shows up on real deals.

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