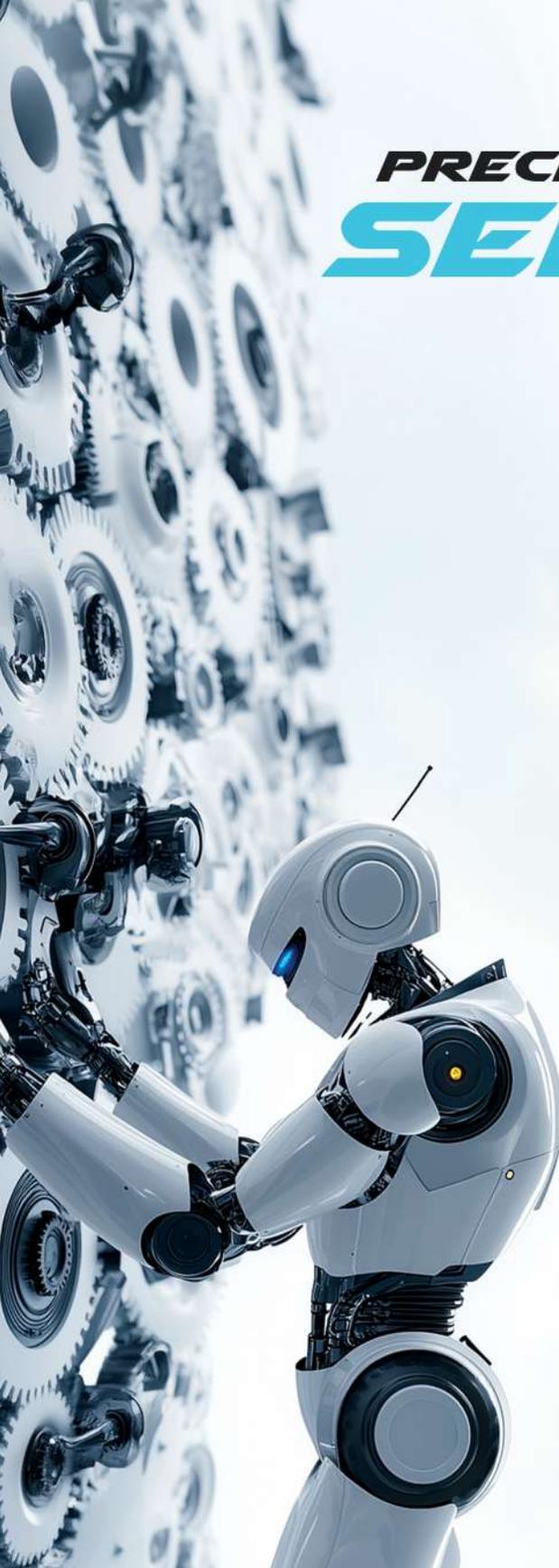


 CloseStrong

# *PRECISION GUIDED* **SELLING**



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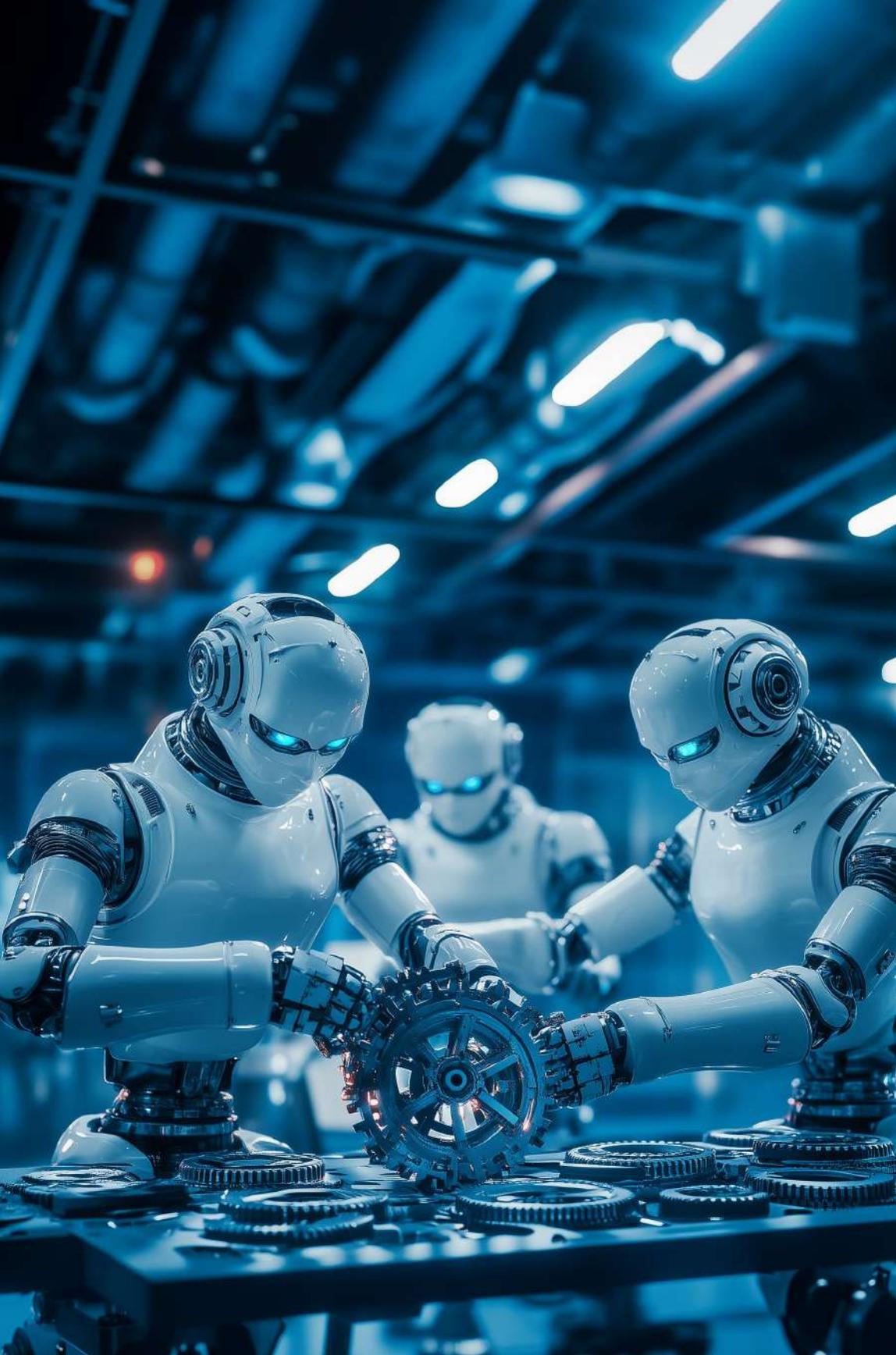
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# INTRODUCTION

In the pages ahead, we've distilled over 20 years of deal coaching, training, primary research and consulting experience across 47 countries into just 9,500 words. This isn't just a book; it's a concentrated guide to mastering the art of closing more and higher-quality deals.

Let's put this into perspective: based on average reading speeds, it will take you anywhere from 19 to 47.5 minutes to absorb this knowledge. Less than an hour to gain insights that have driven results for thousands of professionals worldwide. That's an investment not in a book, but in yourself.

By committing this time, you're not just reading—you're becoming a student of the profession, sharpening your skills, and equipping yourself to approach every deal with greater confidence and clarity. The lessons here aren't theoretical; they've been proven in boardrooms, sales floors, and negotiations across industries and cultures.

So, are you ready to take that step? Let's dive in and make those 9,500 words a game-changer for your career.

*PRECISION GUIDED*  
**SELLING**



CHAPTER 1

# THE MODERN SALES LANDSCAPE AND THE NEED FOR PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

## INTRODUCTION

### THE EVOLVING WORLD OF SALES

In today's world of sales, the landscape has shifted dramatically. Sales professionals are facing unprecedented challenges: smaller pipelines, more complex buying committees, and rapidly shifting market conditions. Gone are the days when having a 6x pipeline was the norm; now, most forecasts are based on a much smaller 2x pipeline. This means that both capturing a higher percentage of existing deals and maximizing the quality of those deals have become essential to achieving revenue goals. At the same time, customers are struggling with their own decision-making processes, further complicating the path to closing deals.

In this environment, we need more than traditional tools and methods. We need a living, breathing support system that adjusts to changes in our value, competing alternatives, and customer needs—one that delivers real-time data and insights to empower us to compete and win. This is where Precision Guided Selling (PGS) steps in.

As Rita McGrath notes in her book *Competing at the Speed of Change*, companies can no longer rely on fixed value propositions. Instead, they must compete on a series of short-term, transient advantages, adapting quickly to the ever-changing market landscape.

### THE CHALLENGE: SALES HAS BECOME OVERCOMPLICATED

Modern selling has become a labyrinth of complexity. Customers are now executing committee-based buying decisions, with an average of seven stakeholders involved in each deal. The rise of “no decision” outcomes reflects the growing struggle buyers face as they navigate this complexity.

*The average number of stakeholders involved in B2B purchase decisions has increased to 11.4.*

Source: Gartner (2023), Future of Sales Research.

For sellers, it has also become overly complicated, often due to over-engineered sales methodologies, an overwhelming number of tools, and conflicting priorities. This leaves us juggling an array of tasks, trying to anticipate customer needs, competing alternatives, and evolving market conditions. We need a simpler, cleaner approach that works.

The core challenge lies in simplifying this complexity and focusing on what truly matters: helping clients make better decisions—biased towards us—while making sales decisions in alignment with the strategy and best practices of our companies. Precision Guided Selling simplifies this process, giving us the tools to not just understand customer decisions but to lead them.

Research shows at the 90% level that sales professionals do not want to “fill out blank forms”. We want to spend time selling not filling in CRM fields, or a blank form on your account at the end of a training class. In fact, the same research shows that what we want is Guided Selling, to give us content and insight that helps us sell. In essence, this is what the PGS AI will do.



### REFRAMING THE ROLE OF SALES PROFESSIONALS

Your role in sales is far more than hitting quotas or closing deals. You are a co-executor of your company's growth strategy, working one deal at a time to drive progress. To do this effectively, you need access to your ever-shifting growth strategy, including changes to your solutions, new pricing models, competitive value shifts, and peer best practices that save time and improve the quality of your work. Precision Guided Selling bridges this gap by providing actionable insights tailored to each opportunity.

This approach distills selling into its most essential components:

1. Key decision makers at three levels.
2. Key decision criteria for each.
3. Why are you better than the alternative on those criteria?

It's about identifying the 2-3 reasons why your solution is the best fit for the customer, given their key decision criteria—the elements that set you apart from the competition. This is in essence your value proposition one deal, one stakeholder at a time.

## KEY PILLARS OF PGS

### 1. Focus on the Few Key Elements That Matter

One of the most powerful aspects of PGS is its ability to simplify. Instead of overwhelming your customer with every feature and benefit, PGS helps you zero in on the few critical reasons why your solution is the right choice. These reasons align directly with key decision criteria and also focus on key commercial terms, and key aspects of your solution configuration.

Based on \$12 billion in win/loss analysis, we know that you win when you:

*Show the customer how your solution meets their needs with higher confidence and lower risk than the alternatives.*

### 2. SIO Framework: Strategic, Initiative, and Operational Buyers

In complex buying committees, not all stakeholders are equal. The SIO framework categorizes buyers into three levels:

- **Strategic:** High-level decision-makers focused on setting the strategy/direction and long-term outcomes.
- **Initiative:** Leaders driving specific projects or initiatives to enable the strategy.
- **Operational/Technical:** Tactical stakeholders managing day-to-day execution.

Within this framework, identifying “thought leaders”—the 1-2 individuals whose opinions carry the most weight—is crucial. These thought leaders often sway the group and can make or break a deal.

### **3. Strategic Spend and Value Conversations**

Customers spend money to bring their strategies to life and achieve key performance indicators (KPIs). PGS shifts the conversation from the price of your product to the value and business impact of your solution. This change in perspective allows you to connect your offering directly to the customer's strategic objectives, making it a must-have rather than a nice-to-have.

### **4. The Future of Sales: Predictable Negotiations and Co-Creation**

Negotiation doesn't have to be a last-minute scramble. With PGS, you can anticipate negotiation dynamics months in advance and begin shaping the conversation early. Our primary research shows that 97% of all buyer tactics can be anticipated and fall into two categories.

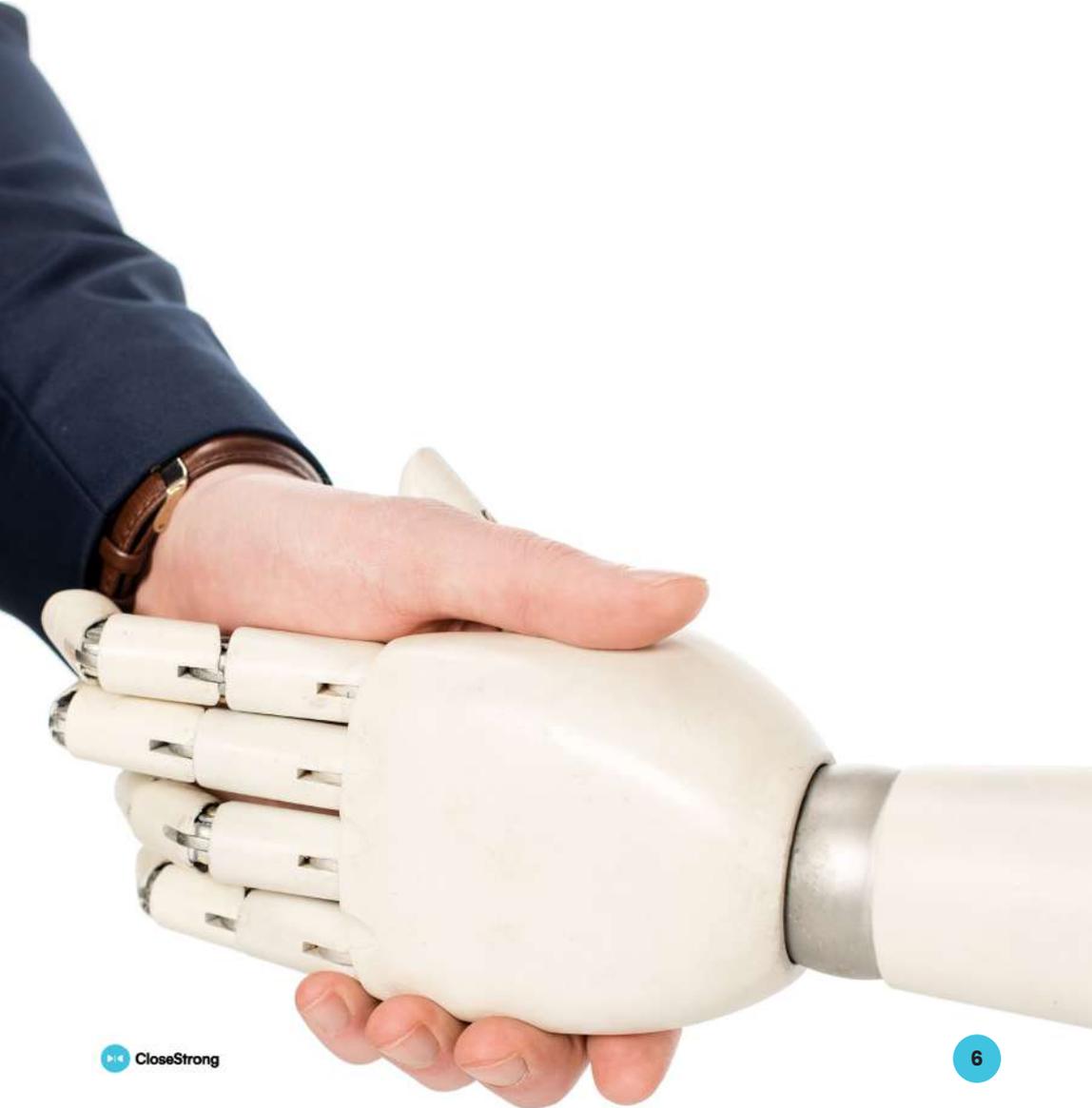
We will also show that by providing customers with multiple paths forward—offering varying levels of investment and effectiveness—you empower them to co-create a solution with you. This collaborative approach builds trust and increases the likelihood of closing the deal on favorable terms.

### **5. Understanding and Shifting the Balance of Power: Capturing Value**

Many sales professionals operate under the misconception that power is always on the buyer's side. The reality is that B2B deals require a balance of power—50/50—where both sides need each other. By leveraging the insights provided by PGS, you can confidently navigate negotiations, knowing the value you bring to the table. Conclusion: PGS as a Living, Breathing System.

## 6. Deal Risk

A core element of PGS is risk management. We proactively identify areas of pursuit where our positioning may be weak and take strategic steps to strengthen them to increase wins.



### GROUNDED IN REAL LIFE PRACTICE

Precision Guided Selling is not just another sales methodology. It's a dynamic, adaptable framework rooted in decades of experience and billions of dollars in deal coaching. It's designed to work with the natural flow of the buyer journey, not against it. Whether you use it in order or out of order, PGS provides both the framework and more importantly our AI provides curated best practices at every stage of the buy/sell cycle. Your peers' best practice and corporate go to market strategy are also aligned at every stage.

PGS is based on our founders' work coaching on over 20,000 deals, in 47 countries, over 20 years. We've executed this work with Google, Microsoft, FedEx, Lucent, United Airlines etc. It is grounded in best practice actions and data not concepts.

Our work coaching on billions of dollars of new and renewal business we worked with many talented AE's and AMs. One thing we've learned is that most of the top performing reps actively look for what we call "disconfirming data" to de-risk their deals. As we move through this process together we will raise the probability of winning higher value deals by de-risking our opportunities.

Modern selling is about precision and focus—and PGS is your guide to mastering it. With this system, you'll close more deals, maximize opportunities, and lead your customers to better decisions. This is the future of sales, and it's time to embrace it.

**HIGHER WIN RATE  
HEALTHIER DEALS**



CHAPTER 2

## QUALIFY: HIGHER WIN RATE, FASTER, HEALTHIER DEALS

Lets start with a note about risk and the role it plays in closing deals.

- Beginning with qualification it's important to start to de-risk our deals. We're going to start here and look to pro-actively lower risk to improve the probability of closing a high quality deal. We will continue to do this in the next few sections as well.
- Our coaching practice shows us that the best of the best AE's and AM's look for "red flags", areas of the deal that put them at risk.
- Decision science shows us that most of us as humans look for confirming data to prove we are right!
- Scientists however are taught to actively search for data that is disconfirming to their hypothesis...this leads to better outcomes
- Let's be sales scientists and systematically reduce risk in our deals for higher close rates and better quality deals

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

The very first step of PGS is proper qualification.

We all know it's important, but our coaching practice shows that in our zeal to close as many deals as possible, based on our almost always increasing sales goals, we're reluctant to walk from deals... and that makes sense. We all know that proper qualification leads to more wins, faster deal cycles, more optimized deals, and greater renewals.

Qualification is kind of a boring topic; however, maybe these stats can add some excitement to it and answer...WIFM?

### **Increased Win Rates:**

*Companies with a well-defined qualification process experience win rates that are 25-30% higher compared to companies without structured qualification processes.  
(Forrester Research)*

### **Improved Sales Efficiency:**

*Sales teams that rigorously disqualify poorly qualified leads spend up to 40% more time on high-value opportunities.  
(HubSpot Sales Report)*

### **Higher Deal Size:**

*Qualified opportunities are 67% more likely to result in larger deal sizes.  
(SiriusDecisions)*

### Shortened Sales Cycles:

*When opportunities are properly qualified, **sales cycles are reduced by 20-25% on average.***  
(Gartner Research)

### Increased Renewal Rates:

*Proper qualification aligns sales efforts with customers who are a better fit for the company's offerings, leading to up to **40% higher renewal rates.***  
(Salesforce State of Sales)

### Reduced Churn:

*By pursuing only well-qualified opportunities, companies **reduce customer churn by 30%**, as better-fit customers are more likely to remain satisfied and continue renewing contracts.*

We need to know what the attributes are of ideal opportunities for past deals and use those to qualify new ones. We want to look at ideal opportunity attributes that are actionable and measurable; we are better off having fewer that actually make a difference. In fact, many times, if we have 5-7 ideal opportunity attributes, 2-3 might be more heavily weighted than others in terms of driving good deals.

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

To develop ideal opportunity criteria, we often ask:

- What were the last 5 great deals? What made them great?
- What were the last really bad deals? What made them bad?

We do not want to overcomplicate these. If it turns into a huge research project to determine if this account or opportunity is worth pursuing, then we may have gone too far and are not likely to take the time to qualify. We want actionable criteria that make a concrete difference.

Our goal is to close high-quality deals, but we also need to know when to wall and reduce the risk of wasting time and resources or closing a bad deal with low renewal rates. This saves time for better deals at a higher close rate with better renewals.



**AREAS TO DE-RISK THE DEAL:**

# QUALIFY

Ultimately, there are 3 outcomes of qualifying:

1. It is so bad and can't be fixed, we walk.
2. Pursue but adjust to make it a better fit.
3. It aligns with attributes of our best deals, so we move forward.

There are exceptions, of course, mostly strategic ones that can influence us to pursue less-than-ideal deals. It could be just to get a foot in the door and upsell or to bring a new product on board. However, we need to be judicious and make certain we're not rationalizing pursuing a bad deal.

Some typical criteria would be things like access to executives. Later on in PGS, we will talk about how to trade for access to executives when presenting solutions. It might be that they don't have a budget, so we downsize the deal or run a pilot.

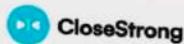
### HOW TO MITIGATE RISKS: QUALIFY

- **Define Clear Boundaries:** If the deal stretches your capabilities, outline explicit terms to avoid overextending resources.
- **Pilot or Trial Options:** Offer a smaller-scale pilot program to test the waters before committing fully.
- **Contractual Safeguards:** Include clauses to protect against potential downsides (e.g., performance-based incentives or phased commitments).
- **Refine Success Metrics:** If the deal doesn't meet ideal criteria, consider recalibrating success metrics to prioritize strategic over immediate gains.
- **Flex Criteria Where Feasible:** Identify non-essential criteria you can compromise on without sacrificing your core business objectives.
- **Dig Deeper:** Look beyond surface criteria to uncover hidden value. For example:
  - Is this deal a gateway to a new market, industry, or partnership?
  - Could it lead to long-term revenue through cross-sells or upsells?
- **Expand the Scope:** Explore if there are additional needs or challenges you can solve that would increase the deal's worth.

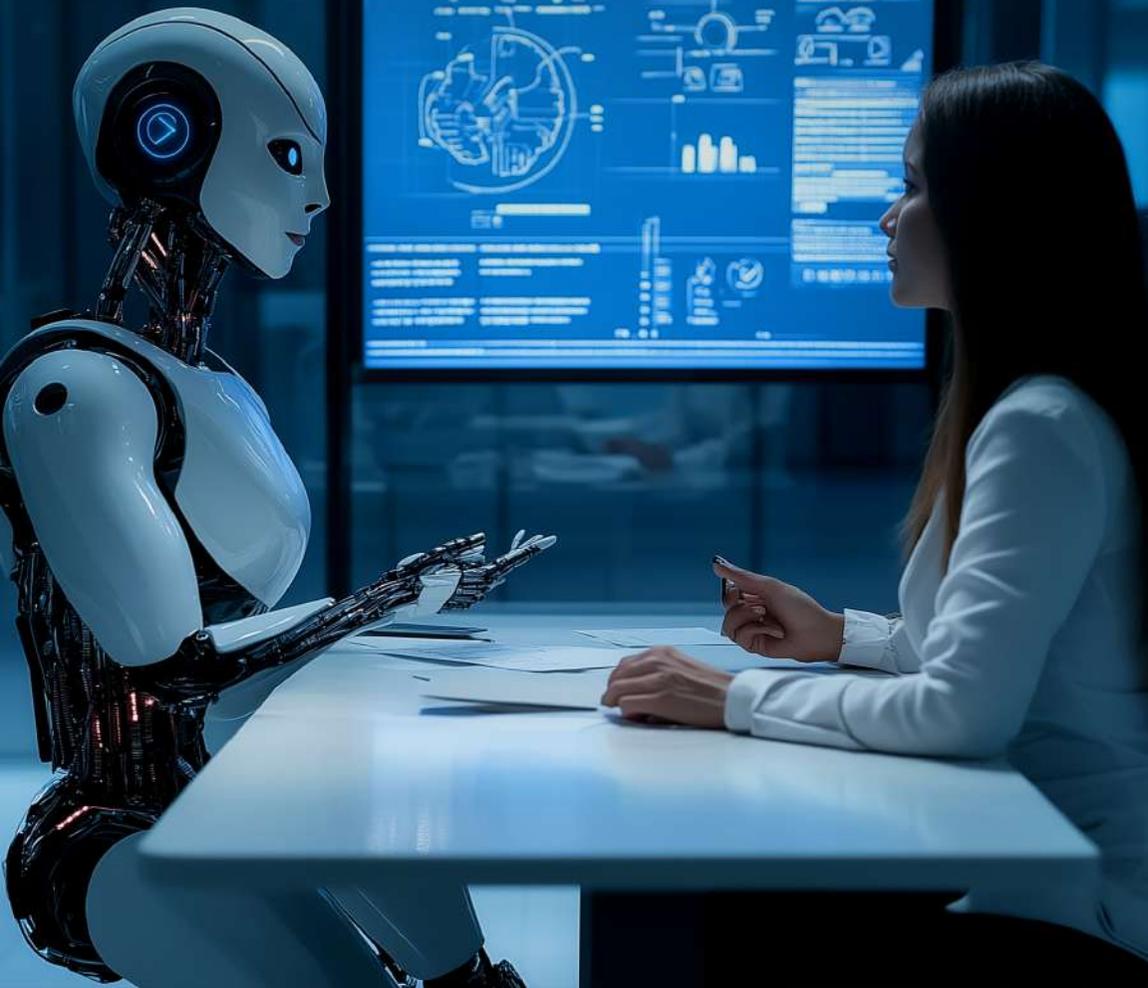


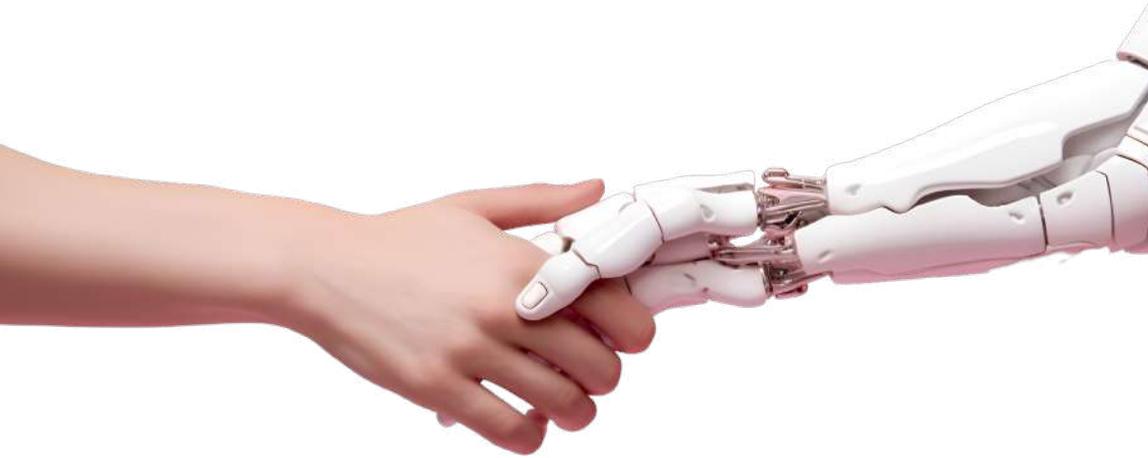
The PGS APP will provide you with custom curated qualification criteria based on best practices of your peers and in alignment with corporate strategy.

You will also be provided with a list of actions designed to de-risk the specific opportunity at each stage of the buy/sell cycle.



# ***STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT***





### CHAPTER 3

## **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: WHO ARE WE TALKING TO AND WHAT ARE WE TALKING TO THEM ABOUT?**

Most likely, this has happened to you: a deal is lost when an uncovered stakeholder emerges.

In this section, we're going to work through who we need to be talking to and get a preliminary sense of what we're talking to them about. We will think through the following areas to show us where we are at risk. Later, we will work on how to change the conversation.

Most sales methodologies define customer roles that are tied to us: coach, economic buyer, etc. The goal many times is the role they play for us—for example, are they the decision-maker? Do they control the budget.

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

Our goal is to align buying influences around what they own in their organization and where they stand in the strategic hierarchy. We need titles and names that match three roles: Lets assume the seller is

1. **Strategic:** Who owns the strategic direction for this aspect of their business? Who is driving the overall process? The strategy might be to raise revenue or profit.
2. **Initiative:** Who is responsible for putting initiatives in place to drive strategy execution? The initiatives might be to roll out a new pricing program or train salespeople.
3. **Operational/Tech:** Who handles the operational implementation? These are the people who will implement and guide the use of your solution.

Ideally, we need at least one stakeholder at each level.



### SHIFTING THE CONVERSATION

We need to be highly aware of the conversations we are having with various stakeholders. Often, we need to change that conversation. The problem is that we react to the conversation the customer wants to have—perhaps they are comparing us to someone else in terms of price.

The issue with this initial conversation is that it tends to “anchor” the discussion and impact subsequent discussions. When we’re reacting, we get caught in that trap. Instead, we want to proactively observe the conversation to make sure it’s the right one. Doing this as early as possible in the deal cycle is critical, as it can otherwise impact the conversations throughout the entire deal cycle, ultimately affecting both our win rate and deal quality.

We want to move from “what” they are buying to “why” they are buying. We want to slowly and diplomatically change that conversation to their KPIs and the business impact of our solution on their KPIs.



### IDENTIFYING THOUGHT LEADERS

We also need to know who the thought leader is. You will notice identify thought leaders in these ways:

- They have deep knowledge of the subject matter.
- Others look to them and consult with them frequently and pay attention to them.
- They shape the narrative and have persuasive arguments.
- Body language and tone project authority.
- They are natural leaders whom others follow.
- They have a strong reputation and respect within their organization.
- They redirect the group and provide action steps.

Another key reason we lose is not being aware of and connected to the thought leader who, many times, is leading the decision unofficially.

*64% of deals are won when sellers identify and engage with the thought leader early in the decision-making process.*

Source: Chief Sales Officer Insights, Sales Performance Study.

### HOW TO: GAINING ACCESS

Getting to B2B buyers today is challenging due to several key factors:

1. **Information Overload:** Buyers are bombarded with sales pitches and content, making it hard for outreach to stand out.
2. **More Educated Buyers:** They research independently and engage sales reps late in the decision-making process.
3. **Longer Buying Cycles:** Internal bureaucracy and multi-stakeholder involvement slow decision-making.
4. **Digital Gatekeepers:** Tools like spam filters, call screening, and LinkedIn restrictions block outreach efforts.
5. **Crowded Markets:** Similar offerings make differentiation harder, and buyers demand clear ROI.
6. **Remote Work:** Reduced in-person interactions make relationship-building more challenging.
7. **Economic Pressure:** Budget constraints and scrutiny prolong or derail deals.

Getting in front of a B2B buyer requires creativity and a deep understanding of their needs, interests, and challenges. In a later section we will introduce the concept of “sponsored access” but meanwhile, Here are some out-of-the-box strategies to stand out and connect with buyers:

### 1. Leverage Personalization at Scale

- **Send a Personalized Video Message:** Use tools like Vidyard or Loom to create a short, custom video that directly addresses the buyer’s specific needs. Mention their recent initiatives, challenges, or even a social media post to show you’ve done your homework.
- **Customized Swag:** Send a small, personalized item (e.g., a notebook with your company logo and a handwritten note) that resonates with their business or industry.

### 2. Add Value Before Selling

- **Create a Bespoke Resource:** Develop a mini case study, industry trend report, or tailored strategy document specific to their company or industry.
- **Host a Small Private Event:** Organize a virtual or in-person roundtable for a niche group of decision-makers to network and discuss shared challenges. Invite the buyer and subtly position your expertise.

### 3. Use Social Media in Unexpected Ways

- **Comment Strategically:** Engage thoughtfully on the buyer's LinkedIn posts or on posts they've interacted with. Provide insights or ask questions that reflect your expertise.
- **Tag Them in Relevant Content:** Share valuable content (industry insights, whitepapers) and tag the buyer if it aligns with their interests.
- **Engage in LinkedIn Groups:** Join industry groups where your buyers are active and provide valuable input on their posts.

### 4. G Be Unforgettable with Gifting

- **Target Niche Communities:** Participate in industry-specific forums, Slack groups, or subreddits where your buyers hang out and offer authentic, helpful advice.
- **Attend Their Events:** If your buyer is speaking or attending a conference, attend and introduce yourself (virtually or in person).
- **Offline Ambush with Tact:** If appropriate, drop off a creative package at their office (if they're on-site). For example, a coffee mug with "Let's brainstorm over coffee!" and a Starbucks gift card.

### 6. Be Unforgettable with Gifting

- **Unexpected Deliveries:** Send something unusual but relevant, like a plant with a note: "Let's grow your business together."
- **Curate a Book:** Send a business book tailored to their industry challenges with a note explaining why it reminded you of them.
- **Experiential Gifts:** Offer something experiential, like a virtual escape room or wine tasting, where you can interact casually.

## 6. Use Humor and Creativity

- **Funny LinkedIn Message:** Lighten their day with a witty subject line or opening line like: “This email will self-destruct in 5 seconds (just kidding). But seriously, this might solve your X problem.”
- **Send a Quirky Survey:** Design a fun quiz related to their challenges (e.g., “How Future-Ready is Your Company?”) and follow up with results.

## 7. Tap Into Mutual Connections

- **Ask for an Introduction:** Use LinkedIn or your network to find mutual connections who can introduce you.
- **Work with Internal Champions:** Identify lower-level employees or colleagues of the buyer who might be open to conversations and can advocate for you internally.

## 8. Build Credibility Through Thought Leadership

- **Publish Content:** Write an article or post that addresses the buyer’s key challenges and share it where they’ll see it.
- **Host a Webinar or Podcast:** Invite industry experts or peers of your buyer to a discussion on relevant topics and invite them to participate or listen.

## 9. Create a Unique Campaign

- **Direct Mail Campaign:** Design a creative direct mail sequence that leads to a digital interaction, such as scanning a QR code for an exclusive offer.
- **Gamify Outreach:** Send them a riddle or challenge related to their business. Reward them with valuable insights or a fun prize.

## 10. Partner with Complementary Providers

- Collaborate with another vendor or partner whose services complement yours and co-market a solution to the buyer. They'll be more likely to respond to a trusted partner.

## 11. Leverage Data

- **Hyper-Target with ABM:** Use Account-Based Marketing platforms like Terminus or Demandbase to deliver personalized ads to your buyer's organization.
- **Geo-Targeting:** If the buyer's team is centralized, use geo-fencing to display ads to them when they're near their office or specific locations.

## 12. Show Empathy and Relatability

- **Acknowledge Their Pain:** Open your outreach with a direct acknowledgment of their current challenges (e.g., "If you're like most heads of IT, you're struggling with X...").
- **Humanize Yourself:** Share a relatable personal anecdote to create an emotional connection.

## 13. Use Unique Outreach Cadences

- Combine email, LinkedIn, direct mail, and even text messages (if appropriate) in a thoughtful sequence.
- For instance:
  1. Start with an insightful LinkedIn comment.
  2. Follow up with a direct message referencing the comment.
  3. Send a personalized email offering a solution to a specific problem.

#### 14. Give Without Asking

- Offer free tools, templates, or resources without expecting an immediate meeting or sale. Building goodwill can lead to reciprocity over time.

#### 15. Co-Create Value

- Invite them to co-author an industry report, participate in a panel discussion, or collaborate on a community initiative.

The key to any creative outreach is **authenticity and relevance**. Buyers are more likely to respond when they see you've invested time in understanding their needs and genuinely want to help solve their problems.

AREAS TO DE-RISK THE DEAL:

# STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

To de-risk the deal, ask yourself:

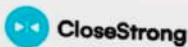
1. Am I missing a stakeholder name at any one of the three SIO levels?
  - (If yes, this represents risk.)
2. Do I have low levels of engagement with any stakeholder?
  - (If yes, this represents risk.)
3. Do I know who the key stakeholders/thought leaders are?
  - (If not, this represents risk.)
4. Am I having a conversation about product and price (what they are buying) or business impact (why they buy)?
  - (If it's price and product, this represents risk.)
5. How deeply am I connected with them?
  - (Never met or only in passing represents risk.)
6. How do they feel about our solution?
  - (Supporters? Anti-sponsors? If they don't support us, this represents risk.)

By answering these questions and executing discovery effectively, we can uncover potential risks early, align with the right individuals, and ensure the conversation is focused on value and impact—not just price or features.



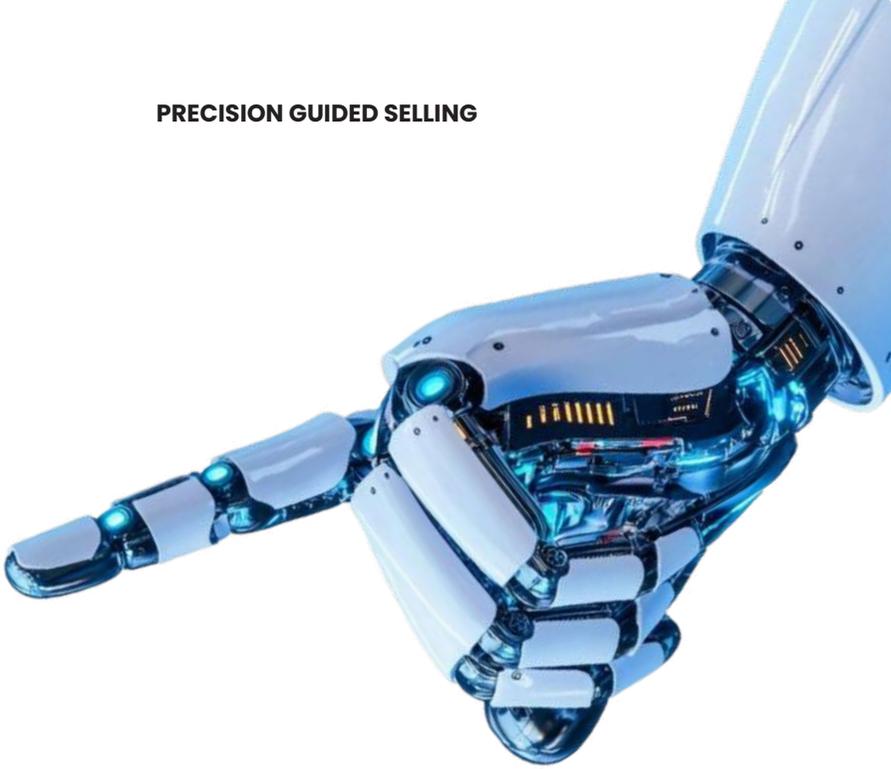
The PGS APP will provide you with custom curated list of target titles at the SIO levels and their KPIs your solution can impact based on best practices of your peers and in alignment with corporate strategy.

You will also be provided with a list of actions designed to de-risk the specific opportunity at each stage of the buy/sell cycle.



*THE NEW*  
**DISCOVERY**





## CHAPTER 4

# SIGNAL/VALIDATE: THE NEW DISCOVERY

*62% of buyers say sellers fail to add value during the discovery phase of the sales process.*

Source: CSO Insights, The Buyer Preferences Study.

Traditional open-ended discovery often fails to add value, leaving buyers to repeat what they already know. Typical discovery questions like “What are your goals?” or “What keeps you awake at night?” fail to create meaningful dialogue. Instead, we need to reframe discovery as an opportunity to provide insights by saying, “This is what should be keeping you awake at night.”

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

*Buyers rank sellers 9th out of 10 sources for insights*

Source: CSO Insights, The Buyer Preferences Study.

However, the good news is that buyers are open to spending more time with sellers who genuinely add value. Customers are struggling with more complex decisions, and deals are stalling. Sellers have more expertise than buyers on how to make decisions within their category, having seen hundreds, if not thousands, of similar scenarios. Buyers, by contrast, might source a solution like yours once every year or two, with little organizational knowledge retained about best practices for decision-making.

By focusing not on your product but on decision support—how to buy within your category—you can differentiate yourself and provide genuine value.



### THE APPROACH: SIGNALING AND VALIDATION

**Signaling:** This involves asking questions that embed information you want to share, such as competitive weaknesses, important decision stakeholders, or missing decision criteria. For example, instead of asking, “What are your KPIs?” you might say, “Are these 3–4 KPIs important to you?” This approach demonstrates your expertise and guides the conversation toward relevant insights.

**Validation:** This step focuses on clarifying and confirming key decision criteria, particularly their top KPIs, and understanding how those KPIs factor into the decision-making process. Validation involves exploring both the current and desired state of these KPIs and aligning your solution to bridge the gap.

Asking **content-embedded questions** during B2B discovery offers significant advantages over simply asking open-ended questions. While both approaches have their place, content-embedded questions provide structure, demonstrate expertise, and help build trust. Here’s a comparison and the specific benefits of embedding content into your questions:

#### 1. Demonstrates Expertise and Credibility

- **Benefit:** Embedded content shows you’ve done your homework and understand the customer’s business, industry, or challenges. This reassures the customer that you’re a knowledgeable partner rather than just another salesperson.
- **Example:**
  - **Content-Embedded:** “I noticed in your last quarterly report that customer churn increased by 12%. How are you addressing retention challenges this year?”
  - **Open-Ended:** “What are your biggest challenges right now?”

### 2. Builds Trust and Engagement

- **Benefit:** Customers are more likely to open up when they see you've invested time in understanding their context. This approach fosters trust and positions you as someone who values their time.
- **Why It Works:** Customers prefer engaging with someone who "gets it" rather than explaining basic aspects of their business.

### 3. Frames the Conversation

- **Benefit:** Content-embedded questions guide the discussion toward relevant topics, ensuring the conversation is productive and focused.
- **Example:**
  - **Content-Embedded:** "Many companies in your space are struggling with long procurement cycles. Is that something your team is facing, or do you have processes in place to streamline it?"
  - **Open-Ended:** "Can you tell me about your procurement process?"

### 4. Reduces Ambiguity

- **Benefit:** Embedded content narrows the scope of the question, making it easier for the customer to respond with meaningful insights. Open-ended questions can sometimes lead to vague or unfocused answers.
- **Why It Works:** Decision-makers often appreciate clarity and directness, especially when time is limited.

## 5. Sparks Insightful Dialogue

- **Benefit:** Content-embedded questions can uncover deeper insights because they introduce specific ideas or trends the customer might not have considered.
- **Example:**
  - **Content-Embedded:** “With rising concerns about data security in your industry, how are you prioritizing cybersecurity in your IT investments?”
  - **Open-Ended:** “What are your current IT priorities?”

## 6. Shows Empathy and Relatability

- **Benefit:** Referencing specific challenges or opportunities relevant to the customer’s industry or role makes them feel understood, which deepens rapport.
- **Example:**
  - **Content-Embedded:** “I know many HR teams are dealing with retention issues post-pandemic. How is your team navigating this?”
  - **Open-Ended:** “What challenges are you experiencing in HR?”

## 7. Encourages Honest Answers

- **Benefit:** When you demonstrate that you already know something about their situation, customers are more likely to share honest, detailed answers rather than generic responses.
- **Why It Works:** Content-embedded questions lower the barrier for buyers to open up because you’ve already made an effort to understand their situation.

### 8. Uncovers Specific Opportunities

- **Benefit:** By embedding relevant details in your questions, you can highlight pain points or opportunities for your solution without overtly pitching.
- **Example:**
  - **Content-Embedded:** “We’ve seen some companies struggle with integrating legacy systems when transitioning to the cloud. Is that something you’re concerned about as you scale?”
  - **Open-Ended:** “What concerns do you have about scaling?”

### When to Use Open-Ended Questions

- Open-ended questions are still valuable for exploring unknown areas or encouraging customers to think broadly. For example:
  - **Great for broad exploration:** “What are your top priorities this year?”
  - **Early in the conversation:** Open-ended questions can help you identify areas of interest before narrowing down the focus.

### Conclusion

Content-embedded questions create a more structured, engaging, and insightful discovery process. They demonstrate your expertise, build trust, and guide the conversation toward meaningful opportunities while still leaving room for the customer to share their unique perspective. When paired with occasional open-ended questions, they create a balanced and effective discovery strategy.

### POSITIONING AS DECISION SUPPORT

Frame your signaling and validation as a “needs analysis”—an audit of their decision-making process and evaluation of supplier choices. Deliver insights that the customer can use to make a better decision, regardless of whether they choose your solution. For example, request “sponsored access,” where an executive stakeholder introduces you to other decision-makers at the SIO levels. This enables you to gather cross-functional insights and share what you’ve learned in return.

By leveraging signaling and validation, you transform discovery into a process that adds value, builds trust, and positions you as a trusted advisor—a critical advantage in today’s competitive sales landscape.



**AREAS TO DE-RISK THE DEAL:**

# SIGNALING AND VALIDATION

To de-risk the deal, ask yourself:

1. Have I executed KPI validation with each of the S, I, and O roles?
  - (If missing with any level, this represents risk.)
2. Did I learn what their current and desired state KPIs are based on this deal?
  - (If not, this represents risk.)
3. Do I know what the key decision criteria are?
  - (If not, this represents risk.)
4. Have I signaled on an overall decision process?
  - (If not, this represents risk.)

By answering these questions and mapping stakeholders effectively, we can uncover potential risks early, align with the right individuals, and ensure the conversation is focused on value and impact—not just price or features.

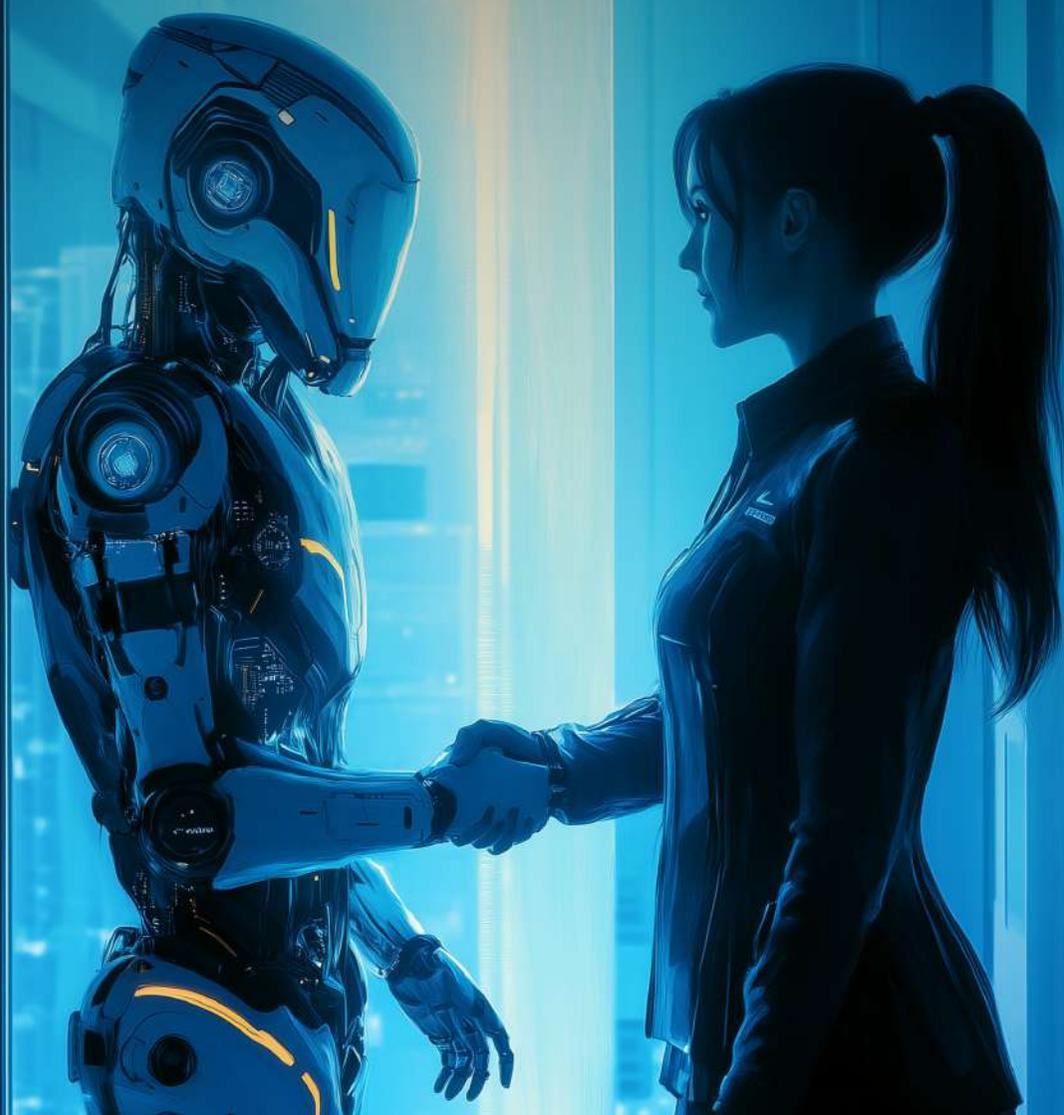


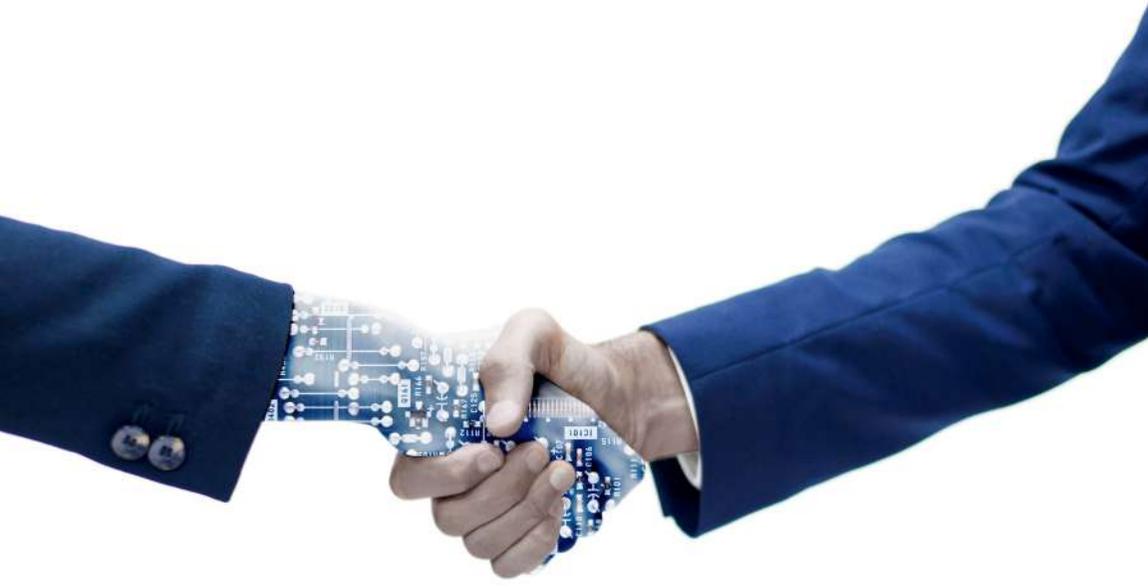
The PGS APP will provide you with custom curated signaling and validation questions at the SIO levels.

You will also be provided with a list of actions designed to de-risk the specific opportunity at each stage of the buy/sell cycle.



*THE CUSTOMER*  
**DECISION**





## CHAPTER 5

# WHY WE WIN DEALS: THE CUSTOMER DECISION

As mentioned at the outset, a key focus of Precision Guided Selling (PGS) is decision-making—both ours and the customer's. For this chapter, we will focus on the customer decision and how we can lead the customer and bias the decision in our favor.

## THE CORE OF WINNING DEALS

We win when we:

***show customers how we meet their needs with higher confidence and lower risk than the alternatives***

To achieve this, we must:

- Understand the key decision criteria for the thought leader(s) and address those needs effectively.
- Articulate our real value proposition one deal at a time based on key decision criteria of thought leaders. While patterns exist, this approach is zero-based and tailored to each deal.
- Based on the customers most likely alternative

Even if our solution is similar to the alternative, we gain “credit” for making clearer connections to confidence and risk reduction. By focusing on the 2-3 key reasons why we are the better choice, we:

- Raise our probability of winning.
- Strengthen our ability to defend commercial terms.

### **Why Customers Make Bad Decisions**

Customers often make poor decisions due to:

- **Missing Key Criteria or Stakeholders:** Critical elements or perspectives are overlooked.
- **Misdiagnosis of the Problem:** Customers may address the wrong problem, leading to a solution mismatch or delayed decisions.

*40% of buyers experience decision regret due to poorly defined problem statements and incomplete decision criteria.*

Source: Gartner, Customer Decision-Making in the B2B Era.

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Good decisions are based on driving the achievement of KPIs for buyers at the Strategic, Initiative, and Operational/Technical (SIO) levels. However, customers are often not skilled at making complex decisions about your solution. With an average of six to eleven buyers per decision, outcomes are delayed, and “no decision” scenarios are increasingly common.

When people make decisions, especially between competing alternatives from a pure logic perspective they should choose the alternative that meets their needs at higher confidence and lower risk than the alternative.....they often don't.

Buyers often do not have a clear and complete picture of who should be involved and what criteria they should use to make a choice. It is our goal to help provide them with support to make more informed decisions with a bias toward our solution.



### LEVERAGING OUR EXPERTISE

As sellers, we have a unique advantage:

- **Extensive Experience:** We've observed hundreds, if not thousands, of customers make decisions in our category, while buyers may only do so once every year or two, and for some strategic decisions, once in a career.
- **Insight into Decision-Making:** We know more about the customer decision process than they do. This positions us to guide their thinking and provide valuable insights.

### Anchoring the Right Conversation

We need to be hyper-aware of the "anchor" or focus of the conversation with each stakeholder. Is the discussion:

- **Tactical and Price-Based?**

Or,

- **Strategic and Business Impact-Based?**

Proactively shifting the conversation to buyer KPIs and the impact of our solution helps customers define their problem more effectively. Clear problem statements lead to easier and more confident decisions.

### The Role of Thought Leaders

In most deals, there is usually one or two "thought leaders" whose opinions carry more weight. These individuals often:

- Influence the decision significantly.
- Can exist at the S, I, and O levels.

Knowing who these individuals are and engaging them effectively can make or break a deal. Deals are won or lost based on a few key items with a few key people, and understanding these dynamics is critical.

### Driving the Customer Decision

In many cases, we can help drive the customer's decision by:

- 1. Identifying Key Criteria:** Ensure all necessary stakeholders and criteria are accounted for but net out the most important ones for thought leaders.
- 2. Shaping Problem Statements:** Guide the customer toward a clear and accurate definition of the problem tied to current and desired KPIs.
- 3. Focusing on KPIs:** Highlight the KPIs that matter most to the SIO levels and demonstrate how our solution impacts them.
- 4. Providing Decision Support:** Use our insights to simplify and clarify their decision-making process.

### A Simple Yet Holistic Decision-Making Approach

An effective decision-making framework includes:

- 1. Clarity:** Define the problem and desired outcomes clearly.
- 2. Criteria:** Establish decision criteria based on KPIs and stakeholder needs.
- 3. Confidence:** Build trust and reduce perceived risk.
- 4. Collaboration:** Engage thought leaders and stakeholders across all levels.

By leading customers through this process, we not only increase our chances of winning but also position ourselves as trusted advisors who add genuine value to their decision-making journey.

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

A good decision-making process systematically moves from identifying the problem to evaluating options and implementing the best solution. Here's a structured process:

### 1. Correctly Identify the Problem

- **Objective:** Clearly define the issue or opportunity to ensure focus on the right goal.
- **Steps:**
  1. Gather information to understand the situation fully.
  2. Ask "why" repeatedly (root cause analysis) to identify the underlying issue.
  3. Frame the problem concisely, such as: "How can we reduce customer churn by 10% within six months?"
- **Tip:** Involve key stakeholders early to validate the problem definition.

### 2. Identify Stakeholders and Their Decision Criteria

- **Objective:** Ensure all relevant perspectives are considered to make an inclusive and well-rounded decision.
- **Steps:**
  1. Identify Stakeholders: List everyone affected by or contributing to the decision (e.g., employees, customers, leadership).
  2. Understand Criteria: Ask stakeholders about their priorities, needs, and concerns.
  3. Categorize Criteria: Break criteria into tangible (e.g., cost, timeline) and intangible (e.g., brand impact, employee morale) factors.

### 3. Weight the Decision Criteria

- **Objective:** Prioritize criteria to reflect their relative importance.
- **Steps:**
  1. Assign weights to each criterion based on stakeholder input. Use a scale (e.g., 1–5 or 1–10) to quantify importance.
- **Example:**
  - » Time to Implement: 4
  - » Customer Impact: 3
  - » Cost: 2
  - » Strategic Alignment: 2
  2. Validate the weighting with key stakeholders to ensure alignment.

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

### 4. Generate and Score Options

- **Objective:** Evaluate possible solutions against the weighted criteria to identify the best option.
- **Steps:**
  1. Brainstorm Options: List all feasible solutions.
  2. Score Each Option: Rate how well each option meets each criterion on a consistent scale (e.g., 1–5 or 1–10).
  3. Calculate Weighted Scores: Multiply the score for each criterion by its weight, then sum the results for each option.
- **Example:**

CRITERIA	WEIGHT	PLATFORM A (SCORE)	PLATFORM B (SCORE)	PLATFORM C (SCORE)
FUNCTIONALITY	35%	9 (3.15)	7 (2.45)	8 (2.80)
PRICE	25%	7 (1.75)	9 (2.25)	8 (2.00)
INTEGRATION	20%	8 (1.60)	6 (1.20)	9 (1.80)
SCALABILITY	10%	8 (0.80)	8 (0.80)	7 (0.70)
CUSTOMER SUPPORT	10%	6 (0.60)	7 (0.70)	8 (0.80)

PLATFORM	TOTAL WEIGHTED SCORE
PLATFORM A	<b>7.90</b>
PLATFORM B	<b>7.40</b>
PLATFORM C	<b>8.10</b>

### 5. Make a Decision

- **Objective:** Select the best option based on weighted scores and stakeholder input.
- **Steps:**
  1. Present the scoring results and rationale to stakeholders.
  2. Address any concerns or objections.
  3. Finalize the decision and document the rationale for future reference.

### Benefits of This Process

- Encourages collaboration and inclusivity.
- Ensures decisions are aligned with goals and priorities.
- Reduces bias by using objective scoring and weighting.
- Builds stakeholder confidence through transparency and rigor.

This structured process creates a logical flow from problem identification to actionable results, making it a reliable framework for effective decision-making.

Given that this is a core skill for us as sellers, we should have this process committed to memory.



The PGS APP will provide you with custom curated list of decision criteria at the SIO levels, where you have advantages, based on your customers likely alternative and best practices of your peers and in alignment with corporate strategy.

You will also be provided with a list of actions designed to de-risk the specific opportunity at each stage of the buy/sell cycle



*PRESENTING*  
**VALUE**





## CHAPTER 6

# PRESENTING VALUE: MULTIPLE SOLUTION OPTIONS (MSO)

Offering customers three different choices at varying investment and effectiveness levels is a powerful decision-making strategy. This approach aligns with human psychology and increases the likelihood of a successful sale.

*Offering three solution options increases deal closure rates by 20% compared to offering a single option.*

Source: Behavioral Economics Research (The Paradox of Choice by Barry Schwartz).

Here's why presenting multiple options is better than offering just one:

### WHY MULTIPLE SOLUTION OPTIONS WORK

#### 1. Provides a Frame of Reference

- **Why It Matters:** With three options, customers can compare and evaluate the relative value of each choice. This context helps them better understand the benefits of each option.

#### 2. Increases Perceived Control

- **Why It Matters:** People are more likely to make a decision when they feel in control. Offering multiple options empowers customers to choose what best fits their needs, reducing resistance.

#### 3. Anchors Customer Perceptions

- **Why It Matters:** Introducing a high-priced premium option (anchor) makes the mid-priced option feel like a better deal. Similarly, a low-priced option can highlight the value of higher tiers.

#### 4. Addresses Diverse Customer Needs

- **Why It Matters:** Customers vary in their priorities, budgets, and risk tolerance. Offering multiple choices caters to a wider range of needs and increases the chance of meeting their expectations.

#### 5. Reduces Decision Paralysis

- **Why It Matters:** Too few choices (one or none) can make customers feel trapped, while too many choices

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overwhelm them. Three options strike a balance, providing enough variety to choose without causing decision fatigue.

### 6. Encourages Upselling

- **Why It Matters:** Customers often gravitate toward the middle or premium option because they see greater value compared to the basic package. This structure creates a natural upsell path.

### 7. Builds Trust

- **Why It Matters:** Offering choices signals that you understand your customer's varying needs and aren't trying to push a one-size-fits-all solution. This builds credibility and trust.

### 8. Mitigates the "Take-It-or-Leave-It" Effect

- **Why It Matters:** A single option puts the customer in a binary "yes or no" situation, increasing the likelihood they'll walk away. Multiple options shift the decision to "which one" instead of "should I?"

### 9. Highlights Value vs. Cost Trade-offs

- **Why It Matters:** Showing varying levels of investment and effectiveness helps customers make an informed choice about what they're willing to pay for additional benefits.

### 10. Simplifies Negotiation

- **Why It Matters:** Offering multiple predefined choices reduces the likelihood of protracted haggling. Customers focus on choosing between presented options rather than demanding customizations.

### CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

We want to shift the conversation from the price of our product to the value and business impact of several paths forward.

One key reason to create three offers is that we often find ourselves reacting to and being anchored by what the customer says they need. When we simply respond to their request, we're essentially operating in order-fulfillment mode. While this approach is fine if the customer's desired solution aligns with what's best for both them and us, this isn't always the case. In many situations, we need to adjust away from their initial "anchor"—what they think they want—and guide them toward what they should be ordering.

To do this effectively, we start by envisioning the most robust solution we can offer, one that aligns closely with our company's product strategy. This becomes the first of three Multiple Solution Options (MSOs). The final MSO, on the other hand, represents what the customer initially believed they wanted, providing a direct comparison to help them see the value of the more strategic solutions.

To achieve this, we:

#### **1. Build 3 MSOs in Line with SIO Levels:**

- Create options tailored to strategic, initiative, and operational stakeholders.

#### **2. Present in a Live or Virtual Meeting:**

- Avoid sending a document. Instead, present options in a meeting with all three levels of stakeholders present.

### 3. Use Sensitivity Analysis to Refine:

- Ask stakeholders to “rack and stack” the three options from most to least desirable. This process:
  - ◊ Highlights the varying needs of each stakeholder.
  - ◊ Identifies the thought leader’s preferred solution, often aligning with strategic-level KPIs.

### 4. Co-Create the Fourth Option:

- Based on feedback from the rack-and-stack exercise, collaborate with stakeholders to co-create a fourth option that incorporates their input and aligns with their priorities.



## STRUCTURING THE MULTIPLE SOLUTION OPTIONS

Each solution should:

- **Have a Title Reflecting Business Impact:** Titles should focus on the customer's business outcomes rather than your product or service.
- **Include a Subtitle:** Provide a brief explanation of the solution's focus.
- **List the Solution Configuration:** Clearly outline what is included in the package.
- **Present Commercial Terms:** Specify pricing and other terms for each option.

By offering multiple options, we enable customers to explore solutions that best fit their needs, foster collaboration, and increase the likelihood of closing a high-quality deal. Presenting MSOs empowers us to create value, build trust, and ensure customer satisfaction.

Here's an example of Multiple Solution Options (MSO) for a SaaS company, tailored to strategic, initiative, and operational stakeholders:

## OPTION 1: MAXIMIZE ENTERPRISE GROWTH

Subtitle: *Transformational Growth and Strategic Enablement Designed for enterprise-wide scalability and KPI-driven outcomes.*

### **Solution Configuration:**

- Advanced analytics and forecasting tools integrated with AI-driven insights.
- Unlimited user access with role-based permissions.
- Dedicated strategic consultant for quarterly business reviews (QBRs).
- Full API access for seamless integration with existing systems.
- Comprehensive training and onboarding for all levels of staff.

### **Commercial Terms:**

- Annual Investment: \$250,000
- Includes 24/7 priority support and a guaranteed 99.9% uptime SLA.
- Custom KPI reporting dashboard designed for C-suite visibility.

## OPTION 2: BUSINESS ACCELERATION PACKAGE

Subtitle: *Balanced Performance and Cost Optimization Perfect for mid-sized teams aiming to drive initiatives and improve efficiency.*

### **Solution Configuration:**

- Core analytics with customizable dashboards.
- Access for up to 50 users with optional role-based permissions.
- Bi-annual business review sessions with insights and recommendations.

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- API integration with select third-party platforms.
- Virtual training sessions for key users.

### **Commercial Terms:**

- Annual Investment: \$120,000
- Includes 8/5 customer support and a 99.5% uptime SLA.
- Additional user licenses available for \$1,500 per user/year.

## OPTION 3: OPERATIONAL ESSENTIALS

Subtitle: *Tactical Insights for Immediate Needs ocused on addressing short-term operational challenges.*

### **Solution Configuration:**

- Basic analytics tools with pre-configured dashboards.
- Access for up to 10 users.
- Standard email and chat support.
- One-time virtual onboarding session.

### **Commercial Terms:**

- Annual Investment: \$50,000
- Includes basic SLA of 99% uptime.
- Limited to predefined reporting templates.

### HOW TO PRESENT THE MSOS

1. Live or Virtual Meeting: Gather strategic, initiative, and operational stakeholders in the same room or virtual environment.
2. If you use a sales methodology or a value calculation tool like Valkry, present your value calculations first. If you do not have either of those, use current and desired state for SIO level KPIs and position the upcoming MSO's you will present as the bridge from current to desired state. You will extract these during the Signal and Validate process.

### CURRENT/DESIRED STATE EXAMPLE

#### Strategic Level

- **Title:** Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) or VP of Strategy
- **Current State KPI Stat:** 8% YoY revenue growth, with inconsistent performance across customer segments.
- **Desired State KPI Stat:** Achieve 15% YoY revenue growth by expanding into enterprise segments and improving retention rates by 10%.
- **Goal:** Focus on aligning the SaaS solution with company-wide strategic goals, such as entering new markets, scaling predictable revenue streams, and improving overall customer lifetime value (CLV).

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

### INITIATIVE LEVEL

- **Title:** Director of Sales Operations or VP of Sales Enablement
- **Current State KPI Stat:** Average win rate is 20% across all deals, and the sales cycle averages 60 days.
- **Desired State KPI Stat:** Increase win rate to 30% while reducing the sales cycle to 45 days.
- **Goal:** Drive initiatives like enhanced sales training, better sales pipeline management, and advanced forecasting tools that enable the sales team to perform more efficiently.

### OPERATIONAL LEVEL

- **Title:** IT Manager or Director of Customer Success
- **Current State KPI Stat:** Onboarding process for new customers takes an average of 45 days, with 20% of customers failing to adopt the full suite of features within six months.
- **Desired State KPI Stat:** Reduce onboarding time to 30 days and achieve a 90% feature adoption rate within the first six months.
- **Goal:** Implement tools and processes to streamline onboarding, improve customer education, and deliver ongoing support that ensures feature adoption and satisfaction.

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

These examples help you tee up your MSO's to specific, actionable KPIs at each SIO level.

3. Present titles and subtitles across all three
4. Then add in solution configuration
5. Then key commercial terms
6. Rack and Stack: Ask stakeholders to rank the options from most to least desirable based on their needs and priorities.
7. Co-Create the Fourth Option: Based on feedback, adjust the solution configurations to address gaps or overlaps, ensuring alignment with all stakeholders' expectations.

There are two areas to avoid when building MSO's:

1. **Do not overengineer them!** Keep the solution configuration and commercial terms focused on key aspects of this deal. We think of MSO's as a higher level business fit, solution fit and terms sheets etc. can all come later.
2. There is a chance the buyer will ask for the **most robust solution at the lowest price**. As mentioned in previous sections, never negotiate one zero sum item. Each one of the MSO's was built based on all the moving parts working in concert. If the request is to change one variable we need to refocus the effort on co-creating option 4.

One final note, oftentimes we are anchored on a solution the customer has prescribed for themselves based on a bad diagnosis of the underlying problem.

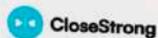
## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

In essence we are fulfilling an order for what the customer is ordering and we can use MSO to change the conversation to what they should be ordering. Option three is usually what they are ordering and option one is the most robust solution at the most aggressive terms and 2 is somewhere in the middle. Our experience is that we often cocreate and upgrade from the #3 opinion to something that looks more like #2.



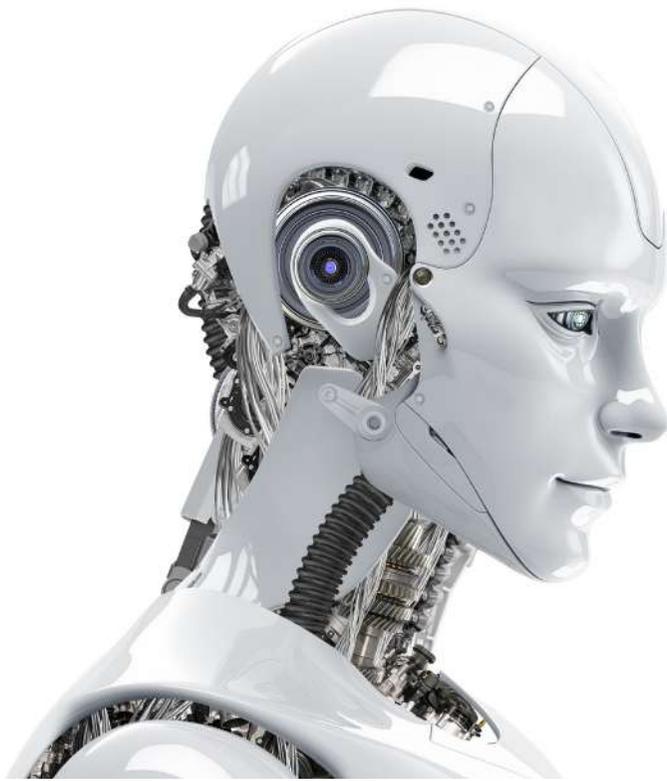
The PGS APP will provide you with 3 custom options based on key decision criteria of thought leaders at the SIO levels, where you have advantages based on your customers likely alternative and their desired KPI's.

You will most likely want to edit all three but it will give you a great starting point.



# ***NEGOTIATION***





## CHAPTER 7

# NEGOTIATION: PREPARING FOR THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

For too long, negotiation has been viewed as a soft skill and an unpredictable part of the sales process. However, research shows that negotiation tactics follow predictable patterns. Through our two-year, 19-country study, we analyzed buyer tactics used at the negotiation table across various industries. The findings were eye-opening:

97% of buyer tactics fall into two categories, and they are remarkably consistent across industries and regions.

## COMMON BUYER TACTICS

**1. Alternative-Related Tactics** These tactics focus on referencing competitors or alternatives to create leverage. Examples include:

- “Your competitor offers faster delivery times.”
- “Another vendor offered us additional features.”
- “We’re considering other solutions that integrate better with our existing systems.”
- “We’ve worked with your competitor before and were very happy with their service.”
- “We can build it ourselves faster.”

**2. Concession-Related Tactics** These tactics aim to extract additional benefits, discounts, or compromises. Examples include:

- “If you can lower your price by 15%, we can sign today.”
- “We need a longer warranty to feel comfortable moving forward.”
- “Give us a bulk discount.”
- “Our budget is tight this quarter—can you defer payments until the next quarter?”
- “We need priority customer support included at no additional cost.”

**3. Combined Alternative-Concession Tactics** These combine references to alternatives with demands for concessions. Examples include:

- “Your competitor provides better delivery terms, so we’d need you to waive the setup fee to justify choosing you.”
- “We’ve been offered a lower rate elsewhere, so you’ll need to match it for us to consider your solution.”
- “Another vendor includes premium support in their base package—will you add that to your offer?”
- “The competitor can install faster; if you can’t, we’ll need a discount to offset the delay.”

### SHIFTING FROM CONCESSIONS TO TRADES

When a buyer asks for a concession, respond by trading value instead of giving it away. For example:

- **Concession:** “Lower your price.”
- **Trade:** “There might be a pathway to a lower price if we can increase the volume.”

If a buyer references an alternative, bring the discussion back to the broader decision criteria, ensuring the comparison is comprehensive:

- **Alternative:** “Your competitor has faster delivery,”
- **Back Into Context:** “The competitor does have faster delivery, but how does that compare to our quality, global capacity, and support?”

In the event the competitor doesn’t have faster delivery:

- “In fact, Gartner analysis shows we have the fastest delivery at lower delays than all competitors. That being said, can we also compare our quality, global capacity, and support?”

*85% of buyers use tactics related to price concessions or competitor comparisons during negotiations.*

Source: Harvard Business Review, The Art of Negotiation.

## THE ROLE OF POWER IN NEGOTIATION

Power in negotiation comes from having the best alternative. By knowing the 2-3 key reasons “why you,” you shift the balance of power to your side. Despite common perceptions, buyers don’t always have all the power. Most deals are interdependent, with power balanced at 50/50.

Key Strategies for Negotiation Success

### 1. Defend Commercial Terms:

- Understand the 2-3 reasons why you versus the alternative.
- Avoid pure concessions; always trade for value.

### 2. Trade, Don’t Concede:

- Look for opportunities to trade items that provide more value than they cost.
- For example, trade additional training (costing \$5k) for access to another division worth \$50k, creating \$45k in value.
- Be prepared for the most likely areas of concession pressure, they tend to follow patterns

It is best next to think of a “catalogue” of potential items to trade. We like to do it this way:

- **Level One:** Price and Products
- **Level Two:** Legal T’s and C’s
- **Level Three:** Creative trades like access to other divisions, references, case studies.

Then pair them into “if this then that” possible trades to be ready to counter concession pressure.

### 4. Tie Price to other commercial term variables:

- Never discuss price in isolation. Relate it to other variables like volume, configuration, or support levels.

### 5. Contextualize Alternatives:

- Highlight your value compared to competitors in totality, not just on a single feature.
- Working on decision analysis with one of our clients we identified 43 decision criteria across six buying influences that their clients would have to analyze to determine if they are the “same” as a competitor.
- Chances are very low their client did that analysis when they said it was the same.

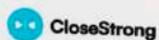
### 6. Anticipate Anchors:

- Anchors are not only opening offers
- Be aware of anchors like last year’s price or solution concepts in an RFP.
- As Dr. Max Bazerman of Harvard Business School notes:  
*“The opening offer has more impact on the final outcome than all subsequent counteroffers combined.”*

By understanding and preparing for common buyer tactics, focusing on trades instead of concessions, and anchoring negotiations on your value, the 2-3 reasons why you, you’ll navigate the moment of truth with confidence and achieve better outcomes for both parties.

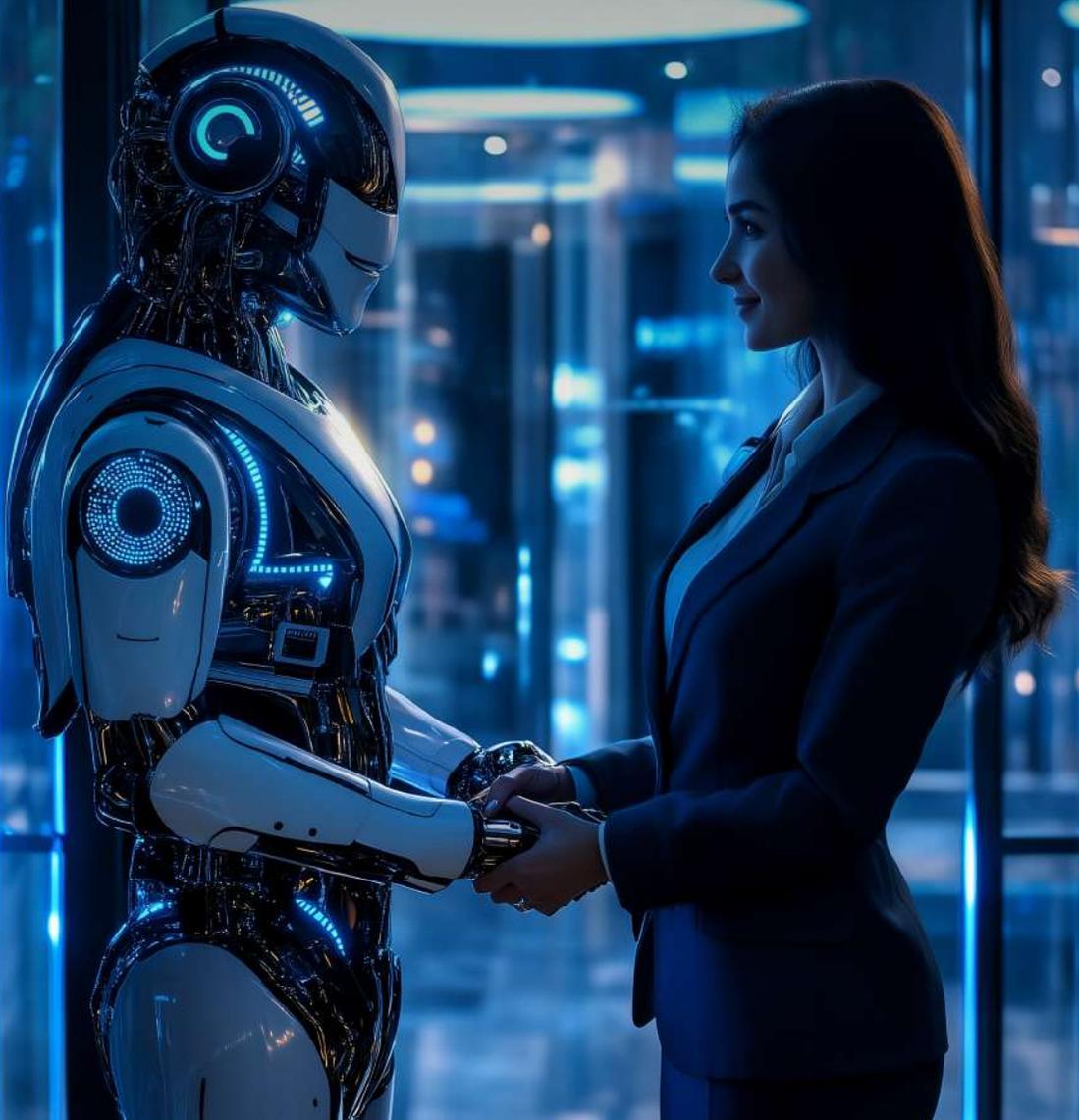


The PGS APP will provide you with a catalogue of negotiable items you can use for brainstorming to find trade pairs. Some key trade pairs will also be suggested.



*DEAL*

# *APPROVAL*



CHAPTER 8

## DEAL APPROVAL: SECURING INTERNAL ALIGNMENT

Our goal with PGS is to have higher win rates and optimize each deal. Very often the selling process is focused on the external customer. High performing reps pay close attention to how their deals are aligned with company strategy. It gets your deals approved more quickly and doesn't hurt your career!

Often, getting a deal approved internally is as challenging as closing it externally. In fact, research from Harvard Business Review suggests that internal negotiations are often more difficult than external ones.

Early on, we discussed how Precision Guided Selling (PGS) guides customers to make better decisions and ensures sellers align their decisions with company strategy. This alignment is critical during the internal deal approval process.

*72% of internal deal approval delays are caused by misalignment between sales proposals and company strategy.*

Source: McKinsey & Company, Aligning Sales and Strategy for Growth.

**WHY RESPECT FROM DEAL APPROVERS MATTERS**

Top sellers excel in earning the respect of “deal desk” approvers or those responsible for evaluating and approving deals. Here’s why respect matters:

**1. Builds Credibility:**

- Respect earns trust in your judgment, reducing skepticism and increasing deal approvals.

**2. Facilitates Alignment:**

- Respected reps experience smoother collaboration across departments, speeding up approvals.

**3. Justifies Proposals:**

- Confidence in your professionalism reduces scrutiny and friction in the process.

**4. Enhances Influence:**

- Approvers listen to and value your perspective during negotiations.

**5. Strengthens Relationships:**

- Respect fosters long-term support, internal advocacy, and career growth.

**FIVE WAYS TO EARN AND MAINTAIN RESPECT**

**1. Demonstrate Deep Knowledge and Expertise:**

- Why It Builds Respect: Approvers trust reps who understand the product, market, customer needs, and internal processes.

**2. Align Deals with Organizational Goals:**

- Why It Builds Respect: Reps who prioritize deals aligned with company strategy—like profitability, retention, or market expansion—earn respect.

**3. Communicate Clearly and Professionally:**

- Why It Builds Respect: Clear, concise communication reflects confidence and respect for the approver's time.

**4. Build Collaborative Relationships:**

- Why It Builds Respect: Collaboration signals that you value their input and are open to feedback.

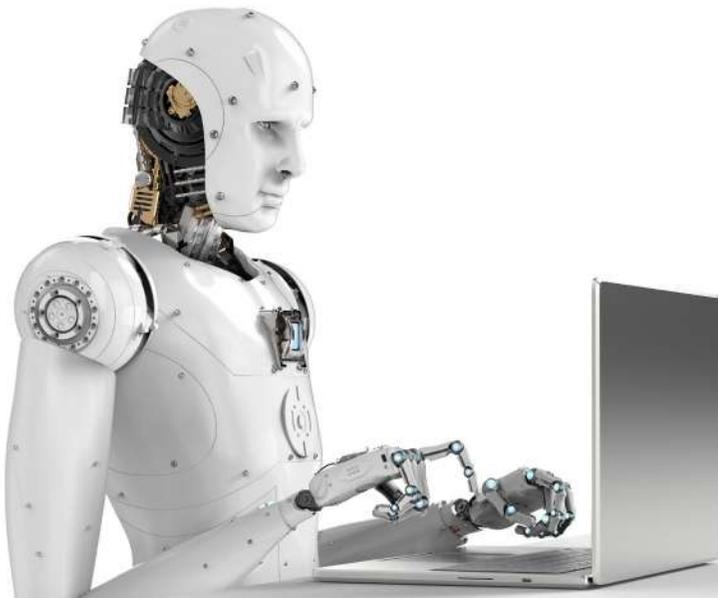
**5. Consistently Deliver Results:**

- Why It Builds Respect: A track record of successful deals demonstrates reliability and minimizes concerns.

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

### BONUS TIPS

- **Be Transparent and Honest:** Avoid exaggerating customer needs or deal benefits. Approvers value integrity.
- **Show Empathy for Their Role:** Understand the pressures and constraints approvers face, and frame your proposals to make their job easier.
- **Keep Learning:** Seek feedback and continuously improve your approach based on organizational expectations.



## TWO KEY ASPECTS OF DEAL APPROVAL

### 1. Solution Configuration Approval:

- Ensure the proposed solution aligns with both customer needs and company capabilities.

### 2. Deal Terms Approval:

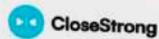
- Present terms that reflect company strategy while balancing customer demands.

By aligning with leadership priorities and easing the pain points associated with deal approval, you improve your success rate and build stronger internal relationships. Remember, the respect of deal approvers is a crucial component of long-term success.



The PGS APP will provide you with possible trades and preferred/acceptable “ranges” for all three levels of trades. It will also provide you with optimal solution configuration as preferred by leadership.

Think of this insight as a bridge between the strategy of leaders and our tactics to get deals closed.





CHAPTER 9

## SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF PROCUREMENT

We've written books (Negotiation Blueprinting for Buyers) and have been fortunate to consult with buying organizations at companies like Ford, Allstate, American Airlines, Chevron etc. As life long sellers we learned a lot about how procurement functions and would like to share that with you.

Procurement teams operate with a distinct mindset and set of priorities. To sell effectively, we must align with their goals and "speak their language. The language they mostly want to speak about is price and that is not a conversation we want to have. However if we learn more about how they really function we will be able to change the conversation to a more strategic one.

*70% of procurement professionals say their primary focus has shifted from cost reduction to value creation.*

Source: Deloitte, 2023 Global Chief Procurement Officer Survey.

This chapter explores the core areas that really drive procurement decisions and provides strategies for building rapport and advancing deals with these critical stakeholders.

### UNDERSTANDING PROCUREMENT'S KEY PRIORITIES

#### 1. Internal Customers:

- Procurement professionals buy on behalf of others, not themselves. Their internal customers—such as sales, IT, or operations—dictate requirements, and procurement must satisfy these stakeholders.
- Success for procurement is measured by internal customer satisfaction, which depends on more than just price. Factors like quality, service, and support play a significant role.
- We like to call on “the business”, these are the same people that procurement calls their internal customers.
- We can align strategies with procurement by sharing what we've learned during signaling and validation with the procurement team.

#### 2. Share of Spend:

- Procurement teams aim to increase their “share of spend”—the proportion of a company's purchases routed through their process. Rogue buying, where internal customers bypass procurement, signals dissatisfaction with the value procurement offers.
- To prevent rogue buying, procurement strives to demonstrate strategic value and align purchases with broader business goals.
- Internal customer satisfaction and share of spend are very closely aligned.

### 3. Business Fit:

- Modern procurement goes beyond cost-cutting. Organizations expect procurement to source solutions that advance strategic priorities, such as long-term growth or market competitiveness.
- Category buyers specialize in specific areas (e.g., IT, logistics), enabling procurement to align sourcing decisions with strategic objectives.
- If a buyer who is sourcing laptops for the sales teams simply buys the cheapest on the market, their customer sat and share of spend will go down.
- Do not believe them when they say price is #1
- Business fit is where we and procurement are completely aligned

### THE WEIGHTED ATTRIBUTE DECISION MATRIX (WADM)

Procurement uses tools like the WADM to evaluate supplier options. This matrix assigns weights to different attributes—price, quality, delivery speed, and others—based on their importance to internal customers. Sellers should be prepared to address all attributes, as no two solutions are ever identical. The matrix we laid out earlier for you is almost identical to what procurement uses.

Research indicates that procurement decisions are not solely based on selecting the lowest-priced option. Organizations often adopt strategic **sourcing** methodologies, which evaluate suppliers based on multiple factors beyond just price. These factors include total cost of ownership, quality, risk, performance, and supplier reliability. (Source: Netsuite)

For instance, the concept of **Best Value Procurement (BVP)** emphasizes assessing various attributes such as quality and expertise, rather than focusing solely on price. This approach aims to select vendors or contractors who offer the best overall value, considering multiple criteria. (Source: Wikipedia)

Additionally, procurement strategies often incorporate **non-price attributes** like supplier performance, production capabilities, and delivery reliability into their sourcing decisions. This comprehensive evaluation ensures that the selected suppliers align with the organization's broader objectives and contribute to long-term success. (Source: CPO Rising)

Therefore, while price remains an important consideration, procurement decisions typically involve a holistic assessment of various factors to determine the most advantageous option for the organization.

**SELLING TO PROCUREMENT: KEY STRATEGIES**

**Recognize Their Dual Role:**

- Procurement balances the needs of their internal customers with company-wide priorities like cost efficiency and strategic alignment. Tailor your pitch to address both levels.

**Quantify Total Value:**

- Price is just one piece of the puzzle. Highlight how your solution reduces total cost of ownership or delivers strategic benefits, such as scalability or risk mitigation at all SIO levels.

**Align with Business Goals:**

- Demonstrate how your solution supports broader company objectives, such as revenue growth, innovation, or customer satisfaction.

**4. Collaborate, Don't Compete:**

- Approach procurement as a strategic partner. Understand their challenges and priorities, and work together to meet shared goals.

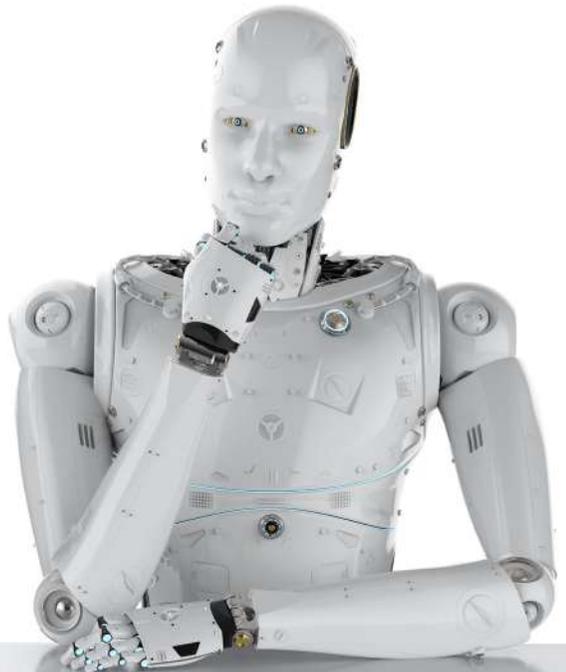
**5. Understand and Address Concerns:**

- Be ready to explain how your solution outperforms alternatives on key attributes, from cost to delivery timelines. Use data to counter common objections like "I can get the same thing cheaper."

## PRECISION GUIDED SELLING

We've frequently hosted roundtables that include both sales and procurement teams from the same company. During one of these sessions, a sales representative candidly told the buyers, "I hate when I get handed off to you guys." The buyers responded with knowing laughter, explaining that when the business hands a deal over to procurement, their role is simply to finalize it—often with little room to negotiate.

Being able to speak the language of procurement helps us to understand these kinds of dynamics. Our suggestion is to stop thinking of procurement as "outside" the deal and recognize them as a legit stakeholder and engage as we would with the business.



## THE FUTURE OF PROCUREMENT

As procurement evolves, the focus is shifting toward strategic sourcing and long-term partnerships. Sellers who understand and align with these trends will build stronger relationships, gain a competitive edge, and close deals more effectively. Conversely buyers who are still sourcing on price are a dying breed. MIT, Arizona State are all churning out MBA's in sourcing who are leveraging technology to determine which suppliers have highest value and lowest total cost of ownership and are not focused on acquisition price.

### CONCLUSION

Speaking the language of procurement requires understanding their processes, priorities, and pain points. By aligning with their objectives and demonstrating total value, sellers can turn procurement from a barrier into an advocate, ensuring deals move forward smoothly and strategically.