SELLING CYBER 2026

Why the biggest challenge in cybersecurity sales isn't the technology — it's the conversation

Gil Fromovich, Michael O'Neil and Jason Gropper speak to Insight Revenue about the complexity of the cyber market — and why the sellers who thrive are the ones who lean into it.

There are roughly 6,000 cybersecurity companies competing for attention right now. The threat landscape grows more sophisticated by the month. And yet, ask most buyers how they experience being sold to in this space, and the answer is surprisingly consistent: too many vendors, not enough real conversations.

We brought together three people who know this market from very different angles:

- **Gil Fromovich** is Chief Revenue Officer at Hadrian, an offensive cybersecurity firm based in Amsterdam, with 25 years of building and scaling cyber businesses.
- **Michael O'Neil** is a long-standing consultant and advisor who has worked inside the office of the CISO at some of the world's largest companies.
- **Jason Gropper** comes from the buyer side — 25 years guiding federal cabinet-level organisations on how to make better technology decisions.

The conversation that followed was, in itself, a case study in what a sophisticated sales conversation should look like.

PART 1: KNOW YOUR BUYING GROUP

Q: There are thousands of vendors in this market chasing the same buyers. Where does a conversation actually begin?

GIL FROMOVICH
Everyone points at the CISO — and if all 6,000 vendors are pointing at the same person, he's going to be a very busy man just triaging. The truth is, the CISO often delegates to someone he trusts. A head of, a director, a manager — it depends on the size and maturity of the company. But that person is closer to the problem, closer to the pain. If they're a true champion, they can influence upward. I always say: start with the champion.

MICHAEL O'NEIL
And the buying group is larger than most sellers realise. Research suggests the average decision involves more than seven people, but sellers typically manage to identify only around four of them. The group segments pretty clearly. Procurement cares about cost and standardisation — which is almost impossible in a field moving this fast. Managers and directors care about solving the problems they're experiencing right now. Executives — the CISO, CIO, CEO — care about neither the solution nor the cost. They care about aligning risk management with corporate strategy. If you're selling a point solution, which most cyber firms are, the manager and director level is your most fertile ground.

JASON GROPPER
It's also about understanding how they buy, not just who they are. In government work, for example, there's a strict acquisition cycle with very defined entry points – industry days, solicitations, communities of interest. You can excite and enlighten everyone in the room and still never get through the door if you haven't figured out the process. The personas matter, but so does the choreography.

> "The selling motion isn't just external – getting the vendor to yes. There's a whole internal selling motion too. Your champion has to win a battle inside their own organisation."
>
> **– Gil Fromovich, CRO, Hadrian**

Q: So once you've found your champion, what does good look like?

GIL FROMOVICH
The hard part isn't finding a champion or even convincing them. It's helping them sell it internally. They've understood the value. Now they have to defend it. Why this over that? Why now? Why should the CISO, who's been in the role for five years, suddenly need a solution he didn't need before? You have to equip your champion with the answers to those questions. That's part of the job. There are limited budgets, limited resources, limited capacity – and sometimes, frankly, politics. The more you understand what's happening on the inside of your customer's organisation, the better you'll be at articulating value and staying patient.

MICHAEL O'NEIL
There's also a risk dynamic that sellers often miss. A CISO who buys an innovative point solution is being asked to take a personal risk. Because if that solution breaks a dependency elsewhere in the environment, they don't get a bonus for saving money – they get fired for taking down the system. So the instinct is always to de-risk the purchase. What that means for sellers is that third-party validation – integrators, advisors, people whose opinion the buyer already trusts – matters enormously. Your own words are the least trusted source in the room.

PART 2: THE BUSINESS CASE IS WHERE DEALS DIE

Q: What's your experience of how vendors try to demonstrate value – and where it tends to go wrong?

JASON GROPPER
The first thing I'd say is: ask the buyer what their technical evaluation criteria are before you start talking. Most sellers don't. They come in with a pitch built around what they think the value is, when the buyer already has a framework for how they're going to evaluate. If you can fit your product into that framework, you're ahead. If you can't, better to know early. And the conversation has to go beyond the initial purchase cost. Total cost of ownership. Maintenance

burden. What happens when something breaks? Buyers are time-poor — we're looking at fifteen vendors where we used to look at four. You need sharp cut points, not a lengthy evaluation process.

GIL FROMOVICH
The ICP point is real. When you join a company, you think every customer in the world should want what you're selling. Then you realise that different customers have different priorities, and you might be tenth on their list, not first. Demonstrating value isn't just about converting a prospect — it's about understanding whether now is actually the right moment for them. Sometimes the honest answer is: come back in six months.

> "We're looking at fifteen vendors where we used to look at four. Ask the buyer what their evaluation criteria are before you start. Most sellers don't."
>
> **— Jason Gropper, Federal Technology Advisor**

MICHAEL O'NEIL
There's a distinction worth making here between risk and threat that I think gets sellers into trouble. Risk, properly defined, is dollar-denominated. Threat is the specific thing you're trying to mitigate. Most cyber tools address threats. They reduce risk as a consequence. Sellers who conflate the two end up having imprecise conversations at the executive level — where the language of risk and business impact is the only language that matters. Getting that right isn't just semantics. It's the difference between a conversation that lands and one that doesn't.

> "Risk is dollar-denominated. Threat is what you're mitigating. Sellers who conflate the two end up having imprecise conversations with executives — and those conversations don't land."
>
> **— Michael O'Neil, Cybersecurity Advisor**

PART 3: COMPLEXITY IS THE OPPORTUNITY

Q: The market keeps getting bigger, more fragmented, and harder to navigate. Is that just a problem to manage, or is there another way to look at it?

MICHAEL O'NEIL
Nothing ever gets simpler. That's not pessimism — it's just the nature of the field. The threat surface expands. The regulatory environment tightens. AI is now creating attack vectors that didn't exist eighteen months ago, and at the same time it's changing how buyers research, how they build their shortlists, and how they evaluate vendors before a seller even gets in the room. The winners in this environment aren't the ones who find a way to simplify the conversation. They're the ones who add sophistication in a way that doesn't break everything around it.

GIL FROMOVICH
AI is changing the buying motion in ways we haven't fully worked out yet. A buyer used to go to conferences, read analyst reports, talk to peers. Now they might just ask an AI to summarise the top products in a category and give them a shopping list. That can be efficient — or it can produce a hallucinated shopping list of requirements for solutions that don't even exist yet. The seller who understands this — who can walk into a conversation knowing what the buyer has already been told, and where that picture is incomplete or wrong — has a real advantage.

JASON GROPPER
The acceleration isn't going to slow down. Which means the premium on being able to move quickly, make good decisions, and bring stakeholders with you only goes up. The companies that win aren't necessarily the ones with the best technology. They're the ones who can navigate the buying environment as well as they can build a product.

> "Somebody is interrogating an AI before they even call you. You need to know exactly what they've been told — and where that picture is incomplete."
>
> **— Gil Fromovich, CRO, Hadrian**

PART 4: THE GAP BETWEEN KNOWING AND DOING

What's striking about this conversation is how much of it has nothing to do with product features. The three people talking are, between them, a CRO concerned with getting results, an advisor who has spent decades helping buyers make complex decisions, and a former buyer who has sat on the other side of hundreds of vendor conversations. The language they share — champion dynamics, risk quantification, buying group choreography, business case construction — is the language of sophisticated commercial engagement. It's not complicated. But it is demanding.

The gap between that standard and the average quota-carrying rep is real. Most sellers in this market have been trained to lead with product, respond to technical questions, and hope that the CISO eventually says yes. The conversation above describes something quite different: a structured, insight-led process that starts with understanding the customer's strategy (Blueprint), reframes the problem in a way that creates urgency (Reframe), builds a business case around the metrics that matter to each stakeholder (Illustrate), anticipates and addresses the internal obstacles that will kill the deal (Defuse), positions clearly against the alternatives including doing nothing (Gauge), and then aligns both sides on a joint path forward (Execute).

That's the BRIDGE framework — and the conversation above is, in effect, a guided tour of why each stage exists. It's not a sales script. It's a way of equipping sellers to have the kind of conversation that Gil, Michael and Jason are having here. The kind that buyers actually find valuable. The kind that wins.

BRIDGE is Insight Revenue's customer value roadmap for complex sales. To find out how it applies to your team and your market, visit insightrevenue.com

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About the contributors

Gil Fromovich is CRO at Hadrian, an offensive cybersecurity company in Amsterdam. He has previously held senior roles at CyberArk, Aqua Security and Cyprint.

Michael O'Neil is a cybersecurity consultant and advisor with extensive experience working with and within Fortune 1000 organisations, including as part of the Office of the CISO at a $14 billion company.

Jason Gropper has 25 years' experience in government-related technology and policy, advising federal cabinet-level organisations on technology acquisition, cybersecurity and emerging technologies including AI.

This conversation was hosted by **Timur Hicyilmaz**, Insight Revenue's Head of Research, June 2026.