Closing Foundry.

THE OPERATOR'S GUIDE

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The Founder-Led Sales Guide

How B2B sales actually works, and how to turn it into a motion someone else can run.

Drawn from the system **Closing Foundry** installs in founder-led teams. Six chapters, from why buyers buy to running it without you.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read it cover to cover across all stages, or jump to the part you're in. Each part opens with the short version, names the few things that matter, and ends with one test you can run on a real deal this week. The diagrams are the system on a page; the tests are how you put it to work.

01

PART 1 OF 6

Why buyers **buy**

B2B buying is a decision a self interested, risk averse human makes about whether to change what they do today. Every deal turns on three gates: why change, why now, why us.

THE SHORT VERSION

B2B buying is a decision a self interested, risk averse human makes, usually with other self interested humans, about whether to change what they do today. Every deal turns on three gates: **why change, why now, why us.** Miss one and the deal stalls. Almost every sales method you've heard of, Challenger, SPIN, Sandler, GAP, value selling, is doing the same job with different labels. Learn the gates and you can read any deal, run any method, and stop selling on features and hope.

It's a game, and the buyer is playing their own hand

A purchase is a decision, and people make decisions in their own best interest. Not the company's interest in the abstract, their own: their targets, their bonus, their reputation, their workload, their risk of looking foolish. In a B2B deal there's rarely one buyer either, there's a champion, an economic buyer, a few stakeholders, each playing their own hand.

Two things are true of almost every player. They'd rather not change, because change is effort and risk, and doing nothing is safe. And they feel a possible loss more sharply than an equal gain. Your job isn't to have the best product. It's to change the maths each player is running until **"change, now, with you"** becomes the obviously sensible move for them personally.

Every deal passes through three gates

A buyer, consciously or not, has to answer three questions before they'll act. **Why change**: is staying as we are too costly to leave alone? **Why now**: can we afford to wait, or does this have to be solved this quarter? **Why us**: are you the right, safe choice versus doing it ourselves, using someone else, or waiting?

FIG 1 · THE THREE GATES Every sales method ever named, Challenger, SPIN, MEDDIC, is a different way of moving a buyer through these same three gates.

GATE ONE

Why change

Nobody changes without a reason, and there are only two kinds: to get away from something bad, or to move toward something good. Pain and gain, usually both. Your job is to surface and sharpen both, because together they create the pressure to change.

Pain weighs more than gain

If you only had time to build one side, build the pain, and there's solid science behind why. Prospect theory, the work that won Daniel Kahneman a Nobel prize, found that people feel the pain of a loss roughly twice as strongly as the pleasure of an equivalent gain.[1] We're wired to protect what we have more than to chase what we don't.

Imagine you win £1,000 at a table in Vegas. Nice night, forgotten by the weekend. Now imagine you lose £1,000 instead. That one stings, you replay the decision for weeks. Same money, very different weight. Your buyers are no different. They'll work harder to avoid losing revenue, market share or a target than to chase an upside. So lead with what the problem is costing them, then add the upside on top.

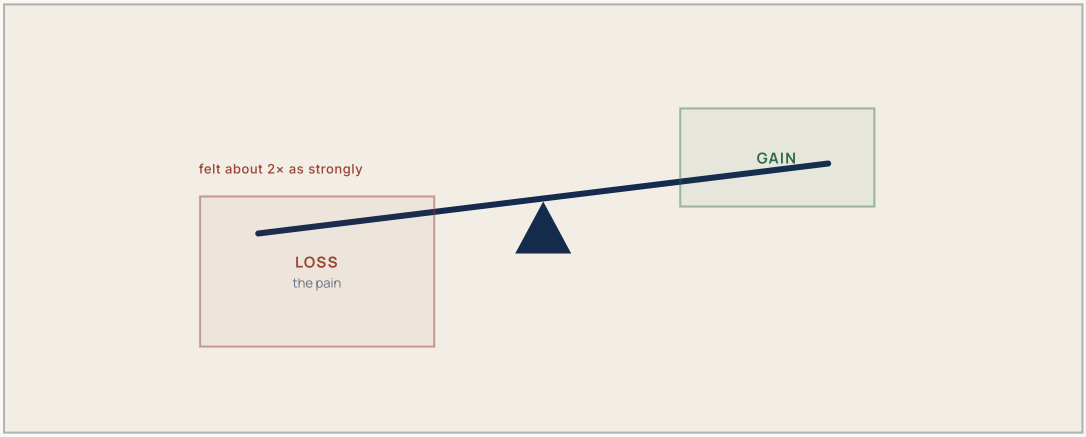

FIG 2 · LOSS AVERSION A loss is felt roughly twice as heavily as an equal gain. Build the cost of the problem before the upside of the fix.

> Lead with what the problem is costing them. The upside goes on top, never first.
>
> GATE ONE · THE ENGINE OF WHY CHANGE

Current state, future state, and the gap

Here's a clean way to hold a whole deal in your head. On the left, the buyer's current state, where they are now, with the problem and its pain. On the right, the future state once it's fixed. Between them sits a gap, and the gap is where the value lives.

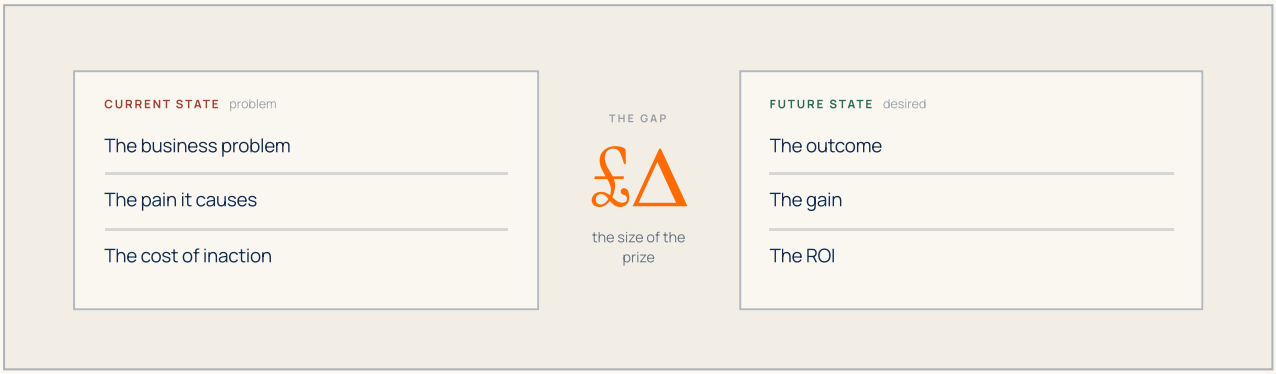

FIG 3 · THE GAP A sales team 20–30% below target, bleeding reps, versus hitting target with a stable team. That distance, in their numbers, is the business case.

Two rules make this work. **Get to the root cause, not the symptom**, a headache and a brain haemorrhage look the same from outside, and you treat them very differently. And **put numbers on both sides**. A painful current state and a compelling future state, both quantified, make the gap real. Vague problems get vague urgency.

Cost of inaction and ROI

These two are just the gap expressed in money, and most sellers get one badly wrong. **Cost of inaction** is what the problem is costing them right now if they do nothing, not "what you're missing by not buying our product." **ROI** is the other side: the future-state upside of fixing it. So you can say, in their numbers, staying as you are costs roughly this every month, and fixing it returns roughly that.

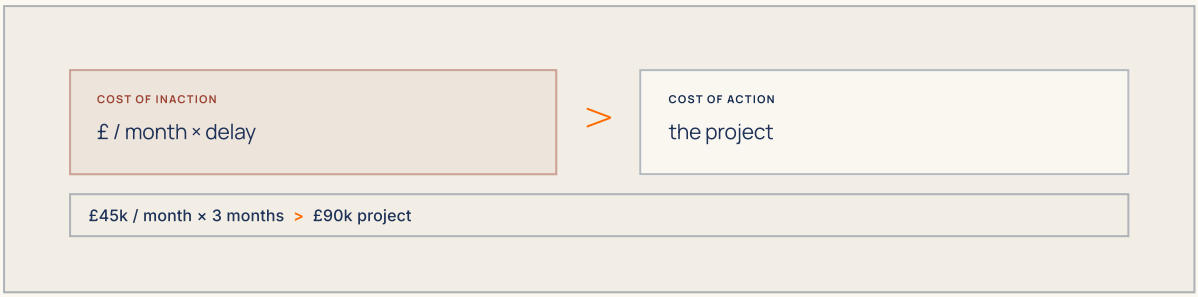

FIG 4 · COST OF INACTION Every month they delay, they keep paying the cost and keep forgoing the gain. Stack those and "now" beats "later."

GATE TWO

Why now

A buyer can fully accept they should change and still not do it now. "Why change" gets them nodding; "why now" gets them moving, and it's mostly a maths trick on top of what you've built. Every month they delay, they keep paying the cost of inaction and keep missing the upside. A compliance deadline, a board mandate, a competitor win, a new leader who needs a result, any of these sharpen it further. Without a why now, even a convinced buyer drifts.

The real reason deals die: the status quo

Your biggest competitor is not another vendor. It's the buyer deciding to do nothing. Doing nothing is safe, cheap, and requires no effort or risk, and it's the default every human reaches for. This is status quo bias, and it's why deals that felt great go quiet. When a deal dies here, it's telling you one of two things: you didn't build a strong enough why change and why now, or there's a real blocker you haven't surfaced. Either way, the answer isn't to chase harder. It's to make staying still cost more than changing.

> Your biggest competitor is the buyer doing nothing.
>
> STATUS QUO BIAS · THE DEAL-KILLER THAT NEVER SAYS NO

GATE THREE

Why us

Say you've beaten the status quo. The buyer accepts they should change and soon. The psychology shifts, from the problem to risk: are you the right choice, and how badly could this go wrong for me, personally and professionally? **Differentiated value** answers why you, versus doing it themselves, a competitor, or waiting. When it isn't obvious, dial up the areas where you're genuinely strong and help the buyer see why those are the ones that matter most. And remember buyers don't just buy value, they buy safety, which is why pilots and proofs of concept exist: a low-risk path to a yes is often what gets the yes.

The two enemies, named

Hold these two and you'll diagnose most stalled deals on sight. The **status quo** kills the deal early: the buyer never builds enough reason to leave where they are, and the fix is a sharper why change and why now. **Indecision, the fear of messing up,** kills it late: the buyer wants to move but is frightened of choosing wrong, and the fix is to de-risk the decision with a clear recommendation and a smaller first step.[2]

Why this is the only foundation you need

Every framework you've heard of is trying to do exactly what this chapter described: move a self interested, risk averse buyer through why change, why now and why us, against the pull of the status quo and the fear of messing up. Different labels, same job. Learn the gates and you don't need to memorise the methods. You can read any deal and know which gate it's stuck on.

THE TEST TO RUN THIS WEEK

Run the three gates on one live deal

Pick one real, open deal and write a single honest line for each gate.

1. **Why change**, what is this costing them right now, in their numbers, and what do they gain by fixing it?
2. **Why now**, what makes solving it this quarter better than next year?
3. **Why us**, why you, over doing nothing, doing it internally, or a competitor?

Wherever the line is thin or you're guessing, that's where the deal will stall. That's the most useful map you'll get this week.

02

PART 2 OF 6

Selling as a **founder**

How you actually run the conversation that moves a buyer through the gates. Stop pitching the product and start diagnosing the problem, and learn to tell real intent from polite curiosity.

THE SHORT VERSION

This is how you have the conversation that moves a buyer through the three gates. Stop pitching the product and start diagnosing the problem. Say what you do in problem language, not features. Run a first meeting that earns the next one. And **learn to tell a buyer who's going to act from one who's just curious**, because counting curiosity as pipeline is the single most expensive habit in founder-led sales.

Sell the problem, not the product

People don't buy features. They buy a solution to a problem they care about. If you open by talking about what your product does, you put the buyer to work, they have to translate your features into their world and decide if it matters, and most won't bother.

So lead with the problem. The founders who win early aren't the ones who know their product best, they're the ones who understand the buyer's problem better than the buyer does. When you can describe someone's situation more sharply than they can themselves, they trust you, and trust earns you the right to talk about a solution at all. This is also why a founder is so good at early sales: you've lived the problem, and you can talk about it with real conviction.

Say what you do in problem language

When someone asks what you do, don't reach for the product. Walk them through a short chain that connects the problem to the result. We call it **Root to Result**, and it has five links.

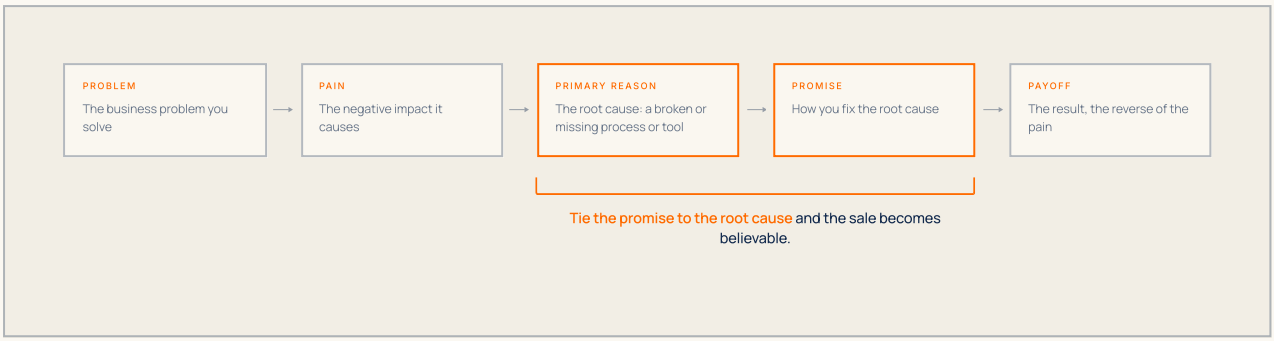

FIG 5 · ROOT TO RESULT Name the real cause of a buyer's problem and show your solution fixes that exact cause. A promise tied to a root cause is one a buyer can trust; a promise floating free is just marketing.

Write your Root to Result down once, for your sharpest buyer, and it becomes your message everywhere: your outreach, your first meeting, your website.

The first meeting sets up every deal that follows

The most dangerous first meeting is the one that feels great. Friendly, lots of nodding, "this is really interesting." You leave certain it went well, then it goes quiet. A good first meeting does a specific job: it earns the next step by getting the buyer to see and feel the gates. By the end you should have surfaced a real problem, started to size what it's costing, sensed why it might matter now, and agreed a concrete next step with a date. Open with a soft agenda, come in with a point of view to test, and aim to talk about a fifth of the time.

Run discovery that surfaces the gates

Discovery isn't a list of questions, it's how you help a buyer build their own case for change. There's a natural order to it, the problem funnel, that walks from a vague problem to a quantified, urgent one.

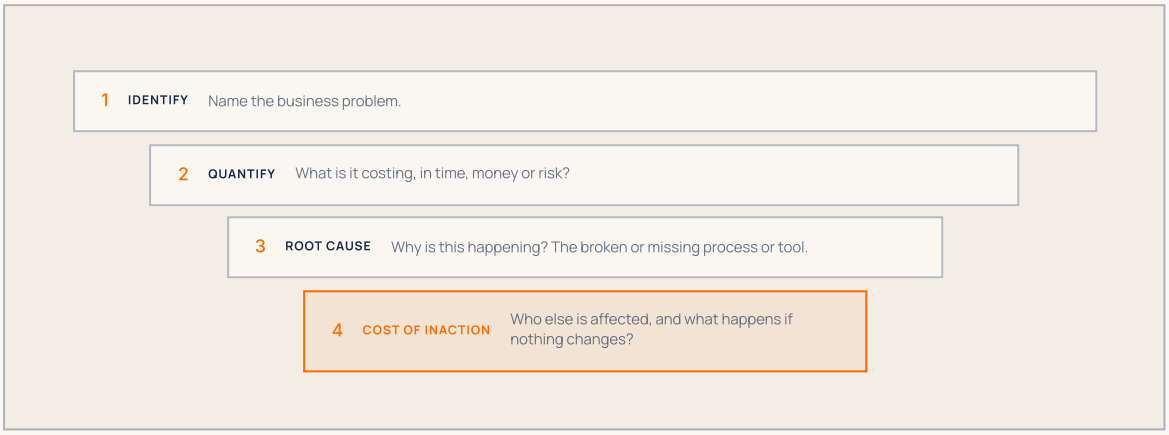

FIG 6 · THE PROBLEM FUNNEL A problem with no number creates a curious buyer; a problem with a number creates a motivated one.

Two questions do a lot of the heavy lifting, and they're worth memorising. **"What happens if you don't fix this?"** pulls the buyer into the cost of inaction, the current-state pain that drives why change and why now. And **"what could you do if this were solved?"** opens up the future-state gain. Between them they map the gap from Part 1. The discipline underneath all of it: stay in their world, not yours. The product comes later, and it comes lighter than you think.

Tell real intent from polite curiosity

This is the skill that separates a founder with a real pipeline from one with a busy calendar and flat revenue. Curiosity is a buyer who wants to learn, and won't buy now. Intent is a buyer with a specific problem, a deadline, and a reason the status quo has become unacceptable. On a good call these look identical. The sharpest single question, asked of every live opportunity: **what changed to make solving this matter now?** A specific, dated answer is intent. A vague one is curiosity.

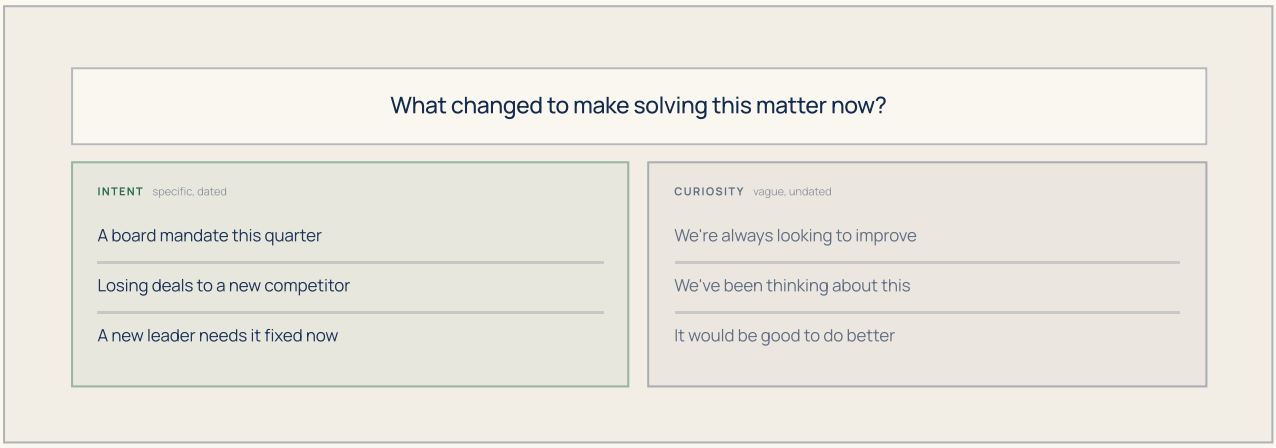

FIG 7 · CURIOSITY VS INTENT Before you count a deal as real, answer five things in the buyer's words: the problem, why it matters now, when they need it, what doing nothing costs, and whether there's budget and a real decision-maker.

SEE WHERE YOUR OWN MOTION STANDS

The Closing Gap Score, ten minutes, a scored read.

On the four areas a founder-led motion leaks from, it shows where yours is actually losing the number, and the first thing to fix.

→ closingfoundry.com/closing-gap-score

SCAN TO START

Create urgency without faking it

Real urgency isn't manufactured, it's found, by surfacing a cost the buyer is already paying and a reason it's just become intolerable. Your real competitor is the buyer doing nothing. You beat it not by pushing, but by making staying still cost more than changing. A discount doesn't create urgency, it just lowers the price of arriving late, and teaches the buyer your price was soft to begin with.

A point of view earns the meeting

Buyers, especially senior ones, give their time to people who arrive with a point of view, not questions and a demo. A point of view is a short, testable hypothesis about their world. It shows you've done the thinking, earns trust before the pitch, and gives the buyer something to push against, far more engaging than a blank "tell me about your challenges."

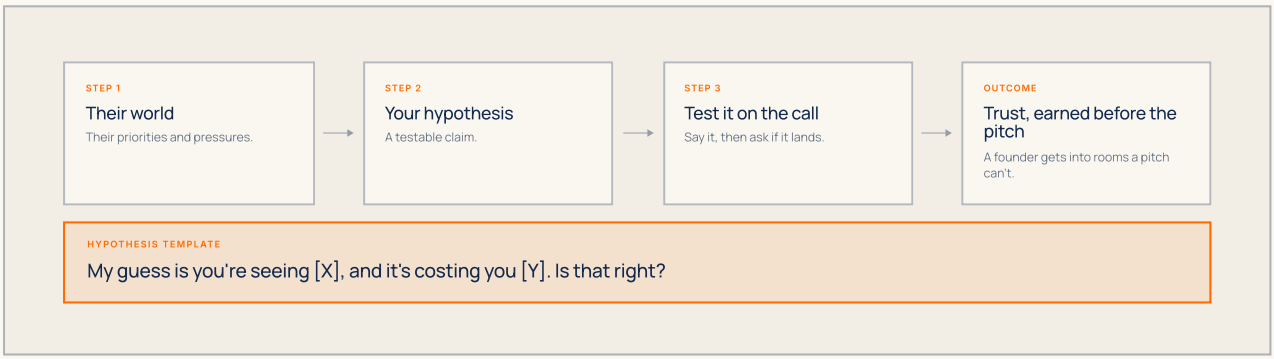

FIG 8 · POINT OF VIEW A credible point of view, shared consistently and brought into the first call, means the buyer arrives already half trusting you.

RUN THIS BEFORE YOUR NEXT CALL

1. **Your Root to Result, for this buyer.** One line each: problem, pain, root cause, promise, payoff.
2. **Your point of view.** One testable hypothesis, and a rough guess at what it's costing them.
3. **Three discovery questions** that surface the gates: one to quantify, one to find the root cause, and "what happens if you don't fix this?"

03

PART 3 OF 6

Building a repeatable **motion**

Winning deals proves you can sell. It doesn't prove you have a motion, something repeatable that another person could run. This is the bridge between selling well and being able to hand it over.

THE SHORT VERSION

A motion is something repeatable, that doesn't live only in your head, that another person could run. You build it by narrowing who you sell to until it's almost uncomfortable, qualifying on buyer evidence rather than gut feel, writing down the handful of things that actually win deals, and **proving it repeats with a simple test.**

Narrow until it's almost uncomfortable

A wide market produces a generic message, and a generic message resonates with no one. A narrow market does the opposite: when you focus on one kind of buyer with one sharp problem, the right person reads it and thinks, **that's me.** Narrowing isn't shrinking your ambition, it's concentrating it. A wedge. It's where referrals compound, where your discovery gets sharper every week, and where a first hire can actually learn the job.

The ICP your own deals already prove

Most ICP definitions are useless because they stop at size and industry. A real ideal customer profile is the intersection of three specific things, and you don't have to invent it, your closed deals already point to it.

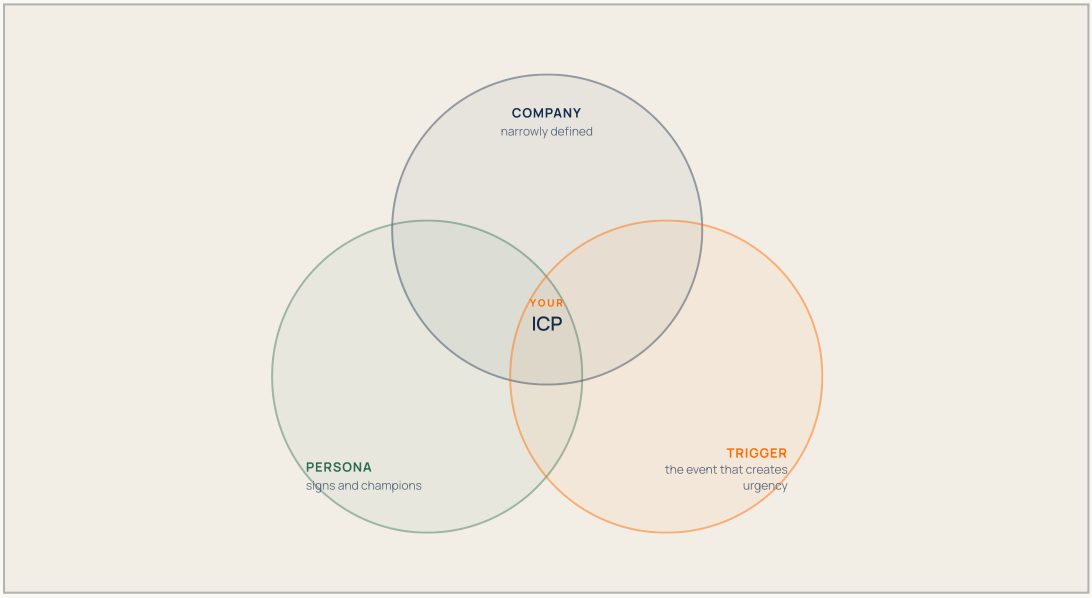

FIG 9 · THE ICP INTERSECTION The trigger is the one most founders miss, and the one that predicts a deal. If you can't name it, you're selling to everyone and closing no one.

One message, sharpened by level

Your Root to Result chain works at three levels. At the **company** level it's your core proposition, the thing on your website. At the **persona** level it shifts: a user feels daily friction, a manager feels missed targets and team risk, an executive feels revenue, cost and board pressure. At the **deal** level it's specific to the buyer in front of you. Same root cause, same promise throughout, spoken to the stakes of the person you're talking to.

Qualification is a standard, not a feeling

The principle underneath every qualification model, MEDDIC, MEDDPICC, SPICED, is worth more than any of the acronyms: **a deal advances on buyer evidence, not seller opinion.** "It's looking good" is not evidence. "The buyer confirmed the problem, named the cost of inaction, agreed a dated next step, and introduced a second stakeholder" is. Define what has to be true, on evidence, for a deal to move between stages. With it, the pipeline tells the truth.

Write down what wins

Five artefacts are most of the difference between a motion that transfers and one that doesn't.

- **The buying signals**, the specific things a buyer says or does that tell you a deal is real, as observable behaviour, not a feeling.
- **The ICP and its triggers**, the company, the personas, and the events that make your best buyers move.
- **Stage definitions with exit criteria**, what has to be true, on buyer evidence, to move a deal between stages.
- **The objections and how you handle them**, the five or six that come up every time, and your best answer to each.
- **The close plays**, what you do late in a deal to get it over the line, including how someone carries your credibility without you in the room.

These aren't a sales manual in the abstract. They're the contents of your own head, made explicit. A motion you can't describe is one you can't hand over, coach, or trust.

The test for repeatable

So how do you know you have a motion rather than a run of good luck? There's a clean test, and it's the readiness bar to clear before you hire anyone. You have a repeatable motion when you've closed three to five deals that share three things.

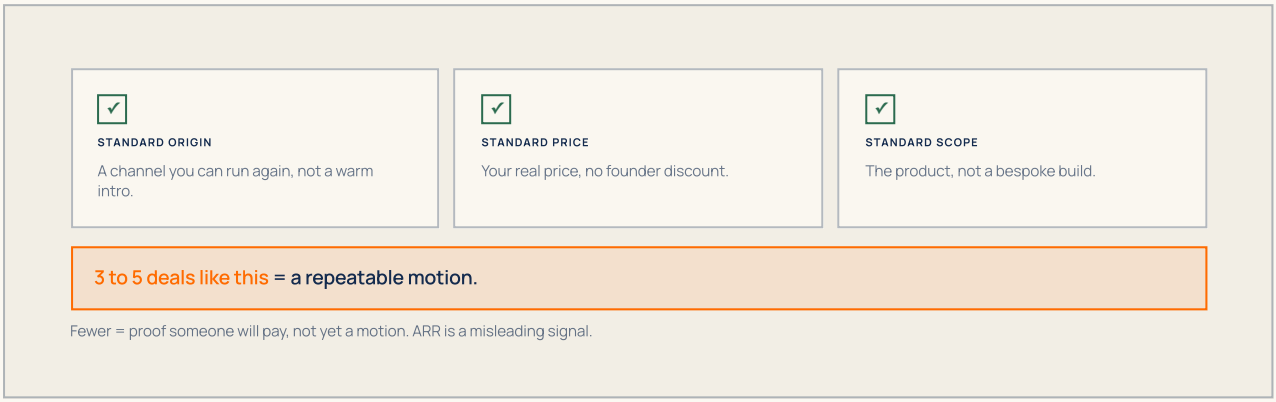

FIG 10 · THE STANDARD DEAL TEST Revenue is a misleading readiness signal: a founder can produce it for months by personally closing network deals while the motion makes no progress at all.

RUN THIS ON YOUR LAST WINS

1. **What do they share?** Write it as one sentence: "We win [company] when [persona] is under pressure from [trigger]."
2. **Which pass the standard deal test?** Standard origin, price and scope. Count them honestly.
3. **What's missing from your written motion?** Of the five artefacts, which exist and which are still only in your head?

That last answer is your to-do list. It's also, almost always, the reason a first hire would struggle today.

04

PART 4 OF 6

The **transition**

Founder-led selling is a stage, not a flaw, and it has a ceiling. Getting past it runs through three stages, and the most expensive mistake is skipping the middle one.

THE SHORT VERSION

Getting past founder-led selling runs through three stages: selling alone, founder coached, and handed over. The most expensive mistake is jumping from the first to the last by hiring a senior seller and hoping they bridge the gap. **You're ready to hire when your motion passes the standard deal test, not at a magic revenue number,** and the first hire is a builder, not a runner.

Founder-led selling is a stage, not a flaw

Buyers respond to a founder in ways they don't respond to a hired seller, because the accountability, product knowledge and conviction are all real. That's a feature. It is, though, a stage. It carries a company a long way, then hits a ceiling, because a motion that runs on one person is capped by that person's hours and lives in that person's head. ICONIQ Growth, who study this across hundreds of scaling software companies, find founder-led selling works well early and then runs out of road, with many companies plateauing around $15m in revenue.[3] The goal isn't to stay in it forever, or to escape it tomorrow. It's to understand it well enough to transfer it.

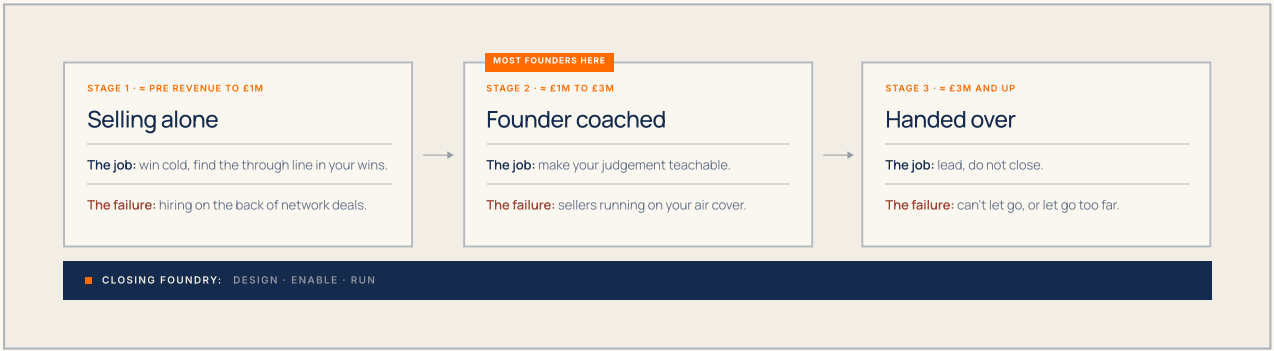

FIG 11 · THE THREE STAGES Founder coached is the most dangerous stage: revenue keeps coming, so you assume the motion is transferring, when the sellers are really running on your air cover.

The most expensive mistake: skipping the middle

A founder at a million and a half hires a senior salesperson from a name brand company and expects a hands off team. There's no documented motion, nothing built for the seller to run. The seller spends months trying to reverse-engineer a motion that only ever lived in the founder's head, then leaves. As ICONIQ put it, **sales hires scale clarity, they can't scale guesswork.** Add the salary, the recruiter fee, and a quarter or two of pipeline the founder stopped building, and skipping the founder-coached stage costs somewhere between £200k and £400k, all to avoid the twelve months of work the motion actually needed.

When you're actually ready to hire

There's no magic revenue number. The real bar is the standard deal test from Part 3: three to five deals won at standard origin, price and scope. The practitioner version, made often by Jason Lemkin at SaaStr, is that you should close your first ten to twenty customers yourself, because until you have, you don't know how it's done well enough to teach anyone.[4]

Hire a builder, not a runner

At this stage you need a builder, a first seller who helps refine the playbook while they sell, not a senior leader brought in to run a machine that doesn't exist yet. A **founding AE** builds the motion as they go, comfortable without a finished playbook; a **regular AE** runs an existing one and tends to flounder without it. Hiring the second when you need the first is one of the most common reasons first hires fail.

> Sales hires scale clarity. They can't scale guesswork.
>
> ICONIQ GROWTH

Why the first hire keeps closing nothing without you

When you sell, three things do the work at once, and you don't notice because they run in one head. You can feel which objection is real and which is a stall. You carry the credibility that makes a buyer trust the answer to "what happens if this goes wrong." And your reputation quietly warms the pipeline before the first call. A new seller inherits none of that by default. There's a clean way to check: **if you went dark for a month, would your live opportunities keep advancing without you?** If the honest answer is no, the motion hasn't transferred, and that's the work, not a second hire.

How to actually transfer it

Make explicit the three things that never get handed over by default. **The buying signals**, define what real intent looks like as observable behaviour, and build it into your stage criteria. **The ICP triggers**, write down the events that predict a deal and teach the seller to surface them in the first call. **Late-stage credibility**, give the seller the proof points and the point of view that earned the trust, and stay visible in the market.

The fastest way to start: record yourself on three or four live deals, watch them with your seller, and narrate the decisions you make on instinct. Then shadow rather than lead, they run the call, you observe, you debrief, you remove yourself. Most of the motion lives in choices you don't notice making, and making them visible is the whole job.

RUN THIS

1. **The month away test.** If you went dark for a month, would your live deals keep advancing without you? Answer yes or no.
2. **If no, name why.** Take the last three deals you stepped into, and for each name which pulled you back in: the buying signals, the ICP triggers, or the late stage credibility. The one that shows up most is the first thing to build.

05

PART 5 OF 6

Running **it**

A motion you've written down still has to be run, and running it is a rhythm, not a burst of effort. This is the difference between a playbook on paper and a motion that holds when you're not in every deal.

THE SHORT VERSION

Running a motion is a rhythm. A weekly deal review that inspects buyer evidence rather than reporting activity, stage criteria that hold, a forecast defined honestly enough to trust within about ten percent, a close plan that maps the late stage road with the buyer, and a deliberate way of turning customers into growth.

A motion runs on rhythm, not heroics

A founder invests in the playbook, the ICP, the qualification standard, and then nothing moves, because there's no operating rhythm to run them. The engine got built and never got switched on. In our diagnostic we see this as a high capability, low momentum score: everything's in place, nothing's being run. It's the single most common shape in a founder-led team that's done the homework.

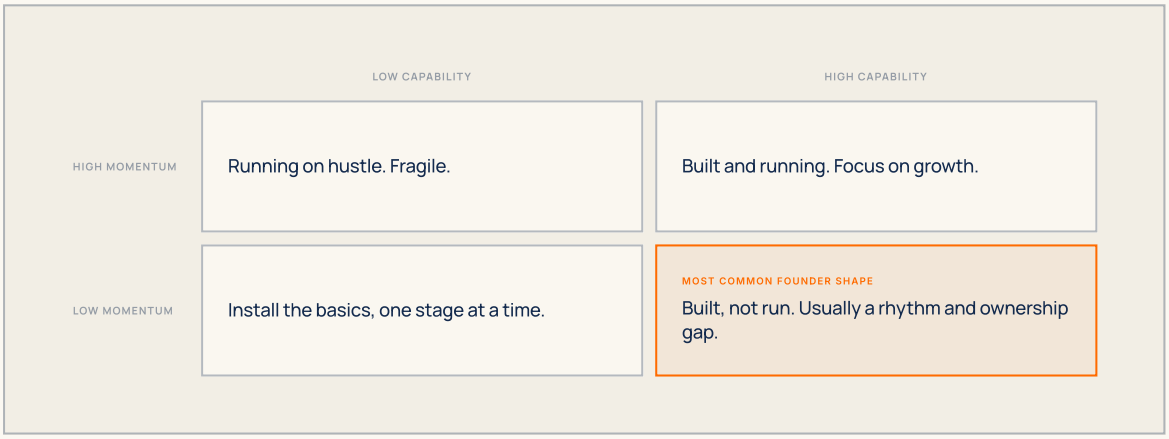

FIG 12 · CAPABILITY VS MOMENTUM

The fix is a cadence: a small number of recurring reviews that keep the motion honest. The spine is one weekly deal review, a working session, not a status meeting.

Inspect deals on evidence, not optimism

In a good review you walk each live deal against its stage criteria and ask, for real, is the evidence there. Where it isn't, move it back, don't wave it through. This feels slow and is the opposite: a pipeline full of deals that look further along than they are produces a forecast that lies. Inspecting on evidence shrinks the visible pipeline and makes the remaining number real, and it coaches the seller every time.

A forecast you can trust, not just report

Define your stages clearly enough that a deal can only sit in one if the evidence is there. Be ruthless about the word **commit**: a committed deal has a dated close, a confirmed buyer, and the late stage steps mapped, not a seller feeling good about it. A team that does this can forecast within roughly ten percent. A team that doesn't has a forecast that's really a wish list, and finds out at quarter-end.

Kill the slips before they happen

Deals that slip a fortnight at a time usually fail for one reason: the road ran out before the destination. Pricing, legal, procurement, security, stretches nobody mapped. The fix is a **close plan**, a map of every step from where the deal is now to signed and live, with an owner and a date for each, agreed with the buyer.

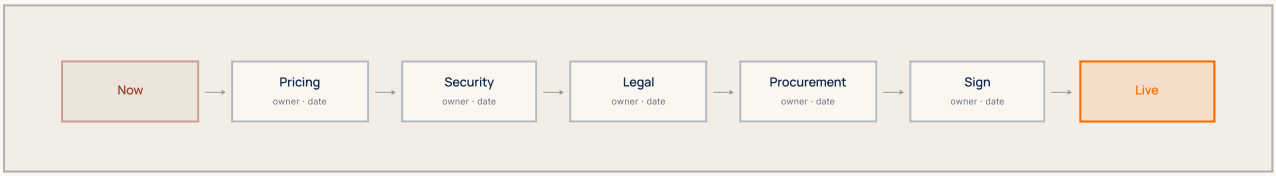

FIG 13 · THE CLOSE PLAN A close date you set on your own is a wish. A close date you mapped together, step by step, is a plan, and it surfaces the legal or procurement step weeks before it would ambush you.

Customers are where the next deal lives

Once you're past the earliest stage, the customers you already have are the most reliable source of growth you've got, and most founder-led companies leave it on the table because nobody owns it. A customer bought to get from a painful current state to a better future one. Get them to value quickly, with a clean handover from sell to deliver, and they renew and expand. Net revenue retention is either built on purpose or it's an accident, and accidents don't compound.

The system underneath

Running a motion is three things working on a rhythm: the process a deal moves through, the method the seller uses at each step, and the qualification that proves a deal is real, all inspected weekly against a clear standard. The same playbook, turned into structured data a machine can read, is what lets the system tell a seller the next best action on this deal, at this stage, now.

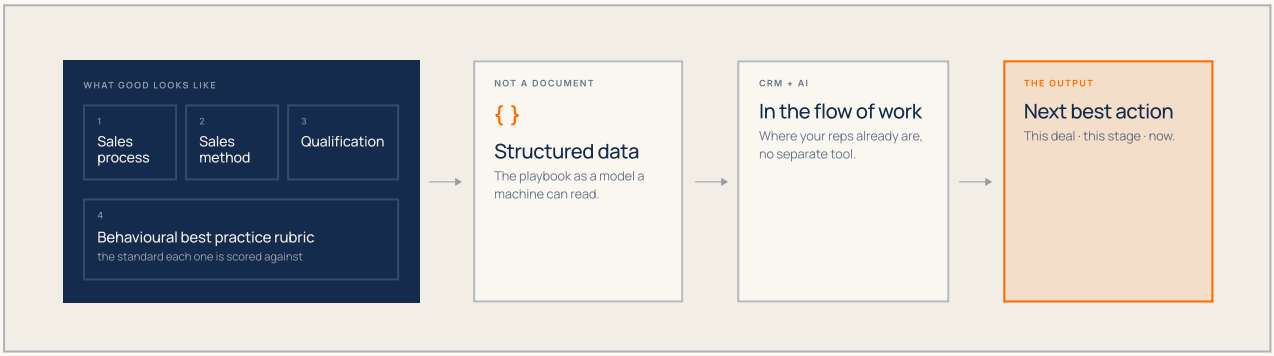

FIG 14 · NEXT BEST ACTION This is where Closing Foundry does its deepest work: not handing over a diagnosis and leaving, but staying until the new way of selling becomes the way the team sells.

RUN THIS

Stand up one thing this week: a weekly deal review on your top five live deals, run against written stage criteria. For each, ask whether the evidence is actually there to be where it sits, and write the next step, owner and date. Do it for four weeks and you'll see which deals were never as far along as you thought, and how much steadier the forecast gets.

06

PART 6 OF 6 · APPENDIX

The tests, the terms, and the **tools**

The reference part of the guide. Everything taught across Parts 1 to 5, collected in a form you can use on a live deal this week.

You've reached the end of the guide

A buyer is a self interested person deciding whether to change, and every deal turns on three gates: why change, why now, why us **(Part 1)**. You move them through it by selling the problem, not the product, and telling real intent from polite curiosity **(Part 2)**. You make it repeatable by narrowing who you sell to, qualifying on evidence, and writing down what wins **(Part 3)**. You hand it over in stages, without skipping the middle **(Part 4)**. And you keep it honest with a weekly rhythm, an evidence-based forecast, and a deliberate way of growing your customers **(Part 5)**.

The diagnostic: the Closing Gap Score

Everything in this guide is general. Your motion is specific. The system below is the full picture, four lenses across four layers, and the Closing Gap Score reads your own motion against it: where it's leaking, on buyer evidence, and the first thing to fix this week.

SYSTEM LENS	DEMAND	SALES PROCESS	CLOSING	EXPANSION
PRODUCT	ICP / use case / proof	Value hypothesis	Business case / proof	Value path / expansion
PEOPLE	Coverage / ownership	Manager cadence	Champion / sponsor	CS ownership
PROCESS	Inbound / outbound rhythm	Stage gates / qualification	MAP / pricing / paper path	Handoff / renewal motion
REPEATABILITY	Winning demand plays	Inspection rhythm	Close plan approaches	References / win and loss loop

FIG 15 · THE 4×4 SYSTEM MATRIX Four lenses, Demand, Sales process, Closing, Expansion, across four layers. The map the Gap Score scores you against.

The founder's tests

Eight checks you can run on your own deals and your own motion. Each takes minutes, and each tells you something the busy version of you would miss.

1 PART 1

The three gates check

On one open deal, write a line for each gate: what is the problem costing now, what makes solving it this quarter better than next year, and why you over doing nothing or a competitor.

2 PART 2

The "what changed" question

Ask of every live opportunity: what changed to make solving this matter now? A specific, dated answer is real intent. A vague answer is curiosity, and curiosity doesn't close.

3 PART 2

The five qualification questions

The problem, why it matters now, when they need it, what doing nothing costs, and whether there's budget and a real decision-maker. Gaps on urgency and cost of inaction mean curiosity dressed as intent.

4 PART 2

The point of view prep

Before a call, write one testable hypothesis about a problem the buyer likely has and a rough guess at what it's costing them. Arriving with a view earns trust and gets you into rooms a pitch can't.

5 PART 3

The closed-won analysis

Take your last wins, especially from outside your network, and find what they share. "We win [company] when [persona] is under pressure from [trigger]." That's your ICP, proven by evidence.

6 PART 3

The standard deal test

Three to five deals at standard origin, price and scope. Fewer is proof someone will pay, not yet a motion. This is the readiness bar before you hire.

7 PART 4

The month away test

If you went dark for a month, would your live deals keep advancing? If no, the motion hasn't transferred, and the fix is documentation, not a second hire.

8 PART 5

The weekly deal review

One working session a week on your top deals, against written stage criteria, asking for evidence each deal is where it sits, not the activity around it. Do it four weeks and watch the forecast steady.

→ Want these scored across your whole motion? The Closing Gap Score is the scored version of the same questions. **closingfoundry.com/closing-gap-score**

Glossary

The three gates
The three questions a buyer must clear before they act: why change, why now, why us. The structure every sales method is really trying to move a buyer through.

Status quo bias
The human preference for doing nothing, because it's safe, cheap and effortless. Your biggest competitor in most deals, and why deals go quiet rather than say no.

Loss aversion
The finding, from prospect theory, that people feel a loss roughly twice as strongly as an equal gain. Why leading with the cost of the problem moves buyers more than the upside.

Current state, future state, the gap
Where the buyer is now versus where they could be once the problem is fixed. The value of your solution lives in the gap, and your job is to size it in their numbers.

Cost of inaction (COI)
What the buyer's current problem is costing them now if they do nothing, in time, money or risk. Not what they miss by not buying your product. A key driver of urgency.

ROI
The future-state upside of fixing the problem. The other side of the gap from cost of inaction.

Root to Result
The chain connecting a problem to a result: problem, pain, primary reason (root cause), promise, payoff. Tying the promise tightly to the root cause is what makes a sale believable.

Point of view selling
Arriving with a testable hypothesis about the buyer's world rather than blank open questions. Earns trust before the pitch.

Curiosity vs purchase intent
Curiosity is a buyer who wants to learn and won't act now. Intent is a buyer with a problem, a deadline, and a reason the status quo is unacceptable. Identical on a good call, different afterwards.

Trigger event
The change that makes a buyer act now: a funding round, a new executive, a compliance deadline, a competitive loss. The part of an ICP that predicts a deal.

ICP and anti ICP
The ideal customer profile is the intersection of company type, the persona who signs and champions, and the trigger event. The anti ICP is the buyer you deliberately won't chase.

Qualification
Judging whether a deal is real on buyer evidence rather than seller opinion. The principle under every model (MEDDIC, MEDDPICC, SPICED): a deal advances only when the buyer has left proof.

The standard deal test
Three to five deals won at standard origin, price and scope: the test for whether a motion is repeatable, and the bar to clear before hiring.

The transition (three stages)
Selling alone, founder coached, then handed over. The arc from the founder being the motion to a team running it. Skipping the middle is the most expensive mistake.

Founding AE vs regular AE
A founding AE builds the motion while selling, comfortable without a finished playbook. A regular AE runs an existing one. Hiring the second when you need the first is a common reason first hires fail.

Close plan (mutual action plan)
A map of every step from where a deal is now to signed and live, with an owner and date for each, agreed with the buyer. Stops late stage slips by surfacing procurement, legal and pricing early.

Net revenue retention (NRR)
Whether your existing customers grow or shrink over time. Built deliberately through getting customers to value and triggering the next purchase, or left to accident.

Capability vs momentum
Capability is what you've built; momentum is what's actually moving. High capability, low momentum has the playbook but no rhythm, the most common founder-led shape.

The four areas
Volume, Efficiency, Control, Expansion: the four places a revenue motion leaks, and the lenses the Closing Gap Score reports against.

The fear of messing up
The late stage enemy: a buyer who agrees they should change but freezes, more afraid of choosing wrong than of standing still. Beaten with safety, not more value.

The toolkit

Free operator tools, each built from the system in this guide. Each takes a single part of it and turns it into something you can run on a live deal.

01 **Real ICP One-Pager** — PART 3
The ICP your closed deals already prove, on a page.

02 **First Meeting Scorecard** — PART 2
Score a first conversation against the five things that actually start a cycle.

03 **First Sales Hire Rubric** — PART 4
Hire, grow and assess your first seller on evidence, not a feeling.

04 **Forecast Confidence Check** — PART 5
Score whether your forecast can be trusted, not just reported.

05 **MEDDPICC Deal Health Scorecard** — PART 3 & 5
Score a live deal across all eight elements on buyer evidence.

→ Start with the scored read of your whole motion, then pick the tool for the area most under pressure. **closingfoundry.com/closing-gap-score**

SOURCES

1. Daniel Kahneman & Amos Tversky, prospect theory: losses are felt roughly twice as strongly as equivalent gains (Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, 2002).
2. Research on customer indecision and late stage deal loss, on the fear of choosing wrong at the finish line (Dixon & McKenna, *The JOLT Effect*).
3. ICONIQ Growth, on founder-led selling running out of road and the plateau around $15m revenue, across hundreds of scaling software companies.
4. Jason Lemkin, SaaStr: close your first ten to twenty customers yourself before hiring a seller.

Closing Foundry.

WHERE TO START

Understanding the gap is the start. **Closing it is the work.**

SEE WHERE YOUR OWN MOTION STANDS

Run the Closing Gap Score. Eight minutes, a scored read.

A scored read across demand, conversion, control and expansion, your primary issue, and the first thing to fix this week.

→ **closingfoundry.com/closing-gap-score**

WHEN YOU WANT TO FIX IT

Understanding the gap is one thing. **Closing it is what we do**, staying with a team until the new way of selling becomes the way they sell. The Bootcamp builds your playbook on live pipeline; 5 Days to Scale finds the one thing limiting growth; Closing OS installs and runs the whole motion.

ABOUT CLOSING FOUNDRY

We help founder-led and scaling technical B2B teams close the revenue gap between target, forecast and actuals by operationalising sales method into CRM, deal inspection, daily seller behaviour and AI workflows.

GET IN TOUCH

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