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Selling into enterprise

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Closing Foundry.

BUSINESS ACADEMY · DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS AND TRADE

Selling into enterprise.

A practical guide for B2B SMEs. What enterprise ready actually looks like, and how to judge whether it is the right route for you now.

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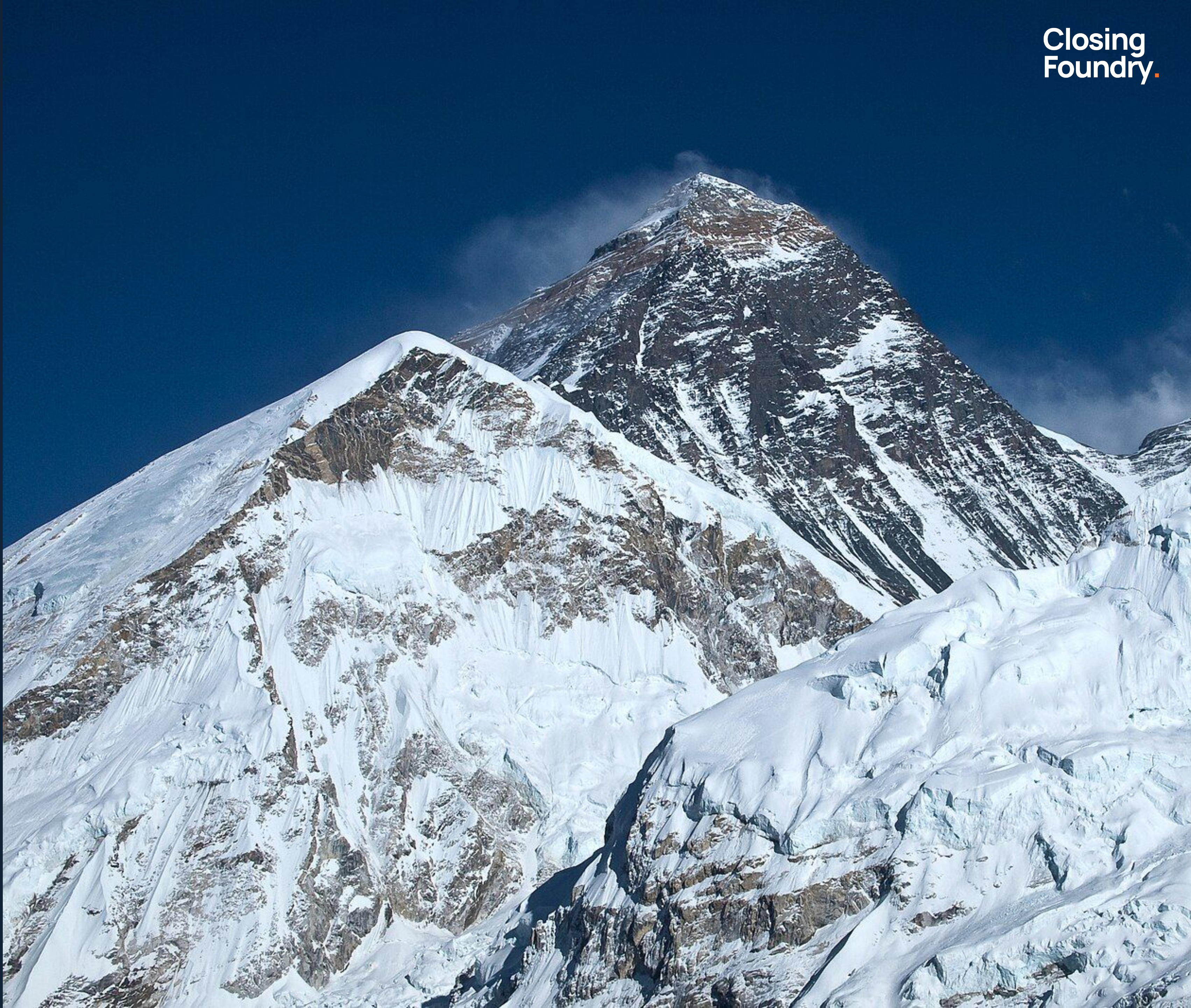

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What you’ll leave with.

Three practical decisions. Each one is something you can do this week on a real account.

01

A verdict on the route

Whether enterprise is right for you now, staged, or not yet.

What has to be in place before you commit time and runway to it.

An honest alternative if the answer is not yet.

02

A sharper point of view

Why Change, Why Now, Why Us, answered in the buyer’s language.

The cost of staying put, quantified rather than asserted.

How the message differs for innovation versus known problems.

03

Control of the deal

Champions, multi threading and a power base you can name.

A mutual action plan that holds the dates.

Procurement and InfoSec running in parallel, not at the end.

Each of these maps to one of the three outcomes published for this session.

PART · 01

Should you sell into enterprise at all?

The honest version. What the prize is worth, what the attempt costs, and how to score yourself before you commit.

The prize, and the price.

Landing one enterprise account can change the shape of the business. The attempt is also the most expensive experiment a small company can run.

What a first enterprise win buys you

Cash at a size that changes the plan, not the quarter.

Referenceability that makes every other deal easier.

Product feedback from the most demanding buyer you will meet.

A logo that shortens the trust conversation for years.

What the attempt costs to find out

Consensus across 4 to 10 stakeholders, any one of whom can stall it.

A cycle measured in quarters, with 40 to 100 meetings behind it.

Founder time taken out of the deals that pay the bills now.

The real competitor is not a rival. It is doing nothing.

14%

of sellers deliver more than 80% of the revenue.

Ebsta, across roughly £4bn of tracked pipeline. Those are full time, quota carrying sellers. The distribution is not kinder to founders selling part time, and it is less kind again at enterprise size.

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Score yourself. Eight checks.

Tick only what is accurate today, not what is coming. The point of the exercise is to stop you spending a year finding what's needed.

- [ ] A point of view sharp enough to earn a first meeting on its own merit.
- [ ] A warm route to at least one potential champion inside the account.
- [ ] Runway and capacity to carry a cycle across several quarters.
- [ ] A founder or senior operator who can hold an executive conversation.
- [ ] Named security, compliance and implementation answers, written down.
- [ ] Two or more reference customers who will take a call.
- [ ] A proposition that beats doing nothing, not just the nearest rival.
- [ ] The discipline to disqualify an account that is not moving.

7 to 8

Summit now

Pick one account and run it properly. Do not run five.

5 to 6

Stage the climb

Fix the gaps on a live mid market deal first, then step up.

Under 5

Acclimatise first

Win smaller, build the references, come back in two quarters.

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Not yet is a route, not a verdict.

Not yet is a route, not a verdict on the business. Three ways to get there that cost far less than a failed enterprise campaign.

01

Acclimatise on mid market

Same buying committee shape, fewer people, shorter cycle.

You build the trust pack, the references and the case studies for real.

Every mid market win is enterprise ammunition later.

02

Stage one named account

One account, chosen because you already have a warm route in.

Treat it as a funded experiment with a stop date, not a campaign.

Learn the paper process once, on a deal you can afford to lose.

03

Go in behind someone bigger

A partner, a systems integrator or an existing supplier already on the paper.

Their procurement approval becomes your entry.

Slower margin, faster access, and far less runway at risk.

The expensive mistake is not choosing enterprise. It is choosing enterprise and running it like a volume motion.

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PART · 02

The message that opens the door.

Why Change, Why Now, Why Us. How the answer changes depending on whether you are selling a new idea or a known problem.

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Innovation, or known problem.

Most deals mix both. You still have to pick a lead for this deal, because it sets your message, your proof and your ask.

	INNOVATION **A new game**	PROBLEM **A known pain**
Where the budget sits	No clear owner or line item yet. Exploration money, and a place on the executive agenda.	A named owner, a budget line, and something already being paid for that you replace or extend.
What you lead with	Founder point of view built from observed facts. Observation, implication, tension, insight.	The cost of the status quo per month, in the operator’s own KPI language.
What you ask for	A short validation with written success criteria, data boundaries and a rollback path.	A production grade pilot or a phased rollout with a baseline, a target and a time boxed exit.
What proves it	Safe to try. Security posture, data handling, and a credible path to production.	Safe to buy. References, an implementation plan, and TCO with the assumptions shown.

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Three gates every buyer walks through.

Consciously or not, in a hallway or in a formal business case, the buyer has to clear all three. Every sales method ever written is moving them along this path.

01

Why change

Is staying put too costly?

INNOVATION

An executive level shift. Technology, regulation or a competitor has moved, and the status quo now blocks something they have committed to.

KNOWN PROBLEM

The status quo costs a number per month, caused by something specific you can name.

02

Why now

Can we afford to wait?

INNOVATION

A window. By a date, peers will have moved. Delay carries a named risk, not a vague one.

KNOWN PROBLEM

Each month of delay adds cost or misses a target that somebody is measured on.

03

Why us

How do we de risk this?

INNOVATION

Safe to try. A trust pack, clear data boundaries, and a gated pilot.

KNOWN PROBLEM

Safe to buy. References, an implementation plan, TCO and ROI with the assumptions visible.

The competitor you are actually beating: **no decision, drift, and the status quo.**

A point of view is a testable hypothesis.

Not a pitch. A specific, falsifiable claim about how this buyer hits a goal they have committed to, or avoids a loss they are already taking.

WHAT IT IS

- A claim about their business, built from research they can verify.
- Anchored to Why Change and Why Now, with the cost of inaction quantified.
- Specific enough to be wrong. If it is wrong they will correct you, and people love to correct you.
- Something that gets sharper in every meeting until it becomes their business case, in their words.

WHAT IT IS NOT

- A product summary with the buyer's logo on the front page.
- Generic ROI. Nobody has ever changed a supplier because of an industry average.
- A trend observation they have already read three times this month.
- Something you write once and send fifty times.

The test: could a competitor send this same message to this same person and have it still make sense? If yes, it is not a point of view yet.

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Connect their stated goal to your value.

Enterprises publish goals, not problems. Your job is to link the goal they have announced to the challenge that will stop them, and then to what you do.

01

Their stated goal

Hire 200 front line staff to open new sites this year. Published in the annual report.

→

02

The challenge in the way

Pre employment screening is manual, so candidates drop out before they start.

→

03

The hidden cost

Drop outs spike at right to work and shift scheduling. Manual steps add days.

→

04

The linkage

Around 120 applicants abandon each week at right to work. That is roughly £45k a week of lost capacity.

→

05

Your value proposition

One pre employment workflow, document capture to checks to slot booking, cutting drop outs and time to start.

Precision beats perfection.

The linkage does not have to be right. It has to be specific, and it has to show the homework. If you are off, they will correct you, and the correction is better research than anything you could have bought.

A point of view sharpens every meeting.

You are not writing it once. You are running it as a hypothesis and letting the buyer author the final version. By meeting three it should be theirs, not yours.

01

Hypothesise

We think drop outs spike at right to work, and we think we can cut it.

02

Probe

Is that where yours concentrates, or is it somewhere else? Worth validating?

03

Validate

Prospect confirms the pain and an early number surfaces from their side.

04

Quantify

Around 120 a week abandon at right to work. £45k a week of lost capacity. It hits the site opening date.

05

Anchor

The point of view becomes their problem statement, business case and mutual action plan.

Two formats you can reuse tomorrow

Every [frequency], [reach] are affected by [problem], costing £[cost]. If it is not addressed by [timing], [it gets worse].

Despite trying [failed fix], we still cannot [outcome] because of [root cause], costing £[cost].

PART · 03

Trust, when you are the small vendor.

Large buyers are not managing for upside. They are managing for the risk of choosing you and being wrong.

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Competence, reliability, intent.

Buyers do not care about you, your product or your investors. They care about themselves, their world and their problems. Trust is what you earn by being more useful than the alternative.

01

Competence

Know the problem space better than they do, including the parts your product does not touch.

Be the person who can explain what usually goes wrong at step four.

Product expertise is table stakes. Problem expertise is the differentiator.

02

Reliability

Do the small things exactly when you said you would.

Send the follow up in the shape you promised, on the day you promised.

Enterprise buyers are reading you for how you will behave in year two.

03

Intent

Help them make a good decision, including the decision not to buy from you.

Tell them the thing that is not in your commercial interest, once, clearly.

That single move does more for a small vendor than any case study.

"You can have everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want." **Zig Ziglar. The operative word is help.**

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What a large buyer needs to see.

Written down, before it is requested. Assume every one of these is asked for. Having it ready before it is requested is worth more than the document itself, because the speed is the signal.

Security and data posture

Where data sits, who can see it, how it is encrypted, what happens on exit. One page, plain English.

Compliance evidence

Certifications you hold, and an honest line on the ones you do not, with the date you will.

Implementation plan

Who does what, in what order, over how many weeks. Named roles, not job titles.

Risk log

The three things most likely to go wrong on this rollout, and your mitigation for each.

References who will talk

Two customers who will take a call. Warned in advance and happy to be asked.

Business continuity

What happens to them if you are acquired, run out of money, or the founder is hit by a bus.

Small vendor risk is real and pretending otherwise loses the deal. Naming it first is how you take it off the table.

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The advantage they cannot copy.

Nobody gets to sit down with the founder of a large software company. They can sit down with you. Used deliberately, that access is a genuine accelerator.

The founder script

1. **Origin.** Why you started this, in one honest paragraph.
2. **Customer truth.** What you have seen across every account that they have not.
3. **Vision.** Where this goes, and what it means for their function.
4. **One or two proofs.** Not a case study reel. Two things that actually happened.
5. **Risk plan.** What could go wrong here, and how you would handle it.
6. **The ask.** Discovery, and a named next step with a date.

Point it at the right people

- Target early adopters, not the whole market. The executives who speak at innovation events, publish memos and run pilots.
- Look for people who have publicly sponsored your theme. They need internal evidence they are exploring it.
- Eighteen months ago, an executive at a bank publicly talking about agentic AI would almost certainly have taken the meeting, because it let them go back and say we are already looking at this.
- Founder in the room, plus an early adopter list, plus a sharp point of view. That combination is the accelerator.

The access only works if you aim it. A founder meeting with the wrong persona is still the wrong meeting.

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PART · 04

Getting beyond one contact.

Single threading is the most common way an SME loses an enterprise deal it was winning.

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Five roles. One of them can stop you.

You are not selling to a company. You are building consensus across people with different jobs, different fears and different definitions of a good outcome.

Economic buyer

Owns the budget and signs. Usually one person with authority for spend at this size.

Cares about return, risk and whether this is the best use of the money.

Wants: the business case, in numbers, in one page.

Champion

Navigates the politics and connects you to the rest. Sells when you are not in the room.

Has personal credibility on the line if this goes badly.

Wants to look good, and not to be embarrassed.

User

Judges usability and the day to day. Can veto quietly on adoption grounds.

Practical concerns dominate. Does this make my job better or worse?

Wants: to see it, not hear about it.

Technical buyer

Assesses feasibility, integration and security. Often IT, InfoSec or data.

Their job is to find the reason not to. That is not hostility, it is the role.

Wants: your architecture and data answers, early.

Procurement and legal

Manages contract, price and risk. The final checkpoint, and a slow one if surprised.

Validates compliance and negotiates terms and payment schedule.

Wants: to be involved before the end, not at it.

If you can only name one of these five on your biggest open deal, that is the finding and worth acting on.

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Who moves whom beats the org chart.

An org chart tells you reporting lines. A power base map tells you who this organisation actually listens to when money is at stake.

Four things to know about each persona

Outcome	What does a good year look like for them personally?
Risk	What are they afraid this makes worse?
Influence	Whose opinion do they check before deciding?

How to multi thread without ambushing your champion

- Never go around your champion. Go through them, with their blessing and their framing.
- Ask the referral question in every meeting: who else is affected by this, and who would push back?
- Give each person a reason of their own to meet you, tied to their outcome, not your demo.
- Two contacts is not multi threaded. Aim for a named person in three different functions.

The one habit that changes this: never leave a meeting without an agreed next action & who else cares aka another name.

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An unarmed champion is just a contact.

Your champion has to sell this internally in meetings you will never attend, against people who are better at internal politics than you are. Give them the ammunition.

01

The one page point of view

Their problem, quantified, in their language. Something they can forward without editing.

02

A three sentence email to the executive

Written so your champion can paste it and look sharp. Not written so you look sharp.

03

A three slide mini deck

Situation, cost of inaction, proposed next step. Sized to be dropped into their board pack.

04

The numbers, with assumptions shown

So when someone challenges the figure in a room you are not in, your champion can defend it.

05

The answer to the small vendor question

One paragraph. Because someone senior will ask it, and your champion needs a ready reply.

06

A named next step with a date

Champions lose momentum when the ask is vague. Make the ask a calendar entry.

A real champion has said something to someone senior that would be awkward if you turned out to be wrong.

PART · 05

Deal control through technical & commercial projects

Enterprise deals are projects that rely on coordination between multiple stakeholders and across 2 core workstreams.

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A mutual action plan, on one page.

Not a project plan you send them. A document you build with your champion, in the meeting, working backwards from the date they need this live.

MILESTONE	OWNER	DATE	ARTEFACT
Problem statement agreed and quantified	Both	Week 1	One page, signed off by the champion
Technical and security review booked	Them	Week 2	Architecture note and data flow diagram
Validation scope and success criteria written	Both	Week 3	Success criteria, baseline and target
Executive sponsor meeting held	Them	Week 4	Three slide business case
Procurement and legal engaged	Them	Week 4	Standard terms, DPA, insurance certificates
Validation runs	Us	Weeks 5 to 8	Weekly read out against the baseline
Decision and commercial close	Both	Week 10	Signed order and rollout plan

Why it works: the dates are theirs, not yours. When week 4 slips, your champion is the one explaining it internally, and you have a legitimate reason to escalate.

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Three things compress a cycle.

Chasing is not one of them. Power, proof and plan. Everything else is activity, and activity is what small companies do instead of deal control.

01

Power. Start at the top.

Power compresses cycles. A universal truth.

Go in at chief officer or vice president level with a sharp point of view, get championed down to the operators for discovery, then come back up with them to report findings.

The alternative is the messy middle, where politics runs the clock.

Executive meeting by day 14, or re seed and disqualify.

02

Proof. Quantify it properly.

Full quantification of the problem, the negative business impact and the root causes.

Current state cost, opportunity cost, and the future state gain, tied to operator KPIs.

Done properly this turns a £100k problem into a much bigger one, in their own numbers.

That is what dials up why change and why now.

03

Plan. Operate the deal.

The mutual action plan holds the dates and the accountability.

Procurement, legal and InfoSec engaged from day one, inside the plan.

Book a meeting from a meeting. Never leave a call without the next one in the diary.

Sell the next stage of the process at the end of every conversation.

Engaging procurement and InfoSec early is not a courtesy. It is the cheapest de risking available to you.

PART · 06

Where this leaves you.

What ready looks like next to what not ready looks like, and the five things worth doing in the next seven days.

Ready, next to not ready.

Take one live enterprise deal and read it across these four rows. Be honest about which column you are in. Go a level deeper with MEDDPICC.

	READY	NOT READY
Point of view	Executive relevant, quantified cost of inaction, real tension between why change and why now.	Product centred pitch. Generic ROI. Value described in adjectives rather than numbers.
Trust	Problem expert first, product expert second. Trust pack ready before it is asked for.	Product centric selling. Security and implementation answers assembled under pressure, late.
Penetration	Named champion, a path to the economic buyer, a power base map, three functions engaged.	Single threaded. Economic buyer unknown. Org chart only. Blockers invisible until they act.
Acceleration	Top down motion. Co owned mutual action plan with dates, owners and artefacts. Next meeting always booked.	No plan. Drifting meetings. The paper process discovered in the final month.

Most deals sit in the right hand column on at least two rows. Fixing one row changes the odds materially.

Five things to do this week.

All five are free, all five can be done on a deal you already have, and none of them require a new tool.

01

Pick one account

Today. One, not five. The one where you already have a warm route in.

02

Write the point of view

Six lines. Their commitment, your claim, the cost, the falsifiable bit, the low commitment ask.

03

Map the power base

Name every person you know, and mark the roles you cannot yet fill. The gaps are the plan.

04

Identify one name

Identify who the person is you ultimately want to get to

05

Draft the plan

Draft the relationship plan

If you only do one, do the second.

Solidify your opening POV

Your next best action.

1

Score your readiness

Two minutes, free. The Closing Growth Score reads where your sales system is under strain and gives you the first fix in writing.

closingfoundry.com/growthscore

2

Book a Revenue Workshop

Sixty minutes with a senior operator, free, no strings. Bring the enterprise question or bring one live deal. You keep the report either way.

closingfoundry.com/revenue-workshop

3

Take the tools

The Enterprise Ready Checklist and the Enterprise Deal Review one pager, plus these slides. Nothing to fill in first.

closingfoundry.com/businessgrowth

Scan for the free enterprise toolkit:
checklist, deal review one pager and these slides.

Questions to **hello@closingfoundry.com**

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Thank you.

We help founder led B2B teams turn messy sales activity into a system the team can actually run.

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