

# UNCENSORED OBJECTION HANDLING TECHNIQUES

Your Guide for Turning Pushback into Pipeline



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>HOW TOP REPS HANDLE OBJECTIONS, ACCORDING TO DATA</b>	3
#1 Slow it down	3
#2 Clarify with questions	4
#3 Validate their concern	6
#4 Isolate the objection	6
#5 Gain permission to overcome	7
#6 Address the objection with a “reframe”	7
#7 Get closure	8
#8 Attempt to surface other objections	9
<b>THESE 4 OBJECTIONS ARE HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT</b>	10
Objection #1: The False Positive	10
Objection #2: The Silent Killer	11
Objection #3: The Window Shopper	12
Objection #4: The Technologist	13
<b>OBJECTION TEARDOWN: "I NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT"</b>	16
The truth behind “I need to think about it”	16
Warning: Long sales cycles ahead	17
Use this talk track	18
How to handle the mid-funnel objection	19
How to handle the late stage objection	20
Bonus tip	21
<b>OBJECTION HANDLING TIPS FOR THE 2020 REALITY</b>	22
Tip #1 - Think Like a CFO	22
Tip #2 - ALWAYS Lead With Empathy	23
Tip #3 - Move the conversation from email to phone	24
Tip #4 - Prep your champion to secure budget Steal	25
This Talk Track	26

# HOW TOP REPS HANDLE OBJECTIONS, ACCORDING TO DATA

Sometimes, you handle the objection.

And sometimes, the objection handles you.

We analyzed 67,149 sales meetings to understand what sets expert objection handlers apart.

And the data is clear.

Great salespeople adopt the **same behavior patterns** to overcome objections.

It's like they intuitively know: 1. what each objection *really* means and 2. how to get past them.

And it all boils down to these 8 techniques.

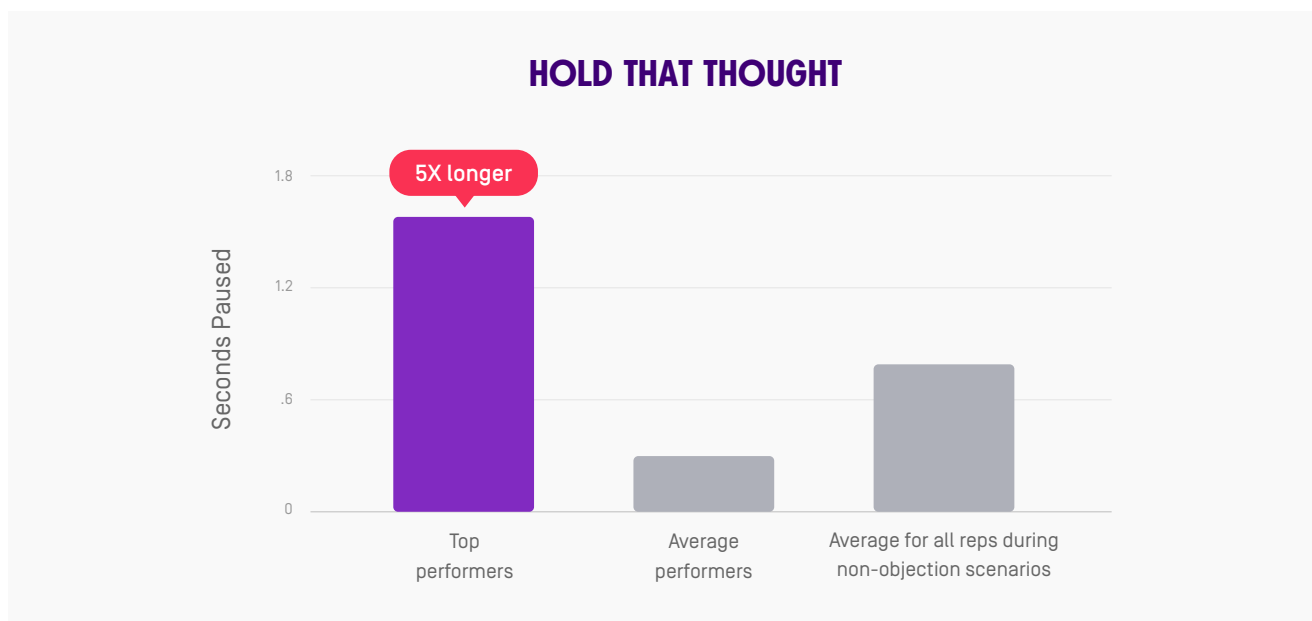
## #1 SLOW IT DOWN

Less successful reps literally pounce on objections.

They steamroll their buyers, missing the opportunity to deliver important information that could **help them clarify the objection.**

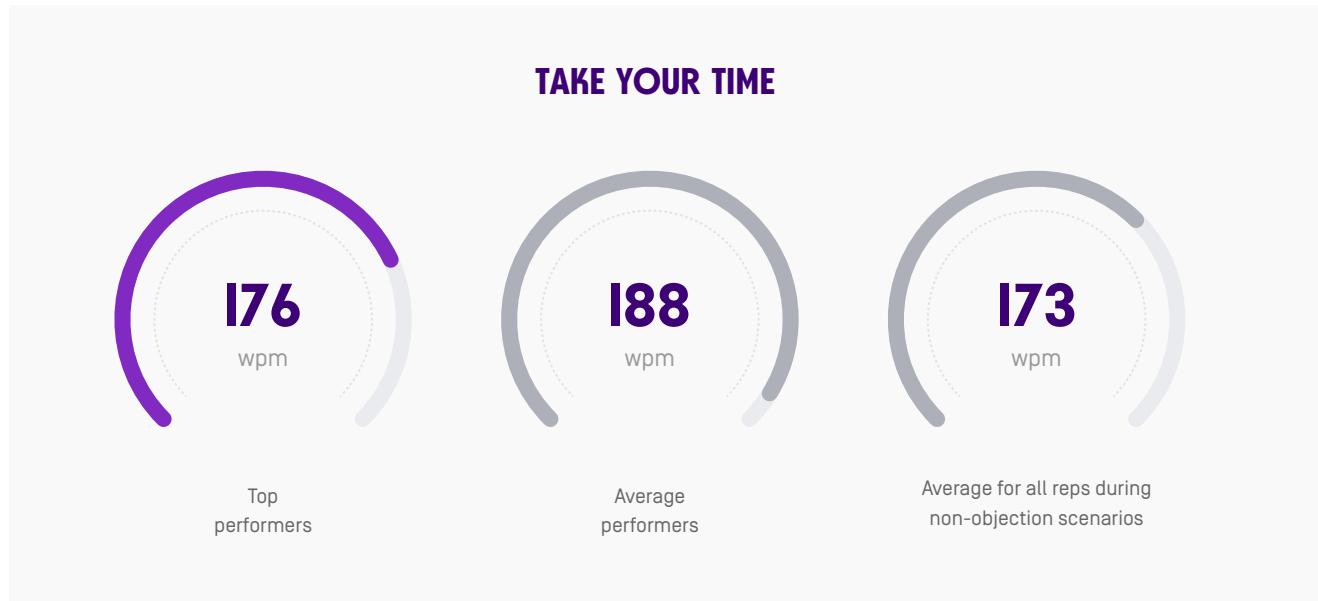
By contrast, successful reps pause longer after an objection than during any other part of a sales call.

And they pause longer than their peers.



Not only do top sellers pause, they also slow down their delivery.

Where average reps get flustered and increase their words per minute count, top reps keep a cool head and maintain a pace that is consistent with a normal conversation.



Doing so earns them more time to craft their answer.

And makes buyers feel heard, which helps build trust.

## #2 CLARIFY WITH QUESTIONS

Objection scenarios are rife with potential misunderstandings.

Average performers will launch into knee-jerk monologues addressing the wrong objection.

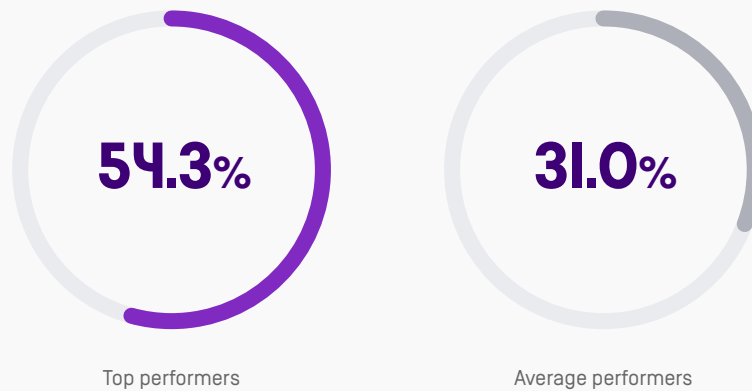
It creates friction.

It runs down the clock against you.

And it reeks of insecurity.

**Remember: a strong answer to the *wrong* objection makes the objection worse.** Instead, top sellers follow up objections with questions.

## ASK QUESTIONS



So, what question *should* you ask to clarify objections?

The first technique is called mirroring.

It's taken from Chris Voss' book [Never Split the Difference](#).

Here's how it works: Repeat the last few words of your buyer's sentence with an upward inflection (like you're asking a question).

*Your boss said no?*

*Timing isn't right?*

*Price is too high?*

It triggers your buyer to elaborate, which helps you to understand what's really causing the objection.

That leads us to the second type of question you can use to clarify objections.

*"Can you help me understand what's causing that concern?"*

Notice this question asks "why" without ever saying the word "why."

That's because "why" doesn't clarify.

It's a threatening question that undermines the validity of the buyer's objection.

It puts them on the defensive.

And it brings your answer further out of reach.

## #3 VALIDATE THEIR CONCERN

Fact: humans go through 95% of their lives feeling misunderstood.

Give your buyer the gift of feeling understood and you'll carry powerful influence.

In fact, empathy is so important that the Solution Selling method dedicates three out of its nine types of questions to "summarizing confirmation questions".

And those are the questions that make your buyer feel understood.

Here's how it works:

Use the phrase "That's a valid concern. It seems like you're \_\_\_\_\_."

Fill in the blank with an emotion they expressed.

For example:

"That's a valid concern Kate. It seems like you're pretty torn on what to do here."

If you get it right, this is empathy on steroids.

You'll have them feeling like you are an ally that can truly help because you get it.

Get it?

## #4 ISOLATE THE OBJECTION

What your buyers tell you versus what's actually stopping them from moving forward are sometimes different.

Some objections are textbook smoke screens.

And your job is to make sure you're addressing the true objection.

Not heading deeper into the smoke.

Use a hypothetical to clear up the air.

Here's how it works:

Use this exact phrase to get your buyer to voice their real objection.

*"If we somehow figured out how to solve that completely... what other obstacles would we have to overcome before moving forward?"*

IF the answer is something else than the original objection, chances are those are the REAL things you need to overcome.

IF their answer is the same, then the first objection they voiced is the right one.

Congratulations, you've isolated the objection.

Now you can make a *real* determination about whether it can be overcome or not.

## #5 GAIN PERMISSION TO OVERCOME

This next step is all about bringing down your buyer's barriers.

Before you get there though, your goal is to make them receptive to a different way of thinking.

Here's what NOT to say to gain permission from your buyer:

*"Can I make a suggestion?"*

This question puts them on the defensive [same as "why" in technique #2.

It triggers the "rebellious teenager effect", which is pretty self-explanatory...

You'll come across as preach-y.

At best, the buyer will smile, nod, and proceed to ignore *everything* you say.

For this technique to work, you need your buyer to be **receptive** to your suggestions.

Here's the phrase that works like a charm:

*"Can I bounce a few thoughts off of you?"*

Why?

Because this question implies that YOU are the vulnerable one, not them.

And it sets a space where you can exchange ideas freely, outside of their current frame of thinking.

## #6 ADDRESS THE OBJECTION WITH A "REFRAME"

Reframes give sellers superpowers.

Simply put, a reframe is an insight that gets buyers to change how they think about a problem or opportunity.

Used well, a reframe gets buyers to see things through a new "lens" (ideally, your lens).

Take this example from our sales team.

Our reps try to get our buyers to pilot our software and an objection they often come up against is this:

*“I don’t want to start a pilot until after next month. We’re too busy closing out the quarter. Right now is the worst time for us to do this.”*

Our sales reps use the reframe to turn that objection from “bad timing” to “perfect timing.”

And it looks like this:

*“The conversations your team will be having before end of quarter will be higher-stakes, and more important to capture. Right now is the best time.”*

Notice how the end turns the objection (timing into an opportunity) for them.

Stumped at coming up with your OWN reframes?

Think of a common objection you’re currently struggling with.

Now try to picture a scenario in which that weakness is actually a strength.

Boom, you’ve been reframed.

## #7 GET CLOSURE

Leading your buyer to say what you want to hear doesn’t work (nor help your commission).

It leaves the objection unresolved.

**And it’ll put your deal at-risk later on.**

To truly put an objection to rest, your buyer needs to feel like you have left no stone unturned.

Instead of using a question that leads our buyer to giving you a false “yes” like:

*“Does that resolve your concern?”*

Try turning it into an open-ended question like:

***“What part of your concern do you feel is still left unaddressed?”***

This shows empathy (check AND brings closure to the objection (double check.

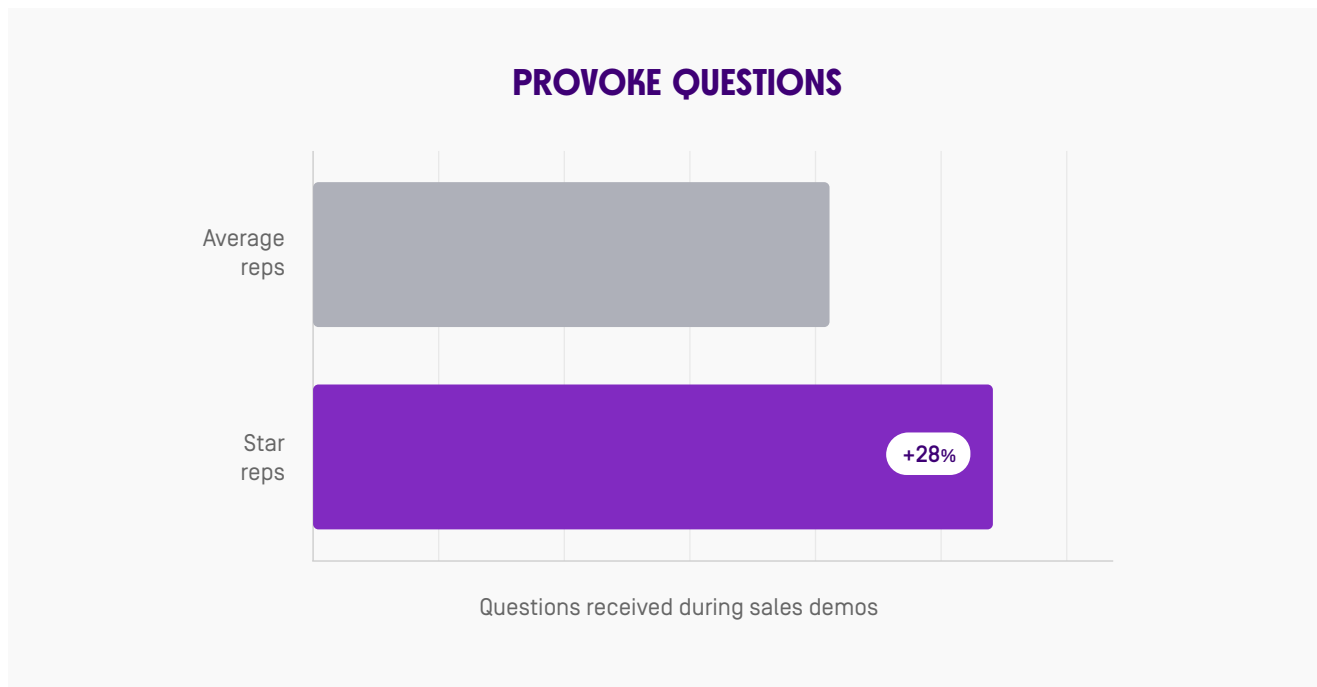
Remember: objections buried alive never die, they come up later as deal-killing zombies.



## #8 ATTEMPT TO SURFACE OTHER OBJECTIONS

Top performers get buyers to ask more questions.

They bring out nearly 33% more questions from buyers during product demos than middle-of-the-pack performers.



Why it's a good thing:

Getting prospects to ask questions allows the best reps to dive deeper into the topics they care about.

It means top reps know what they need to show in order to show value.

When you've finished putting an objection to rest, ask for more:

*"What other reservations do you have?"*

This gets you to focus the rest of the conversation where it matters for *them*.

\*Ka-ching\*

# THESE 4 OBJECTIONS ARE HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

To the untrained ear, these phrases sound completely normal.

Some of these might even come across as positive.

Turns out, these four phrases have been posing as normal conversation.

When really they're silent objections, waiting to sneak up on you and steal your deal without you ever noticing.

Here's what to listen for to get ahead of these impostors and protect your pipeline.

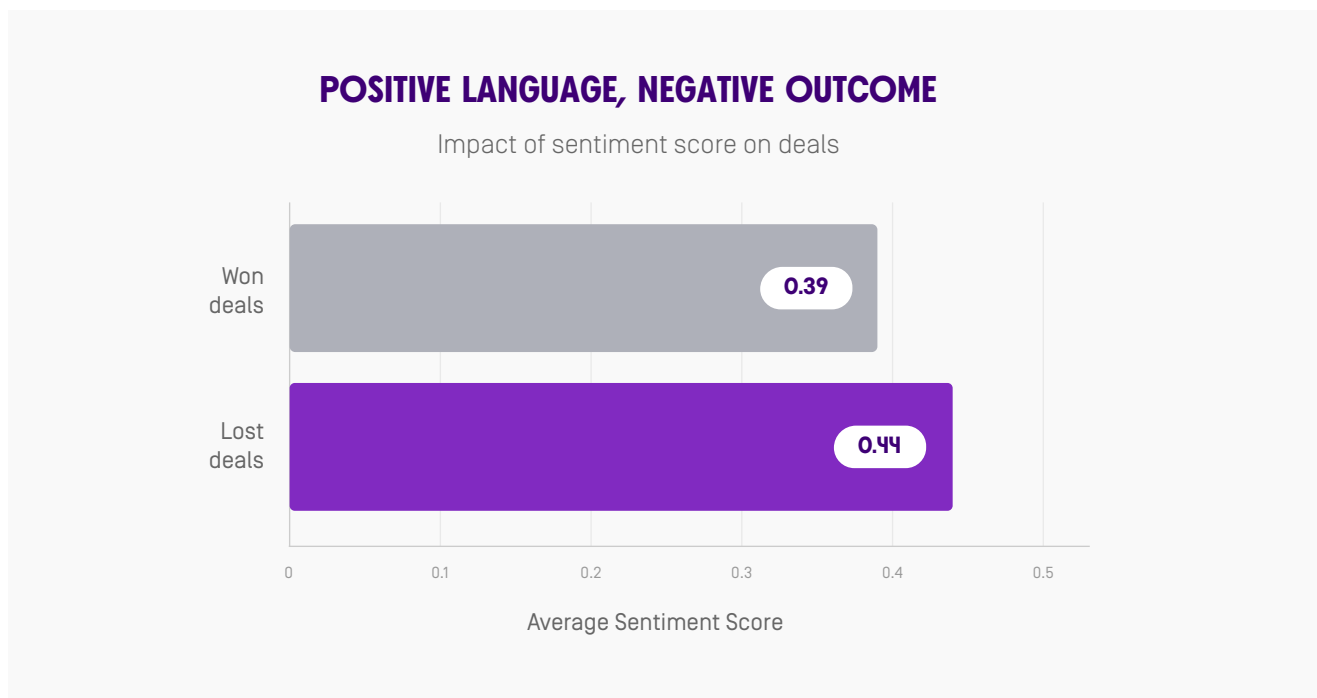
## OBJECTION #1: THE FALSE POSITIVE

Science proves that there is truth behind the saying "too good to be true".

Ever have a creeping suspicion that your prospect might not actually be as excited as they are letting on?

It's all *greats*, *awesomes*, and *amazings* during the call.

But then they never answer your follow up.



What gives?

Turns out, the data says that high sentiment scores - i.e. with few objections raised - didn't correlate with higher win rates.

*In fact*, lost deals have a 12.8% higher sentiment score than closed-won deals.

That's right.

They were just being polite.

And all the while you had them pinned as a sure thing...

So what should you be doing instead?

Get your prospects to open up.

Give them the opportunity to voice those concerns upfront (no judgement.

And DO NOT take positive language at face value.

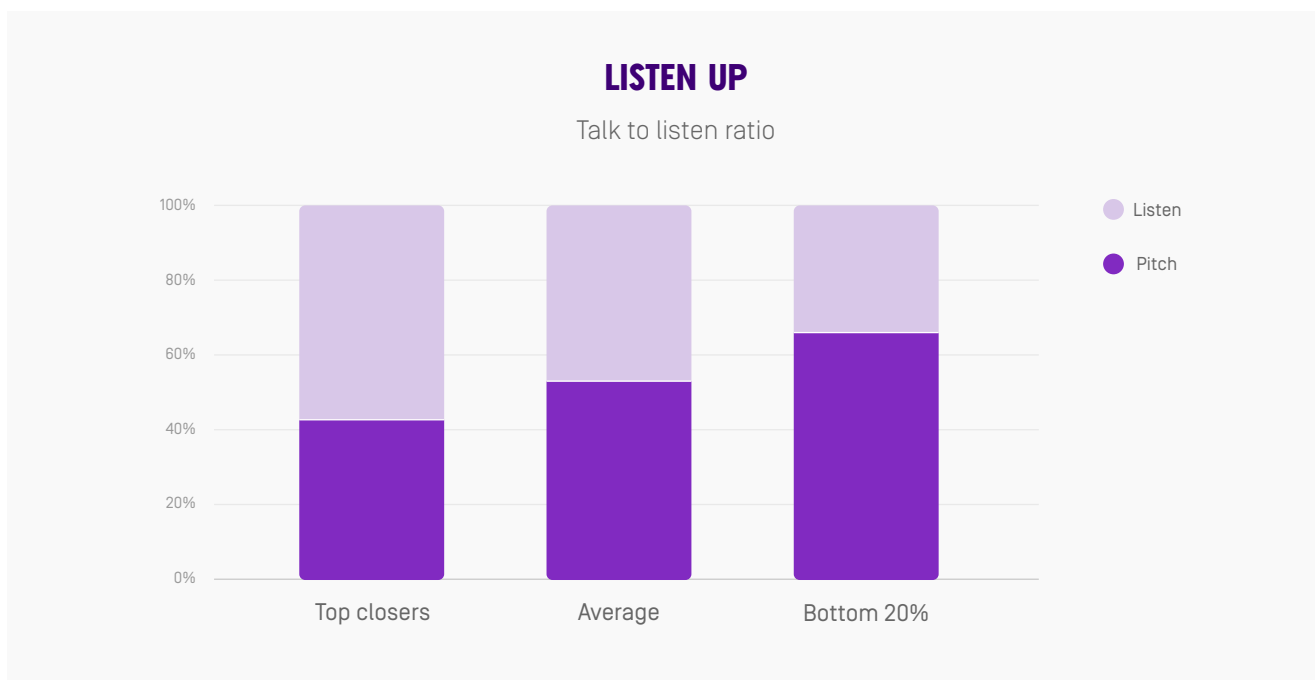
## OBJECTION #2: THE SILENT KILLER

What's worse than too many questions on a call?

No questions.

Sometimes getting a prospect to open up is like pulling teeth.

But, as painful as it may be, the data is clear:



So, just because they aren't saying much doesn't mean they don't have much to say.

In fact, the no-question call is the biggest red flag you can get.

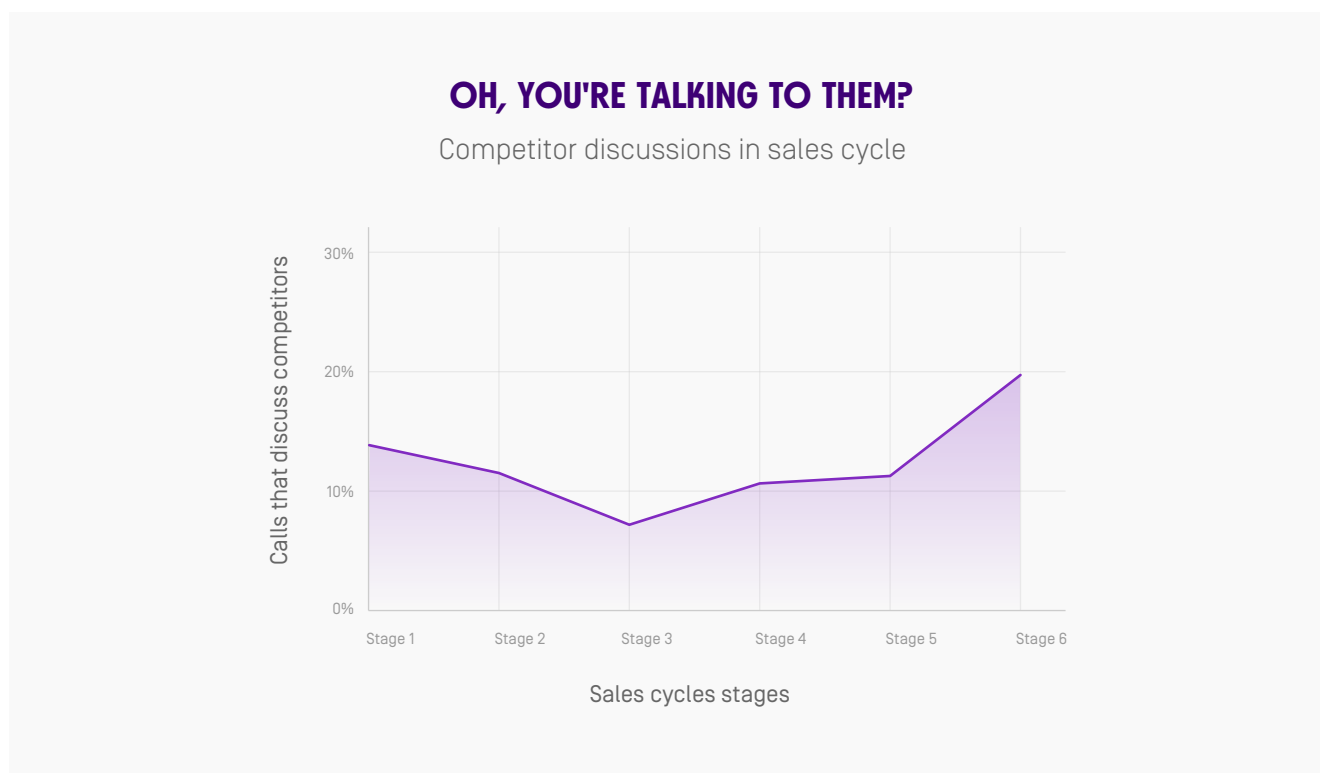
## OBJECTION #3: THE WINDOW SHOPPER

Being kept in the dark is no fun, right?

Well, actually, it's more complicated than that...

Your buyers bringing up "someone else" isn't always bad news.

Competitors can come up in your discussions in one of two ways: early or late stage.



And that changes everything.

Data indicates that discussing competitors at the beginning of the sales cycle correlates with higher win rates...

... by 24%

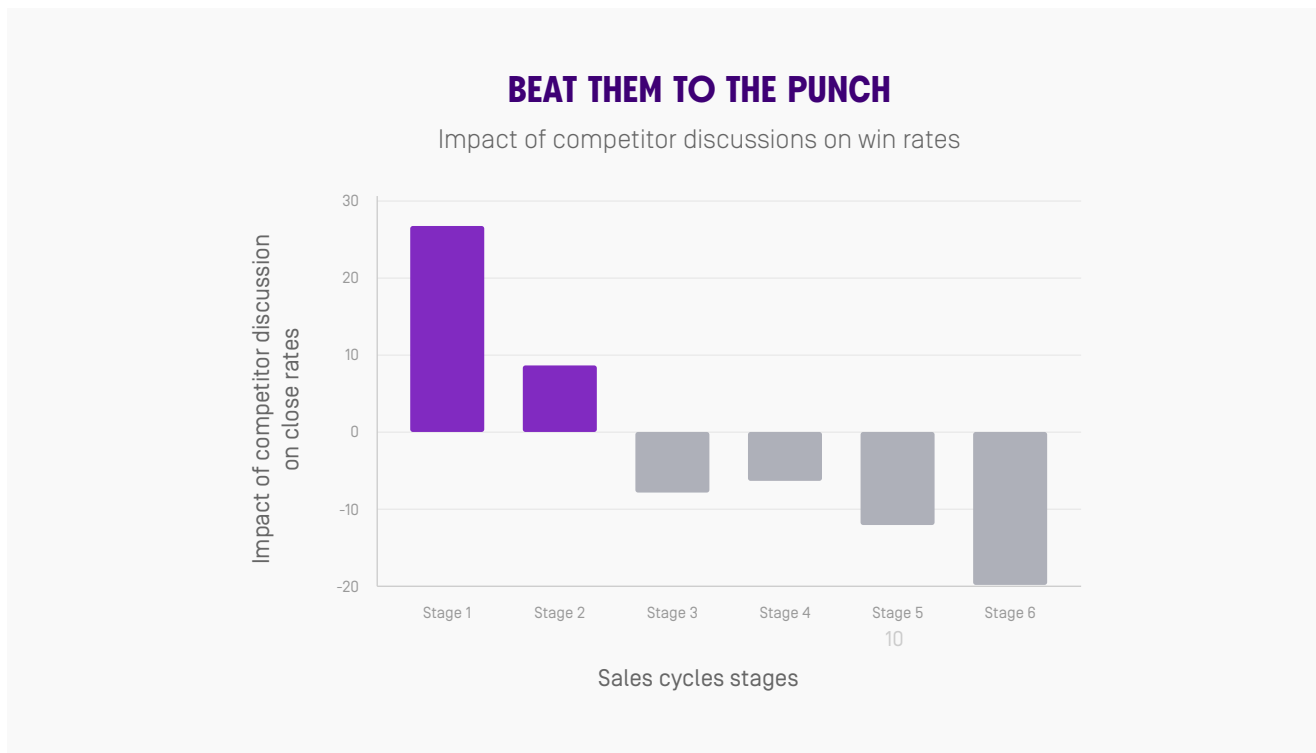
Why?

It shows your buyers are pain-aware and solution-aware.

And that means intent.

However, competitor mentions in late stage deals are a no-no.

They result in a 20% drop in win rates.



Why?

Because that means they aren't getting everything they need from you...

And they're looking to get it elsewhere.

Shut. that. down.

## OBJECTION #4: THE TECHNOLOGIST

This person LOVES to talk about features.

They want you to pop the hood and show them everything [wires and all.

This is textbook tire-kicker behavior.

Don't tell your product team I said this but...

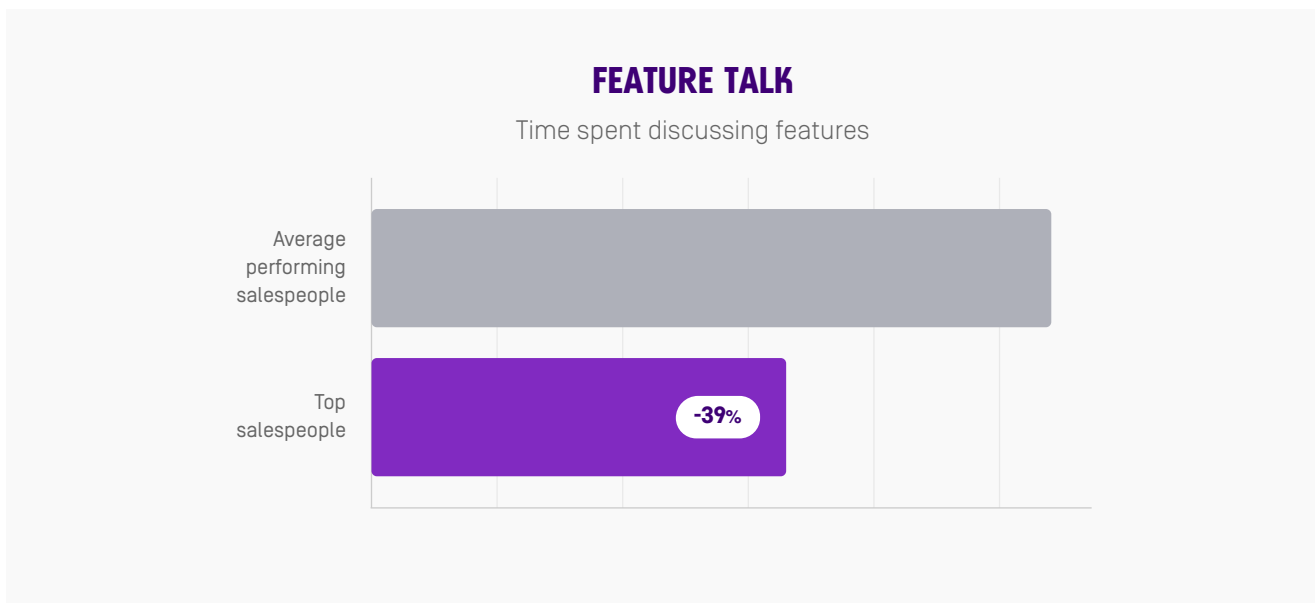
Buyer's don't want to see features.

Why?

Features don't demonstrate value to buyers.

The data is clear: reps that achieve 120% of quota discuss features and technical topics 39% less than their quota-missing teammates.

Ouch.



Top reps know this intuitively and tend to gravitate towards more business-oriented topics on their calls.

It's your job to steer the conversation to where you're going to be able to demonstrate value.

I'm talking:

- ROI
- Business challenges
- Business environment
- Decision-making ecosystem
- Ongoing support and project implementation
- Value-related topics

These topics get brought up a whopping 52 percent more often by closers.

It weeds out tire-kickers, and helps progress deals that actually stand a chance of closing.

## OUTCOMES WIN

Time spent discussing business and value topics



In other words, if you can prove value prospects are more likely to pay.

Sounds fair, right?

# OBJECTION TEARDOWN: "I NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT"

Question: What's worse than hearing "*I'm not interested,*" "*Your price is too high,*" or "*I don't have budget*"?

Answer: "*I need to think about it.*"

This objection can come down on you like a ton of bricks.

The deal had legs.

The finish line was in sight.

You were ready to hit "closed won."

Aaaaaaaand it's gone.

To find out how to *really* overcome this objection, we turned to the data.

And the results are staggering.

## THE TRUTH BEHIND "I NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT"

If you're keeping up, you know that objections can be smoke screens.

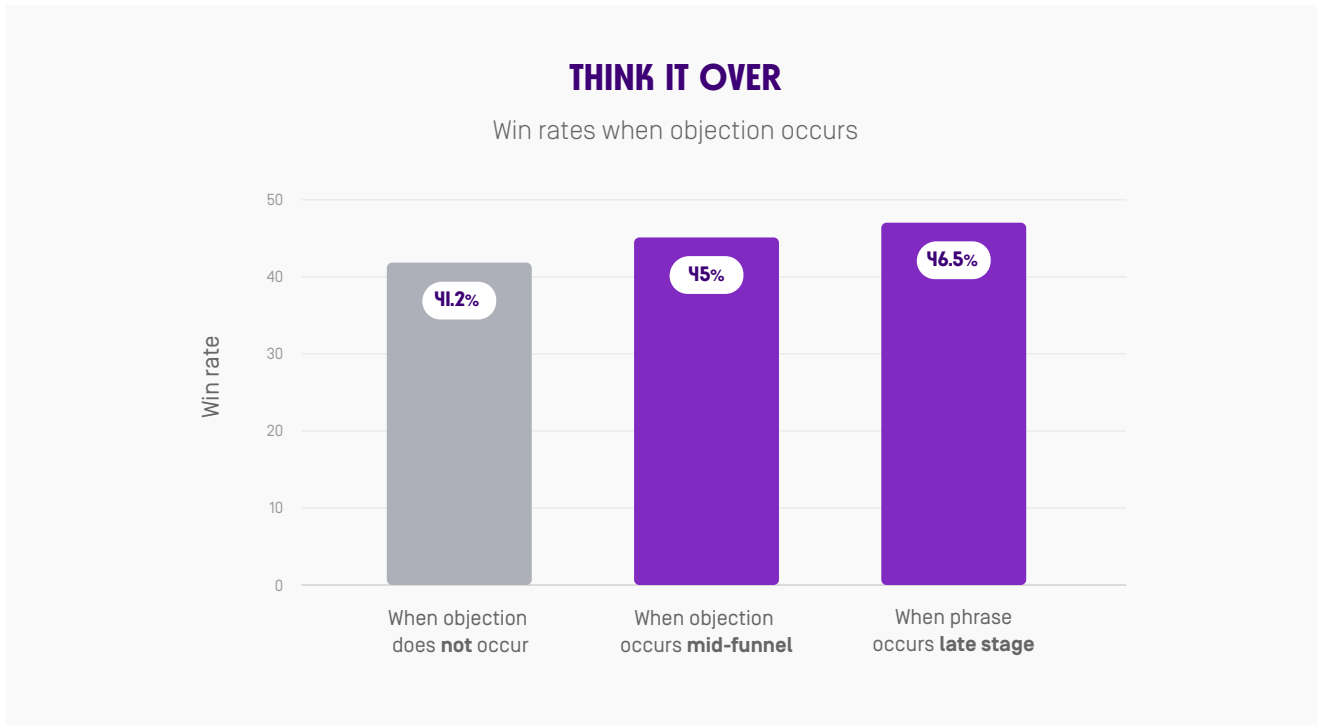
And your job is to clarify. Clarify. Clarify.

Just because something sounds bad doesn't mean that it actually is bad.

Case in point:

When buyers tell you they "need to think about it," it does NOT negatively impact win rates.





Most sales pros take this phrase as a polite way of saying “I’m not interested.”

It sure feels that way on the receiving end.

But the data says otherwise.

The truth is, deals that encounter that phrase have a slight uptick in win rates. It looks like they really are thinking about it...

The good news: you shouldn’t give up on that deal just yet. (Phew!

The not-so-good news: there’s one BIG issue you need to pay attention to when you hear that phrase if you want to keep the deal in your forecast.

## WARNING: LONG SALES CYCLES AHEAD

This objection is the proverbial speed bump.

Hit it at 10 mph and you’ll barely feel it.

Hit it at full-speed and you’re gonna take a hit.

How much?

**173%**

## SPEED BUMP AHEAD

Sales cycle length when objection occurs

Sales cycles extended



● Objection is not mentioned ● Objection is mentioned

Ouff. That's gonna hurt in the morning.

That's easily the difference between your deal coming in this month or next month (or next year.

Part of that delay comes from the added distance between the objection and when the next scheduled sales meeting occurs.

Time to next meeting is extended on average by 55% when the objection comes up.

We've got a chase on our hands, and that's a forecasting nightmare.

Your goal is to literally cut the chase by securing next steps with a confident, actionable response.

How it works:

Consider WHEN the objection arises.

The timing of the objection will determine your course of action.

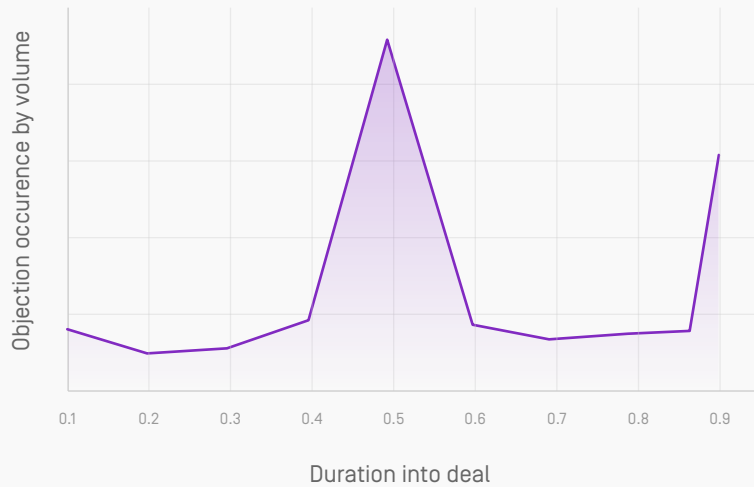
## USE THIS TALK TRACK

Recognizing when the objection arises is extremely important because it determines how you respond.

Most of the time, the objection will come up in one of two scenarios: mid-funnel or late-stage.

## THINKING TIME

Objection occurrence in sales cycle



If the objection hits you mid-funnel, your focus should be on deal progression.

If they say the magic words late stage in a deal, you'll need to go all-in on the close.

## HOW TO HANDLE THE MID-FUNNEL OBJECTION

Excuse me while I reach for my Sandler Training handbook...

According to Sandler research: buyers use this phrase because they have an unspoken objection.

In other words, your buyer is uncertain about what's next.

They either don't know what comes next in the process and use the phrase to escape the pressure of the unknown, or they don't want to continue the process.

Except here's the catch:

**They won't openly share which it is.**

It's up to you to figure it out and transform their unspoken objection into next steps.

Here's how you do it.

If you hear the phrase early in your sales cycle, respond with:

*“When most people tell me they need to think about it, it’s typically because they’re not interested or I missed something in our meeting.”*

If you missed something, they’ll respond with “No, we’re interested, it’s just that…”

That ‘dot dot dot’ is where they start to reveal their uncertainty.

Maybe they want to better understand your integration abilities.

Maybe they just want to confirm the onboarding support they’ll receive.

Maybe it’s something completely out-of-the-blue.

Either way, it’s a win for you.

Now that you’ve uncovered the true hurdle in your deal AND you’ve confirmed that they’re interested.

Use this uncertainty to pin down the date and time for your next meeting AND make their question the main item on the agenda.

*“Thanks for sharing, James, glad you brought it up. Let’s spend a few minutes covering [insert now-spoken objection]. How’s Thursday at 2pm looking on your end?”*

This is how you avoid that massive stretch in your sales cycle and keep deal momentum moving forward.

By locking in the agenda and confirming time for your next meeting, you’ve maintained control instead of letting them off the hook, which inevitably leads to chasing.

On the other hand, if they say “No, you didn’t miss anything,” they aren’t interested.

And it is infinitely better to uncover that sooner rather than later so you don’t waste time chasing a deal that’s never going to close.

## **HOW TO HANDLE THE LATE STAGE OBJECTION**

Alternatively, if you’re ready to close and your buyer asks to think it over, it means something completely different.

At the time of writing this (May 2020, decision making is more restricted and often involves people at one-level higher than normal.

And, more often than not, that means your offer is gonna land on the CFO’s desk.

So when your buyer says, *“We need to think about it, let me get back to you next week”*, they probably mean they need to figure out how to sell it internally.

This is totally normal.

And it’s a cue for your next course of action.

Do NOT react with shock or confusion.

And definitely don't let them leave the call to figure it out on their own (unless you want to up your cardio by chasing them for the next few weeks).

Instead, get ahead of the objection and take control of the process with something like this:

*“Sure, most of the people I’m talking to right now have shifted their buying process as budgets tighten up. I imagine that might be true for you too. Can I bounce a few thoughts off of you that will help you make the case internally?”*

Now is when you map out the buying process — whose approval is needed, what that process looks like, and what hurdles to expect.

You're helping them answer these questions clearly and in a way that will resonate with budget holders.

In other words, you're prepping your champion to get a yes from the person who matters most.

## **BONUS TIP**

If you want to avoid the situations above altogether, use an upfront contract as created by Sandler Training.

It's an agreement between the buyer and seller at the beginning of a call that sounds like this:

*“Today we’ll see whether our product is a strong fit, so that you know your time in this process is well spent. If we agree that it’s useful after our demo, we’ll loop in your team to continue building a use case. Is that fair?”*

Your buyer's agreement lets you hold *them* accountable later on if they try to squirm out of next steps with *“I need to think about it.”*

# OBJECTION HANDLING TIPS FOR THE 2020 REALITY

Sellers everywhere are hearing uneasiness in the form of a few specific objections: current circumstances, turbulent times, uncertainty, economy, current events, crazy situation.

The result?

Buyers are waiting to spend because they don't fully understand how their business is being impacted.

This is — however unfortunate — the new selling landscape that we must accept.

As sellers, it's critical that we move quickly from being reactive to proactive.

How exactly will you navigate these new objections and give your pipeline a fighting chance?

We compiled a list of successful tactics to keep deals moving forward and secure budget.

But before you can deliver a compelling talk track to overcome objections (and I have one for you below, you need to understand how CFOs view purchases right now.

## TIP #1 - THINK LIKE A CFO

Budget is a known factor in getting any deal done – especially during the end of the month and quarter. Previously, savvy sales pros could overcome a budget freeze to land a deal. A “virus-caused-economic-slowdown” budget freeze is a new obstacle. Today's selling landscape is unique because the budget objection itself has changed.

Gong's CFO, Tim Riitters, has some ideas on how budget holders are managing purchasing decisions. Here's what is getting approved: Purchases with quantifiable ROI, because every dollar matters right now.



*Before COVID-19, Growth CFOs spent much of their time approving technologies and investments focused on growing the business. While still important, with the new environment we are living in, we are now focusing significant amounts of our time on ways to save money, improve productivity, and mitigate risk.*



*The best way to get a deal done today is to prove how you're going to help increase remote productivity, enhance visibility into their business, and/or increase agility. You have to come prepared to show how a specific investment will indeed save the company hard dollars. The bar for measurable and rapid Return on Investment is much higher than it was before.*



**TIM RIITERS**  
CFO @ Gong

**TL;DR: Focus on cost savings when positioning your offering. That's what will grab (and keep) a budget manager's attention today.** You'll want to frame how your cost savings tie into the new remote workforce. Stories of exponential growth, on-boarding new folks, and the like, are at high risk of getting a stamp of disapproval. Now more than ever, you need to present what Tim called "measurable and rapid return." Make it easy for buyers to see the fiscal impact of your offering.

## **TIP #2 - ALWAYS LEAD WITH EMPATHY**

Yes, your deal, your pipeline, and your quota are very important and top-of-mind.

But when we're in survival mode, our focus shifts from doing right by our buyer to an inward "I gotta get this deal done."

That can lead to self-centered talk tracks and action plans.

Resist those at all costs.

Your buyers aren't in the mindset of buying – they're assessing impact and scrambling to make a plan.

Make sure you start every conversation by acknowledging the elephant in the room.

This demonstrates empathy and acumen.

Ignoring their uncertainty will only backfire and demonstrate that your focus is in the wrong place.

You'll lose trust — and your deal — faster than you can select "Closed Lost" in your CRM.



*When you speak with prospects, try to walk in their shoes. Ask them directly ‘What are you feeling?’ and ‘What are your thoughts on the changes happening at your organization?’*

*Empathy requires that you shift your perspective and attempt to feel what someone else is going through. In practice, that means using active listening techniques, not interrupting, asking for clarification, withholding judgement, and sharing the dialogue.*



**TATIANA FEOLA**  
Sales Development @ Gong

### **TIP #3 - MOVE THE CONVERSATION FROM EMAIL TO PHONE**

Now that you have your most empathetic foot forward, let’s get down to brass tacks.

You’ve heard “never negotiate over email,” right?

It’s sound advice, and it applies now more than ever. Here’s why:



*This is an emotional time for people, and you’ll have more control over how you’re perceived over the phone. Tone is easily lost via email, empathy specifically. These are complicated conversations that deserve a human touch.*



**JAMESON YUNG**  
VP Sales @ Gong



Here's how to switch from email to phone: suggest new ideas to make the conversation enticing.

Try: *Hey [Name], I have a couple of ideas to run past you. When can I catch you for 5-10 minutes today?*

Or: *[Name] - There's something I think will work to address your current challenges. Let's chat.*

This approach is intriguing to buyers because it promises new ideas and solutions during a time of uncertainty.

And everyone is looking for concrete action plans right now.

Notice how I deliberately left out the actual list of ideas from the email.

That's because these are better saved for a more direct conversation.

Can't get your buyer back on the phone?

Here's another tip that works for late-stage deals: leverage your mutual time investment.

Like this:

*"I know we've both put a lot of time into this. Can we spend 15 minutes on the phone to wrap this up the right way?"*

No one likes losing an investment, especially personal time and energy.

And that means people are more likely to keep investing to get their desired outcome than give up altogether.

Once you get the call, here's how to secure their budget.

## **TIP #4 - PREP YOUR CHAMPION TO SECURE BUDGET**

What was certain last week may not be true today.

That includes budget allocation, even if it's your champion's own budget.

Your best move is to ask about potential spending changes proactively.

Do not put this off until later to find out it's an issue.

As the sales legend, John Barrows, says: *"I know you're probably on lockdown or budget freeze like the rest of my clients, which is why I wanted to talk with you, because we're finding now is a great time to take a step back and review existing solutions to see if there are better options available."*

If your client confirms that their budget is tighter than before, don't worry.

I have a plan you can use today.

## STEAL THIS TALK TRACK

You need your champion to acknowledge that they WILL get internal pressure to justify why this purchase is a must right now.

Thankfully, you've got their back and can prep them for that conversation.

- **STEP 1**  
**GET YOUR CHAMPION TO FRAME THE PROBLEM**

Your champion has to think like their CFO.

If they can, they'll bring decision makers on board by presenting the business problem rationally and answering a few important questions:

*What exactly is the problem at hand?*

*What negative business impact does it cause?*

*What's the outcome of doing nothing?*

Give them the tools they need to create genuine urgency inside their organization. In today's world, pricing and pressure tactics are futile.

- **STEP 2**  
**ALIGN YOUR SOLUTION WITH THEIR CURRENT STATE**

To get your deal approved, you must tie your solution to the state in which their business currently operates.

That requires a clear value prop centered around how your offering helps them save.

Your champion can do so by effectively answering:

*How exactly will your solution solve this problem?*

*Is this solution going to save the company money?*

*If so, how much?*

- **STEP 3**  
**PREPARE YOUR CHAMPION TO HEAR "NO"**

Your buyer gets ONE shot at a "yes" for this decision.

There's no room for error, or doubt will creep in and your deal will get punted until who-knows-when.

To avoid that, do a friendly stress test with your champion.

Here's a sample of what you might say:

"I'm your CFO, and I just said no. Now what?"

If your buyer can't rebut that, then revisit steps 1 and 2 above.

Rinse and repeat until your champion is confident in their talk track and ready for CFO approval.

Seem like a lot?

It is.

Simply put, deals are going to take more work.

Our new reality demands that you secure budget directly from the CFO.

At this point, assume nothing.

And prepare to have this budget-conscious conversation with every single deal in your pipeline.



# WANT MORE SECRETS?

Yeah, we thought so.

[Follow Gong on LinkedIn.](#)

That way the sales candy falls straight on  
your lap [or, you know, in your feed].

