A FIELD GUIDE FOR SALES MANAGERS & TRAINERS

HOW ~~NOT~~ TO SELL

A Field Guide to Everything Your Reps Are Already Doing Wrong

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A field guide for sales managers and trainers who want their team to spot its own bad habits before a prospect does.

How to Use This Book

This book has three layers, stacked on purpose.

The top layer is the joke. Each chapter in Part I opens with a caricature — a bad habit pushed just far enough past reality to be funny, and just close enough to reality to be recognizable. Read that layer for the laugh. It's meant to make a bad habit memorable in a way a bullet point never does.

The middle layer is the diagnosis. Under the joke, every chapter breaks the habit down: why it happens, what it actually costs a deal, what it sounds like on a real call, and the one specific line or question that swaps it out for something better.

The bottom layer, Part II, is for the person running the team. A shared vocabulary for bad habits is only useful if someone knows how to coach it out of a real adult with a quota and an ego without turning training into a public flogging. That's what the second half of this book is for.

Read it front to back once, for the whole shape. After that, use it the way you'd use a reference book: pull the one chapter that matches what just happened on a call, reread it in five minutes, fix the one thing it's pointing at, move on.

Part I: The Cardinal Sins of the Sale

Chapter 1: The Pitch That Never Ends

There is a particular kind of silence that falls over a Zoom call around minute thirty-eight — the prospect's camera has been off since minute twelve, their coffee has gone cold, their dog has been walked, possibly twice — and the rep is *still talking.* Not presenting. Talking, the way a dentist's waiting-room radio talks: technically producing sound, aimed at no one, ignored by everyone, present at the scene of at least one minor breakdown.

The pitch achieved liftoff around slide four and has been circling the runway ever since, occasionally requesting permission to land and being denied by air traffic control, which is also the rep, which is the whole problem.

He sees this as thoroughness. He believes, with the sincerity of a man who has never once closed on a first call and never will, that value is a volume metric — that if forty-five minutes of feature explanation didn't land, the answer is fifty-five, and if that doesn't land, there's a bonus appendix. He opens with a company overview so exhaustive it should require an intermission. He tells the founding story, the one with the garage and the ramen and the "we just wanted to solve our own problem," which is a beautiful story the first time a human being hears it and a war crime the four-hundredth. He arrives at the logo slide — forty client names in six-point font, because if the prospect can't actually read the logos, the thinking goes, they'll simply sense their credibility, the way you sense a ghost. By the time he reaches the actual point of the call, the prospect has mentally rescheduled their next meeting, the one after that, and dinner.

The tell isn't the length. Some of the best discovery calls run ninety minutes because the prospect won't stop talking — which is the entire point, and also the dream, and also something this rep would not recognize if it introduced itself. The tell is who's talking. He has mistaken his own monologue for progress, when progress in a sales call is measured in what the other person reveals, not in how long you can hold the floor before someone's Wi-Fi "conveniently" cuts out.

Anatomy of the mistake. Underneath the monologue is a simple fear: if the rep stops talking, the prospect might say something he doesn't have an answer for. Talking is a shield. Every additional slide is another minute where nothing can go wrong, because nothing is being asked of the prospect, and nothing being asked means nothing being risked — and also nothing being learned, which is the trade nobody notices they're making until the deal is dead and nobody can explain why.

Three varieties of this sin. The *Historian* opens every call with the company's full origin story, as if the prospect signed up for a documentary rather than a demo. The *Completionist* can't leave a slide deck unfinished, so a forty-minute call becomes a sixty-minute call because "we're almost through it" outranks "we're out of time." The *Preemptor* tries to answer every possible objection before it's raised, which sounds efficient and is actually its own kind of monologue — a wall of pre-loaded rebuttals aimed at questions nobody's asked yet.

A short case study. A rep at a mid-market software company once ran a first call with a healthcare operations director for fifty-one minutes without asking a single open-ended question. The recording shows the director attempting to redirect the conversation four separate times — "our main issue is really staffing," "we've actually already looked at two competitors," "I've only got until the top of the hour" — each attempt absorbed and redirected back to the deck. The call ended with the rep proposing a second demo. The director never took it. When asked later why the deal went cold, the rep said, "I think they just weren't ready to buy." They were ready. They just were never asked what they were ready to buy.

Field notes — what it sounds like: The prospect tries, twice, to redirect. "So actually, our main issue right now is onboarding time." The rep says "great, great, I'll get to that" and does not get to that. He gets to the roadmap instead. Nobody asked about the roadmap. The roadmap is where confidence goes to hide.

The swap: Replace "let me walk you through everything" with a single sentence at minute two: "Before I show you anything, tell me what's making today worth forty-five minutes of your time." Then stop talking. The silence that follows is not dead air. It's the whole meeting arriving.

The manager's script. When you sit down with a rep who does this, don't open with "you talk too much" — that's a trait, and traits feel like attacks. Open with a number instead: "I pulled the talk-ratio on your last five calls. You're at seventy-eight percent. Let's look at one together and find the moment you could have handed the floor back." Numbers depersonalize the conversation. A transcript makes it concrete. Together, they turn a character judgment into a fixable behavior.

The coaching note: If you're managing a rep who does this, don't just tell him to "talk less" — that's not a skill, that's a vibe, and vibes evaporate the second the call starts and adrenaline kicks in. Give him a structural handcuff instead: no slide before the third open-ended question gets answered. Discovery becomes the toll booth the pitch is legally required to pass through. You're not asking him to suppress forty years of monologuing instinct through sheer willpower — you're just taking the microphone away until he's earned it.

Chapter 2: Feature Vomit

There is a moment in every product demo where the rep discovers a button. Not the button — a random, ancillary, fourth-tier button, buried three menus deep, that lets you export a report in a font size the prospect will never once adjust. And instead of walking past it the way you'd walk past a stranger's open garage, the rep stops. Points. Narrates. "And this — this is actually one of my favorite features."

Nobody has ever asked a rep what their favorite feature is. It is not a category of information the prospect requested. And yet it arrives anyway, unprompted, like a group chat photo dump from a wedding you weren't invited to.

This is Feature Vomit: the compulsive need to demonstrate every capability the product has ever shipped, in the order the engineering team built them rather than the order the prospect might care about them, culminating in a walkthrough of the admin settings panel that nobody besides the rep himself has ever willingly opened.

The instinct comes from a good place, which is the most annoying kind of bad habit. The rep is proud of the product. He wants the prospect to see its full range, the way a new parent wants you to see every angle of a sonogram photo that, to be honest, looks like weather radar. But range isn't relevance, and a prospect sitting through forty capabilities to find the two they actually need will remember the demo as long and forgettable — two adjectives that have killed more deals than price ever has.

Anatomy of the mistake. Feature Vomit is what happens when a rep's confidence is anchored in the product instead of in their own judgment. It's easier to lean on "look how much this thing can do" than to make a call about what matters and risk being wrong. The product becomes a security blanket — if the demo covers everything, surely something in there will land, even if nothing in there was actually asked for.

Three varieties of this sin. The *Tour Guide* walks through the interface top to bottom, left nav to right, because that's the order it's laid out in, not the order it matters. The *Show-Off* gravitates to the most technically impressive feature regardless of relevance, because it's the one that gets the best reaction in an internal demo to other reps. The *Just-In-Caser* shows a feature nobody asked about "just in case it comes up later," which it never does, because it was never the point.

A short case study. A rep selling marketing automation software once spent eighteen minutes of a twenty-five minute demo on the platform's custom-reporting builder, a feature the prospect — a five-person marketing team at a regional retailer — would never have the headcount to fully use. The prospect's actual stated need, mentioned once in discovery and never returned to, was simpler: "we just need our email and social scheduling in one place." That feature got ninety seconds at the very end, rushed, because time had run out. The prospect didn't advance the deal. When the rep asked why, internally, in the post-mortem, the honest answer was: because the ninety seconds that actually mattered got treated as an afterthought.

Field notes — what it sounds like: "So this dropdown here lets you filter by region, but you can also filter by team, or by date range, or — actually let me show you the custom filter builder, this is really powerful." The prospect's eyes have glazed into the specific thousand-yard stare reserved for airport gate-change announcements.

The swap: Before every demo, write down the two capabilities that map directly to what the prospect said in discovery. Show only those, in depth, with room for questions. If there's time left over, ask if they want to see more — don't assume they do.

The manager's script. "Walk me through your demo prep for this call. What did the prospect say their top problem was, and which two things were you planning to show because of it?" If the rep can't answer that second question cleanly, the demo was built from the product, not from the prospect — and that's the actual thing to fix.

The coaching note: Ban the phrase "let me show you everything." Replace it with a rule: every feature demoed must trace back to a specific pain point the prospect named earlier in the call. If a rep can't say why they're showing something in one sentence, the slide doesn't get shown. This forces discovery to actually inform the demo instead of the demo existing as a greatest-hits tour nobody requested.

Chapter 3: The Discount Reflex

Somewhere in this rep's nervous system, a wire got crossed between "the prospect hesitated" and "cut the price." It fires instantly, involuntarily, the way your leg kicks when the doctor taps your knee. The prospect says "let me think about it," and before the sentence has even finished, the rep is already saying "well, what if we did fifteen percent off."

Nobody asked for fifteen percent off. The prospect was thinking about budget approval, or timing, or whether their boss even needs to be in this conversation, and instead they've just been handed a discount they didn't request, for a reason nobody explained, which teaches them a valuable and permanent lesson: this price was never real in the first place.

Watch this rep negotiate against an opponent who isn't in the room. The prospect hasn't objected to anything. They've paused. A pause is not a rejection — it's a pause, the conversational equivalent of a yellow light — but this rep treats every yellow light as a reason to swerve into oncoming discount traffic. By the third call, he's given away 30% of margin to a prospect who never once said the word "price."

Anatomy of the mistake. The Discount Reflex isn't really about price. It's about the rep's discomfort sitting in an uncomfortable silence and needing to do something, anything, to fill it. A discount is an action. Silence, held a beat longer, is not — and to a rep who equates activity with progress, doing nothing feels like losing, even when doing nothing is exactly the right move.

Three varieties of this sin. The *Pre-Emptive Discounter* offers a lower number before the prospect has even seen the full price, "to get ahead of it," which mostly just tells the prospect the sticker price is negotiable before they've even asked. The *Panic Discounter* caves the moment a competitor's name is mentioned, regardless of whether the competitor is actually a serious threat. The *Serial Discounter* has discounted so consistently that their entire book of accounts now expects it, turning every renewal into a re-negotiation from a lower floor than the year before.

A short case study. A rep closing a mid-size logistics deal received a one-line reply to a proposal: "Reviewing internally, will follow up." Reading urgency into a routine internal process, he sent a follow-up offering a limited-time 12% discount "to help move things along." The prospect, previously on a normal internal timeline, wrote back asking why the price had suddenly changed — and whether the original number had ever been real. The deal closed six weeks later, at the discounted price, with a buyer who spent the rest of the relationship assuming every renewal conversation was also negotiable, because the first one had taught them it was.

Field notes — what it sounds like: Silence, four seconds, then: "I can also probably do something on price if that helps." The prospect, who was doing basic mental math about headcount, now does a different kind of math: how low will this go if I just... don't say anything for a while.

The swap: Meet the pause with a question, not a number: "What's making you pause?" It costs nothing, and it usually reveals the actual issue — which is almost never the sticker price.

The manager's script. "Before we talk about the discount you offered — what specifically did the prospect say that made you think price was the blocker?" More often than not, the honest answer is "nothing, they just went quiet," which is the whole diagnosis right there.

The coaching note: Install a rule that discounts require a named, spoken objection first — not a pause, not a sigh, not a "let me check with my team." If the prospect hasn't said a specific concern out loud, the rep's job is to ask a question, not offer a number. "What's making you pause?" costs nothing and often reveals the real issue is timeline, not money — which a discount was never going to fix anyway.

Chapter 4: Ghosting the Champion

Every deal has one person who's quietly doing the rep's job for them inside the building — fielding internal questions, forwarding the proposal to legal, defending the budget line in a meeting the rep will never see. This is the champion. And this rep, astonishingly, will let two and a half weeks go by without saying a single word to them.

Not out of malice. Out of the same energy that lets a gym membership go unused for four months: nothing bad happened, so nothing happened. The deal felt "warm," which is a temperature and not a strategy, and warmth, left alone in a drawer, becomes room temperature, and room temperature becomes cold, and cold becomes a prospect who took a call with a competitor because at least they followed up.

Meanwhile the champion — the actual human being who stuck their neck out to advocate for this purchase — is sitting there with zero updates, getting asked by their own boss "so what's happening with that vendor," and having no answer, because the rep went dark the moment the SOW got sent over, apparently under the belief that legal documents self-execute through sheer vibes.

Anatomy of the mistake. Ghosting the champion happens because the visible, adrenaline-producing parts of the sale — the pitch, the demo, the negotiation — feel like "real work," while follow-up feels like clerical overhead. The rep isn't lazy. He's misallocating effort toward the parts of the job that feel like selling and away from the parts that actually are.

Three varieties of this sin. The *Waiter* genuinely intends to follow up but keeps waiting for "something to report," not realizing that silence itself is a message, and a bad one. The *Over-Discloser* goes the opposite direction, sending the champion every internal update whether relevant or not, burying the one thing that matters under noise the champion now has to filter through. The *Assumer* believes the champion will reach out if something's needed, forgetting that champions have full-time jobs unrelated to chasing vendors.

A short case study. A champion at a manufacturing firm spent three internal meetings defending a software purchase with no new information to offer, because the vendor's rep hadn't sent an update in nineteen days. In the fourth meeting, a competing product came up, championed by someone else in the room who *had* recent talking points to share. The original deal didn't die from a "no." It died from irrelevance — the champion simply ran out of things to say on its behalf, and someone else's product had more current ammunition.

Field notes — what it sounds like: Nothing. That's the whole field note. Seventeen days of nothing, followed by a rep message that opens with "Hey, just circling back!" — three words that have never once made anyone's week better.

The swap: Even a boring update beats silence. "Still on track, nothing new to report, checking back in Thursday" takes ten seconds to send and gives the champion something — anything — to say the next time their boss asks.

The manager's script. "When's the last time you touched base with your champion on this deal — and what did they walk away able to tell their boss?" If the rep can't answer the second half, the update, even if it happened, didn't do its job.

The coaching note: Every champion gets a standing cadence — not "when something happens," but a fixed touchpoint, even if the update is "nothing new, still on track for Friday." A champion armed with something to say internally will keep advocating. A champion with silence to report will quietly stop bringing your name up in rooms you're not in.

Chapter 5: The Free Trial Giveaway

There is a specific moment in a sales cycle where a prospect says, gently, almost apologetically, "we're just not quite ready to commit yet" — and this rep hears, instead, "please give me the entire product for free, indefinitely, no pressure at all." He doesn't offer a scoped, time-boxed trial with clear success criteria. He offers *access*. Full access. Forever, functionally, because nobody ever set a date for it to end.

This is generosity mistaken for strategy. The rep believes that if the prospect just gets to *use* the thing long enough, the value will become self-evident and the deal will close itself, sparing him the uncomfortable work of actually making a case. What he's really done is remove all urgency from a relationship that had some, and replaced it with an open-ended arrangement that costs the prospect nothing to let quietly expire in their inbox of forgotten tabs.

Three months later, usage logs show four logins, one of which was clearly someone checking whether the free trial they forgot about was still running. The rep, baffled, cannot understand why "they got to try it and still didn't buy."

Anatomy of the mistake. The Free Trial Giveaway comes from confusing product-led growth with a lack of a plan. A trial with no defined end date, no named success metric, and no scheduled check-in isn't a sales motion — it's a hope wearing a trial's clothing. Access without a plan for what "success" looks like just becomes one more unused login.

A short case study. A rep at a project management software company granted a sixty-day, fully unrestricted trial to a ten-person creative agency, with the parting words "just let me know if you have any questions!" No onboarding call was scheduled. No success criteria were defined. At day fifty-eight, the rep reached out to ask how it was going, and learned the team had tried it for one afternoon in week one, hit a setup question, gotten no answer because none had been offered, and quietly reverted to their spreadsheet. The trial had, from the prospect's side, ended in week one. From the rep's CRM, it was still "actively evaluating" for two months.

Field notes — what it sounds like: "No rush at all, just poke around whenever works for you!" — a sentence that sounds like customer-friendly flexibility and functions, in practice, as an instruction to never think about this again.

The swap: Every trial gets three things before it starts: a specific, named outcome that defines success ("if you can build your first project board with your team by day ten, we're on track"), a scheduled check-in before the trial's midpoint, and a real end date the prospect agreed to, not one the rep quietly extends out of avoidance.

The manager's script. "What does this prospect need to see happen by day ten for the trial to be working? And when's your next scheduled call with them?" If either answer is "we'll see how it goes," the trial doesn't have a plan — it has a countdown to being forgotten.

The coaching note: Time-box every trial and put the mid-point check-in on the calendar before day one, not as a follow-up to be scheduled later. An unscheduled check-in is a check-in that competes with everything else in the prospect's week and reliably loses.

Chapter 6: The Demo Nobody Asked For

This rep books a demo on the first call. Not because discovery revealed a need for one — because discovery didn't happen, because "let's just get you in front of the product" felt like progress, and progress felt better than the mildly uncomfortable work of asking a prospect what they actually do all day.

So thirty minutes get scheduled, the whole team dials in — the prospect's ops lead, their IT guy, someone from finance who has no idea why they're there and will spend the whole call visibly composing an email — and the rep opens with, "So, tell me a little about what you're hoping to see today," which is discovery happening live, on camera, in front of an audience, which is the worst possible place to discover that this product doesn't actually solve their problem.

The demo proceeds anyway, because cancelling it would mean admitting the call was booked prematurely, and admitting that feels worse than forty-five minutes of showing dashboards to people whose actual pain point was never established. Everyone leaves confused about why they were there. The rep logs it as "great engagement."

Anatomy of the mistake. A booked meeting shows up as a metric. A qualified conversation doesn't, not directly — it's invisible in most activity dashboards, which count calls and meetings, not the quality of what happened in them. A rep optimizing for visible activity will always be tempted to book first and qualify later, because the calendar invite is what gets noticed.

Three varieties of this sin. The *Momentum Chaser* books the demo the instant a prospect shows any interest, afraid that slowing down to ask questions will kill the enthusiasm. The *Avoider* books the demo specifically to skip the more uncomfortable qualifying questions, letting the product do the talking instead. The *Over-Scheduler* books a demo for every single inbound lead regardless of fit, treating "they filled out a form" as sufficient qualification on its own.

A short case study. An SDR passed a lead to an account executive after a single form fill with no scoping call. The AE, eager to move fast, booked a full demo within twenty-four hours. Five stakeholders joined. Fifteen minutes in, it became clear the company had under ten employees and was looking for something a fraction of the product's size and price.

The call ended early, awkwardly, with everyone's time spent and nothing gained. A single two-minute qualifying call beforehand would have surfaced the mismatch before five calendars were cleared for it.

Field notes — what it sounds like: "So, tell me what you're hoping to see today" — asked to a room of five people, three of whom clearly did not know this call was happening, one of whom asks, audibly, "wait, what does this product actually do?"

The swap: No invite goes out until three things are on record: the specific problem, who else needs to be in the room, and what "good" looks like to them. If you can't answer those three, you're not ready to book — you're ready to ask one more question.

The manager's script. "Before this demo went on the calendar, what problem did they tell you they were trying to solve?" A rep who can answer instantly booked it correctly. A rep who has to think about it booked it too soon.

The coaching note: No demo gets booked without three qualifying answers on record first — the specific problem, who else needs to be in the room, and what "good" looks like to them. If a rep can't produce those three things before hitting send on the invite, the invite doesn't go out. A demo without discovery isn't a shortcut. It's a coin flip with a calendar hold attached.

Chapter 7: Fighting the Objection

The prospect says, "I'm a little worried about the implementation timeline." A reasonable, common, entirely survivable objection. This rep hears it as a personal challenge to single combat.

"Well, actually, our implementation is faster than ninety percent of the market," he says, and produces a chart. The prospect, mildly startled by the chart, tries again: "It's more that our team is already stretched thin this quarter." The rep counters with a case study. Then a stat. Then, unbelievably, a second chart. Somewhere around chart three, the prospect stops raising concerns not because they've been resolved, but because raising one clearly triggers a PowerPoint, and nobody wants to trigger a third PowerPoint on a Tuesday.

This is not persuasion. This is a debate the prospect didn't sign up for, against an opponent with slides prepared for every rebuttal, who will absolutely win the argument and just as absolutely lose the deal, because the prospect didn't come here to be proven wrong. They came here to be understood.

Anatomy of the mistake. Objection-handling training, done badly, teaches reps that every objection has a "correct" counter — a rehearsed rebuttal to fire back, gladiator-style. It optimizes for winning the exchange instead of resolving the concern, which are frequently two completely different outcomes. A won argument and a won deal are not the same thing, and a rep chasing the first will often cost themselves the second.

Three varieties of this sin. The *Debater* treats every objection as a logical puzzle to be solved with a superior counter-fact. The *Deflector* changes the subject back to a strength the moment a weakness is raised, hoping the prospect won't notice the dodge. The *Over-Preparer* has so thoroughly rehearsed responses to every possible objection that real answers come out sounding scripted and canned, even when they're technically accurate.

A short case study. A prospect raised a concern about data migration complexity on a call. The rep, confident in the product's migration tooling, launched into a four-minute explanation of exactly how smooth the process would be, complete with a diagram. The prospect went quiet, said "okay, that's good to know," and the deal stalled the following week. In a later conversation, it emerged the actual concern wasn't the tooling at all — it was that the prospect's own internal data was famously messy, something they were embarrassed to admit outright, and no amount of migration-tool confidence addressed a problem the rep never found out was actually about the data itself.

Field notes — what it sounds like: "But statistically—" is a phrase that has ended more sales calls than any competitor ever has.

The swap: Meet the objection with a question before a rebuttal: "Say more about that" or "What would need to be true for the timeline to work?" You'll find out fast whether it's a real blocker or a surface comment covering something else entirely.

The manager's script. "Play me the moment right after they raised that concern. What was the very next thing you said?" If it's a fact, a stat, or a case study, the rep argued. If it's a question, the rep listened. The transcript makes the distinction impossible to dodge.

The coaching note: Train reps to respond to an objection with a question before a rebuttal, every time. Half of all objections dissolve once you understand what's actually underneath them. The other half were never about the surface issue in the first place — and no chart, however elegant, fixes a concern nobody's actually named yet.

Chapter 8: The Happy Ears Close

The prospect says, "This looks interesting, let me talk to my team." This rep hears: "We're basically signing this week." He updates the CRM to "Verbal Commit." He tells his manager the deal is "basically closed." He starts mentally spending the commission.

Happy Ears is a hearing condition unique to sales, in which any sentence containing a positive-adjacent word — "interesting," "promising," "I like where this is going" — gets translated into a yes, regardless of the sentence's actual content, tone, or the six qualifying clauses that immediately followed it. "This looks interesting, but we're not prioritizing new vendors until next fiscal year" becomes, in this rep's forecast, "interesting." The rest is treated as ambient noise, like a flight attendant's safety demonstration.

The tragedy isn't the optimism. Optimism is a fine trait in a rep. The tragedy is what happens two weeks later, when the deal that was "basically closed" evaporates entirely, and the rep is stunned — genuinely, personally stunned — because as far as he heard, this was a done deal that unfortunately, inexplicably, fell through.

Anatomy of the mistake. Quota pressure turns hope into a hearing aid. A rep under pressure to forecast a good quarter will subconsciously filter every ambiguous signal toward the outcome he needs to be true, because the alternative — an honest, uncertain pipeline — is stressful to look at, and stress is the thing this whole reflex exists to avoid.

Three varieties of this sin. The *Optimist* genuinely, temperamentally hears the best in everything, a trait wonderful at parties and expensive on a forecast call. The *Quota Wisher* isn't naturally optimistic but needs the deal to close this quarter badly enough to talk himself into believing the signals support it. The *Non-Confronter* suspects, correctly, that the deal is softer than reported, but avoids saying so out loud because it invites uncomfortable questions from his manager.

A short case study. A rep forecasted a six-figure renewal as "Commit" three weeks running, based on a customer contact who kept saying "yeah, we're definitely renewing, just need to sort out some internal stuff." No renewal order form was ever sent. No specific date was ever named. In week four, the customer went dark entirely; it emerged they'd quietly moved to a competitor two months prior and simply hadn't wanted an awkward conversation. Every "definitely renewing" had been true in spirit and empty in substance — a polite deflection mistaken, three separate times, for a commitment.

Field notes — what it sounds like: "Great call, they're basically in," reported after a call in which the prospect's actual final sentence was "we're probably revisiting this in Q3." Basically in. Revisiting in Q3. Two very different sentences, filed under the same forecast stage.

The swap: Translate every "positive" signal into a specific next action before believing it. If there's no scheduled next step with a name and a date attached, it isn't a commit — it's a nice thing someone said on their way out the door.

The manager's script. "What specific, observable fact makes this a Commit and not a Best Case?" If the honest answer is a feeling rather than a document, a date, or a signature, the stage moves back until there's something concrete to point to.

The coaching note: Ban vibes from the forecast. A deal only moves stages based on a specific, observable action — a signed mutual close plan, a scheduled procurement call, a budget number confirmed in writing — never based on tone of voice or a rep's gut feeling that "it just felt good." If it can't be pointed to, it doesn't move the stage.

Chapter 9: Selling to the Wrong Room

Eight calls. Two demos. A custom proposal, personalized, with the prospect's logo on the cover slide. This rep has built an entire relationship, floor by floor, with someone who — it emerges on call nine — cannot actually approve a purchase over $500 without three other signatures, none of whom have ever heard of this deal.

This is selling to the wrong room: investing enormous energy in the person who's enthusiastic rather than the person who's empowered, because enthusiasm is warm and immediate and empowerment requires an awkward question early on that this rep never got around to asking, for the same reason nobody gets around to flossing.

The enthusiastic person is often a genuine ally. They're just not the one who can say yes. And by the time that becomes clear, the rep has spent six weeks building a beautiful case for a person who now has to go build the same case, from scratch, secondhand, to someone who's never taken a single call with the vendor and has approximately zero investment in the outcome.

Anatomy of the mistake. Asking "who else needs to sign off on this?" early in a relationship feels presumptuous, almost rude — like asking someone's salary on a first date. So it gets deferred, and deferred, until it's asked far too late to do anything but explain the delay. The avoidance is social, not strategic, which is exactly why it's so easy to justify putting off one more call.

Three varieties of this sin. The *Single-Threader* builds the entire relationship through one contact and never asks who else is involved, treating a friendly rapport as a proxy for organizational buy-in. The *Assumer* guesses at the org chart based on job title alone, without confirming who actually controls budget. The *Late Asker* does eventually ask the right question, but only after the proposal's already been sent, at which point the answer changes everything and nothing can be redone in time.

A short case study. A rep spent seven weeks building a relationship with a "Head of Operations" at a mid-size distribution company, sending a fully customized proposal after four calls and two demos. On the eighth interaction, the contact mentioned, almost in passing, "I'll just need to run this by our CFO, he handles anything over ten grand." The

CFO had never heard of the vendor, had a standing relationship with a competitor, and asked for the entire business case rebuilt from scratch, addressed to him. The seven weeks of rapport with the original contact turned out to be seven weeks spent convincing someone who was never going to be asked to make the actual decision.

Field notes — what it sounds like: Call nine, week seven: "Oh, I'll actually need to loop in our CFO on this." A sentence that, said in week one, is a normal fact of life. Said in week seven, is a countdown timer on the whole deal.

The swap: Ask by the second call, framed as helpful rather than presumptuous: "So I can make sure this goes smoothly on your end — who else usually weighs in on a decision like this?" Nobody's ever been offended by that question. Plenty of deals have died from it never being asked.

The manager's script. "Who signs this deal, and when did you last speak with them directly?" If the rep's only relationship is with an internal champion and they've never once spoken to the actual approver, that's the deal's real risk — not the ones showing up anywhere else on the scorecard.

The coaching note: Make "who signs this, and have you talked to them yet" a mandatory field by the second call, not the eighth. It's an uncomfortable question exactly once. Not knowing the answer is uncomfortable for the entire length of the deal cycle.

Chapter 10: The CRM Black Hole

Ask this rep how a deal is going and you'll get a rich, detailed, entirely verbal answer — tone of the last call, a read on the buyer's body language, a hunch about timeline. Ask the CRM the same question and you'll get a stage that hasn't moved since March and a close date that has been pushed exactly eleven times, always by exactly thirty days, like a recurring subscription nobody remembers signing up for.

The CRM, for this rep, is a compliance chore performed under duress right before the Friday pipeline review — a frantic, backdated flurry of notes reconstructed from memory, in which every deal is "on track" because "on track" is the least effortful thing to type and the hardest thing to be challenged on.

The real cost isn't the manager's annoyance, though there's plenty of that. It's that an entire team's forecast, resourcing, and hiring plan get built on top of data that is, functionally, fiction — a beautifully organized fiction, color-coded and everything, but fiction nonetheless. Nobody finds out the pipeline was hollow until the quarter's already over and the numbers refuse to show up no matter how many times someone refreshes the dashboard.

Anatomy of the mistake. CRM hygiene has no immediate reward and a very immediate cost — five extra minutes after every call that could otherwise go toward the next one. Untended, it always loses that trade, because the benefit of accurate data is diffuse and future while the cost of maintaining it is specific and now.

Three varieties of this sin. The *Batcher* saves all their updates for Friday afternoon, reconstructing three weeks of activity from memory, which is exactly as reliable as it sounds. The *Optimistic Typist* logs every deal as further along than it actually is, because typing the honest stage feels like an admission of underperformance. The *Silent Slipper* pushes close dates by exactly thirty days every review cycle without ever noting why, so the pattern is invisible unless someone plots it out over time.

A short case study. A regional sales team's Q3 forecast showed $2.1M in pipeline marked "Commit" or "Best Case" going into the final two weeks. Actual closed revenue came in at $640K. A post-mortem review of CRM notes found that "next steps" fields across the shortfall were either blank or read, verbatim, "follow up" — no dates, no names, no specific actions — for deals that had, per the notes, been in "final stages" for six to eight weeks. The forecast wasn't wrong because the market shifted. It was wrong because it had been built on records that were never accurate to begin with.

Field notes — what it sounds like: "It's basically the same as last week" — said about a deal whose close date has, in fact, changed four times since last week, none of it reflected anywhere except the rep's memory, which is not a database.

The swap: Update the record live, in the last two minutes of the call, before the next call swallows the details whole. A note written the same day is data. A note reconstructed on Friday is historical fiction.

The manager's script. "Pull up this deal's activity log with me. What's the date of the last logged next step, and is today's conversation reflected in it yet?" A rep whose CRM lags their memory by more than a few days is running the deal on a system nobody else can see.

The coaching note: Make CRM updates part of the call, not an epilogue to it — the last two minutes before hanging up, notes typed live, stage changed on the spot. A field left blank should be as visible and as awkward as a client walking in on an unfinished pitch. Nobody fixes what nobody can see.

Chapter 11: Selling Past the Close

The prospect has said yes. Verbally, clearly, unambiguously — "okay, let's move forward, send over the paperwork." This is the single cleanest signal a sales call ever produces, and this rep, instead of saying "wonderful, I'll have that to you within the hour," keeps talking.

He starts explaining the onboarding process in granular detail. He mentions two upcoming features that aren't relevant to anything discussed. He recaps, unprompted, the entire value proposition one more time, as if the yes hadn't already happened, as if the prospect might need re-convincing of a decision they just finished making out loud. And somewhere in that extra eleven minutes of unnecessary talking, he mentions a small caveat about support hours that the prospect hadn't previously considered, which raises a brand-new question, which reopens a conversation that had, ninety seconds earlier, been completely finished.

This is Selling Past the Close: the inability to recognize a yes as a stopping point, born from the same instinct as Chapter 1's sin but arriving at a much more expensive moment, because this time there was actually something to lose.

Anatomy of the mistake. A rep who has spent an entire deal cycle building toward this moment has built up momentum that doesn't know how to switch off just because the goal's been reached. Talking has been the tool this whole time. Old habits don't recognize that the job just changed from persuading to processing paperwork.

A short case study. A prospect agreed verbally to a twelve-month contract on a Thursday afternoon call. The rep, riding the high of the win, spent the next fifteen minutes walking through the full onboarding roadmap in detail, including a mention that premium support was a separate add-on not included in the base package — a detail nobody had asked about and that had no bearing on the decision already made. The prospect, previously ready to sign, asked to loop in IT before finalizing "just to understand the support model fully." The contract closed nineteen days later, at a lower tier, after a question that never needed to be raised got raised anyway, by the rep, after the deal was already won.

Field notes — what it sounds like: "Great, I'll send that over — oh, and one more thing you should probably know about..." is a sentence that has personally reopened more closed deals than any competitor's sales team ever has.

The swap: The moment a clear yes lands, say thank you, confirm the next concrete step and its date, and stop talking. Anything else that needs to be communicated can go in the paperwork or the kickoff call. It does not need to happen in the ninety seconds after someone said yes.

The coaching note: Teach reps to recognize a close the same way they'd recognize a green light — as a signal to go, not as an invitation to say more. If it helps, give them a literal rule: after a verbal yes, the next sentence out of their mouth is either a thank-you or a next step. Nothing else.

Part II: For the Sales Manager and Trainer

Chapter 12: Diagnosing Anti-Patterns on Your Team

Before you can coach any of the eleven sins out of your team, you have to catch them doing it — not in a quarterly review, months after the deal's already dead, but in the moment, on a live call, where the habit is actually visible.

The fastest diagnostic isn't a personality assessment or a 360 review. It's call recordings and a very short checklist. For each recorded call, ask three questions: Who talked more, the rep or the prospect? Did a discount or concession get offered before an objection was actually spoken aloud? Did the call end with a specific, dated next step, or a vague "I'll follow up"?

Run that checklist across ten calls per rep and patterns surface fast — not as vague impressions ("Dave seems a bit talkative") but as countable behavior ("Dave held the floor for over 80% of four out of five calls"). A pattern you can count is a pattern you can coach. A pattern you can only vaguely sense is a pattern you'll keep vaguely sensing forever.

Build a simple scorecard — one row per chapter in Part I, one column per rep — and mark it not as a judgment but as a map. The goal isn't to catch anyone in an embarrassing moment. It's to find out, concretely, which one or two anti-patterns are actually costing this specific team money, so you're not running generic training on problems this team doesn't even have.

Running the scorecard in practice. Pick five recent closed-lost deals and five recent calls at random — not the rep's best ones, which they'll happily submit, but a genuine random sample. Score each against the eleven-chapter checklist. Patterns that show up across both closed-lost deals and random calls are the ones worth spending training time on; a habit that only shows up in losses might just be one bad-fit prospect, not a systemic issue.

Reading the scorecard as a team, not just as individuals. Once you've scored several reps, step back and look across the whole sheet. If four out of six reps are all showing up heavy on Chapter 3 — the Discount Reflex — that's not four individual coaching conversations. That's a pricing conversation, or a training gap, or a pattern the whole team picked up from watching each other. Individual scorecards catch individual habits. The aggregate catches culture.

Chapter 13: Coaching Without Shaming

Here's the trap: you now have language for eleven specific, funny, easily-recognized failure modes — and the temptation, the very human temptation, is to walk into a 1:1 and say "you're doing the Pitch That Never Ends thing" in the tone of someone who's just won an argument. Don't. A label used as a gotcha stops being diagnostic and starts being a weapon, and nobody improves while being hit with one.

The move is to introduce the anti-patterns before you ever need to use one on a specific rep — as a team-wide framework, in a training session, where everyone gets to laugh at Chapter 4 together and privately recognize themselves in it without anyone pointing. That way, when you do need to say "hey, that felt a little like the Discount Reflex," it lands as shared vocabulary, not as a diagnosis handed down from above. You're referencing a shared joke, not issuing a verdict.

Pair every label with a specific, observable moment — "on the call with Meridian, the prospect paused after you gave the price, and the next thing out of your mouth was ten percent off, before they'd said anything" — rather than a character trait. You're describing a moment in a transcript, not a permanent feature of who this person is. One is coachable. The other just feels like an insult with a page number attached.

One habit at a time. Resist the urge, once the whole team knows all eleven chapters, to give feedback against all eleven at once. A rep handed five things to fix simultaneously fixes none of them.

Pick the single anti-pattern doing the most damage to that specific rep's numbers, coach it until it's gone, and only then move to the next.

The follow-up loop. A coaching conversation without a follow-up is just a comment. After flagging a specific pattern, put a date on the calendar — one week, two weeks out — to review a new call together and check whether the swap actually showed up. Improvement that isn't checked on tends to quietly slide back to baseline; the follow-up is what makes the first conversation stick.

Chapter 14: Building an Anti-Playbook for Onboarding

Most onboarding decks are a highlight reel: here's what a great call sounds like, here's the ideal talk track, here's a case study of a deal that went beautifully. New reps nod along, retain about a third of it, and then go make every single mistake in this book anyway — because a highlight reel doesn't prepare you for what failure actually sounds like in real time.

Build the inverse deck. Take three or four anonymized call recordings — real ones, from your own team, blurred of any identifying detail — that clearly demonstrate an anti-pattern in the wild, and walk new hires through them before their first live call, not after their fifth blown one. "Here's what Feature Vomit sounds like. Count how many capabilities get mentioned before the prospect asks a single question." Let them hear it, not just read about it.

This does something a positive-only onboarding never can: it gives a brand-new rep, who has no experience to draw on yet, a set of alarms to listen for in their own voice. They won't yet know what a great call feels like from the inside — that takes reps. But they can absolutely learn to notice, mid-sentence, "wait, I've been talking for six straight minutes," because you gave them the pattern to listen for before they needed it.

A simple week-one exercise. Have new hires listen to one anonymized call per anti-pattern and write, in one sentence each, what they'd have said instead at the exact moment things went sideways. It's a low-stakes way to practice the swap from each chapter before any real prospect is on the line.

Keeping the library current. An onboarding library built once and never updated goes stale fast — new reps deserve recent, representative examples, not the same two calls from three years ago. Make it someone's explicit responsibility, quarterly, to swap in a fresh example or two, pulled straight from the current scorecard process in Chapter 12.

Chapter 15: Metrics That Actually Reveal These Habits

Most sales dashboards measure outcomes — bookings, win rate, average deal size — which is a bit like judging a diet purely by the number on the scale and never once looking at what's actually on the plate. Outcome metrics tell you that something's wrong. They almost never tell you what.

Pair them with a small set of behavioral metrics, pulled straight from call recordings: talk-to-listen ratio per rep, average number of open-ended questions asked before a demo gets booked, percentage of deals with a documented next step and date after every single call, and days-since-last-touch on every open opportunity, sorted by whoever's champion has gone quietest the longest.

None of these numbers replaces a manager's judgment — a rep with a 70% talk ratio isn't automatically guilty, some deals genuinely need more explaining than others. But tracked over time, across a whole team, these numbers turn eleven funny chapters into an actual early-warning system: a rep whose talk ratio creeps from 40% to 65% over a month is visibly drifting toward Chapter 1, in the data, weeks before it shows up as a blown deal in the outcome report.

Keep the list short. Four or five behavioral metrics, tracked consistently, beat twenty tracked sporadically. The point is an early-warning system, not a second dashboard nobody opens.

Sharing the metrics with the team, not just watching them. Behavioral metrics work best when reps can see their own numbers, not just when a manager quietly monitors them from a distance. A rep who can watch their own talk ratio trend down over a month gets to feel that improvement directly, which does more for the habit sticking than any single coaching conversation could on its own.

Chapter 16: Building a Team Culture That Catches These Early

Everything so far in Part II assumes a manager doing the diagnosing. The healthier version of this system is one where the team catches its own anti-patterns before a manager ever needs to.

That starts with peer call reviews — not a formal, high-stakes review board, but a low-key, recurring habit of two reps listening to five minutes of each other's calls and naming, out loud, which chapter (if any) showed up. It works because hearing a colleague name your own Discount Reflex lands very differently than hearing it from your manager — less like a performance review, more like a friend pointing out spinach in your teeth before the client meeting, which is, after all, the entire spirit this book was built on.

It also requires making the chapters genuinely safe to admit to. A team where naming your own mistake out loud in a stand-up gets you mocked will quickly learn to hide mistakes instead of fixing them. A team where someone can say "yeah, I definitely did the Happy Ears thing on that call, I'm moving it back to Best Case" without flinching is a team whose forecast you can actually trust — not because nobody makes mistakes anymore, but because nobody's hiding them.

The final piece is modeling it from the top. A manager who never admits to their own version of these habits — the pitch they let run long, the discount they offered too early back when they carried a bag themselves — teaches the team that these chapters are something that happens to reps, not to people. The fastest way to make eleven anti-patterns a shared, low-stakes vocabulary instead of a set of accusations is to be the first one, publicly, to admit which chapter you used to be worst at.

Chapter 17: Closing — Turning "How Not To" Into "How We Do"

A book of anti-patterns is only useful if it eventually deletes itself — if "don't do the Discount Reflex" quietly becomes "we don't discount before an objection's been named," a normal, unremarkable house rule nobody needs a chapter to remember anymore.

That's the actual goal here, and it's worth saying plainly: the humor in Part I is a delivery mechanism, not the point. A joke gets a bad habit noticed and remembered in a way a bullet point never does — but noticing is only the first half of the job. The second half, the one that actually changes a quarter's numbers, is the boring, structural stuff in Part II: the scorecards, the call reviews, the onboarding deck built from real failures instead of highlight reels.

Do that consistently, and a strange thing happens. New reps stop needing the chapter titles at all, because the behaviors those chapters were describing simply never took root as habits in the first place. That's the version of this book actually working — not more people quoting Chapter 3 at the bar after a conference, but fewer people ever needing to.

Appendix

The Eleven Sins — One Line Each

The Pitch That Never Ends — talking past the close instead of into it

Feature Vomit — showing everything instead of what was asked for

The Discount Reflex — cutting price before an objection exists

Ghosting the Champion — going quiet on the one person doing your job for you internally

The Free Trial Giveaway — handing over access with no plan attached

The Demo Nobody Asked For — booking the meeting before the discovery

Fighting the Objection — winning the argument, losing the deal

The Happy Ears Close — hearing "maybe" as "yes"

Selling to the Wrong Room — building the case for someone who can't approve it

The CRM Black Hole — a pipeline built on memory instead of record

Selling Past the Close — talking a finished deal back open

Role-Play Scripts

Script 1 — The Pitch That Never Ends. Manager plays the prospect. Rep has five minutes to "pitch" before being cut off with a raised hand. Debrief: At what point did you start talking about the company instead of the prospect? Where was your first question?

Script 2 — Feature Vomit. Manager gives the rep one made-up pain point on an index card. Rep runs a two-minute "demo" using only that card as the brief. Debrief: How many features did you show, and how many traced directly back to the card?

Script 3 — The Discount Reflex. Manager plays the prospect, delivers a price, then pauses silently for five seconds. Debrief: What did you feel the urge to say? What would you ask instead of offering anything?

Script 4 — Ghosting the Champion. Manager plays a champion who sends: "Hey, just checking — anything new I should tell my boss?" Rep has thirty seconds to reply from memory, no CRM lookup. Debrief: Could you answer without checking notes?

Script 5 — The Free Trial Giveaway. Manager plays a prospect asking for trial access. Rep must state the success metric, the check-in date, and the end date out loud before the trial is "granted." Debrief: Which of the three was hardest to define on the spot?

Script 6 — The Demo Nobody Asked For. Manager hands the rep an already-sent calendar invite. Rep must reconstruct, out loud, the three qualifying answers that should exist before booking. Debrief: Which one would you actually be guessing at on a real deal?

Script 7 — Fighting the Objection. Manager plays the prospect, delivers the same objection twice, worded differently. Rep must respond to both with a question, not a rebuttal. Debrief: How hard was it to resist reaching for a stat?

Script 8 — The Happy Ears Close. Manager plays a prospect who says three ambiguous, positive-sounding things, each followed by a real qualifier. Debrief: What CRM stage would you log, and what specific fact justifies it?

Script 9 — Selling to the Wrong Room. Manager plays an enthusiastic but powerless contact. Rep must ask "who else needs to sign off" within the first two minutes. Debrief: Did it feel awkward asking early? Would it feel worse asking in week seven, for real?

Script 10 — The CRM Black Hole. Immediately after any other script, give the rep two minutes to write the CRM note live, no drafting afterward. Debrief: What got left out under time pressure?

Script 11 — Selling Past the Close. Manager plays a prospect who gives a clean, unambiguous verbal yes mid-sentence. Rep must stop talking within one sentence of it. Debrief: What did you almost say next, and did the deal actually need it said?

Team Health Diagnostic — Thirty Questions

Use this as a quarterly pulse check, scored 1 (rarely) to 5 (consistently) per rep or as a team average:

> Do your reps ask at least three open-ended questions before presenting anything?
>
> Do demos map directly to a pain point named earlier in the same deal?
>
> Are discounts only offered after a specific, named objection?
>
> Does every open deal have a champion touchpoint logged in the last ten business days?
>
> Do trials have a named success metric before they start?
>
> Is a scoping call completed before any demo gets booked?

Do reps respond to objections with a question before a rebuttal?

Are forecast stages backed by a specific document, date, or signature — not a feeling?

Is the economic buyer identified and engaged by the second call?

Are CRM notes updated the same day as the call, not reconstructed later?

Do reps stop talking within one sentence of a clear verbal yes?

Is talk-to-listen ratio tracked and visible to reps themselves?

Are closed-lost deals reviewed for anti-patterns, not just outcomes?

Does onboarding include real (anonymized) call examples of failure, not just success?

Are peer call reviews a regular, low-stakes habit on the team?

Do managers model admitting their own past anti-patterns openly?

Is there a standing cadence for every champion, regardless of deal stage?

Are trial end dates enforced rather than quietly extended?

Do reps know, without checking, who signs each of their top five deals?

Are behavioral metrics reviewed as often as outcome metrics?

Is coaching feedback tied to specific transcript moments, not general traits?

Do coaching conversations end with a scheduled follow-up review?

Is there a shared, safe vocabulary for naming mistakes on the team?

Are discount thresholds and approval levels clearly defined and followed?

Do reps document the "what good looks like" answer before every demo?

Are stalled deals reviewed for a missing internal decision-maker?

Is pipeline coverage checked against verified next steps, not just stage labels?

Do new hires shadow real calls that include visible mistakes, not just wins?

Are quarterly scorecards run across a random sample of calls, not just top performers'?

> Would your team recognize each of the eleven chapter titles without looking them up?

A team scoring consistently low across a cluster of questions — say, 4 through 11, which all touch discovery and qualification — has found its next training priority. That's the actual use of this diagnostic: not a score to feel good or bad about, but a map of where to point Part II next.

Glossary of Terms

Anti-pattern. A recurring, recognizable habit that reliably produces a bad outcome — the opposite of a best practice, and often easier to teach precisely because it's easier to spot.

Champion. The internal contact who advocates for a purchase inside their own organization, often without any formal authority to approve it themselves.

Discovery. The part of a sales conversation devoted to understanding a prospect's actual problem before proposing a solution to it.

Economic buyer. The person with actual budget authority to approve a purchase, who may or may not be the person a rep has been talking to the whole deal.

Forecast stage. The label assigned to a deal in a CRM indicating how likely and how soon it is to close — only useful when it's tied to observable facts rather than a rep's optimism.

Happy Ears. The tendency to hear ambiguous or lukewarm signals from a prospect as firm commitments, usually driven by a rep's own hope or quota pressure.

Mutual close plan. A shared, dated document between buyer and seller outlining the specific steps required to reach a signed contract, used as a concrete signal of real progress.

Next step. A specific, named, dated action agreed to by both sides at the end of a call — the minimum bar for a call to be considered productive.

Objection. A specific, spoken concern raised by a prospect, as distinct from a pause, a sigh, or general hesitation, which are not objections and shouldn't be treated as one.

Qualification. The process of confirming a prospect has a real problem, a real budget, a real timeline, and a real decision-maker before investing further sales effort.

Talk-to-listen ratio. The proportion of a call spent with the rep speaking versus the prospect speaking, used as a rough proxy for whether discovery is actually happening.

Trial success metric. A specific, named outcome a prospect needs to reach during a trial period for it to be considered a success, agreed on before the trial begins.

Common Excuses and What They Really Mean

Every manager who's run enough pipeline reviews has heard these before. A short translation guide:

"They're just really busy right now." Usually means the prospect doesn't see enough urgency to make time — which is a discovery gap, not a calendar problem.

"I think they're just doing their due diligence." Often means there's been no contact in over two weeks and the rep is filling the silence with a hopeful guess.

"It's basically a formality at this point." Frequently precedes a deal that stalls for another six weeks, because "formality" is rarely backed by a signed document or a scheduled date.

"They love the product, they're just slow-moving as an org." Sometimes true. Just as often means the champion has enthusiasm but not authority, and nobody with authority has actually been engaged yet.

"I didn't want to seem pushy by asking about the budget." A discovery question deferred out of social discomfort, not strategy — almost always more expensive to avoid than to ask.

"They said no rush, so I figured I'd give them some space." Translates, more often than not, into a deal quietly going cold while everyone waits for someone else to make the first move.

A Ninety-Day Plan for Using This Book With a Team

Weeks one and two. Read Part I together as a team, one or two chapters per stand-up, laughing at the caricatures together before anyone's individual habits get discussed. This builds the shared vocabulary Chapter 13 depends on, before it's ever needed for a real coaching conversation.

Weeks three and four. Run the scorecard from Chapter 12 across a random sample of recent calls for every rep. Don't share individual results yet — first look at the aggregate, team-wide pattern, and decide which one or two anti-patterns are actually costing this specific team the most.

Weeks five through eight. Run one role-play script per week from the Appendix, focused on whichever anti-pattern the scorecard flagged as most common. Pair it with the matching manager's script from Part I for any 1:1 coaching that comes out of it.

Weeks nine through twelve. Start tracking the small set of behavioral metrics from Chapter 15, and make them visible to reps themselves, not just to management. Re-run the scorecard at the end of week twelve and compare it to the baseline from week four — that comparison is the actual measure of whether the book worked.

Ongoing. Fold one anonymized call example into onboarding per quarter, as described in Chapter 14, and keep the peer call review habit from Chapter 16 running as a permanent, low-key fixture rather than a one-time initiative.

SALES TRAINING · MANAGEMENT · FIELD GUIDE

Every sales floor has the same nine bad habits, wearing different name tags. This book names them, laughs at them, and then hands you the exact coaching script to fix them.

Eleven chapters of anti-patterns—*The Pitch That Never Ends, The Discount Reflex, The Happy Ears Close*—each one broken down into why it happens, what it costs, and the one-line swap that fixes it.

INSIDE

Nine cardinal sins of the sale, diagnosed and defanged
A manager's playbook: scorecards, coaching, onboarding
A 30-question team health diagnostic
Eleven ready-to-run role-play scripts

> *"A joke gets a bad habit noticed and remembered in a way a bullet point never does."*

> *"Nobody fixes what nobody can see."*

ANAND KUMAR BHOJANI (AK BHOJANI)

A field guide for sales managers and trainers who want