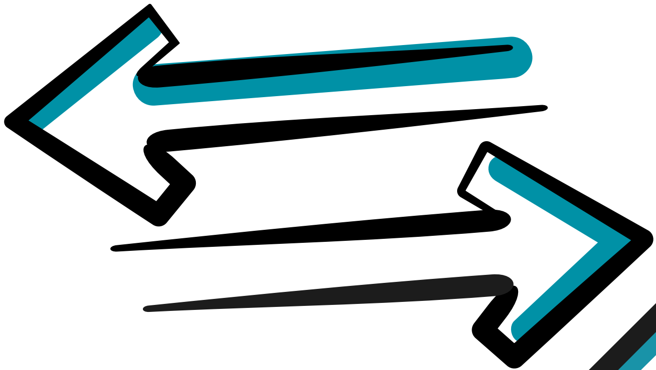
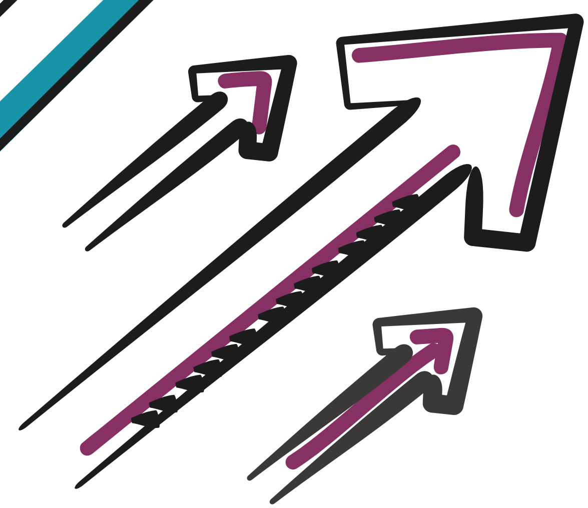


Winning the FOUR VALUE CONVERSATIONS

How to Create, Elevate, Capture, and Expand Value in Your Customer Conversations

CORPORATE VISIONS



Winning the

FOUR VALUE CONVERSATIONS

How to Create, Elevate, Capture, and Expand Value in Your Customer Conversations

CORPORATE VISIONS

Conversations That Win®

The story of Malcolm Gladwell and Morton Grodzins is a cautionary tale for every salesperson

What? So you know who Malcolm Gladwell is but you've never heard of Morton Grodzins? Well, you are not alone, and that is the point of the story.

In 1957, Grodzins, a political science professor at the University of Chicago, wrote an article for the *Scientific American* that explored how large metropolitan areas tended to self-segregate on the basis of race. What Grodzins wanted to determine was at what point neighborhoods' racial/ethnic compositions began to change. He hypothesized that whites' exodus to the suburbs occurred when the number of non-white families moving into certain neighborhoods hit a critical mass, or what he called a "Tipping Point."

Does that term sound familiar? That's because Malcolm Gladwell wrote a highly successful book based on the premise.

However, it was Morton Grodzins who actually did the research, published the findings, and coined the phrase "Tipping Point" 40 years before Malcolm Gladwell's book. Malcolm Gladwell's career exploded with that book. He made millions of dollars, wrote four more books, and now commands $150,000 for a one-hour speech—all on the back of a 40-year-old, unoriginal idea. Meanwhile, poor Grodzins toiled and died in academic obscurity.

What made the difference between the two? Why do we know Gladwell and not Grodzins?

Because Gladwell told a better story. He took a compelling core idea and developed it into a broader narrative that was more engaging, more consumable, and more relevant to the buying public. Despite Grodzins' having had the first-mover advantage and a 40-year head start, no one knows him as the father of the Tipping Point (until now, probably).

Here's the lesson for salespeople: *The best story wins*.

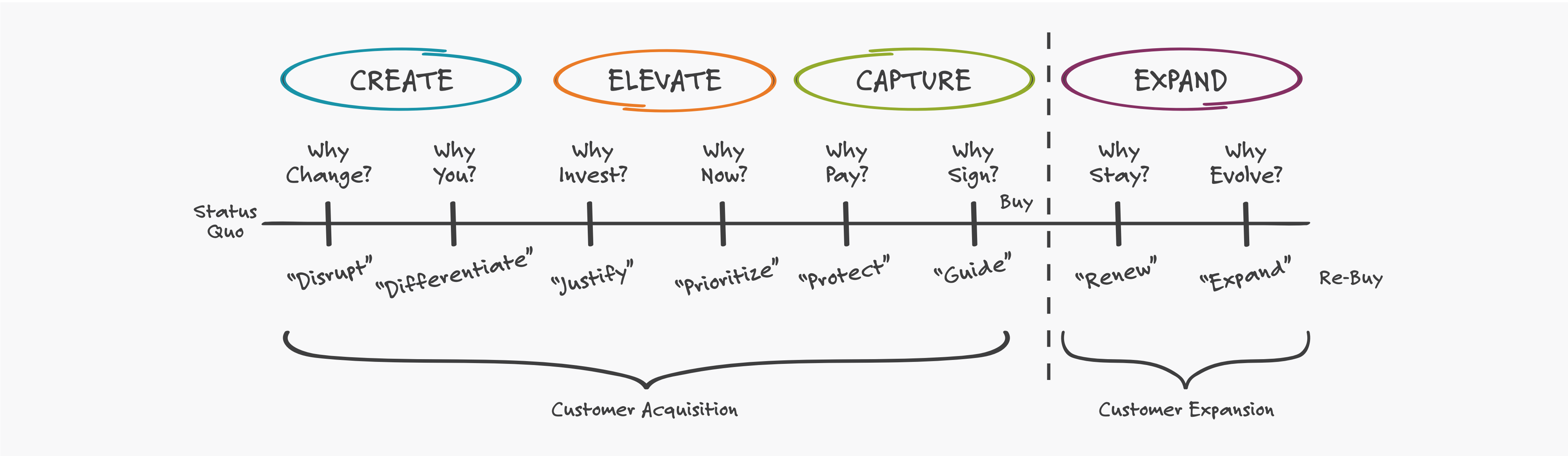
Just having the best product or service doesn't guarantee you'll successfully win new business or retain and grow your business with existing customers. You constantly need to appeal to both new prospects and existing customers. The better story, told best, will win.

And that's what you'll read about in this e-book: How to develop the critical customer messaging skills across the entire customer lifecycle to ensure your stories perform more like Gladwell and less like Grodzins.

The Customer Deciding Journey

This e-book is divided into four sections, corresponding to the four moments in every buying cycle where salespeople must tell a better story to win.

We call this the Customer Deciding Journey.



In the Deciding Journey, your buyers are weighing a series of key questions they need to answer to meet specific business goals. The unique pressures of each of these buying moments call for specific stories and situational skills—tailored to meet the demands of the decision at hand.

1. **Create Value™** – Answer **Why Change** and **Why You** by telling a compelling enough story to defeat the status quo and differentiate your solution from the competition to create more qualified pipeline.

2. **Elevate Value™** – Answer **Why Invest** and **Why Now** by putting together a meaningful business case that helps executive decision-makers justify releasing budget based on your proposal.

3. **Capture Value™** – Answer **Why Pay** and **Why Sign** to expand the size of your deals, avoid unnecessary discounting, protect your pricing, and maximize your profits.

4. **Expand Value™** – Answer **Why Stay, Why Pay More, Why Evolve**, and **Why Forgive** to defend your incumbent advantage with existing customers and keep and grow their business.

Effective selling isn't about following some predictable pathway that prospects and customers all take. You need to master appropriate messaging, content, and skills to respond to the distinct buyer psychology that defines each decision in your Customer's Deciding Journey.

Winning All Four Value Conversations

Mastering all four Value Conversations requires a diverse set of skills, sharpened with the situational awareness to know when and how to adapt from one moment to the next.

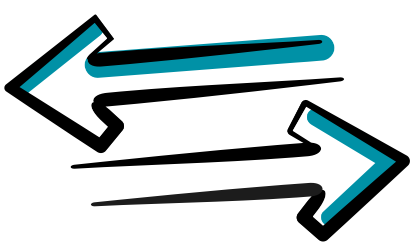
Such mastery of your craft is similar to the way an elite athlete must develop both their physical technique and their mental resilience to manage a variety of challenging situations, against many different types of opponents. Or the way a star performer uses specific skills, depending on the role and how they need to appeal to their audience.

To be considered a master in tennis, for example, a player must win the French Open, American Open, Australian Open, and Wimbledon Championship in a single year. A golfer must win the Masters Tournament, the U.S. Open, the British Open, and the PGA Championship in the same year.

The most elite performers in American entertainment are recognized for their achievements in television, recording, film, and theater by winning an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony (known as the EGOT). This is no small feat. In fact, only 15 people have ever been awarded all four of these prestigious awards.

The same idea applies in sales. Only when you achieve mastery across all four Value Conversations will you become an elite performer. To do that, you need to tailor your messaging approach to match your buyer's psychology and their motivations within each situation.

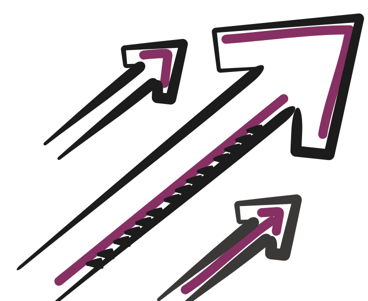
In the pages to come, you'll get an in-depth look at each of the four Value Conversations—Create Value™, Elevate Value™, Capture Value™, and Expand Value™. You'll discover research-backed messaging techniques that have been tested and proven to work in these sales opportunities. And you'll learn about the skills and competencies you need to master to reach an elite level of performance in each one.



Create Value™

Elevate Value™

Capture Value™



Expand w™

Create Value™ Skills

Defeat the Status Quo and Differentiate

Differentiation is one of the most daunting challenges salespeople face. Unfortunately, many of the traditional "best practices" that supposedly distinguish you from your competitors are actually having the opposite effect—you end up sounding exactly like everyone else. And when you sound like everyone else, your buyers become more indecisive and less likely to do something different from what they're doing today. In other words, the dreaded do nothing, No Decision loss.

But here's the thing: Decades of research into the science of decision-making have shed light on the hidden forces that shape how humans actually frame value and make decisions. Mastering these forces is essential to overcoming the biggest threat to your success in this moment—something behavioral experts call Status Quo Bias.

The sour truth is that the majority of buyers prefer to do nothing instead of change. Staying the same is safe and comfortable, while change is associated with threat and risk. To break through buyer inertia and get prospects to leave their current situation, you need to tell a story that makes a compelling case for why they should change, and why they should change now.

That Why Change story is the first critical step to creating the urgency to change and choose you.

READ ON

to learn how to tell the two essential differentiation stories: one for why your buyer should change (Why Change), another for why they should choose you (Why You).

Status Quo Bias, AKA Your Biggest Enemy

When acquiring new customers, your biggest enemy isn't who you think it is. It's not the other competitors in your market. Your biggest enemy is your prospect's Status Quo Bias—their inherent aversion to doing something different than what they're doing today.

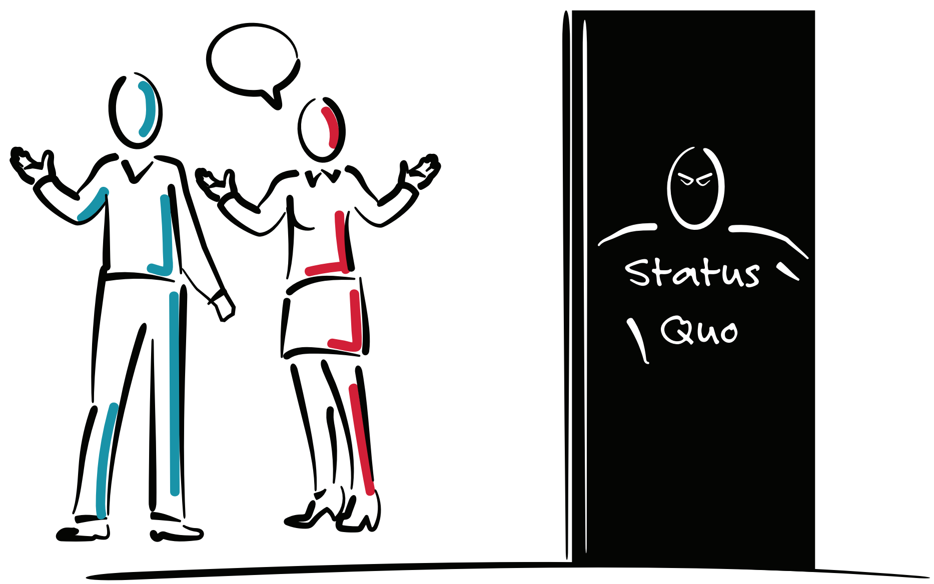
Know why your prospect's status quo is always there, lurking, ready to put the kibosh on your deals no matter how compelling your presentations? It's because the status quo hasn't killed your buyer yet. Dissatisfied as they might be about their current state of affairs, your prospects have adapted to the best of their abilities and forged ahead in the face of gaps and deficiencies.

Inertia is powerful. To overcome it, you need to tell a powerful, disruptive story that inverts your prospect's perceptions about staying the course vs. changing. You need to show them how their status quo situation is actually unsafe and unsustainable, and that by not changing, they're putting themselves at greater risk of not achieving their objectives.

Remember, this is about why your buyer needs to change. It's not about your solution's features and benefits. It's not time to talk about your product or service yet, because that's not enough to move them off their status quo. At this juncture, your conversation should center on creating the urgency to change by establishing that your prospect's status quo situation is actively preventing them from reaching their most important business goals.

READ ON

to learn how to create a buying vision by identifying problems your buyers didn't even know they had.

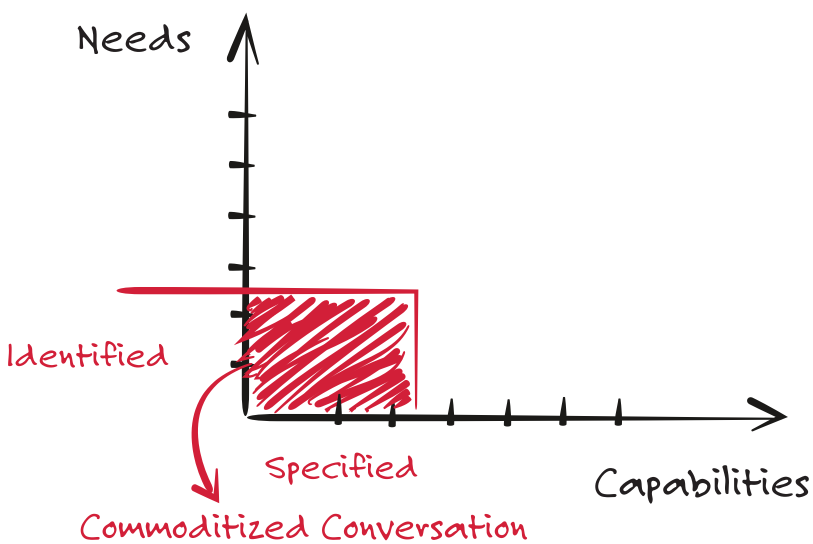


It’s What They Don’t See Coming

Unconsidered Needs and the Why Change Story

To disrupt your prospect’s natural preference for the status quo, you need to venture beyond the known problems and introduce prospects to their “Unconsidered Needs.” These are the challenges, shortcomings, or missed opportunities your prospect doesn’t yet know about, but are holding them back from their most important business goals.

Under a typical positioning approach, salespeople ignore these needs and map only known or stated needs to specific capabilities. This approach places you firmly in the “Commodity Box,” illustrated in the visual on this page. Because prospects hear the same things from you and your competitors, they see no contrast between their choices. They also tend to stick with the status quo because there’s no urgency to change when you live inside the Commodity Box. After all, the painful problems in the Commodity Box haven’t killed them yet, and your prospects are reluctant to make a change because change feels too risky.



Think about it this way: If your prospects already know what their problems are, they can likely already find the information they need to mitigate or resolve them—with limited assistance from you. As a result, your ability to get prospects to do something different and choose you depends less on your problem-solving skills than on your problem-*finding* skills—a point behavioral expert Daniel Pink makes in his book *To Sell is Human*.

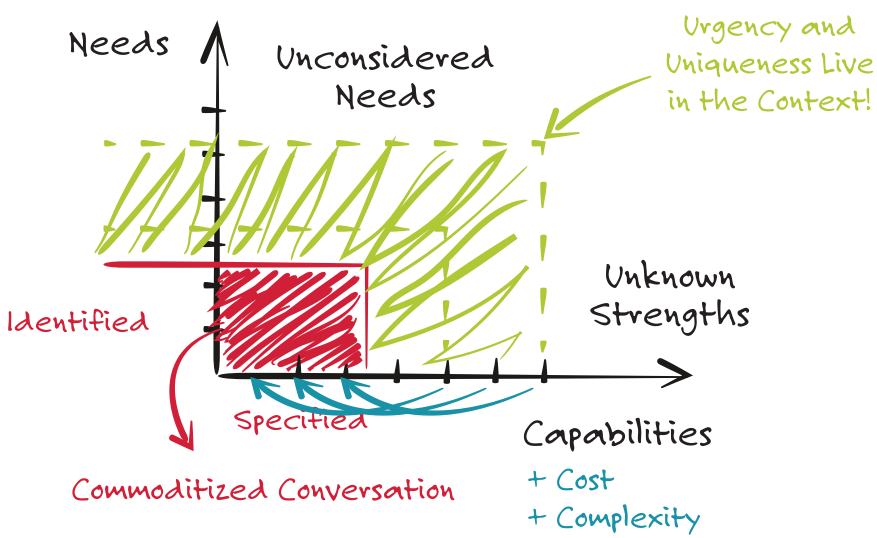
READ ON

to learn how to add value by shifting into problem-finding mode in you customer conversations.

Escaping the Commodity Box

To free your conversations from the Commodity Box, you need to help your prospects see their situations in fresh and revealing ways. You need to help them realize the inconsistencies or uncertainties in the way they're doing things today.

To accomplish this, you first identify the Unconsidered Needs that exist beyond their obvious stated needs. This means digging hard to find needs that are off your prospect's radar, whether it's unconsidered, unmet, or underappreciated needs within their business. As a next step, you align your solution's unique strengths with the Unconsidered Needs you introduced to create opportunities.



This intersection between your prospect's Unconsidered Needs and your solution's unique strengths—illustrated in the image above—is where you can establish that you are singularly qualified to drive a better, more valuable change scenario.

This is the heart of a compelling Why Change story—and it sets the stage for the differentiated Why You story you'll need to reinforce your uniqueness.

Your products and services "are far more valuable [when your prospects are] mistaken, confused, or completely clueless about [their] true problem."

— Daniel Pink Author of *To Sell is Human*

READ ON

to see research that shows the messaging impact of the Unconsidered Needs approach.

Unconsidered Needs vs. Voice of the Customer

Testing the Most Effective Why Change Framework

In a recent experiment conducted with **Dr. Zakary Tormala**, an expert in messaging and social influence, we tested the potential effects of Unconsidered Needs-based pitches in sales presentations against more traditional pitches.

The primary aim of the research was to assess the persuasive impact of Unconsidered Needs in a selling scenario. The study also aimed to determine whether the timing of the reference to an Unconsidered Need had an influence on its impact. You can read the entire study **here**.

Here's a summary: For the study, conducted online, we asked 400 individuals to imagine they ran a large company and were considering partnering with a financial lending firm to protect their company and explore potential growth opportunities in the face of a recession. All participants were instructed to imagine they were seeking a $10 million line of credit and were informed that they would view a pitch from a particular lender who would like to partner with them.

The core offer of the pitches was identical for all participants. What they didn't know is that they'd been randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions that varied important aspects of the message. The four pitch conditions included a **standard solution** pitch, a **value-added** pitch, an **Unconsidered Needs-last** pitch, and an **Unconsidered Needs-first** pitch.

The Unconsidered Need in the latter two pitches came in the following insight-based statement: *Did you know 42 percent of companies who take a cash infusion during challenging economic times end up failing due to underlying problems in their process, operations, sales, or marketing? We have on-staff experts who can work with companies to make sure the cash infusion makes a maximum positive impact.*

The four experimental research conditions:

STANDARD SOLUTION

1. $10 million line of credit at a competitive rate
2. Serving the community for over 75 years
3. Understand the needs of small business

VALUE ADDED SOLUTION

1. $10 million line of credit at a competitive rate
2. Serving the community for over 75 years
3. Experience with your type of business
4. On-staff experts
5. Tailored services

UNCONSIDERED NEEDS LAST

1. $10 million line of credit at a competitive rate
2. Serving the community for over 75 years
3. 42% fail due to underlying problems
4. Ensure no hidden problem areas for max results
5. On-staff experts

UNCONSIDERED NEEDS FIRST

1. 42% fail due to underlying problems
2. On-staff experts to review your operations
3. Ensure no hidden problem areas for max results
4. $10 million line of credit at a competitive rate
5. Serving the community for over 75 years

The Results

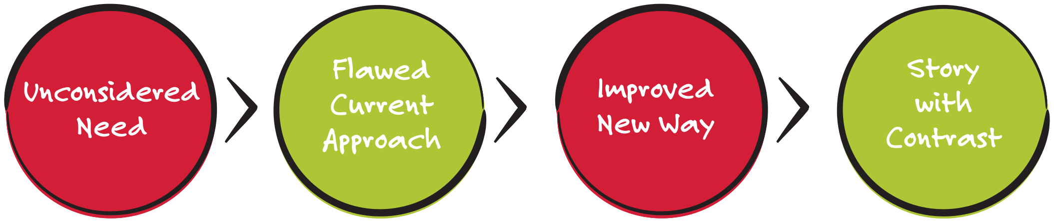
While all participants received the same core offer, the Unconsidered Needs-first presentation outperformed the others in presentation quality and uniqueness, as well as attitude and choice measures.

The Unconsidered Needs-first pitch created a statistically significant improvement in presentation quality by more than **11 percent** relative to the other pitches, which did not differ from each other.

The study also revealed that the Unconsidered Needs-based presentations outperformed the others by a landslide in the area of perceived uniqueness. It was perceived by participants as **41 percent** more unexpected and unique than the standard and value-added conditions.

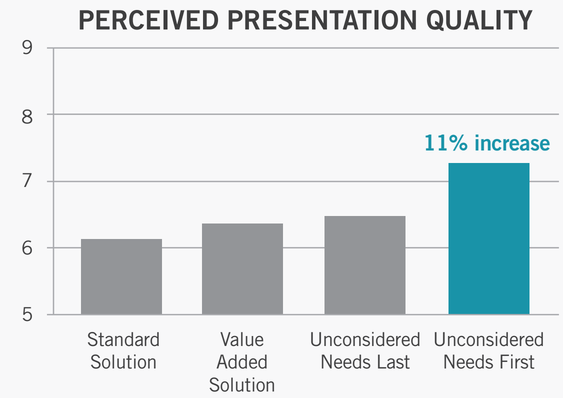
And, on the questions pertaining to attitude and choice measures, which assess the extent to which the message enhanced favorable attitudes toward the lending firm and increased their likelihood of choosing it, the Unconsidered Needs-first message scored more than **10 percent** higher than the other presentations, which did not differ from each other.

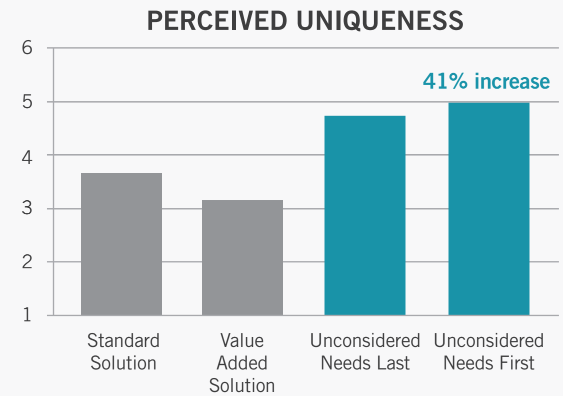
Tested and Proven Why Change Message Framework

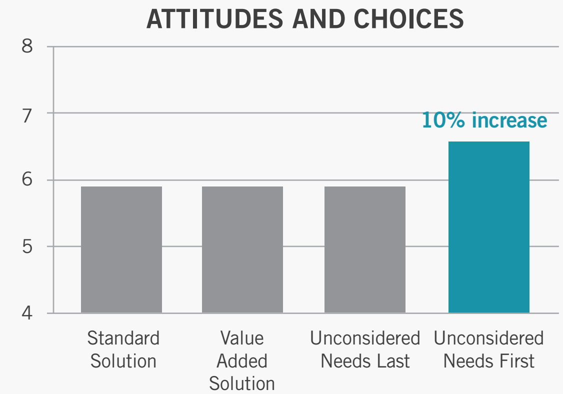


READ ON

Chapter Two covers the next conversation sellers need to master: delivering proposals that create the urgency to compel executive decision makers to change now.







Demonstrate the Urgency for Change

For Conrad Smith, co-author of The Three Value Conversations, one of the most memorable sales calls of his career was one he almost didn't take.

While his assistant at the time had scheduled the vendor meeting, Conrad thought someone else on his staff could have handled it. Smith said he was "reluctant because I viewed the discussion as a purchase of a commodity item that didn't offer much value."

Good thing his assistant insisted that he take the meeting, because he soon found out he was wrong.

The salesperson walked into the office, introduced himself, and started a conversation Conrad hasn't forgotten to this day: The salesperson mentioned he'd been working with several people in the organization, and based on those discussions, he'd come up with a plan for freeing up $5 million of working capital.

That got Conrad's ear. The salesperson, he said, "demonstrated in-depth competency and knowledge about business in general and my company in particular. His message was compelling at the beginning, in the middle, and all the way to the end. The confidence that he demonstrated while delivering his message left a memorable impression. He developed a great buying vision, and he was able to speak my language."

Confidence and competence. All too often, that's what's lacking in salespeople when they engage C-suite and financial decision makers. These shortcomings are behind the "fear of heights" that many salespeople suffer from, and they're part of what cause reps to deliver proposals that don't generate sufficient urgency to convince buyers to change.

READ ON

to learn about a social psychology principle that could change the way you engage with the C-suite.

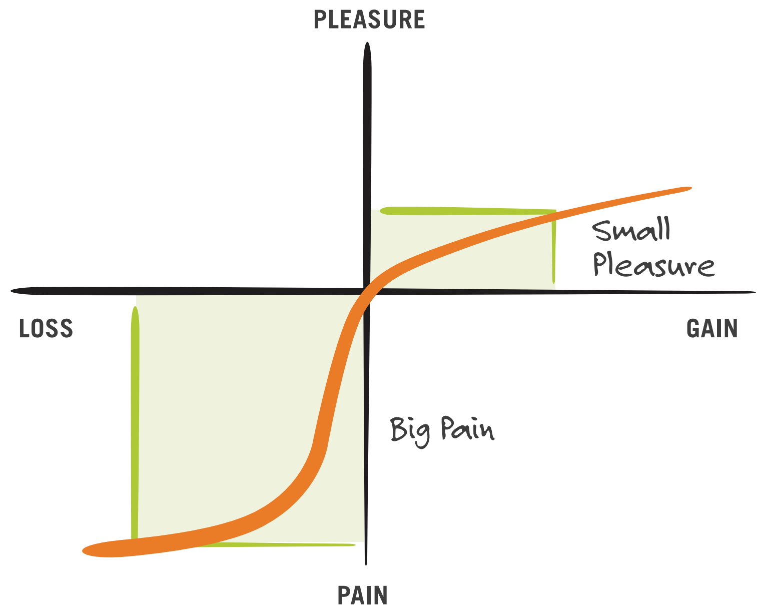
Prospect Theory

Leading with something like "this product can make your business better" rarely works up front as a differentiator (it likely has the opposite effect). What actually works is applying a social psychology term known as Loss Aversion, which as a message looks more like this: "Your business is in trouble, but not because you don't have our product—it's at risk because of the things happening in your environment that put you at risk of not achieving your objectives, whether you have our product supporting you or not."

Loss Aversion is a concept that's been proven and validated repeatedly since the term's introduction in the mid-1980s, when Nobel Prize-winning researchers Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky discovered that people are twice as motivated to change a behavior or make a decision to avoid a loss than they are to achieve a gain.

Later on, Kahneman conducted research that explored what he called "risk seeking." Knowing that most people are risk averse in terms of making changes, he wanted to know when people will actively seek risk instead of avoiding it. The findings of his risk seeking research validate those from the Loss Aversion study: People are far more willing to seek risk to mitigate a loss than to achieve a gain.

Together, these concepts are known as **Prospect Theory**, illustrated in the figure below.



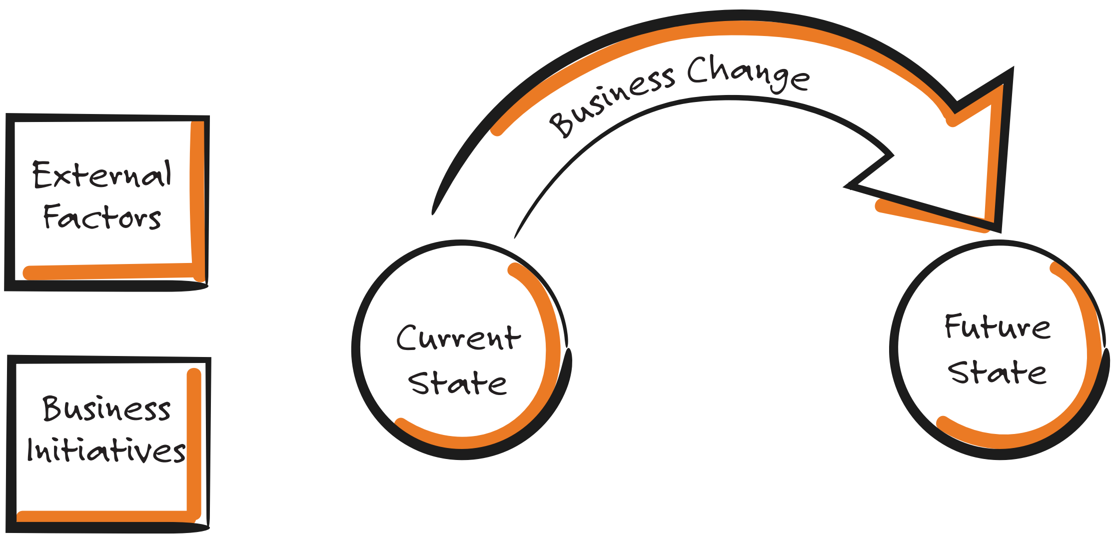
Prospect Theory, developed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, found that people have a far stronger preference for avoiding loss than for attaining gain.

Current State—Future State—Business Change

Prospect Theory is an essential concept for moving your prospects to see—at an executive level—the need to do something different than what they're doing today. A key aspect of doing this effectively comes down to creating contrast between their current state and a business change scenario. After all, to understand why your prospect might buy, you need to first understand what situational factors are driving their current business initiatives.

What external factors are dictating their status quo? What limitations exist? What's blocking their cost savings? What's absent that's leaving them vulnerable or preventing them from achieving the performance outcomes they want?

Answering these types of questions can help you illustrate the contrast between the pain they're feeling in their current situation with the performance improvements and upside they can achieve by switching to something new.



When dealing with executives or financial decision makers, you might think you need to be strictly analytical and numbers-based in your messaging. But that's not actually the case. In fact, the emotional resonance of your message also matters in your executive conversations, particularly as it pertains to the concepts of Prospect Theory—and there's research that proves it. This academic research is covered on the following page.

READ ON

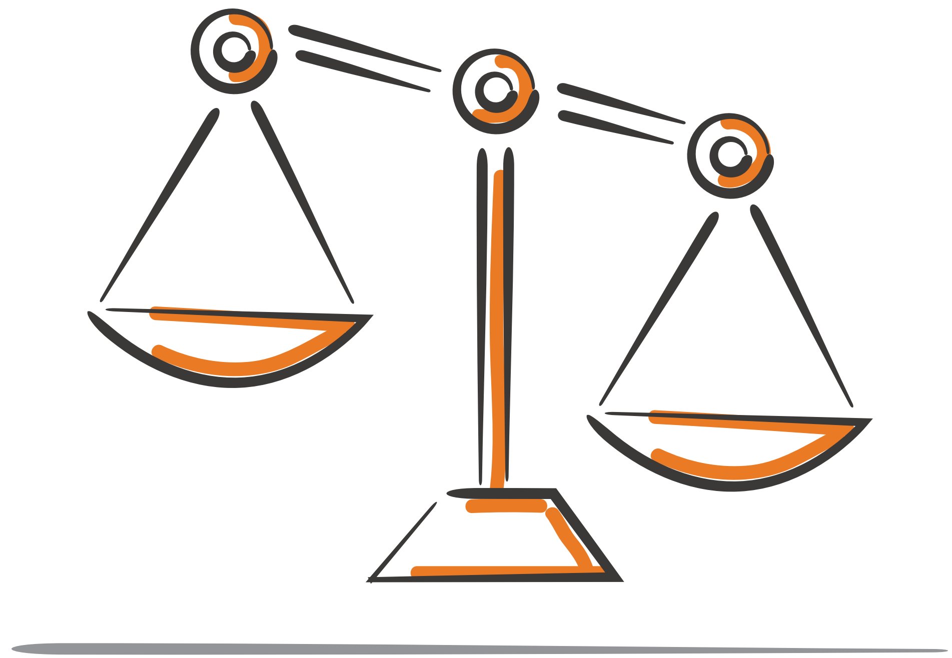
to learn why a longstanding myth about what motivates executive buyers to make decisions is wrong.

Think Executives Are Purely Rational Decision Makers? Think Again

One myth about executives is that they don't want to talk to salespeople. That's not a truism—that's a half-truth at best. In reality, executives want to surround themselves with smart people who can propose bold new ideas, and salespeople can break into that circle of trust.

But possibly an even more damaging myth about executive buyers is the idea that they're strictly rational decision makers, relying solely on math and analytical calculations to inform how they buy. **Research** we conducted shows that's not the case at all. The study, done with Dr. Zakary Tormala, found that executives can be emotionally swayed in buying conversations based on the way a seller frames their message—even when the math is the same.

Our study was designed to test what kind of influence Loss Aversion and risk-seeking—the two concepts that make up Prospect Theory—had within an executive decision-making context. The study included 113 executive participants who came from a wide range of industries (e.g. oil, software, finance, aerospace, etc.) and occupied a diverse set of high-level roles (e.g. VP, CEO, CFO, CMO, etc.). A few different scenarios were tested to assess the effect or lack thereof. You'll see the decision-making test scenario on the next page.



At the outset of the experiment, conducted online, participants were told that researchers were trying to learn more about executive decision-making, and that participants would be presented with several different hypothetical situations. What they didn't know was that they'd be randomly assigned to one of two conditions—a "gain frame" condition or a "loss frame" condition—which they were placed in before the first scenario and remained in throughout the experiment. In each test, participants were asked a question that varied depending on their condition assignment.

READ ON

to learn about the test conditions and the key findings from the study.

Testing the Business Decision-Making Scenario

For the business scenario, all participants received the following instructions:

The following question asks you to choose between two courses of action when facing an economic downturn. Please read the question and choose one course of action: *A large car manufacturer has recently been hit with a number of economic difficulties, and it appears as if three plants need to be closed and 6,000 employees laid off. The vice president of production has been exploring alternative ways to avoid this crisis. She has developed two plans.*

Following this overview, participants received information about the two options, which were mathematically identical across the gain and loss frame conditions. The only difference was in word choice and phrasing.

In the **gain frame condition**, the options were described in terms of how many plants and jobs would be saved:

Plan A:

This plan will save one of the three plants and 2,000 jobs.

Plan B:

This plan has one-third probability of saving all three plants and all 6,000 jobs, but has two-thirds probability of saving no plants and no jobs.

Meanwhile, in the **loss frame condition**, the options were described in terms of how many plants and jobs would be lost:

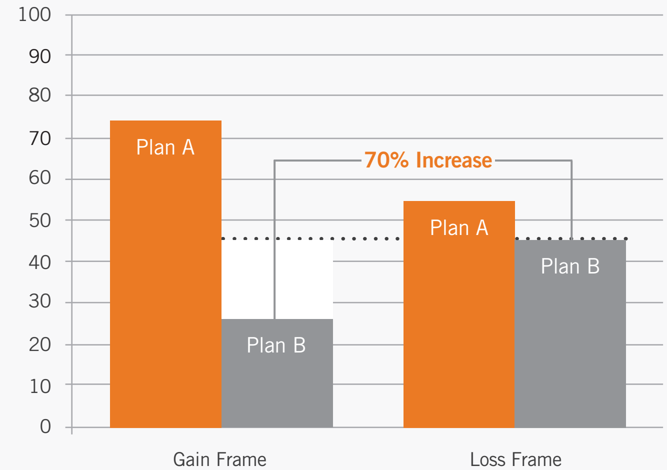
Plan A:

This plan will result in the loss of two of the three plants and 4,000 jobs.

Plan B:

This plan has two-thirds probability of resulting in the loss of all three plants and all 6,000 jobs, but has one-third probability of losing no plants and no jobs.

PERCENTAGE CHOOSING PLAN A AND PLAN B IN BUSINESS TEST SCENARIO



Remember, in both scenarios the choices were mathematically equivalent. Despite this, there was a statistically significant difference in participants' choices across the two conditions.

In the gain frame condition, **74 percent** of participants chose Plan A and **26 percent** chose Plan B. In the loss frame condition, **55 percent** chose Plan A, while **45 percent** chose Plan B.

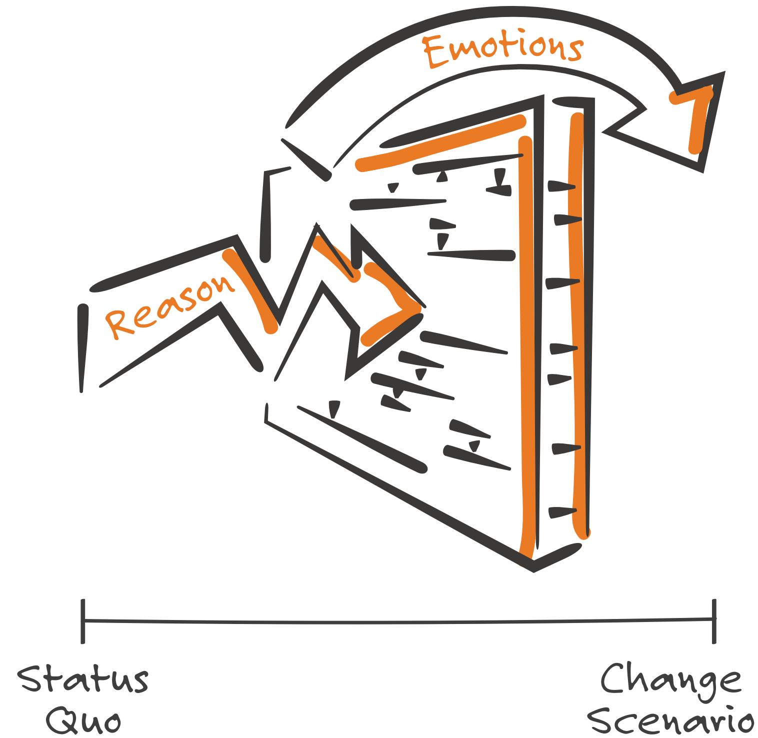
What These Results Mean for Your Executive Conversations

The jump from **26 percent** to **45 percent** is significant because it shows a **70+ percent** increase in the number of executives willing to take the risky bet when it was framed in terms of a loss versus a gain.

This is a classic example of Prospect Theory in action, and powerful proof that executives can be emotionally swayed by how you position your solutions. In sales and marketing terms, asking a prospect to make a change and do something different than what they're doing today is commonly perceived as the "risky" choice—especially when it's compared to the incumbent solution or status quo.

The findings in the study show that you stand to significantly improve your chances of persuading buyers to take a risk by positioning the alternative as a loss.

The big takeaway from this study is that executive buyers aren't the strictly rational actors many salespeople assume them to be. Emotions and intuition hold a whole lot of sway in the decision-making process. Your success at convincing executive and financial buyers to do something different could hinge on your ability to show them not what they stand to gain by switching to you, but what they stand to lose if they don't.



Decide or Defer? Getting Executive Decision-Makers to Act Now

Having validated the influence of emotional factors in executive decision-making, we wanted to get a better understanding of what type of message is best at helping salespeople create business proposals that justify executive decisions.

In our follow-up study, which addresses the Why Now moment, we wanted to know what it takes to create urgency—and show business impact—with executive-level buyers who might not care how your products and services work, but want to know how you can help them drive business value.

For the research simulation, which included 312 executive participants, we teamed up with **Dr. Nick Lee**, a professor of marketing at the Warwick Business School, to test a range of approaches—six in total—to the Why Now moment. Specifically, the study aimed to assess messaging effectiveness across several areas critical to this stage—areas including confidence in the business proposal, how urgent it was, how essential to future growth, and to what extent it made executives in the study more or less likely to purchase right now.

The experiment tested six different message conditions containing various combinations of the following elements:

Business Issue – External factors and business initiatives

Loss – Details about a loss to be avoided

Gain – Details about a potential positive gain

Unconsidered Needs – Introduces an unsuspected threat

Heavy ROI – Hard numbers with a detailed ROI breakdown

Change Story – Business change story with a light ROI component

Here's how we structured the six test conditions:

CONDITION #1 –
Business Issue + Loss + Heavy ROI

CONDITION #2 –
Business Issue + Gain + Heavy ROI

CONDITION #3 –
Business Issue + Unconsidered Needs + Heavy ROI

CONDITION #4 –
Business Issue + Loss + Change Story

CONDITION #5 –
Business Issue + Gain + Change Story

CONDITION #6 –
Business Issue + Unconsidered Needs + Change Story

READ ON

to get the results of the simulation.

Delivering the Most Effective Why Now Message

The only condition to finish first across each assessed area was Condition #3, which had the following structure:

1. Present a business issue – Rooted in external trends and factors the executive will identify with and connect back to their strategic initiatives;

2. Introduce "Unconsidered Needs" – That is, unforeseen problems, challenges or missed opportunities your prospect has underappreciated or doesn't yet know about that create flaws or limitations in his or her current approach;

3. Provide a solution story – Demonstrating specifically how you can resolve the Unconsidered Needs you identified and enable them to realize their goals;

4. Quantify business impact – By sharing a preliminary calculation of how your solution can positively influence revenues, cost savings, and operating margin.

READ ON

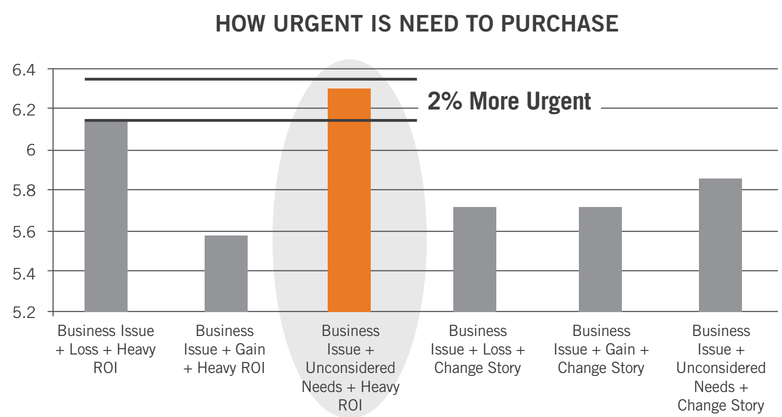
to see the full results of the study.

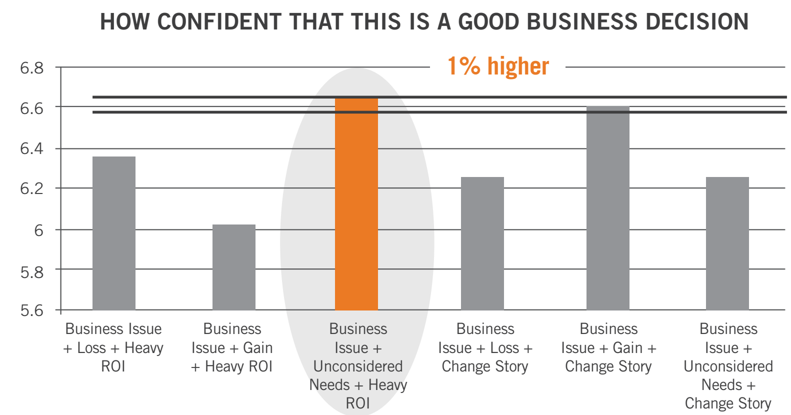
Dr. Nick Lee,
Professor of Marketing,
Warwick Business School

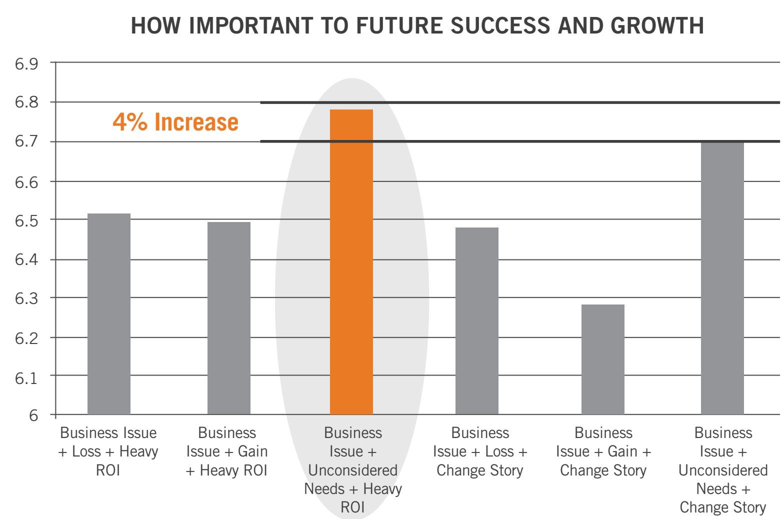
"The consistent pattern of a large number of small effects means that, taken together, there is a clear and compelling argument that the business issue—unconsidered needs—heavy ROI message is more likely to be effective than the others. A message that follows this framework, which outperformed all other conditions in the study in the most critical areas of assessment, is the way to go if you're trying to create the urgency to buy now and demonstrate business impact in your proposals."

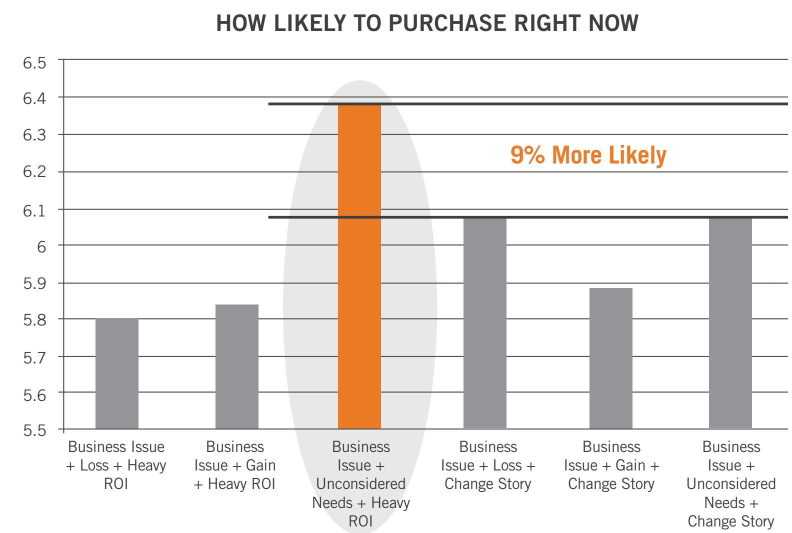
Why Now Research Results

Here's how the six different test conditions fared across the most important areas assessed in the study.









The Winning Why Now Framework

For the **study's** purposes, we asked the 312 executive participants—all employed at companies with $100 million or more in revenues, and all with budget and decision-making responsibilities—to imagine they were executives at a food processing company that cleans, sorts and packages vegetables. This company has traditionally served large vegetable products using large-scale equipment that can process several tons of vegetables per hour, but they're now trying to make a foray into specialty food production, the most promising growth market.

They were to meet with vendors who make smaller-scale, more flexible equipment designed to help them enter this market. Below is an example of the "why now" message that performed best across the areas measured in the simulation:

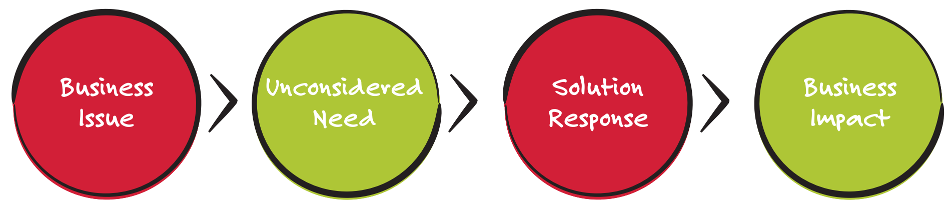
Business Issue – *Growing consumer demand for organic foods, especially in the "ready-to-eat" category, presents a great opportunity for processors like you o expand.*

Unconsidered Needs – *However, this market has unique requirements and cost pressures that you need to consider if you want to enter and compete effectively. First, your large processing machinery is not compatible with the unique needs of the organic producer, who requires frequent changes to accommodate a greater variety of vegetables to be processed, and smaller batch sizes. Second, your current labor and material costs are too high to be price competitive in this market.*

Solution Response plus Business Impact – *Investing in our smaller-scale, flexible equipment should position you to get at least a one percent share of the growing small-producer market, generating $10 million in new revenue. Improvements in automation technology should also provide you with a two percent savings in labor and material costs. This one percent increase in sales and two percent cost savings should improve your operating margin by 29 percent.*

With all these factors considered, we estimate this will generate an ROI of 78 percent in your first year of investing in our new smaller-scale processing equipment that will enable you to enter the organic produce market. This means you'll be making money on this equipment by year two. These results are typical of the results documented by dozens of other processing companies using our equipment.

Tested and Proven Why Now Message Framework



Align key industry trends and external factors with identified strategic initiative

Show the unexpected flaws or limitations with their current approach that will keep them from achieving their goal

Present how you can **resolve the Unconsidered Needs** and enable them to realize their goal

Share a preliminary calculation of quantified ROI your solution will provide

Capture Value™ Skills

Maximize Deal Profitability

Most companies rely on traditional sales negotiation training to maximize profitability. They teach salespeople to "power up" or seize the upper hand in a negotiation.

Unfortunately, this approach isn't as effective as it used to be.

According to our research, **72 percent** of B2B salespeople report that buyers have grown more powerful over the last several years. Your buyers now wield all the power in sales negotiations. They approach sales conversations armed with the confidence to demand discounts—and walk away when they don't get them.

This section explores how to respond to the critical, tension-filled moments that can make or break your ability to close deals profitably. Specifically, you'll learn what to do when prospects and customers start making demands of you—demands for your time, your resources, and of course, for discounts. You'll learn how to embrace the natural tension of your customer conversations to help you exchange value rather than give it away.

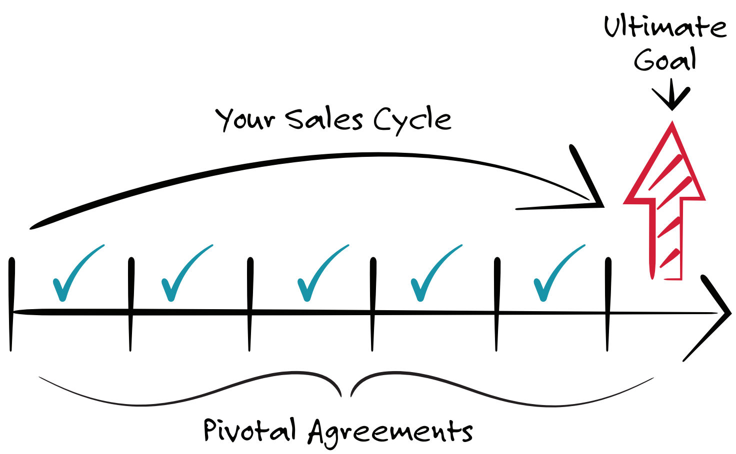
Pivotal Agreements

As deals get increasingly complex, late-stage negotiating tactics become increasingly irrelevant. Now more than ever, your ability to create profitable outcomes depends on how deftly you navigate critical moments of the sales process—moments that have the potential to change the nature of your opportunity and recast the buyer's perception of your influence.

To help you do all this from a low-power position, consider the concept of Pivotal Agreements.

Here, the basic idea is to proactively decide what you need from the customer during the buying cycle to get the most positive final outcome. In other words, capturing maximum value is the result of executing a series of Pivotal Agreements throughout the buying process—not one grand compromise at the end.

Pivotal Agreements are value-based exchanges that you can use to advance your deals while protecting your value.



Value leaks are caused by unnecessary discounting that happens throughout your deals, eroding your margins in the process. Another instance of value leaks are the freebies salespeople give away for the intended purpose of moving deals forward. Pivotal Agreements represent a rejection of that approach. Instead of resorting to costly freebies and giveaways, Pivotal Agreements are milestones that function as value-based exchanges, which you can use to advance your deals without leaking value.

Below is an example of a Pivotal Agreement:

A leading software company was experiencing poor close rates and slow sales cycles and wanted to know why. Consultants analyzed the company's sales process and discovered a range of Pivotal Agreements executed by top performers in their best accounts. One of them involved getting customers to agree early in the sales process to use the selling company's contract paper instead of a contract drafted by the buyer's legal department.

Without this agreement, the sales process would be stalled by the buyer's legal department. This sometimes led to loss of business to competitors, as well as less beneficial terms in the final contracts of closed deals.

Purposeful planning for execution of this early-stage Pivotal Agreement proved essential to increasing the close rate and the speed of the sales process.

READ ON

for an in-depth look at five types of Pivotal Agreements you can take advantage of in the sales cycle.

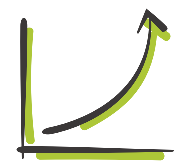
Five Types of Pivotal Agreements

1. Access to Power – Sometimes the meetings you have with senior executives are either pro forma or part of a group meeting, with little specific or definable engagement between you and the executive. An example of an access to power Pivotal Agreement would include an early-stage 30-minute meeting with just the CXO to understand and confirm their objectives for the project.

2. Access to Information – Customers are leery about sharing information that might give you additional leverage in the conversation. This kind of Pivotal Agreement would be one where you get access to information your customer isn't naturally inclined to share. Say you're selling a product that can improve your customer's margins. This agreement could mean getting access to the customer's margin trends for the last three years so you can conduct ROI calculations.

3. Proof Opportunity – Ever had a situation where your prospect agreed to do a pilot, but then doesn't commit to doing or measuring it properly, thus losing any momentum you might have had for your deal? A strong proof opportunity would be an agreement in which your prospect commits to implementing a pilot according to your best practices. This includes a defined scope for participation, trackable results, and a commitment that providing the pilot proof is accepted as a commitment to move ahead with a broader rollout against an already-agreed-upon timeline.

4. Deal Structure – You might hear customers tell you they want better pricing or terms or service because they are "special." (Maybe they claim they're a marquee brand that can do a lot of volume with you). As a result, they might request special things without actually putting anything on the line themselves, giving you high hopes for a lucrative deal without committing to anything. Here, you need to have a contractual agreement stipulating that pricing is contingent upon the customer hitting specific volumes, and that failing to do so will result in clearly defined consequences.



5. Expansion Opportunity – Most B2B companies employ a "land and expand" strategy, believing that once you get a foot in the door, you can broaden the scope of the relationship over time. One way to negotiate expansion opportunities is to conduct quarterly business reviews with customers. The problem is that customers don't always take these reviews seriously, and will sometimes delegate them to lower-level practitioners. Instead of becoming a strategic touch-point as intended, it devolves into a forum for complaints that does little to advance the relationship. To combat this, structure these reviews with definitive commitments that stay focused on agreed-upon, executive-level metrics, giving you firmer footing for strategic conversations and expansion opportunities.

Expand Value™ Skills

Keep and Grow Existing Customers

Acquiring new customers for your business is and always will be important. But analysts estimate that 70-80 percent of annual business revenue actually comes from renewals and upsells with existing customers. So why not put some purposeful effort toward the rest of the customer lifecycle?

Most companies focus the majority of their sales budgets and resources on acquiring new customers, leaving customer expansion as merely an afterthought.

The problem is, while sales and marketing leaders generally grasp the importance of customer expansion, the majority (**58 percent** according to our **survey data**) don't see any need to tailor their messaging for conversations with existing customers. They simply use the same, one-size-fits-all approach, regardless of customer relationship.

But new research shows that you do, in fact, need to take a completely different approach to your sales conversations with existing customers.

In this chapter, you'll see how to handle four crucial moments that arise after your prospects become customers. You'll learn how to tell compelling stories to win renewal conversations (Why Stay), persuade your customers to accept a price increase (Why Pay More), upsell and expand business with them (Why Evolve), and even improve customer loyalty after a service failure (Why Forgive).

READ ON

to learn why Status Quo Bias, which you work so hard to overcome in customer acquisition conversations, can be your competitive advantage during an expansion conversation.

When Status Quo Bias is Your Best Friend

The buyer psychology when you're the outsider, trying to displace an incumbent, is very different than when you're the insider, trying to protect your incumbent status. It's all because of a powerful psychological principal known as Status Quo Bias.

In his study ***The Psychology of Doing Nothing***, research psychologist Christopher Anderson details four causes of Status Quo Bias.

1. Preference Stability – If your customer's preferences are static, they're more likely to stick with what they're doing today. Conversely, if you destabilize their preferences, you increase their openness to change.

2. Anticipated Regret/Blame – Humans chafe at the possibility of regret. Asking a prospect to change elicits all sorts of negative anticipatory emotions such as fear, dread, and anxiety. While the consequences of actual regret will play out in the future, the emotional experience of regret takes place in the present.

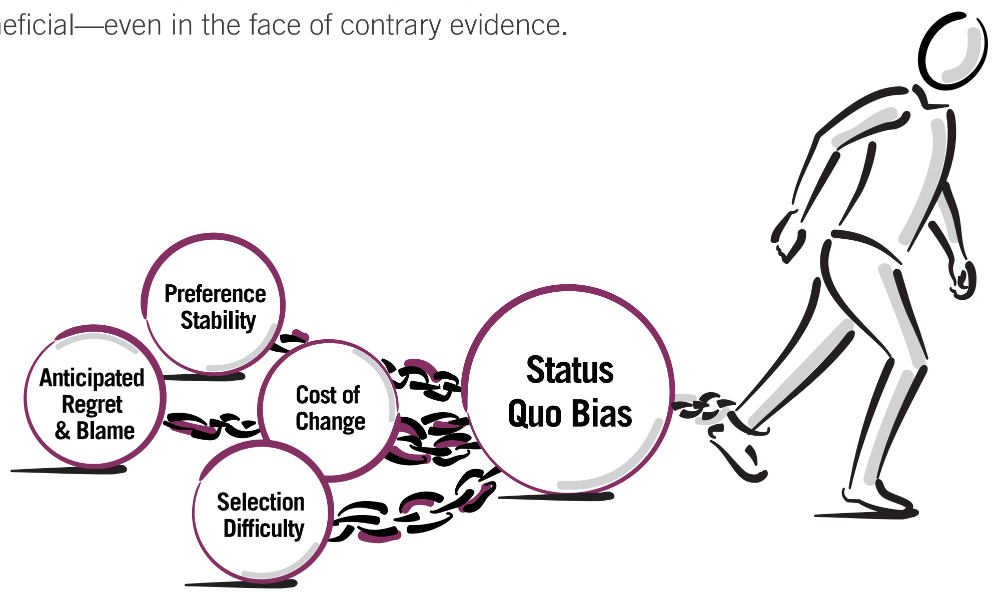
3. Cost of Action/Change – People believe the status quo is free. Change seems risky or costly, while sticking with the status quo registers as either neutral or even beneficial—even in the face of contrary evidence.

4. Selection Difficulty – When prospects and customers are overwhelmed by too many options, they suffer from "choice overload." And if they don't see a clear contrast between all their options, they won't understand the value in switching because every option looks the same.

These four antecedents can be your worst enemy or your best friend, depending on the situation.

When you're engaging new prospects, it makes sense to use a provocative, challenging approach that introduces Unconsidered Needs, disrupts their status quo, and persuades them to choose you. As the outsider, you want to frame their current situation as risky and unsafe and introduce your solution as a better, safer alternative.

But when you're the insider, defending your incumbent position with existing customers, you often need to reinforce your value and highlight the reasons why you're still the safest choice. Because you are your customer's status quo, you can use their natural Status Quo Bias to your advantage during renewal and upsell conversations.



Why Stay:

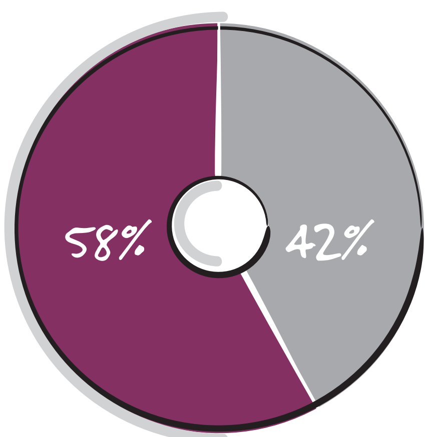
Testing the Best Renewal Message

For many industries, especially those that rely on subscription-type contracts, the up-front cost means the real profitability ramps up only when you score that first renewal. That's why the Why Stay message has huge implications for your growth goals.

Unfortunately, nearly **60 percent** of marketing and sales leaders think the provocative messaging and content suited to new customer acquisition is still applicable in a renewal context. But the research doesn't bear that out.

Provocative, challenging messages can work wonders in your customer acquisition conversations. But when you're talking to existing customers, using that same challenging approach in a renewal conversation will actually set you back—and there's research to prove it.

DO YOU THINK YOUR MESSAGING AND CONTENT FOR DEMAND GENERATION / CUSTOMER ACQUISITION STRATEGIES SHOULD DIFFER FROM YOUR MESSAGING FOR RETENTION / RENEWAL BUSINESS?



42% Yes
These messages should differ significantly

58% No
A provocative demand generation message should still be applicable in a renewal scenario

We partnered with Dr. Zakary Tormala, a social psychologist and an expert in social influence, to discover the most effective sales approach for renewal conversations. In the **research study**, the following three renewal pitches were tested with over 400 participants:

1. Status Quo Reinforcement – This message led with an encouraging description of how the plan was working to date and how the company was making progress toward its goals. Then it moved to a message intended to reinforce the status quo, emphasizing how much effort went into selecting the current provider and highlighting the risks and costs associated with changing to a new one.

2. Provocative Pitch – This message also documented results to date, but then switched gears, introducing a new idea that challenged their current approach. The new approach would require some changes, which the provider would help implement.

3. Provocative Pitch with Upsell – This message was the same as the provocative pitch, except it also proposed additional capabilities that would help the customer reach their goals.

After receiving the respective message from the provider, participants answered a series of questions assessing their reactions to the message and its persuasive impact. The questions were designed to assess the impact of the message across the areas of **switching intentions, willingness to pay, trust,** and **message quality.**

READ ON to find out which renewal message performed best.

The Winning Why Stay Framework

Our test simulation in a B2B renewal scenario found one message that stood above the rest. The message that reinforced Status Quo Bias outperformed the provocative and upsell messages by statistically significant margins across all the measures assessed in the experiment.

Tested and Proven Why Stay Message Framework

Highlight points of progress in your partnership

Validate the success of their original decision to choose you

Underscore the risks they might incur by changing course now

Mention the potential costs of bringing in another vendor

Show how you've kept their solution up to date with any advances in the market

You can use the winning Why Stay framework to reinforce the four elements of Status Quo Bias, reiterate your value, and tactfully convince your customer that you remain the best choice for their business.

Document Results – The first step is to document your customer's positive results and progress to their original goals.

Review Prior Decision Process – Next, you reinforce their Preference Stability by reviewing how much effort went in to vetting the competition, getting consensus among internal stakeholders, and ultimately choosing you.

Mention Risk of Change – At this point, you remind them of the investment they've made toward their goals up to this point and mention the risk of losing that momentum in the event of a change. This step surfaces the Anticipated Regret/Blame of switching providers.

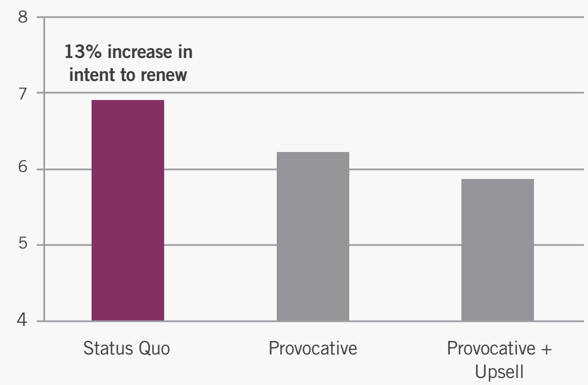
Highlight Cost of Change – Now you highlight the Cost of Change. Switching to another vendor will require a lot of time and resources for implementation—costs that can be avoided altogether if they stay with your solution.

Detail Competitive Advances – Finally, demonstrate how you're keeping pace with the market. This isn't the time to trumpet why you're better or to introduce differentiation, however. You simply want to address their Selection Difficulty. When all their options sounds the same, why would they go through all the cost and hassle to switch to something else that offers exactly what they're already getting from you?

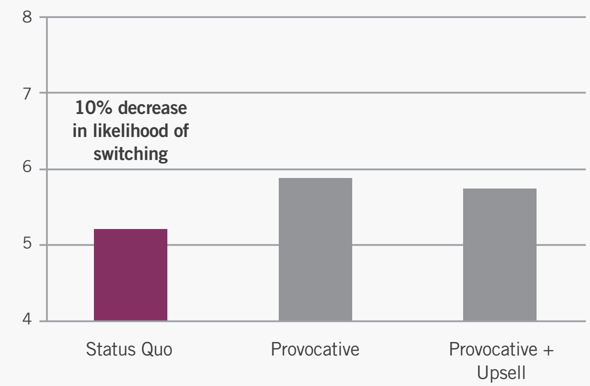
Across the measures assessed in the experiment, the status quo reinforcement message outperformed the provocative and upsell messages by statistically significant margins:

- **13 percent** boost in intention to renew, relative to the two provocative messages.
- **10 percent** less likely to switch or shop around than the two provocative pitches.
- **9 percent** boost in positive attitude, compared to the two other pitches.
- **7 percent** lift in credibility perception, relative to the provocative conditions.

INTENTION TO RENEW



SWITCHING LIKELIHOOD



Why Pay More:

Walking the Tightrope of Price Increase Conversations

In a typical renewal scenario (Why Stay), your goal is fairly straightforward:

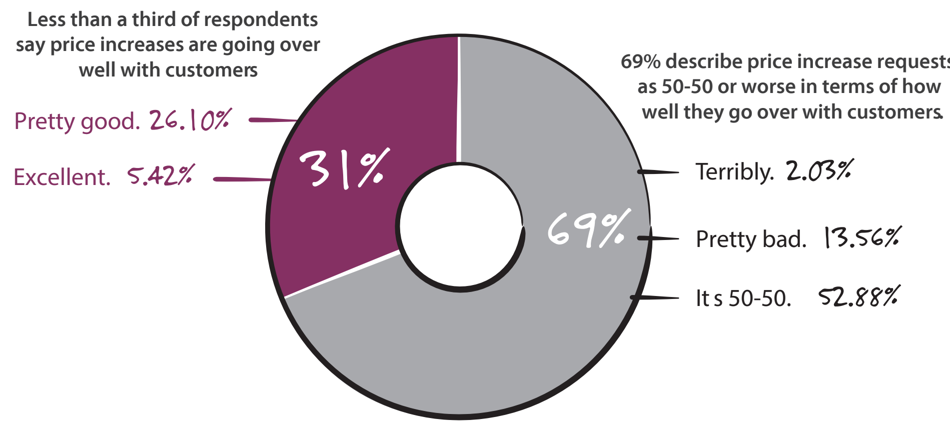
You need to convince your customer not to change by reinforcing your value as their status quo. But it's not so simple when you're talking also introducing a price increase. Yes, you still have an incumbent advantage, but you also risk disrupting the relationship by asking them to agree to new terms going forward.

Communicating a price increase is one of the trickiest, most delicate conversations you'll have with your customers. But for companies with aggressive growth goals, it's also one of the most essential.

That was validated by a **market survey** of more than 300 B2B organizations, conducted by Corporate Visions and the *International Journal of Sales Transformation*, which found that nearly two-thirds of B2B professionals (**63 percent**) believe price increases are "very important" or "mission critical" for maintaining desired profitability and revenue growth.

Unfortunately, this dialogue isn't going over well with customers. The survey also revealed that **69 percent** of respondents described their price increase conversations as "50-50" or worse in terms of how well they go over with customers.

WHEN YOU COMMUNICATE PRICE INCREASES TO YOUR CUSTOMER, HOW WELL DOES IT GO OVER?



No one actually enjoys the idea of spending more money just to stay with the same solution. So how do you persuade your customers to pay more without disrupting the relationship so much that they start to shop around?

READ ON

to learn a tested and proven framework for communicating price increases to your existing customers.

Finding the Best Price Increase Message

How can you retain your customer's loyalty and persuade them to pay more for your solution?

To find out, we conducted an **academic research study** in collaboration with Dr. Nick Lee, a social psychologist with expertise in messaging and persuasion from Warwick Business School in the U.K.

Participants in the study were told to imagine they were small business owners who were nearing the end of a two-year contract with a vendor they'd hired to promote their company's health and wellness program to employees, a move designed to improve employee satisfaction and retention rates. It was now time to either renew with the existing vendor—at a four percent price increase—or consider switching to a new vendor.

Each of the six test conditions for this study opened by documenting business results to date, much like the successful Why Stay retention message. But from there, each test message took a very different approach:

1. Introduce Unconsidered Needs – This message introduced new research that revealed a new opt-out approach to increase plan participation, whereby the company would "flip" its current opt-in approach and all employees would be automatically enrolled. This would require some new services which cost four percent more, but the customer would recover that within a year based on improved performance.

2. Improved Capabilities with Anchor – This message explained how the customer would be getting new capabilities as part of their renewal that will increase performance and progress on their top goals. These new, advanced capabilities would add eight percent to the annual cost of the plan. But, the vendor would reduce that by half because they are a good customer, resulting in a four percent increase.

3. Improved Capabilities without Anchor – This message was the same as above, except there was no "anchoring" of a higher price point to begin with. It simply presented the new capabilities and performance as a justification for a four percent price increase.

4. Improved Capabilities with Anchor and Time-Sensitive Discount – Again, this introduced the improved capabilities in the same way, and explained how they will increase performance. These new capabilities would add eight percent to the annual cost. But the customer was offered a time-sensitive discount: If they renewed before the end of the month, those additional costs will be reduced by 50 percent, for a net four percent increase.

5. Cite External Cost Factors – This message blamed the price increase on outside cost pressures, specifically regulations and responses that necessitate an eight percent cost increase. In a friendly gesture, this approach also used an anchor, explaining that the vendor would be willing to absorb half of that extra cost burden, but must pass along the remaining four percent increase in annual program cost.

6. Reinforce Status Quo Bias – This message justified the price increase by reinforcing Status Quo Bias—reminding customers about the potential risks of making a change and about how much time and energy bringing in a new vendor would require. It also introduced the new and improved capabilities and expected positive impact on performance, along with a straight four percent price increase associated with the advanced solution and anticipated improvement in results.

READ ON to find out which message performed best

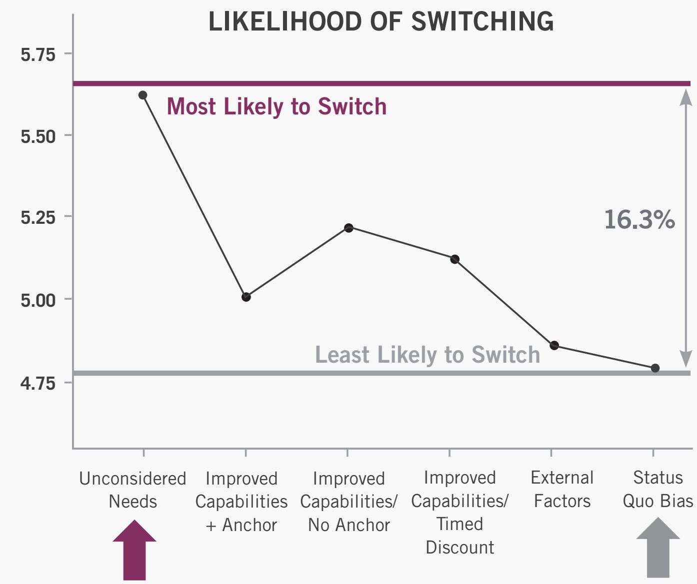
The Winning Why Pay More Framework

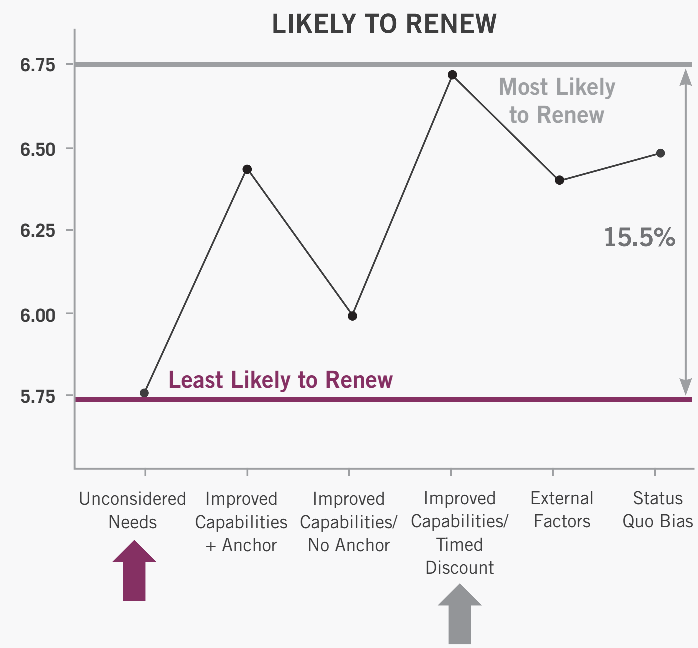
Once again, Corporate Visions research found that—as with renewals—challenging the customer with disruptive insights when communicating price increases is a losing approach. In fact, a provocative message that introduces Unconsidered Needs makes customers think more carefully about what they want and how to get it. Thus, they're more likely to consider alternatives and less likely to renew.

By contrast, the winning Why Pay More message approach appeared to embody two things. First, it reinforced the status quo while introducing key, new capabilities. Second, it also anchored high with the new price, before giving a timed discount to sign the renewal.

Tested and Proven Why Pay More Message Framework

Much like a compelling customer retention message, an effective price increase story will document proven business results to date; reinforce the causes of Status Quo Bias; provide detail around competitive advances that promise to drive increased performance against original business needs and goals; and anchor an initial higher price increase, but offer a form of discount in exchange for continued loyalty.





Why Evolve:

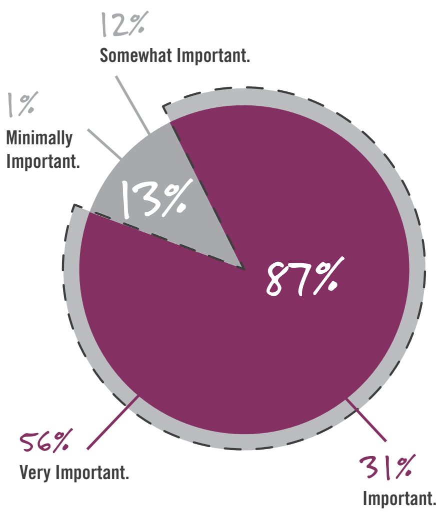
Persuading Your Customers to Expand with You

There's a lot riding on the upsell dialogue. Succeed, and you lay the groundwork for better customer experiences and longer-lasting partnerships. Stumble, and your partnerships stagnate, your revenues plateau, and you get picked off by competitors, who can disrupt you out of the equation with promises of something better.

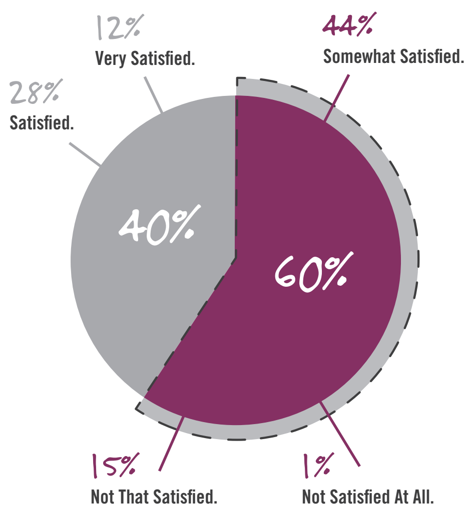
Most of the companies we surveyed agree. **87 percent** of respondents told us that upselling customers to upgraded solutions and services is "important" or "very important" to their revenue success and ability to retain customers. But, **60 percent** reported feeling only somewhat satisfied or worse when it comes to how well they convert customers to new solutions.

This conversation is especially challenging because, while you need to provoke your customer to see the value of upgrading, you still want to reinforce Status Quo Bias in such a way that they stay with your solution. It seems to call for elements of two dramatically different message types—the Why Change story, best for acquiring new customers, and the Why Stay story, ideal for keeping existing ones.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE CUSTOMER MIGRATION/ UPSELL CONVERSATION TO YOUR REVENUE SUCCESS AND ABILITY TO RETAIN CUSTOMERS?



HOW SATISFIED IS YOUR COMPANY WITH CONVERSION RATES OF CUSTOMERS TO YOUR NEW SOLUTIONS—BOTH IN TERMS OF HOW FAST THEY CONVERT AND HOW MANY ARE CONVERTING?



WE IDENTIFIED FIVE CRITICAL CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME IN UPSELL CONVERSATIONS:

1. DIFFERENT ENOUGH?
How do you create a message that's not what the customer expects—that's unusual enough to pique their interest?

2. IMPORTANT TO SUCCESS?
How do you craft a message that gets them to see your solutions as vitally important to a successful future vision?

3. PERSONALLY CONVINCING?
How do you craft a message that not only shows how much you value their business but convinces them to become personally invested in doing something to propel their business forward?

4. WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE?
How do you craft a message that makes a compelling case for change?

5. INTENTION TO PURCHASE?
How do you craft a message that increases the likelihood of your customer buying?

Researching the Best Upsell Approach

For this research, we continued our collaboration with Dr. Nick Lee, Professor of Warwick Business School.

The study placed all 426 participants in a B2B decision-making simulation. Participants were told to imagine they were in a discussion with a sales rep from their long-term software vendor, who is trying to convince them to upgrade from a legacy on-premise version of their business intelligence software to their new cloud-based business analytics solution.

The five test conditions reflected the following message types:

Product as the Hero – This was based on the type of message many companies deploy to announce new solutions. It's product-oriented and heavily predicated on highlighting the new and improved product features and benefits.

Relationship Reinforcement and Emotion – This message used emotional language to lean into the idea that the company and vendor are partners. It's unafraid to have a frank conversation about challenges and opportunities befitting a long-term partnership.

Why Change – This message has already been proven in our past research to be the optimal message for unseating an incumbent vendor and converting new prospects into customers. It's provocative, a little edgy, and we wanted to test it in this Why Evolve scenario.

Why Stay – Our previous research confirmed this message is the most effective at convincing existing customers to renew at the end of a contract. We wanted to see how it would hold up in the middle of an existing customer contract, with an upsell hanging in the balance.

Social Influence – This message was designed with the idea that peer pressure is a powerful motivator. It shows the buyer that many of their peers are taking action and making strides and that they can't afford to get left behind.

READ ON

to learn which of these five messages performed best.

The Most Effective Why Evolve Story

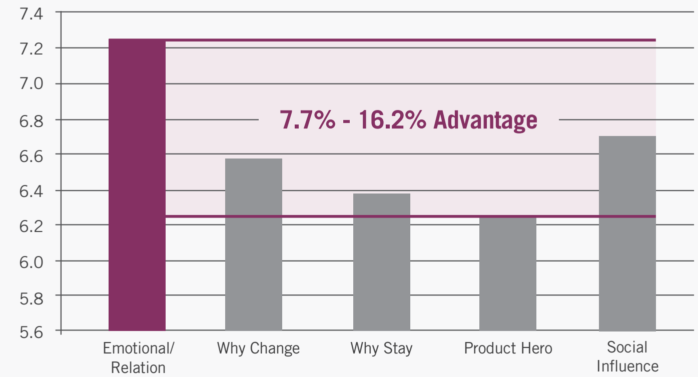
When it comes to winning upsell conversations, our **research** found that reinforcing the emotional aspects of the customer partnership was most effective in persuading customers to make change seem safe—as long as they're changing *with* you, not away from you. It's essentially a hybrid message that includes elements of a provocative customer acquisition story (Why Change) and elements of the more protectionist customer renewal story (Why Stay).

Tested and Proven Why Evolve Message Framework

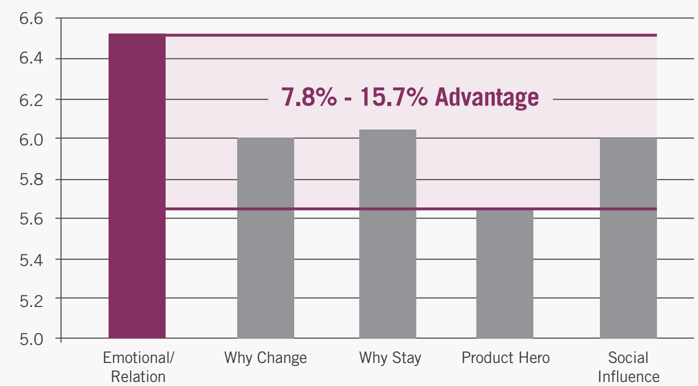
Here's a breakdown of the five components of Why Evolve framework, in order:

1. **Documented Results –** Quantify the tenure and impact of your partnership. Recap the goals you've helped them achieve to date.
2. **Evolving Pressures –** Describe shifting internal and external pressures as a logical progression or evolution—not a surprise or disruption.
3. **"Hard Truths" –** Describe the potential missed opportunities both internally and externally from your vantage point as a trusted partner.
4. **Risk of No Change –** Emphasize the potentially harmful risks and repercussions of not evolving or keeping up.
5. **Upside Opportunity –** Use personalized "you" language to transfer ownership of the solution and all of the internal and external benefits of making the change.

HOW IMPORTANT DOES THIS DECISION SEEM TO YOUR SUCCESS?



HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO PURCHASE THE NEW SOFTWARE?



Why Forgive:

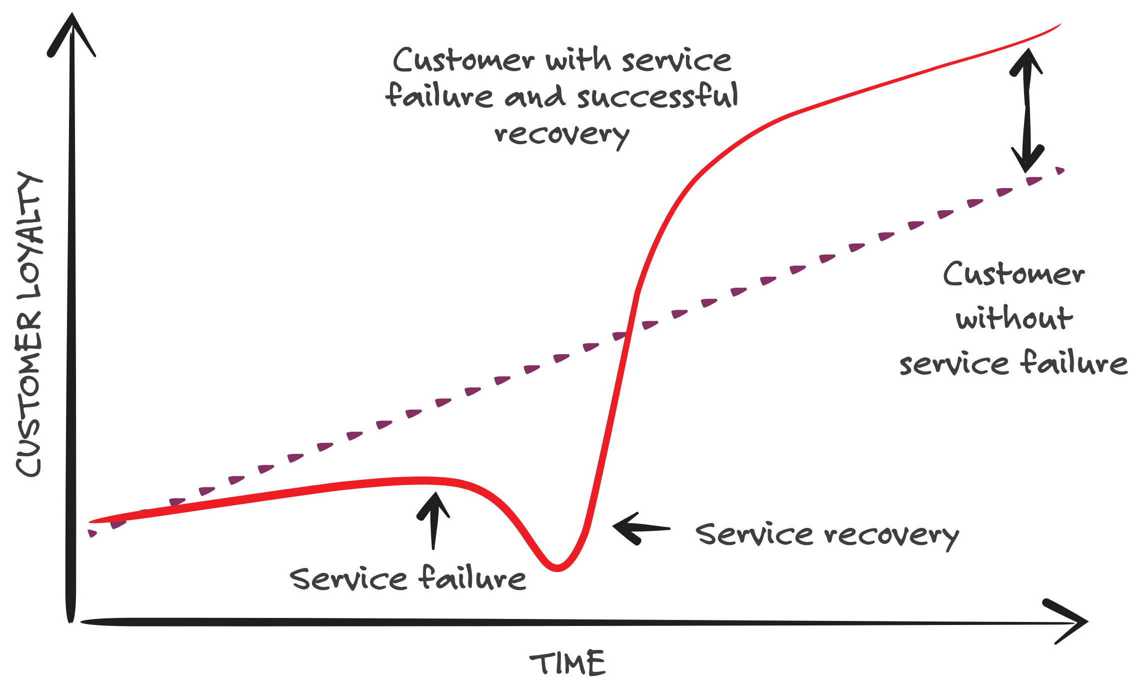
Regaining Trust After a Service Failure

In a perfect world, you would never need to apologize to your customers. But service failures are inevitable. And if you mishandle these pivotal moments, you not only risk losing the customers you've wronged, you risk all future revenue from those relationships. Losing those customers also means losing the opportunity for growth or expansion within their accounts.

Oddly enough, however, handling a customer crisis the right way can not only rescue the relationship but advance it to an even higher level.

It's a scientific theory called the **Service Recovery Paradox**, or SRP: a situation in which the customer thinks more highly of you after you've corrected a problem than if they'd never had the bad experience to begin with.

But, to maximize the benefit of the SRP, you have to handle your service failure and its aftermath properly—including the apology.



The Science of Sorry

To build our research study for effective apology message in a B2B context, we first looked at the existing research on what it takes to trigger the Service Recovery Paradox.

In 2018, the *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* published a study that identified four necessary components to trigger the SRP in a B2B setting:

Initiation – Even if the failure wasn't your fault, the customer will hold you fully responsible and expect you to resolve the issue with professional rigor.

Response Speed – Taking immediate recovery measures once a problem is detected or anticipated increases your chances of recovering from that problem, versus providers who do not.

Compensation – Customers prefer compensation in the form of additional free resources to resolve the service failure as quickly as possible. They expect you to resolve the problem immediately, at no cost to them, rather than make it up to them later.

Apology – A sincere expression of remorse will convey politeness, courtesy, and concern for the client. You should communicate your efforts to eliminate the root cause of a failure and convince the customer it won't happen again.

For the study, we focused on the fourth component, because without the apology, you can't document and communicate the other required components. And without that ability, your customer won't appreciate or give you credit for your efforts and your ability to achieve the SRP evaporates.

We turned to a 2016 article called *An Exploration of the Structure of Effective Apologies* that identified the five specific components a provider needs to apologize effectively:

- **Acknowledgement of Responsibility –** Demonstrate you understand your part in the service failure
- **Offer of Repair –** Describe how you're going to fix the problem and work toward rebuilding trust with your customer
- **Explanation of the Problem –** Explain the reasons for the failure
- **Expression of Regret –** Express how sorry you are for the problem
- **Declaration of Repentance –** Promise to not repeat the problem

This is a helpful collection, but it doesn't answer one key question: If you choose to include all five of these steps, in which order should you present them? What sequence is most effective to achieve the Service Recovery Paradox?

READ ON

to learn the best way to structure your apology.

The Winning Why Forgive Message Framework

In our **research study**, we presented 500 participants across North America and Europe with a test simulation in which the software their employees use to sign up for benefits goes down for an extended period. We tested four different combinations of apology components. We also included a fifth condition that favored a "just-the-facts" approach to compare against the more emotionally charged test messages.

Afterward, participants were asked a series of behavioral questions related to willingness to continue buying or buy more from the supplier. We also asked questions related to advocacy and willingness to recommend the supplier.

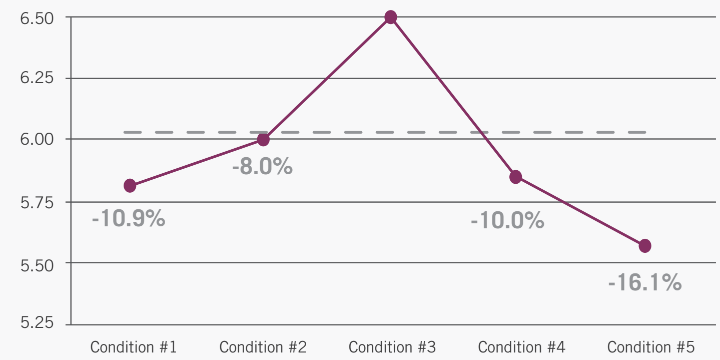
The results? We discovered one message framework, which led with the Offer of Repair and closed with a sincere, emotional Expression of Regret, outperformed all the others across every question asked. Interestingly, the emotionless, just-the-facts approach consistently landed at or near the bottom on every question.

Tested and Proven Why Forgive Message Framework

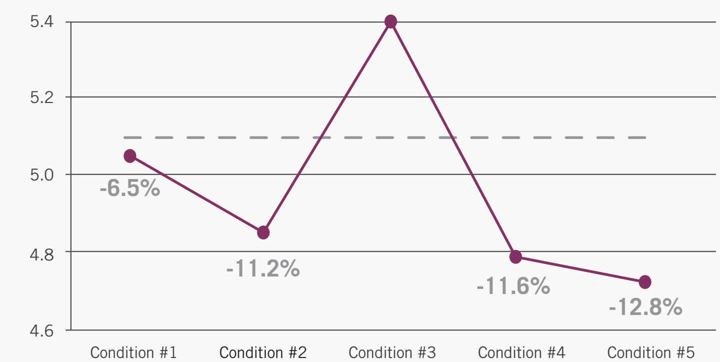
Why did this specific apology framework outperform the rest? It has to do with psychological concept called the "Primacy/Recency Effect." This happens when items at the beginning (Primacy) and items at the end (Recency) of a list or string of information are more easily recalled than items that appear in the middle.

It makes sense if you put yourself in your customer's shoes: They're not going to care about the why and how behind your actual apology until they know what you're going to do to fix it. And the most resonant part of a message is what the recipient hears last. It's the sincere Expression of Regret at the end that appears to have tipped the balance in favor of our winning message.

LIKELY TO BUY MORE?



LIKELY TO RECOMMEND SUPPLIER'



“I sell by being a trusted advisor”

We’d guess almost everyone reading this has either heard someone say this or said it themselves. It seems like a fine enough selling mantra. But probe a little deeper, and what you’ll discover is that when people say this, they mean that they ask their customers lots of questions, use those questions to diagnose the customer’s needs, and then present a solution that fits the criteria.

This approach does you and your customer a disservice—and it’s the antithesis of what it takes to master sales conversations today. To be of value to your buyers, it’s no longer sufficient to say, “Tell me what you want; I’ll get it for you.” Buyers now want salespeople who will tell them what they should want. They want you to do the heavy lifting of sifting through all the information that’s out there, and to deliver insight into what they’re missing that will improve their performance.

To rise to the demands of what great selling requires now, and in the future, it’s no longer enough to simply follow your documented sales process, checking the boxes along the way. You need to understand and master a new, diverse set of conversation techniques that go beyond a sales process and consider what decisions your buyers are weighing in their Deciding Journey. By learning and applying these techniques, you’ll master the skills needed to Create Value™, Elevate Value™, Capture Value™, and Expand Value™, and ultimately win all four Value Conversations in the Customer Deciding Journey.

Good luck and good selling!

CORPORATE VISIONS
Conversations That Win®