Too often, sellers latch on to soft signals like a nod, a compliment, or a vague "we're interested" without digging deeper. Polite conversation can easily mask a lack of urgency, misaligned priorities, or even hidden resistance. In many cases, the buyer doesn't want to say 'No' outright, so they give enough positive feedback to end the conversation on a friendly note. 'No' is an interesting word we heard thousands of times before the age of six. 'No' is that word everyone does not like saying as much as they like hearing it. Polite friendliness is nice and doesn't translate to forward motion.

The difference between a suspect (I hope by now in your career you know what suspect is) and a true sales opportunity is frequently buried beneath layers of miscommunication, buyer politeness, indecision, or political dynamics. Sellers who fail to challenge surface-level enthusiasm and clarify intent may find themselves mis-forecasting deals never qualified in the first place. The result? Missed quotas, wasted time, credibility erosion with leadership, and internal frustration compound over time. Elite sales performers develop the courage to ask harder questions, sometimes simply disqualify buyers and to ensure they're working on winnable deals.

Elite sellers don't chase smoke, they validate substance. They go beyond surface-level questions to explore the buyer's real pain, deep pain, their motivation to act now pain, and what internal forces (budget, timing, influence, internal support) are already in motion or in conflict. They listen to *what* the buyer says, and more importantly *how* they say it, what's being emphasized, hesitant over, or left out altogether. Instead of treating contexts like rigid checklists, they interpret them as dynamic tools, a sort of directional signal decoding buying readiness. They dig beneath the metrics to understand internal champions, competing priorities, and the emotional stakes of the decision. A takeaway to always remember: EMOTION ultimately drives the final decision. How many times did the sale end with "Can I get next week!" or "Can I have it with Smoked Glass?" just before the buy. Of course, the goal is to determine if the buyer matches the solution, whether this deal is both **a true opportunity worth winning** and if it's a match *now*, not someday.

## Observance of Motivation generally falls into categories like:

- Pain avoidance (what are they trying to stop?)
- Gain seeking (what do they want more of?)
- Legacy/Recognition (who's watching?)
- Security/Compliance (what are the risks?)

Each of these Observance of Motivation have unique clues and behaviors you can look for during your interactions. Pain avoidance often surfaces in cautious language "We've had issues with vendors before," or "We can't afford another failed rollout." Gain seekers, in contrast, may be more energetic and future-focused: "We're really looking to accelerate growth this quarter." Legacy or recognition-driven prospects might speak about outcomes tied to their visibility or career: "We want to demonstrate ROI quickly," or "I've been tasked with leading this initiative." Security- and compliance-minded buyers, like CISOs or IT Directors focus more on "I been tasked with risk reduction and mitigation," "Eliminate and chance of liability," or "I need to ensure our policy alignment."

Understanding what bucket your prospect falls into helps you tailor your conversation and solution language more effectively. If someone is risk-averse, showing them, innovation won't help; you need to show assurance. If someone is legacy-motivated, painting a picture of success raises their internal profile. Sometimes, motivations will blend. A CIO may want smooth integration (pain avoidance) and be looking for a legacy move before retirement. Your job is to surface, synthesize, and speak to all relevant motivators. Sales professionals who can map motivational drivers across an account and address them with empathy and precision are always ahead of the game.

Every role has its lens:

- CFOs think in terms of risk and return.
- CIOs think in terms of integration and governance.
- End users think in terms of ease and non-frustration.

The more precisely you see the Observance of Motivation, the more effectively you can tailor your process, thus your partnership straightens. When you deeply understand your buyer's underlying motivations, organizational dynamics, and personal pressures, you can craft messaging and solutions landing with authenticity and urgency and if you do the money will come. Tailoring isn't about using their company's name in an email, it's about aligning your offer with what matters to them most, in the language they respond to best. Observance of Motivation helps you anticipate resistance, validate urgency, and engage with empathy. Ultimately, your ability to observe with precision becomes your competitive advantage, helping you stand out in a sea of noise and show up as a true partner instead of just another pitch.

To sharpen your Observance of Motivation edge even further, many Elite sellers turn to things like **DISC personality profiling**, a behavioral framework categorizes communication preferences into four distinct styles: (**D) Dominance, (I) Influence, (S) Steadiness,** and (C) **Conscientiousness**. Understanding **DISC** helps you decide how your buyer processes information, makes decisions, and prefers to be engaged. A **Dominant** buyer values results and efficiency; they appreciate directness and speed. An **Influential** buyer is motivated by relationships, vision, and enthusiasm, responding best to big-picture ideas and fun, energetic dialogue. Those high in **Steadiness** value security, collaboration, and predictability; they respond to trust, patience, and a clear, step-by-step approach. Finally, **Conscientious** buyers prioritize data, logic, and precision; they want the facts and time to assess the details before committing them. D & I are more outgoing where C & S are less outgoing. It is important to leave no one out for the conversation.

Equally important is understanding **how your buyer best absorbs information**, often categorized into **Visual, Auditory,** and **Kinesthetic** (VAK) learning and communication styles. A **Visual** buyer prefers charts, diagrams, and slides as they'll often say things like "Let me show you," or "I see what you mean." An **Auditory** buyer processes through sound, stories, or spoken walkthroughs and they'll respond to phrases like "Let's talk this out," or "That rings a bell." A **Kinesthetic** buyer wants to experience things through hands-on demos, tactile interactions, or Real-World applications. They use language like "I feel" or "That clicks with me."

When you combine **DISC** analysis with **sensory** preferences, you gain a powerful **double lens** for tailoring your message and delivery. Imagine presenting a highly structured ROI model (C-style) using a visually compelling dashboard (V-style), or storytelling with emotional energy to engage an I-style, auditory buyer. The better you read these clues, and respond in kind, the more likely you are to **gain trust, spark relevance, and create movement**.

This is not manipulation. This is an **empathetic adaptational** skill transforming you from another pitch into a **true partner**. By learning to recognize these traits in real time through tone, body language, questions asked, and objections raised, you can adapt your language, pacing, and messaging to resonate more naturally. It's about meeting people where they are**.** When used with sincerity and practice, it becomes a powerful tool in the CORE(S) Framework™ toolbox for building trust, reducing friction, and delivering value in a way that **feels personalized and authentic** to each buyer.

### Signs You're Assuming, Not Observing

- You're doing all the talking and presenting.
- You skipped confirming who is the true economic buyer.
- You walked out of the meeting with "next steps" and missed specific dates.
- You're waiting for the buyer to tell you what's next.

## Signs You've Observing the Opportunity

- The buyer has articulated a measurable business problem.
- They've disclosed budget boundaries or internal dynamics.
- You've co-defined success criteria.
- There's mutual agreement on next steps and timeline.

In short: Observing the client's signs in opportunity earns qualifying not just the deal, but also the *depth of the relationship* and the *urgency of the issue.* When alignment exists, deals move faster, conversations go deeper, value becomes obvious, and signs of even friendships begin.

## Real World Example:

A sales consultant met with a mid-market CIO who opened the initial meeting with, "We're just exploring ideas." Most reps would've handed off a pitch deck, offered a high-level overview, and followed up weeks later, if at all. Instead, she paused and replied, "That's fair, what's happening that made you want to explore ideas now?"

That one question reframed the entire conversation. The CIO leaned in and shared their current infrastructure was failing audits, and the board was pushing for action, and hadn't yet announced the initiative internally. No RFP had been drafted. No vendors were officially invited. Because the seller earned the CIO's trust with a simple, thoughtful question, she was invited into strategy sessions normally reserved for internal teams.

Over the next few weeks, she helped shape the initiative roadmap and preemptively addressed internal objections before they surfaced. Sixty or so days later, the CIO called her personally and awarded the project, citing her as "the only one who asked the right questions before anyone else knew we were looking to achieve."

**CORE(S) Tip:** Curiosity earns opportunity. Assumptions kill. Understanding Personalities capture.

## Conversation Prompts

- "Why explore this now?"
- "What's the impact of doing nothing?"
- "Who else needs to weigh in before a decision is made?"
- "Can we agree on what success looks like if we move forward?"
- "Should I outline it out for you, or would you prefer a Dashboard?"

## Practical Application

Take five open deals in your pipeline. Ask: Have I earned the right to forecast this? What proof do I have the buyer is committed, budget exists, and timeline is aligned? If you can't answer clearly, schedule a clarification call.

**Learned Lessons: What about Observance of Motivation relates to your sales integrity? (Write your reflection below)**

1. ____________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________

4. ______________________________________________

5. ______________________________________________

**Exercise**: Before your next discovery call, rehearse three clarifying questions to uncover urgency, internal alignment, and budget clarity. Practice them aloud, then listen actively for clues confirming the deal is real.

**Bonus**: Roleplay with a peer. Use Questions to see if you can decipher their personality traits. Have them act disinterested or ambiguous, and practice shifting from assumption to validation.

# Chapter 3: Reveal! Reveal Constraints - Uncover Risks Before They Derail Deals

Too often, sales professionals operate with blind optimism. They press forward with proposals, demos, and follow-ups without verifying whether the foundational pieces are in place. Success in sales doesn't come from momentum alone, it comes from foresight. **Reveal Constraints** is a mindset shift: instead of fearing what might block a deal, proactively seek out those roadblocks. By doing so, you put yourself in a position to influence, redirect, and sometimes even rescue a sale that would otherwise collapse.

In the CORE(S) Framework™, this is where risk begins to emerge. If you're not actively identifying and addressing constraints, budget, timing, trust, or internal resistance, you're not in a real buying process. You're in a polite conversation. In this chapter we will uncover areas where Reveal Constraints plays in everyday sales.

Salespeople avoid asking tough questions because they fear stalling momentum or creating discomfort. Buyers respect transparency and courage. A sales professional who has the discipline to ask, "What could get in the way of this moving forward?" earns trust. A buyer who is willing to share the truth about internal friction, decision hierarchy, or uncertain timelines is a buyer who sees you as a partner, not a pest.

Let's unpack some of the most common attributes in Reveal Constraints:

- **Budget freezes or ambiguity:** Just because a stakeholder is interested doesn't mean the money is there. Ask, "Has the budget been officially approved or is it under review?"
- **Decision-maker inaccessibility:** You may be collaborating with a champion, and if they can't influence the final decision, your deal is at risk. Ask, "Will the final sign-off come from you, your team, or someone else?"
- **Competing priorities:** If your solution is one of many initiatives, timing can kill momentum. Ask, "Are there other major projects happening right now that might take precedence?"
- **Technical compatibility:** Integration issues can derail deals late. Ask, "Has your IT team reviewed our solution's specs yet?"
- **Risk aversion or compliance barriers:** In industries like healthcare, finance, or government, one red flag can trigger a no-go. Ask, "Are there any compliance or procurement guidelines we need to be aware of?"

Here's why uncovering constraints matters:

- **You can proactively solve problems:** Once you know the constraint, you can address it with resources, references, or alternatives.
- **You engage in honest dialogue:** Buyers open when they see you're not afraid of the truth.
- **You build a roadmap reflecting reality:** Your forecast becomes more accurate, and your internal team can better support the opportunity.

Most salespeople are trained to avoid risk. They view objections, hesitation, or resistance as barriers to overcome, or worse, signals to exit. In truth, risk is often the clearest indicator a buyer is emotionally engaged in the process. When risk appears, it means the buyer is picturing, listing, or feeling what change might look like. They're considering the cost of failure, the effort to implement, and the political capital required to move forward. Hence the presence of ***risk*** means the buyer is ***thinking***. And that's good!

Every deal has hidden risks: unspoken objections, competing projects, shifting budgets, or political landmines. These risks, when left unaddressed, have the potential to torpedo even the most promising opportunities. Sales professionals often underestimate the power of surfacing these risks early in the process, not as obstacles, as essential information helps refine strategy and increase deal speed. More withstanding, Elite sellers recognize risk is not resistance, it's relevance. Risk is the flicker of possibility inside the buyer's uncertainty, revealing they are mentally stepping into a future state. It signals the buyer is considering changing seriously, wrestling with what it will cost, who it might affect, and whether the outcome is worth it. So, instead of retreating when risk surfaces, Elite sellers lean in. Don't try to erase fear, explore it. Understanding objections are often expressions of ownership, not rejection. When a buyer raises a concern, it means they've already begun internalizing the stakes. This is where trust is forged, not by avoiding the tough topics, tackling them together.

Risk, therefore, becomes the foundation upon which resilient partnerships are built. Sellers who master this stage don't just close deals, they co-create decisions.

## Risk as a Buying Signal

Risk isn't rejection, it's a buying signal. When a buyer starts raising concerns about deployment, legal, or internal buy-in, don't panic. It's not the beginning of the end; it's the beginning of real consideration. They're picturing the impact your solution might have, and mental shift from status quo to future state naturally brings fear, doubt, and pressure. That's good. This is where decisions get made. Remember: No one worries about something they're not seriously thinking of buying. So, when risk enters the room, lean in. Engage. Guide them through it. Because the bigger the perceived risk, the more value they see on the other side. And if there's no resistance at all? Be careful, you might just be the comparison quote, not the contender. This is why Elite sellers don't fear objections; they invite them. They know when a buyer says, "We've tried this before," it's not rejection, it's an opportunity to ask, "What made it fail then?" When a buyer says, "This feels expensive," it's a chance to ask, "Compared to what the cost of continuing the current path?"

Buyers don't need a flawless solution. They need a partner who acknowledges the friction, plans for it, and reduces the weight of uncertainty. Your job is to demonstrate you've done the hard thinking already, you've anticipated risk, and you have a game plan for it. Risk is not the roadblock to trust it's the gateway to it. Is the buyer telling you, "I'm taking this seriously." The greater the risk, the more value they associate with the outcome. They don't debate risks for solutions they're not considering.

You must create intentional space in the sales process to Reveal Constraints, not just wait for them to surface. Set the tone early your job isn't to sell, it is to solve together. Encourage vulnerability by signaling risk is expected, not penalized. Normalize concern by asking, "What's the worst-case scenario we should prepare for?" and "Where could this go off track?" These questions give buyers permission to speak openly. And when they do, you anchor your solution as flawless, as *prepared*, *as ready* to navigate risk, not ignore it.

Buyers do not need someone *Flawless*. They need a Partner who has thought through the risks with them to meet the projected B*usiness Outcomes.*

## **<u>Real World Example:</u>**

A healthcare CIO confided in a rep, saying, "We've failed three times trying to deploy this system." Instead of recoiling or jumping to reassure, the rep leaned in with, "What made those attempts fall short?" Simple questions unlocked a deeper conversation.

The CIO revealed each prior attempt was derailed for distinct reasons, budget reallocations halfway through the year, misalignment between the IT and compliance teams, and a lack of proper training led to low user adoption. Rather than offering platitudes or pitching solution prematurely, the rep took notes, asked follow-up questions, and mapped each of those risks into her proposed implementation approach.

She created a tailored onboarding strategy with milestone check-ins, brought in a third-party training partner to ease rollout friction, and even helped the CIO pre-sell the project to internal teams by drafting a communication plan.

In the end, the CIO told her, "You were the only vendor who helped me solve the problems we didn’t even list in the RFP." The deal closed not because her product was better, it was because she understood addressing risk wasn't a hurdle. It was the pathway to trust.

**CORE(S) Tip:** Buyers disclose risk to those they trust. If you never hear risk, you’re not close enough.

## Conversation Prompts

These prompts are crafted to surface what buyers are thinking, not saying. Use them to welcome honest dialogue:

- “What worries you about this working?”
- “What’s the biggest risk if we move forward?”
- “Have there been initiatives like this that failed before?”
- “How would you define a red flag in this decision?”

## <u>Practical Application</u>

Review your top 3 deals. Write down the known risks from the buyer's perspective, not what could go wrong, what they fear will go wrong. If you do not know revisit with a quick "I was driving in to work today and had a question I did not ask before, would you mind if I ask it now?" Then, revisit your approach and reframe one message around risk mitigation.

**Learned Lessons: What does buyer risk reveal in your sales conversations when you Reveal Constraints? (Write your reflection below)**

1. ____________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________

4. ____________________________________________

5. ____________________________________________

**Exercise**: Practice responding to common objections by asking a follow-up question instead of offering reassurance. For example, if a buyer says, "This feels expensive," respond with, "What are you comparing it to and how are you measuring the value?"

**Bonus**: Partner with a colleague and roleplay a high-risk conversation. Practice drawing out the root concern and reflecting it back with empathy and strategic insight.

# Chapter 4: Earn - Earn Commitment is What Closes the Gap

Strategy without Commitment is Hallucination!

It's easy to fall in love with planning the decks, the frameworks, the meeting *sounds* strategic. So, what moves the needle is execution: The consistent, intentional follow-through transforming insight into impact. This chapter explores how the Elite sellers differentiate themselves not by having the best ideas, by out-executing everyone else in the room.

CORE(S) Framework™, the **Earn Commitment** aligns most closely with the execution of your buyer's buy-in. Earn Commitment is how you prove you are worthy of their commitment. If your discovery process was strong and your solution maps directly to need, then execution is what seals or loses the deal. At this stage, Elite sellers must bridge vision to outcome with process, discipline, and persistence. Execution is where strategy meets ownership. It's the hinge between potential and performance, where great ideas are proven or forgotten. This is the zone where expectations are reinforced, momentum is protected, and deals stay on track or derail. In this chapter we will look at how getting soft to concrete **Earn Commitment** will lead to high close rates.

Buyers are not just evaluating your product; they're assessing your ability to follow through. Every email you send, meeting you lead, and task you close is a signal. Sloppy follow-up, vague recaps, missed details, or reactive behavior don't just delay deals, they erode confidence and raise red flags about what post-sale might look like. If this is how the process feels now, what happens after the contract is signed? Elite sellers treat execution not as a closing tactic, as a daily discipline and brand signature. It's visible proof they are who they claim to be trustworthy, dependable, and invested. In this stage, precision and consistency separate Elite performers from those who simply had a good pitch.

Earn Commitment doesn't mean doing more, it means doing what matters…**Better!** It's the art of being selective, deliberate, and relentlessly consistent. High performers understand activity for activity's sake is a distraction, and real momentum is created by intentional motion. It's about showing up prepared for the meeting and preparing for what happens after the meeting: The follow-up, the recap, the coordination. This is where deals are won or lost.

Elite sellers aren't winging it; they're forecasting objections before they arise, mapping out internal politics, identifying champions and blockers, and preparing next steps in advance. They're aligning moving parts like a conductor with a score in hand, not reacting to noise and shaping the rhythm of the deal. Think of it like a championship-level game of Pool. Average players focus only on making the current shot. Elite players know where the cue ball lands are as important, if not more so, than the pocketed ball. They plan not just for the now, the next and the next ones. Each move is designed to set up the following one. In sales, every touchpoint should set the stage for deeper engagement, building toward a close that feels inevitable rather than forced.

Elite sales professionals know when to escalate, when to listen, and when to push; more importantly, they understand why each move matters. They aren't simply reacting; they're navigating the buyer's world with precision. These sellers are fluent in the customer's internal politics, approval processes, and pain points, without getting tangled up in the noise. They're not just alone for the ride; they're mapping the route. When critical moments arise, they lead with purpose, not panic. Instead of scrambling for last-minute solutions, they anticipate needs, coordinate stakeholders, and create rhythm across every touchpoint. This level of orchestration builds momentum and trust. They bring order to complexity, clarity to ambiguity, and become calm in the storm buyers instinctively follow. In high-stakes deals, calm confidence often makes the difference between stalled and signed.

### Real World Example:

A rep working at a large enterprise opportunity had done all the right things, through discovery, mapping value to KPIs, aligning with IT and business stakeholders. The buying committee was stalled. While others might wait for a call back, she took the initiative to create a personalized 3-phase execution roadmap: a timeline, accountability chart, and anticipated objection log.

She walked the buyer through it and said, "If we were to move forward, I want you to see exactly how we'd do it, where we'd communicate, and how we'd track ROI." She used a clean, single-page slide with color-coded milestones and owner's responsibilities; nothing flashy, just clarity. She also proactively included a sample risk log and a pre-drafted internal kickoff message the buyer could use with their team.

The client response: "This is the first time I can actually *see* this working." Visual execution plan didn't just provide structure, it projected confidence, accountability, and leadership. It became the deal-closer because it gave the buyer more than just a promise resulting in giving them a plan they could trust.

**CORE(S) Tip:** Earn Commitment does not have to be flashy. It's what buyers remember when they choose who they trust.

## Conversation Prompts

Use these to confirm alignment, highlight accountability, and drive confidence. These are not just check-the-box questions, they are strategic signals reinforce your commitment to follow-through and help buyers feel anchored in a real plan:

- "What happens if this slips a month?"
- "What could delay or derail this internally?"
- "Can we map out what success would look like 30/60/90 days post-close?"

## Practical Application

Audit your last 2 to 3 closed-lost deals. Where did execution falter? Where was follow-up vague or timelines unclear? Build a checklist to prevent those gaps moving forward. Be honest with yourself and remember a loss is a win when you can use it to your advantage.

**Learned Lessons: How have you turned Earn Commitment was not too flashy. (Write your reflection below)**

1. ______________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________

4. ______________________________________________

5. ______________________________________________

**Exercise**: Draft a templated 30/60/90-day plan for your top solution. Use it as a visual aid during closing conversations to reinforce confidence in your process.

For example:

- **Day 0–30**: Client onboarding, internal kickoff, systems access, baseline metrics, and alignment meetings.
- **Day 31–60**: Initial deployment, training sessions, feedback loop, early KPIs measured.
- **Day 61–90**: Optimization, executive reporting, performance benchmarks, and planning for scale.

Tailor the specifics to your solution, making sure each phase clearly communicates value delivery, timeline integrity, and shared accountability.

**Bonus**: Pair with an internal peer to review your execution habits, are you over-relying on CRM reminders, or do you have a personal system to stay ahead?

# Chapter 5: Solution - Solution Deliverables: Solve, Don't Sell

Too often in sales, the solution is treated like the final act or as we say the ***"Ta-Da"*** moment at the end of the pitch. In a buyer-centric sales process, the solution is not just what you offer, it's *how* you offer it. It's not a product sheet or demo link either. It needs to be a shared vision of progress, tailored to the buyer's unique pain points, goals, and risks mitigations.

In the CORE(S) Framework™, the **Solution Deliverables** is how you get to converge on a mutually prepared initial proposition for what you sell, and it's far more than a capabilities deck of a branded presentation and investment. It is the culmination of this plus insight, trust, and strategic alignment. It's the moment where your understanding of the buyer's world crystallizes into a plan should be personalized, actionable, and deeply relevant. In this Chapter we will visit how to get the most out of a **Solution Deliverable** and the preparation for it.

A strong Solution Deliverable proves you listened and did so very carefully. You understood what the buyer said, what they meant, and you engineered a path forward grounded in real value, not just a list of product features and benefits.

Whether it's one or a combination of a proposal, roadmap, plan, pilot, or executive summary, your deliverable should echo the buyer's concerns, objectives, and language. It should *feel* like something they could've written themselves. If it feels generic, you've lost them. If it reads like a brochure, you've missed the mark. If it sounds like your voice and not theirs, you're selling ***at*** them, not solving ***with*** them. Elite sellers know: The more it sounds like the buyer, the more likely it is to be shared, defended, and championed internally. We have heard it all too often, it is worth saying again and again: "**People buy from People they *Like* and *Trust*."**

Top sellers approach Solution Deliverables as a co-creation process. They ask:

- "**Why**, after all we have discussed, are you considering our team?"
- "**Who** on the Team will be the day-to-day lead?"
- "**What** format would make this easiest to share with your team?"
- "**Where** are the non-negotiables to be addressed?"
- "**When** do you want this delivered?"
- "**How** do you want this solution to show up internally?"

This unpacks how to build and present deliverables that don't inform, more as inspiring to drive clarity. Elite sellers understand a proposal isn't conventional, it becomes a **strategic narrative**, your moment to crystallize everything you've learned, align it with the buyer's highest priorities, and present it in a way **moving hearts and minds**, not checklists and budgets. This is where good sellers get filtered out, and great sellers stand out.

Rather than submitting a generic slide deck or bloated scope document, the **Elite** seller crafts a **story,** one reflecting the buyer's language, mirrors their business reality, and connects solution features directly to operational and strategic outcomes. They don't lead with product they lead with purpose. They don't dump data, they distill insight. Every word, every chart, every callout is intentional. They understand the true power of a deliverable lies not in what it contains, more so **how clearly it communicates a path forward**. The best solutions are those making the customer feel seen. They validate the buyer's pain, clarify the stakes, and present a solution **strategically sound and emotionally reassuring**. This means translating customer-specific insights into outcome-based deliverables that resonate at every level, from the technical evaluator to the C-suite. When your proposal reads like an **Executive Brief** rather than a transactional handoff, you elevate the sales conversation from pricing to partnership. That's the level where real decisions get made.

Once all the Why, Who, What, Where, When, and How have been clearly defined through discovery and alignment, then and only then, should you begin crafting your presentation. The goal isn't just to present information; it's to communicate value through your Solution Deliverables in the most compelling, resonant way possible. There are no rigid rules, only the expectation your message connects and inspires action.

We live in an incredible era of tech-enabled storytelling. Your delivery can go far beyond static slides. Want to incorporate a short drone video to illustrate geographic or operational scale? Go for it. Have an idea to use animation or cartooning to simplify complex workflows? Brilliant. Need to act out a dramatized scenario to humanize the pain point? Do it. Self-expression in presentation is no longer fringe; it's becoming the standard for capturing and holding attention.

PowerPoint® and Keynote® have their place if you're leaning on a 90-minute slide deck as your main act. CORE(S)-based, you're missing the point of how connecting with the client at this level can have the impact others will not do. Buyers don't want to be lectured; they want to be shown, engaged, and understood. Presentation should be dynamic, human, and tailored to the audience. Use whatever medium brings your message to life. A whiteboard session, a walk-through of a real use case, or even an interactive digital tour can all serve the cause.

Bottom line: Have fun with it. Creativity sells when it's backed by substance. Just make sure every creative element maps directly to a business outcome. This is your moment to prove your execution isn't just polished, it's personalized, persuasive, and powerful.

Now we covered the basic understanding for CORE(S) Framework™, it's now time to dive deeper and show how these ideals are moving the needle forward. The following chapters will unveil the essential properties how to apply in your world. This is why the name CORE(S) is a "***Framework***" not a forced step-by-step "***Method***" as it a living and breathing adaptable process, hence a "***Methodology***."

## Real World Example

A global SaaS provider was in a competitive bake-off for a multi-million-dollar contract. While other vendors focused on technical specifications and long presentations, one rep approached the proposal differently. He spent time with multiple stakeholders, collecting language, goals, and key concerns. Then, he built Solution Deliverables and didn't lead with the company, it led with the buyer.

The proposal began with a one-page executive summary titled, "Your Strategic Priorities." The next section was a visual journey map outlining how their organization could move from the current state to desired future state. It included a shot video of an existing customer using the software in a critical solution approach getting team cheering at the end. Each solution component was directly mapped to a stated goal or concern from the buyer's team. The final pages included a 30/60/90-day implementation plan, an internal communications toolkit, and an executive dashboard prototype.

The buyer later shared, "Every other proposal told us about their company. Yours told us about ours. We are moving forward."

**CORE(S) Tip:** The best deliverables are not designed to impress; they're designed to be *used.*

## Conversation Prompts

Use these to clarify what solution formats and narratives will land best with your buyer:

- "What will your CFO care most about in this plan?"

- “Who else needs to see this proposal before it moves forward?”
- “Do you prefer visuals, bullet summaries, or technical deep dives?”

## Practical Application

Before building your next proposal or solution roadmap, ask three questions:

1. What language did the buyer use so I can mirror?
2. What risks were raised and how do I address them proactively?
3. If this were shared internally, would it gain traction without me in the room?

**Learned Lessons: How do your solution deliverables reflect the buyer’s voice and goals?**

1. ____________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________

4. ____________________________________________

5. ____________________________________________

**Exercise**: Take a recent proposal or presentation and reframe it from the buyer’s point of view. Rewrite the opening page as if *they* wrote it. Focus on their mission, not your message.

**Bonus**: Share revised version with a peer and ask: "Would you read past the first page if you were the buyer?"

## Part II:

# CORE(S) Framework ™ in Action

# Chapter 6: The Power of Pre-Call Planning

Top performers don’t wing it; they win with preparation.

So, you got past the Cold-Call, the referral, and you are closed for the meeting. Pre-call planning is more than jotting notes on a yellow pad or reviewing the CRM five minutes before a video call. It’s a strategic ritual aligns intention, insight, and impact before you even click in. It requires a mindset shift from transactional to intentional and transforms the seller from a passive participant into a conversation architect. Pre-call planning sharpens your questions, anticipates objections, and primes you to lead the conversation rather than react to it. It builds narrative fluency and confidence because you're not just preparing for what could happen, you're planning how you'll influence the outcome.

The Elite sellers prepare with three outcomes in mind:

1. What do I want the client to think, feel, and decide by the end of this call?
2. What signals would indicate we’re gaining traction?
3. What would derail momentum and how can I get ahead of it?

This Chapter will unpack the CORE(S) Framework™ for mindset and tools turning planning into a power move, not a checklist.

Pre-call planning starts with clarity. Before every customer interaction, Elite sellers slow down and zoom out. They recognize each conversation is a pivotal moment in a broader decision journey. With a CORE(S) lens, they ask: What is the purpose of this call, not just for me, for the customer? What specific value can I bring that advances *their* agenda? What unique insight or perspective can I offer challenging assumptions, inform their thinking, or simplify their path forward?

Elite sellers aren't seeking to simply gather information; they're aiming to elevate the conversation to a strategic exchange, setting the tone for a trusted partnership. They recognize earning trust in a compressed attention economy requires more than charm, it requires preparation delivers instant relevance, situational awareness, and emotional intelligence. They understand buyers are busy, skeptical, and often juggling internal pressures, conflicting agendas, and legacy systems are hard to unwind, meaning the seller must not only prepare to answer the questions the buyer may ask to uncover the questions the buyer *should* be asking.

The preparation anticipates spoken and unspoken needs, eliminates friction, and builds momentum within the first few minutes. The Elite seller's job is to bring clarity, not complexity to help the buyer feel seen, understood, and supported. Their goal is simple: To leave the buyer thinking: **"That wasn't just a call, it was a step forward."**

Too often, average sellers show up with generic questions or default to product talking points, anchored in outdated world of features and benefits. They assume listing product specs and capabilities will somehow resonate with a buyer navigating complexity, risk, and cross-functional alignment. Truth is, again, features and benefits selling has no meaningful depth in today's professional sales arena. It's superficial at best and misleading at worst. Buyers today are looking for advisors who understand business outcomes, not technical attributes. A list of features doesn't convey relevance. A bullet benefit doesn't tell a story nor inspire confidence in the seller understands the buyer's world. Worse, this kind of selling positions the conversation at the bottom of the value chain, where pricing becomes the dominant lever. Strategic sellers rise above noise by connecting the solution to the buyer's priorities, risks, and roadmap. They don't recite; they interpret. They don't sell to needs; they co-create paths to progress.

Elite sellers, on the other hand, bring a hypothesis. They demonstrate understanding of the customer's industry, latest news, strategic goals, and current tech stack. They don't just plan what to *say*, they plan what to *ask*. Their goal is not to recite product advantages, to provoke meaningful dialogue rooted in business impact and strategic alignment. They prepare to uncover what's not being said and draw connections between their solution and the customer's broader initiatives. They tailor each conversation to the buyer's unique pressures, timelines, and performance metrics. Their planning elevates the interaction from a transactional touchpoint to a trust-building engagement resonating long after the call ends.

Do you ever do scenario planning? What if a new stakeholder joins at the last minute? What if the customer mentions pricing early? What if the client is skeptical or distracted? Effective pre-call planning means being ready for the variables, not just static agenda, so it keeps you in your system, always.

To take this even further, let's deeper define the five habits creating Elite sellers to adopt CORE(S) Framework™ as their operating system:

**1. Intentional Pre-Call Planning (Clarity of Expectations)**: Elite performers never wing it. They know every great conversation starts with a clear plan. This habit is built on a set of consistent pre-call disciplines:

- **Clarify the Purpose**: Define exactly why the meeting exists from both your perspective and the client's.
- **Align Internally**: Sync with team members on roles, desired outcomes, and what success looks like.
- **Research with Relevance**: Study the client's business, market pressures, and recent initiatives. Bring one specific insight to the table.
- **Anticipate Objections**: Prepare responses to potential pushbacks and plan a path to oversee them constructively.
- **Structure the Call**: Draft an agenda covers the customer's needs, your solution context, and a clear set of next steps.

When the call begins, elite performers establish a clear agenda and confirm buy-in from the client to create a shared understanding. This level of preparation fosters mutual respect, provides clarity, and enables reps to stay in control of the conversation and outcome.

**2. Tying Every Opportunity to a Business Priority (Observance of Motivation)**: Top sellers dig deep to not understand so much **'what,'** more **'why'** behind the buyer's interest. This habit ensures they align their efforts with high-impact initiatives that matter to the customer. Mastering pain seeking questioning is key to the Elite seller's success. To master this behavior, Elite sellers follow these sub-steps:

- **Surface Strategic Objectives**: In discovery conversations, top reps identify the executive-level goals driving the purchase decision (e.g., revenue growth, risk mitigation, digital transformation).
- **Map Capabilities to Initiatives**: Rather than pitching features, they draw clear lines between the solution's capabilities and the business problem it addresses.
- **Validate Executive Alignment**: They ask explicitly who owns the initiative and what outcomes define success. They also secure confirmation the initiative has budget and timeline prioritization.
- **Quantify Impact**: When possible, they tie the proposed solution to measurable business outcomes items like cost savings, time reduction, increased conversion rates, etc.
- **Reinforce Relevance**: Throughout the deal, they continually check the opportunity remains aligned with active business priorities and hasn't shifted in urgency or scope.

By maintaining this focus, Elite sellers prevent deals from stalling due to lack of strategic relevance. Their pipeline becomes more durable, more defensible, and more likely to close.

**3. Proactively Surfacing Constraints (Reveal Constraints)**: Elite sellers aren't afraid to bring up potential deal blockers. In fact, they seek them out early. Legal, budgetary, technical, or compliance related help drive this. They understand exposing these issues upfront builds credibility and saves time downstream. To consistently execute this habit, Elite seller performers:

- **Normalize the Conversation**: They set the tone by saying, "Let's talk through anything slowing us down," creating safety to raise concerns.
- **Ask Constraint-Specific Questions**: They probe areas like procurement, IT, compliance, legal review, and political buy-in using open-ended and scenario-based questions.
- **Document and Acknowledge**: When a constraint is identified, they don't just note it, they confirm it with the client and record next steps for resolution.
- **Track Risk Reduction**: As blockers are resolved, they track their impact and communicate progress both internally and externally.
- **Engage the Right Allies**: When constraints fall outside their land (legal, IT, etc.), they engage internal Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) or executive sponsors early to mitigate delays.

This approach helps Elite sellers mitigate deal risk proactively, build trust with the buyer, and maintain control over the sales timeline. They don't fear objections; they view them as valuable inputs to co-creating the right path forward.

**4. Mutual Action Plans and Follow-Through (Earn Commitment)**: High performers don't just ask for next steps, they co-create a roadmap with the customer. They know mutual commitment is only real when it's specific, owned, and time bound. To master this discipline, they follow a structured approach:

- **Co-Author the Timeline**: Rather than dictating a path, they build a collaborative timeline of milestones with the customer.
- **Define Roles and Responsibilities**: Each step in the plan includes who is doing what and by when, internally, and externally.
- **Use Verifiable Outcomes**: Track 'meetings scheduled' to concrete outcomes. Items like contract sent, legal review started, demo completed, pilot launched are buying signals even the client may not see.
- **Share the 'MAP'**: They document and share the **Mutual Action Plan (MAP)** via email or in a shared collaboration tool, reinforcing accountability.
- **Follow Up with Purpose**: Every follow-up references the MAP and asks for validation or adjustments, keeping momentum alive and transparent.

When creating your **MAP**, a **RACI**, also known as a RACI chart or responsibility assignment matrix, is a project management tool defines and clarifies roles and responsibilities within a project team. It categorizes roles into four components:

- ✓ **Responsible**: The person(s) who do the work.
- ✓ **Accountable**: The person who is answerable for the correct and thorough completion of the task.
- ✓ **Consulted**: The person(s) who provide information and expertise necessary to complete the task.
- ✓ **Informed**: The person(s) who need to be kept updated on progress or decisions do not contribute directly to the task.

This tool helps improve collaboration and ensures everyone knows who is responsible for what in a project. This habit helps Elite sellers reduce deal slippage, align with stakeholders across departments, and build trust through clarity and consistency. When customers see their path to value laid out with precision, commitment increases on both sides.

**5. Selling to Outcomes, Not Features (Solution Deliverables)**: Elite sellers understand value is in the impact, not in an extensive list of product features. Features describe what the product does, outcomes describe what the product enables. To sell in a way that sticks, Elite sellers:

- **Translate Features to Business Value**: They don't just list capabilities, they explain how those capabilities solve business pains, reduce costs, or accelerate revenue.

- **Use Outcome-Based Language**: Their presentations and proposals use terms like "revenue recovery," "process acceleration," or "risk reduction," making it easy for business leaders to see the payoff.
- **Anchor to Customer Metrics**: They ask which KPIs matter most to the buyer and link the solution to those metrics. This keeps the conversation relevant, and results focused.
- **Tell Outcome-Driven Stories**: They illustrate with short case studies or examples where similar customers achieved Real World results.
- **Deprioritize the Product Tour**: They resist the temptation to demo everything. Instead, they guide the client toward seeing how the solution delivers measurable improvements for great business outcomes.

By doing so, it differentiates them from the feature-focused sellers who merely educate, to elevating the conversation to strategic impact, earning the trust and attention of senior decision-makers.

These habits aren't coincidences. They are the outcome of purposeful discipline, guided by a framework like CORE(S) Framework™ brings structure and intentionality to every motion. Just as Elite athletes rely on muscle memory, Elite sales performers internalize these habits through repetition and reflection. Their days are shaped by thoughtful preparation, consistent execution, and mindful follow-through. They view every client's interaction as a learning opportunity and use each to refine their craft. Over time, what starts as a checklist becomes instinct, and instinct becomes mastery fueled by strategic intent.

## Real World Example

A sales executive preparing for a high-stake meeting with a large public-sector prospect understood success would hinge on more than just showing up informed, it required demonstrating domain expertise, political awareness, and empathy. This wasn't just another touchpoint; it was a credibility test. The rep knew key stakeholders were involved, each with different agendas, so he mapped each participant's role, objections, and desired outcomes. He also anticipated organizational concerns related to procurement timelines, compliance standards, and funding cycles. This level of pre-call planning wasn't just preparation; it was strategic positioning. He built a pre-call plan included:

- A quick-reference dossier on each attendee's background.
- A heat map showing gaps in their current infrastructure.
- Two discovery paths depending on stakeholder engagement.
- A closing question to confirm next steps aligns with the buyer's fiscal cycle.

The client later said, "You knew more about our situation than most of our own vendors." That level of preparation built immediate credibility and a long-term partnership.

**CORE(S) Tip:** Preparation isn't sign of nervousness; it's a sign of respect for your buyer time and goals.