A FIELD GUIDE · B2B SALES & PIPELINE

Stop Blaming the Customer

Five sales habits that quietly cap your revenue — and the system that fixes them.

Built from a real B2B sales team, fully anonymised. For founders who suspect the problem isn’t their prices.

thedico

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START HERE

Let me be straight with you

I sit in on a lot of sales huddles. Different industries, different countries — and I keep hearing the same sentence:

"The customer was too price-conscious."

It's said with a shrug. Deal's gone, here's why, nothing we could do. And sometimes it's partly true — markets are competitive, buyers shop around. But here's what bothers me about that sentence:

- Every time it gets said, and nobody pushes back, the team quietly moves the problem to a place they can't fix it.
- The reason for losing ends up being something the customer did — not something the team did.
- And a team that only blames the customer isn't really selling anymore. It's taking orders that sometimes don't come in.

This guide is me pulling that reason back to your side of the table — where you can actually do something about it. Five habits. One system underneath them. A one-page diagnostic at the end you can run on your own team this week.

> **Most deals you "lost on price" were lost in the pitch. And the pitch is the one thing you actually control.**
>
> ***— Maran***

SHIFT 01

Prove the value. Don’t defend the price.

YOU HEAR IT IN THE ROOM AS

“We lost it on price. They went with someone twenty percent cheaper.”

HERE’S WHAT’S REALLY GOING ON

- The customer wasn’t comparing your product to an equal product. They put your premium build next to something lighter, cheaper and lower-spec — and treated them as the same thing.
- That’s not losing on price. That’s losing on selling.
- The buyer never understood what they were choosing between. And making them understand? That was your job.

My test is one question: **were they comparing like with like?** Same materials, same build, same service backing, same delivery certainty — and you’re still pricier? Fine, that’s a real price conversation. But if the competitor was clearly selling less and you still lost, price was never the problem.

I’ll say it plainly: too many teams are selling a BMW with the attitude of a budget-hatchback salesperson. The product is premium. The pitch isn’t.

DO THIS ON MONDAY

- Take your last three lost deals.
- For each, write one line: were they comparing like with like?
- Every “no” is a deal you lost in the pitch, not the price — and the pitch is yours to fix.

You’re not too expensive. You just haven’t shown them what they’re actually buying.

— Maran

SHIFT 02

Know the budget before you build the quote.

YOU HEAR IT IN THE ROOM AS

“We quoted, they said it’s too expensive, now we’re slashing the price to save it.”

HERE’S WHAT’S REALLY GOING ON

- A quote got built with nobody knowing what the customer could actually spend.
- The technical team took the specs, built the best solution to them, sent back a number. Nobody told them: this is a budget buyer, the real range is this to that.
- So now you’re discounting a premium solution to hit a number you could have designed for from the start.

Discounting and building to a budget are **not the same move:**

- Discounting bleeds your margin — and teaches the customer to push harder next time.
- Building to a budget is just good selling. You can almost always hit a lower price point with a fit-for-purpose solution — *if* you know the target before the quote goes out, not after.

DO THIS ON MONDAY

- Add one line to the handover between sales and whoever builds your quotes: the customer’s likely budget, and why.
- Even a gut feel counts — “they mentioned cost three times, I’d put them mid-range.” It changes what comes back.

A discount is what you hand over when you forgot to ask the budget. Ask first. Build to it. Keep your margin.

— ***Maran***

SHIFT 03

Let proof do the selling.

YOU HEAR IT IN THE ROOM AS

"This customer only cares about cost. They don't care about quality."

HERE'S WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

- I push back hard on this one. It's mostly something we do to ourselves.
- A buyer's price-sensitivity isn't fixed. A lot of it is set by how you sell.
- Here's a tell: a customer who asks you for a reference is *not* purely price-driven. They're trying to de-risk a decision. And the ones who aren't asking? You can often turn them into that kind of buyer.

The way you do that is **proof — not claims:**

- "We're high quality" is a claim. Every competitor says it.
- "Here's a site like yours, here's the before-and-after result, here's who else in your sector we supply" — that's proof.
- Proof moves a buyer off price and onto risk, fit and outcome. That's the ground you want to be selling on.

DO THIS ON MONDAY

- Build a one-page proof pack for your top two or three applications — one real case, one real result, a short reference list.
- From now on, the quote goes out *with* the proof. Never on its own.

Stop calling them price-conscious. They just aren't convinced yet — and convincing them is your job.

— Maran

SHIFT 04

Treat pipeline as a daily number, not a hope.

YOU HEAR IT IN THE ROOM AS

"I was busy all day. — but ask how many new accounts they opened, and it's one. Or none."

HERE'S WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

- When a team is short on pipeline, it's almost always because pipeline-building isn't measured as its own thing.
- It's what happens *if there's time* after chasing live deals. And there's never time.
- So the pipeline quietly starves — while everyone stays genuinely, exhaustingly busy.

Busy isn't the metric. **Reach is** — and reach has two parts:

- Volume — how many accounts you touched.
- Depth — how far you actually got.
- One without the other builds nothing. Ten shallow touches is noise. One deep conversation a day won't fill a funnel.

DO THIS ON MONDAY

- Set a daily new-account number. Pick one your team can actually hit — and "touched" can be as small as one real outbound email.
- Ask for it at the end of every day: how many, and what happened with each.
- The end-of-day habit matters as much as the number. It's how you catch a starving pipeline on day two, not week six.

Pipeline isn't what your team does when the day goes quiet. Building pipeline *is* the day's work.

— Maran

SHIFT 05

Follow up like a professional, not a debt collector.

YOU HEAR IT IN THE ROOM AS

“Any update on the order? Any movement on our quote? — again, and again.”

HERE’S WHAT’S REALLY GOING ON

- A follow-up that only ever asks “where’s my order” teaches the customer one thing: you make contact when you want something.
- Those messages get skimmed and filed.
- Same posture with your existing customers — you go quiet until there’s something to sell, then reappear. That’s a transactional relationship, and those only pay off when the customer happens to need something the exact day you happen to call.

The fix isn’t complicated. Just **more deliberate:**

- Every touch carries something useful — a result, a note from the field, something genuinely interesting to *them*.
- With existing customers, stay in touch when you’re *not* selling. A courtesy call. How’s the equipment running. What’s ahead this year.
- Do that consistently and something flips — the customer surfaces the need themselves. The inquiry comes to you.

DO THIS ON MONDAY

- Look at your last ten follow-ups. How many would be worth reading if you weren’t the one who sent them?
- Then pick five existing customers and call them. No agenda. Just “how’s it running, what’s ahead for you?”

> **If the only time you call is to chase a PO, don’t act surprised when they stop picking up.**
>
> — ***Maran***

THE LAYER UNDERNEATH

A system, not a filing cabinet

The five shifts are habits. And habits don't survive a busy week unless something underneath makes the right thing the easy thing.

- For a sales team, that something is usually your CRM.
- Most SME CRMs are expensive filing cabinets — data goes in, nothing useful comes out.
- A few low-effort changes turn it back into a system:

Make status visible at a glance.

- Colour-code accounts — client, service contract, prospect, dormant.
- Open an account and the relationship should hit you before you read a single note. Half the deals I see "discovered" late were never hidden — just invisible.

Let the system tell the truth.

- Active service contract and a real relationship? The win-probability should say so.
- A number that ignores the relationship isn't a forecast. It's a guess.

Capture the day, every day.

- A quick end-of-day log from each rep — accounts touched, what happened.
- That's how you catch a gap while it's small — not after it's a revenue problem.

Put the answers where the rep is.

- Battle cards, proof packs, competitor comparisons — mapped to applications, one click away.
- A rep who can't find what you already know falls back on the one thing always to hand: price.

> **Your reps aren't the problem. Your system is making the wrong thing easier than the right thing — and that's fixable this week, with a spreadsheet.**
>
> — ***Maran***

Run this on your own team

> **The empty boxes below are your cheapest growth this quarter. Start there.**
>
> — ***Maran***

Tick only what's honestly true — not what you mean to do.

VALUE & PRICE

- ☐ When we lose on price, we can say whether the customer was even comparing like with like.
- ☐ Our team can say, specifically, why we cost more than a named competitor.
- ☐ Price-conscious buyers get proof from us — not just a lower number.

PROOF

- ☐ Every quote goes out with a relevant case, result or reference attached.
- ☐ We have proof packs for our main applications — not just claims.

RELATIONSHIP

- ☐ Our follow-ups carry something useful — not just "any update?"
- ☐ We contact existing customers when we have nothing to sell them.

THE QUOTE

- ☐ Whoever builds our quotes knows the customer's likely budget before they start.
- ☐ We can build a fit-for-purpose solution at a lower price point without gutting our margin.

PIPELINE

- ☐ Pipeline-building has its own daily target, separate from chasing live deals.
- ☐ We know how many new accounts each rep opened yesterday.
- ☐ We measure both volume (accounts touched) and depth (how far we got).

THE SYSTEM

- ☐ Account status — client, prospect, dormant — is visible at a glance.
- ☐ Reps can find battle cards and proof in a click, mapped to applications.

HOW TO READ YOUR SCORE

11–13 A system in place — tighten the edges. **7–10** A capable team on shaky rails — the habits exist, the system isn't holding them. **Under 7** Improvising. The highest-return work you can do this quarter.

WHERE THIS GOES NEXT

The knowing isn't the hard part

- More empty boxes than full ones? You're not behind. You're where most SME sales teams actually are.
- Most teams I see have drifted from a real sales process into a bunch of individuals improvising — each carrying their deals around in their own heads. The price reflex is just the loudest symptom.
- The gap is almost never knowing what to do. It's turning five sensible habits into something a busy team runs every day without thinking. That's the work.

> **Reading the guide is the easy ten percent. Doing it every day is the other ninety — and that's where I come in.**
>
> — ***Maran***

LET'S TALK — FOUNDER TO FOUNDER

No form. No funnel. Just a conversation about where your sales motion actually leaks — and the highest-return fix for *your* team.

Maran

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thedico helps SME founders and B2B sales teams move from relationship-dependent, individual-driven selling to a system that scales. This guide was built from a real client engagement, fully anonymised.