



The Unconscious Bottleneck Playbook

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Who this is for

If you run a service business and you’ve ever thought:

- “They couldn’t sell it like I can.”
- “We hired... and it didn’t work.”
- “I’m the only one who can explain what we do properly.”

This is for you.

The problem

Sales isn't like hiring an accountant or a project manager. Those roles can follow clear inputs/outputs. But in a service business, the owner is usually selling from years of delivery experience, and the "sales process" is mostly instinct. That's the Unconscious Bottleneck: the better you are, the less you can explain what you're doing. Until you document it, every sales hire is forced to reinvent your brain.

How to use this

Work through the 5 documents below. You can complete the first draft in 60–90 minutes. Don't aim for perfect — aim for usable. A salesperson can improve a system. They can't build one from scratch while they're under quota pressure.

Document 1: Your Ideal Customer Persona (ICP)

Goal: define who you can repeatedly win with (and who you should avoid)

Step 1 — Pull your "Top 10" list

List your 10 best clients from the last 3–5 years (profitability + ease + results):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Step 2 — Find the pattern

Circle what shows up most often:

- Industry:
- Company size (revenue or headcount):
- Role/title of buyer:
- Trigger event (why they bought then):
- Budget range:
- Speed of decision (fast/slow):

- What they valued most:

Step 3 — Write your ICP in one paragraph

“Our ideal client is a _____ company with _____ employees, typically led by _____. They usually reach out when __. **They value _____ and they’re willing to pay £ to solve it.**”

Document 2: Qualification Criteria

Goal: stop wasting time on “nice chats” and time-wasters

Create a simple scorecard. Your salesperson should be able to qualify in minutes.

The 5-point qualification scorecard (Yes/No):

1. Problem is real: they can clearly describe the pain and impact
2. They’re the right type of company: matches ICP
3. They have authority: decision maker is involved or reachable
4. They have urgency: a reason this needs solving soon
5. They have money: budget exists or can be found

Your minimum threshold:

- Booked discovery requires at least: __/5
- Proposal requires at least: __/5

Disqualifiers (instant “no”):

-
-

Document 3: Meeting Booking Process

Goal: turn “random outreach” into a repeatable sequence

This is the piece most founders skip — and it’s why reps fail.

A) Where meetings come from (pick 1–3):

- Referrals
- LinkedIn outbound
- Email outbound
- Partnerships
- Inbound content
- Networking/events
- Other: _____

B) Your simple outbound cadence (example)

Write what your rep should do, in order.

Day 1:

- Channel: _____
- Message type: _____
- Script template name: _____

Day 3:

- Channel: _____
- Message type: _____

Day 6:

- Channel: _____
- Message type: _____

Day 10:

- Channel: _____
- Message type: _____

C) The first message template (fill in the blanks)

“Hey [Name] — quick one.

I noticed [relevant observation].

Typically when [their situation], we see [pain/cost].

If it’s useful, I can share [one specific outcome] and how we approach it.

Worth a quick 15 mins next week?”

D) What your rep should never say

List your 3 brand-killer phrases:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Document 4: Common Objections + Your Responses

Goal: turn your founder “instinct” into a script a rep can follow

Write the top 8 objections you hear most often:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

- 7.
- 8.

For each objection, fill this in:

Objection: “ _____ ”

What it really means: (fear / risk / uncertainty)

Questions to ask: (2–3 questions)

-
-

Your response framework: (how you explain it)

Proof to use: (case study / numbers / example)

Repeat for all 8.

Document 5: The Buyer Journey Map

Goal: make it obvious how deals move from “first call” to “signed”

Most reps don’t fail at selling — they fail at navigating your buying process.

A) Stages (your pipeline)

Stage 1:

Stage 2:

Stage 3:

Stage 4:

Stage 5:

B) Exit criteria for each stage

Stage 1 is complete when:

Stage 2 is complete when:

Stage 3 is complete when:

Stage 4 is complete when:

Stage 5 is complete when:

C) Typical deal timeline

From first call to signed: _____ days/weeks

D) Stakeholders involved

Decision maker is usually: _____

Influencers are usually: _____

Blockers are usually: _____

Procurement involved? Yes/No

E) The “no surprises” rule

List 3 things you must know before a proposal goes out:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Hiring Readiness Score (quick self-check)

Give yourself 1 point for each “yes”:

- We have a clear ICP written down
- We have qualification rules (what’s in/out)
- We have a repeatable meeting booking cadence
- We have objection handling documented
- We have a buyer journey map + pipeline stages
- We know what good activity looks like weekly
- We know what the rep should do on Day 1 / Week 1
- We can measure leading indicators (not just revenue)

Score: __/8

- 0–3: Hiring now will feel like gambling
- 4–6: You’ll get inconsistent results
- 7–8: You’re ready to hire and scale