CourseMints

GUIDE

Sales Conversations for Non-Salespeople

Sell Honestly by Helping People Decide

SELF-PACED PDF COURSE

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Sales Conversations for Non-Salespeople

Sell Honestly by Helping People Decide

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How to Use This Guide

You did not choose your work because you love selling. You are a designer, a consultant, a bookkeeper, a coach, a founder, a therapist, a tradesperson. You are good at what you do, and you have discovered that being good is not enough: someone has to say yes before you can help them, and getting to that yes involves a conversation you would rather avoid.

This guide is about that conversation. Not cold outreach, funnels or advertising, but the moment a real person with a real problem is talking to you and wondering whether to buy. You will learn to run that conversation in a way that feels natural, because it is built on things you already value: curiosity, honesty and helping people.

The idea behind the method

Selling, done well, is helping someone make a good decision: sometimes yes, sometimes “not yet” or “not you”. Your job is not to push people toward yes but to help them see their situation clearly, understand what you offer and decide with confidence. Work this way and you stop feeling like a salesperson and start feeling like what you are: a professional who helps people think.

What you will learn

- Why pressure backfires, and how people actually decide to buy.
- How to open a conversation so it feels like a consultation, not a pitch.
- How to ask discovery questions that reveal the real need, using the SPIN model in plain language.
- How to listen and summarize so people feel understood.
- How to present your offer clearly, say your price without flinching and handle concerns honestly.

- How to ask for a decision without pressure, and follow up so nothing falls through the cracks.
- Where honest selling draws the line, and how to keep a simple record of every conversation.

What this guide does not cover

Finding prospects and outreach are covered in the CourseMints guide AI Client Acquisition System. Webinars, applications and funnels for premium programs are in High-Ticket Course Funnel. Setting your prices is in Freelance Pricing Playbook, and negotiation tactics are in Queen of Negotiations. This guide focuses on the conversation itself, in enough depth that you can run it well in any of those settings.

How to get the most from it

1. **Read Chapters 1 and 2 first.** They change how the rest feels.
2. **Pick three real conversations** you expect to have in the next month. Use them as your case studies.
3. **Write your own words.** Every chapter asks you to draft your opener, questions or price statement. Scripts in your own words sound like you.
4. **Practice out loud,** ideally with a friend playing the buyer. Chapter 12 has a four-week practice plan.
5. **Debrief every real conversation** for five minutes. That is where most of the learning happens.

TIP

About the examples

The people in the example boxes (Grace, a freelance bookkeeper for small businesses; Tomás, cofounder of a small company selling inventory software to restaurants; and Ruth, an independent interior designer) are fictional composites, written to show the methods in realistic situations. Adapt the scripts to your culture, your industry and the person in front of you.

CHAPTER 1

Selling Is Helping Someone Decide

01

Most people who dislike selling are not afraid of conversations. They are afraid of becoming someone they do not respect: the pushy car dealer, the cold caller who will not take no for an answer, the “expert” who invents urgency. If that is your picture of selling, of course you avoid it. The good news is that the pushy approach is not only unpleasant, it often does not work, especially for considered purchases.

Why pressure backfires

THE SCIENCE

Two well-established findings

Persuasion knowledge. Marketing researchers Marian Friestad and Peter Wright described in 1994 how people learn, over a lifetime, to recognize persuasion tactics. Once a buyer notices a tactic (a fake deadline, flattery, a rehearsed pitch), they tend to discount what the seller says and become more guarded.

Reactance. Psychologist Jack Brehm’s reactance theory, first set out in the 1960s, describes how people push back when they feel their freedom to choose is being threatened. Pressure to decide now, or the sense of being cornered, often produces resistance rather than agreement.

Together they explain a familiar experience: the harder someone pushes, the more you want to leave. Pressure can win a quick yes on a small, impulsive purchase, but for anything people think carefully about (a service, a contract, software for their business) it damages trust, and trust is what they are really deciding on.

The reframe: you are a decision helper

Replace “How do I get them to buy?” with “How do I help them make a good decision?” This changes what you do in every part of the conversation:

Pushy selling	Helping people decide
Talks about the offer from the start	Asks about their situation first
Treats every person as a buyer	Checks whether there is a real fit
Hides the price until the end	Discusses budget openly and early
Treats concerns as obstacles to overcome	Treats concerns as useful information
Uses urgency to force a decision	Asks for a decision and accepts the answer
Counts a “no” as failure	Counts a clear “no” as a good outcome

A conversation that ends in a clear, well-reasoned “no” is a success: the buyer avoided a bad purchase, you avoided a bad client, and you both kept your time and your respect for each other.

The helper’s trap

Non-salespeople often fail in the opposite direction. Afraid of being pushy, they:

- Give away a full consultation for free and never mention working together.
- Over-explain their process for 20 minutes without asking what the buyer needs.
- Mention a price, apologize for it and offer a discount nobody asked for.
- End with “Let me know if you’re interested”, leaving the buyer to do all the work.

Helping someone decide includes helping them reach a decision. Avoiding the ask is not kindness; it leaves the buyer stuck with an unsolved problem and an unclear next step.

How to adopt the stance

1. **Set an intention before every conversation:** “My goal is to find out whether I can help. If I can, I’ll make it easy to say yes. If I can’t, I’ll make it easy to say no.”
2. **Decide in advance what a good fit looks like,** and what would make you recommend someone else.
3. **Plan to ask for a decision or a clear next step** before the conversation ends.
4. **Measure yourself on clarity, not on yes:** did they leave clearer about their situation and options?

EXAMPLE

Grace’s free consultations

Grace, a freelance bookkeeper, dreaded sales calls so much that she turned them into free advice sessions. She would spend 45 minutes explaining how a café owner could fix his own books, then say “Let me know if you’d like help.” Most never replied. When she rewrote her intention (“find out if I can help, and if so make it easy to say yes”), she spent the first half of each call on questions, kept her advice to one useful tip, and ended by describing her monthly service and asking whether it sounded right. Her calls became shorter, and more of them ended in a decision, one way or the other.

EXERCISE

Your beliefs about selling

1. When you imagine selling your work, what picture comes to mind? What do you fear becoming?

2. Which “helper’s trap” behaviors do you recognize in yourself?