

How to Advance The Sale With 95% Certainty



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Sales Expert Presenter: James Muir



James Muir

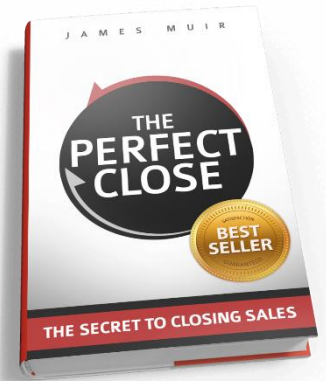
How to Advance The Sale With 95% Certainty

How to Add Value On Every Sales Call



With James Muir

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Author of bestselling book The Perfect Close
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@B2B_SalesTips



My Confession

- I want to change you because of this session.
- Cool science!
- **Change the way you close sales.**
- Be convinced that you've seen the **best practice** in closing & know exactly how to do it.
- Make TONS of sales.
- Are you ready?

The Best Practice in Closing

1. Highest success rate (in the 95% range).
2. Zero pressure.
3. Involves just two questions.
4. Flexible enough to use on every kind of sale at every given stage.
5. You can learn it in less than an hour & master it in a day.
6. Helpful for new or inexperienced people who dislike the "stigma" of selling or find closing awkward or uncomfortable.



What is Closing?

- **Most Common Definition:**

- “The thing you say that gets the customer to buy.”

- **The Problem:**

- This paints the close as an all or nothing request.

- Complex sales cannot be treated this way.

- **Another Common Definition:**

- “Everything you do in the sale from the beginning to the end.”

- **The Problem:**

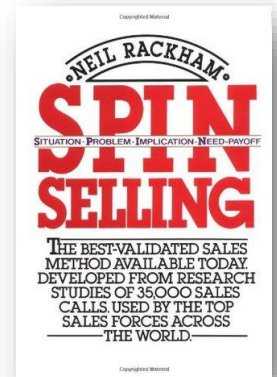
- It’s too broad to be useful.
- Basically redefines closing as all of selling.

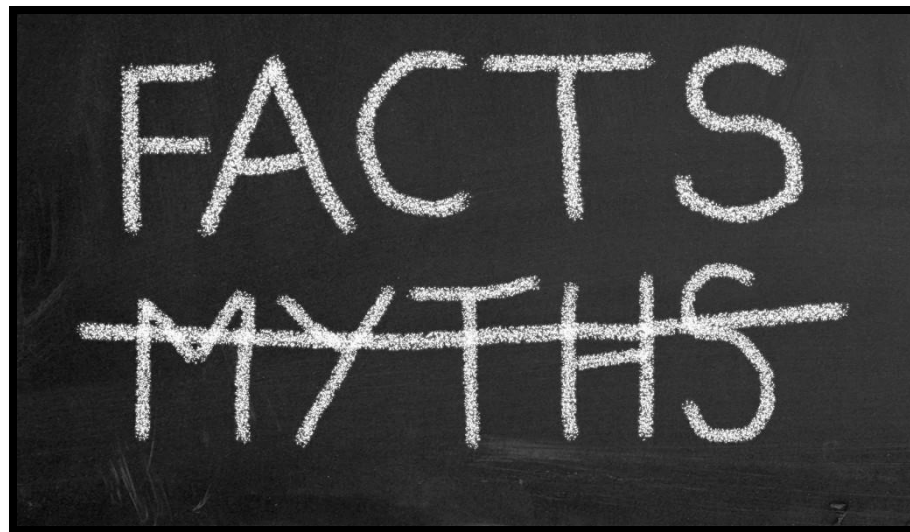
- There’s no reason for us to reinvent the wheel here...

broadcast signal
def·i·ni·tion n. 1.
The teacher gave de
the new words.

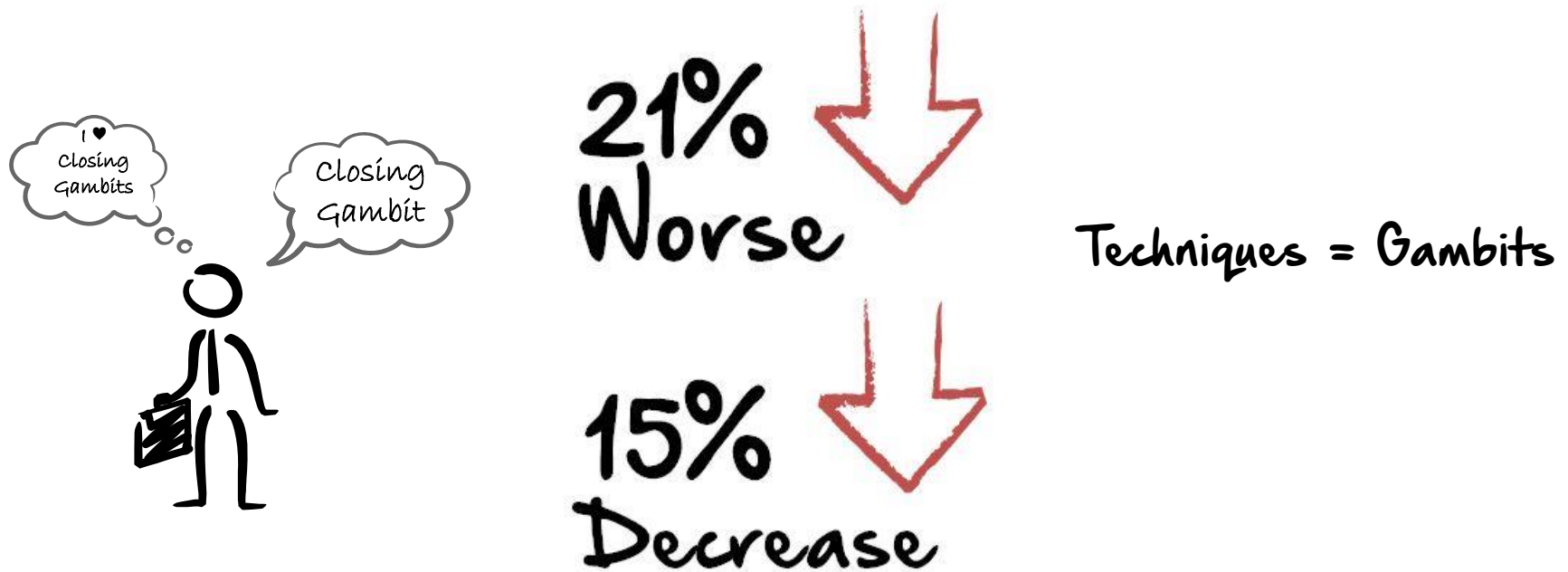
Neil Rackham

- Conducted the largest sales study ever & authored a book called SPIN Selling.
- **Closing** – “Anything that puts the customer in a position involving some kind of commitment.”
- **Advance** – “Progressing the sale forward in a little way.”
- **Continuation** – “Situation where the sale will continue yet no specific action has been agreed upon by the customer to move forward.”





Myth #1 – Closing Gambits Work

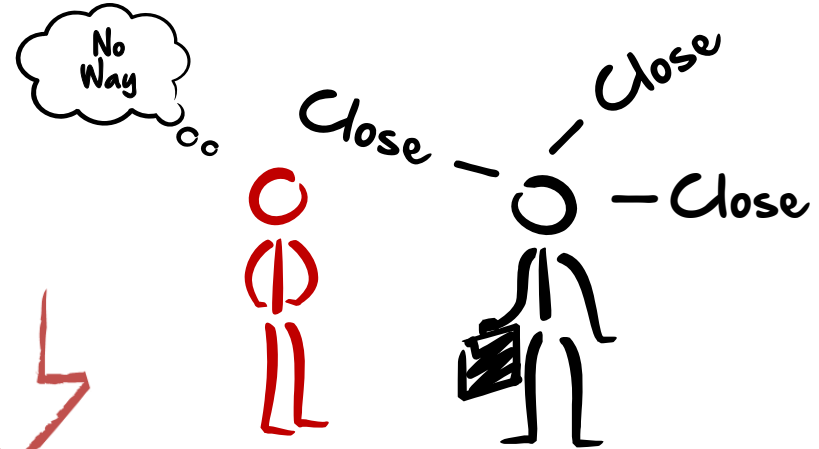


- **FACT** – Closing gambits are negatively related to success & decrease sales. (in the 15% range)

Myth #2 – Always Be Closing

- A – Always
- B – Be
- C – Closing

33%
Less
Effective



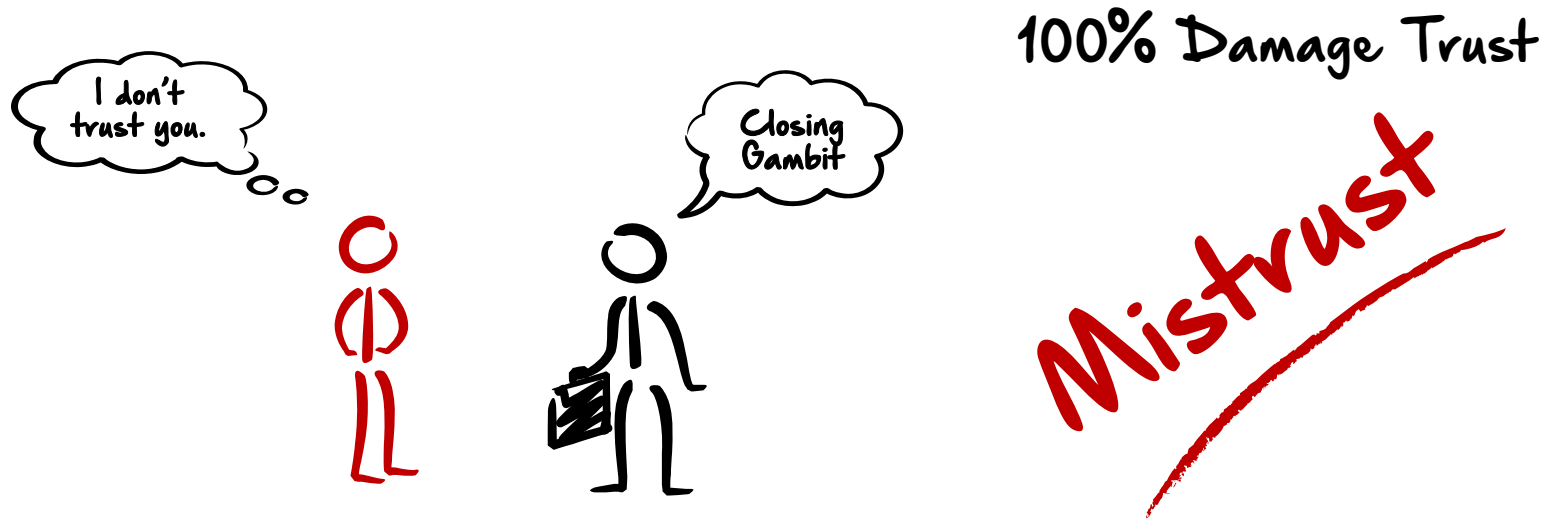
- **FACT** – Past the first attempt there is a negative correlation between closing frequency and sales call success

Myth #3 – Closing gambits work on both large & small sales.



- **FACT** – Closing gambits become counter-productive above \$109.

Myth #4 – Closing gambits show you want the business.



Techniques Tested: Assumptive, Yes set, Model/Example, Reciprocity, If-Then, Impending Event

- **FACT** – Closing gambits damage trust.

Myth #5 – Customers are happier after making a decision. (so using closing gambits is actually helping them)



Pressure

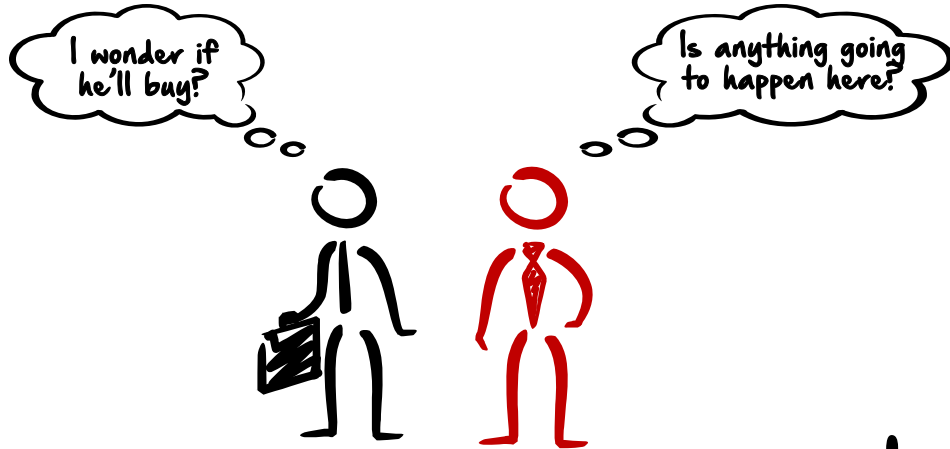


- Negative after-sale ramifications

- Buyer's Remorse
- Complaints
- Cancellations

- **FACT** – Customers are less satisfied with their decisions made under pressure.

Myth #6 – The sale will close itself



No ask = No Sale

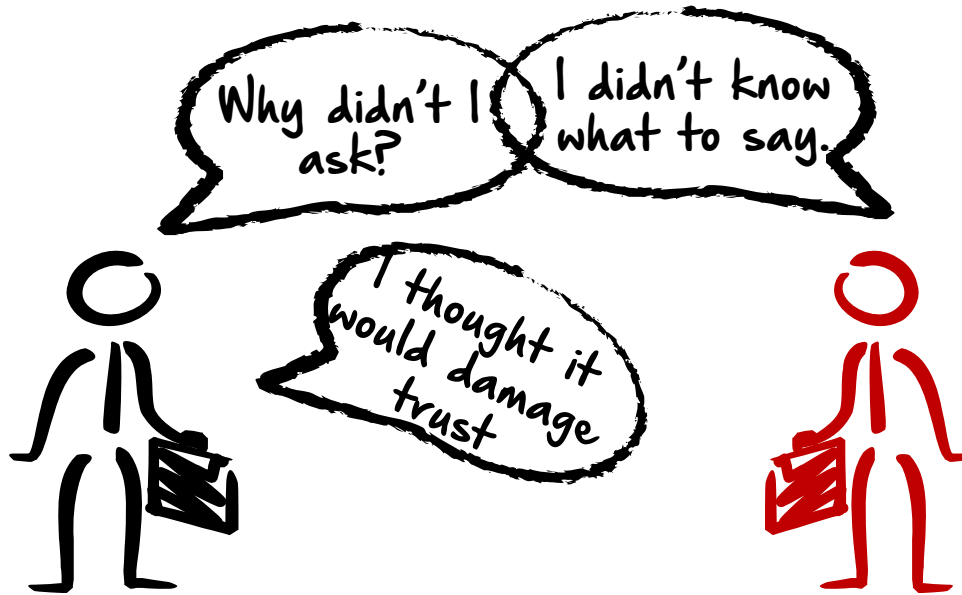
**Just
atten**



“Traditional closing techniques are not the best way to obtain commitment from a customer in a major sale. But... as we’ve seen, doing nothing isn’t effective either. The sale doesn’t close itself.” – Neil Rackham

- **FACT** – The sale will not close itself. You must make an effort

Myth #7 – Salespeople fear asking for commitment.



Half- Myth
People fear damaging trust & appearing pushy.

- **5 Reasons**

1. The professional fears being pushy.
2. The professional fears being humiliated.
3. The professional fears being under-prepared.
4. The professional fears losing a sale.
5. The professional is ashamed to be in sales.

These challenges can be addressed by:

1. By placing a little thought into the *way we ask*, we can advance the sale without being pushy.
2. By crafting questions that make *replies predictable*, we eliminate risk of humiliation.
3. By keeping our questions *simple & facilitative*, there is no need to over-prepare.
4. By using an *ingeniously designed query*, each reply will advance the sale.
5. Lastly, *selling is service*. By selling with *pure intent*, sales becomes a noble profession not worthy of shame.

FACT – Addressing the underlying issues with closing addresses fear & reluctance.

Quick Review: What is an Advance?

Advance – An event that takes place, either in the call or right after it that moves the sale forward toward a decision.

– Neil Rackham – “Progressing the sale forward in a little way.”

- Why is the concept of an Advance important?

The Critical Advance

- “Advances are especially important in more complex sales. In most major-account sales forces, **fewer than 10 percent of calls** result in either an order or a no-sale.”
 - Neil Rackham
- **Advances Show** Interest & Engagement
 - They tell us how to invest our time
- **Business Ball**
 - This is like throwing a ball to the client
 - If they take the effort to throw the back – they want to play.



The 3 Rules of Advancing The Sale

- **The 3 Rules of Advancing the Sale**

1. Get an Advance on every encounter.
2. Get an Advance on every encounter.
3. Get an Advance on every encounter.



- **Move the sale forward in every single encounter.**

Create a steady chain of unbroken Advances that ultimately lead to the sale.

The Acid Test for a Sales Advance

- **The Acid Test For Sales Advances**

- Action
- Energy

ActionEnergy

- **The Action/Energy Test:**

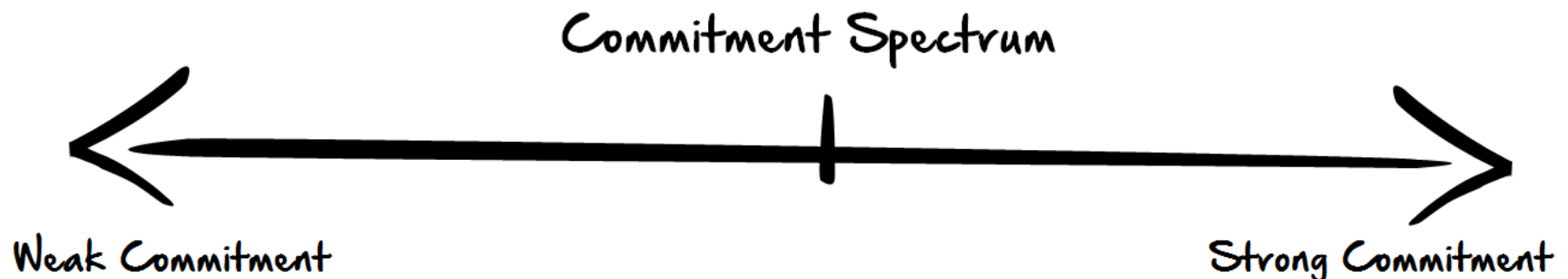
1. Tells us how engaged the prospect is
2. Potentially move the sale one step closer to closure

- **If the client is not taking an action, it is NOT an Advance.**

- **If the action the client takes requires little to no energy, it is NOT an Advance.**

- Examples of Advances

- Arrange for you to meet with a higher-level decision maker
- Arranging a group meeting for you to review the details of your proposed solution face-to-face
- Have a conversation or site-visit with a reference you provide



Exercise: What are the typical advances for our kind of sale?

Possible Advance / Client Action	Measured By	Impact	Achievability / Reasonable	Best Choice / Priority
Get introduced to executive management	Introduction takes place	High	4	
Agree to do assessment & share financials	Shares financials, schedules assessment	High	2	
Arrange meeting with technical team to discuss requirements/options	Technical meeting takes place	Medium	3	
Meet with reference account	Reference account meeting takes place	Medium	3	
Schedule demonstration	Demonstration takes place	Low	5	

Download: the Sales Advance Brainstorm Form at: <http://puremuir.com/resources/>

Step 1: Brainstorm & list possible Advances in the Possible Advance/Client Action column.

Step 2: Review your ideas, then in the Measured By column how you will know when this action has taken place.

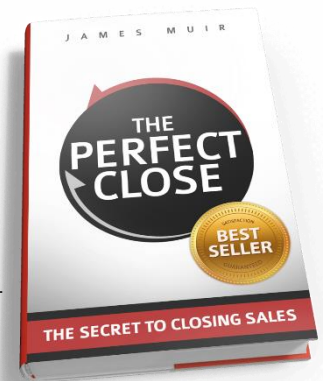
Step 3: In the Impact column rate (High, Medium, Low) how impactful each Advance would be on the development of your sale.

Step 4: In the Achievability/Reasonable column, rate each advance from 1 to 5 (1=very difficult; 5=easy to achieve)

Step 5: Before an actual call prioritize the best choices & put the top 3 in your encounter plan.

Why did we do this exercise?

1. 90% of the time we don't win or lose – what we get is an Advance or a Continuation.
 2. Most meetings you will be closing on one of these Advances you just defined.
- Are you all ready to learn The Perfect Close?



There Are Two Questions

- An initial question & a follow-up question.

Here are the questions:

1. **Initial Question:** "Does it make sense for us to X?"
2. **Follow-Up Question:** "What is a good next step?"



Let's examine question one.

- The formula is: "Does it makes sense for us to X?"
- Where "X" is a logical advance for your sale.
- Examples:
 - "Does it make sense to talk about **scheduling a site visit** for you so you can see the product in a live environment?"
 - "Does it make sense for us to talk about **putting together a financial assessment** of your current situation?"
 - "Does it make sense for us to **schedule a demonstration** so your whole team can see it in action?"
 - "Does it make sense for us to talk about **wrapping everything up?**"

Nuances of Question One

- Question one is not really a closing question.

“Does it make sense?” ≠ “Will you buy?”

- “Does it make sense...” is not:
 - Will you buy?
 - Will you X? (i.e. do something)
 - Do you want it in green or blue? (loaded)
 - Where do you want it shipped? (assumed)
 - Q. Do you have it in X? A. Would you buy it if we had it in X?
 - If I can do X will you buy today?
 - Shall we get started on the contract?
 - This is the perfect time to move forward, isn't it? (manipulative)
 - This offer ends today, and you don't want to miss out do you? (manipulative)
- Question one is not **any** form of ultimatum.
- We are not asking our client to DO anything.
- We are simply asking if a given thing (your advance) makes sense.

Question One is a TIMING Question

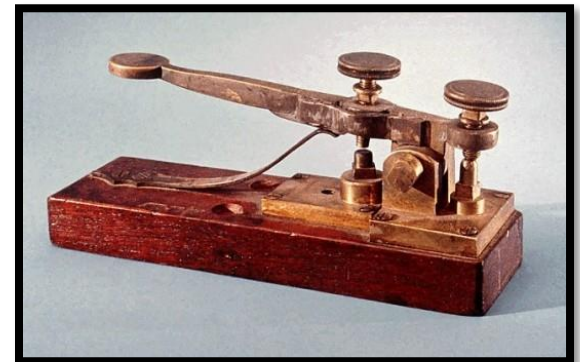
- We're not asking them to do anything. Rather, we're asking if the **timing is right** to do something.
- Important difference between asking to do something & asking if it makes sense to do something:

Differences between traditional closes & The Perfect Close

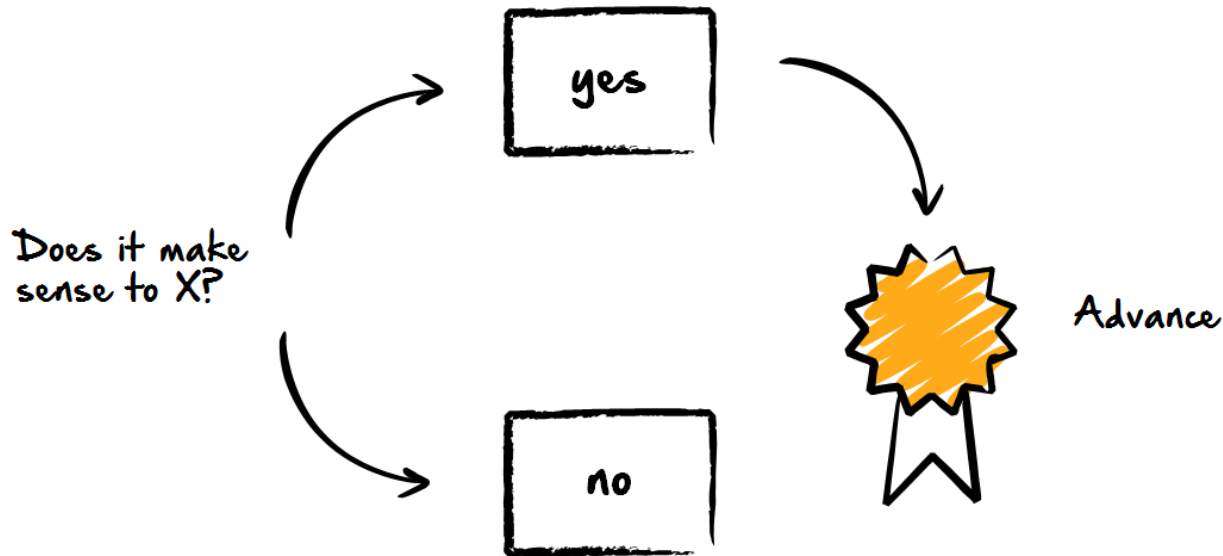
Will you X?	Does it make sense to X?
Yes/No question on a single course of action.	Cannot reject the course of action—only the timing of it.
Timed improperly, creates pressure and tension.	Eliminates the pressure and tension risk of improperly timed questions. (because it is a timing question)
May cause clients to view you as pushy and limit future communications.	Eliminates the risk that clients may see you as pushy. Keeps clients communicating throughout their buying process.
Leaves you at square one if the reply is no.	Sets up your follow-up question (question 2) if the reply is negative.
Reveals little to nothing about where the client is in their buying process.	Reveals much about where the client is within their buying process.
	Paces the sale at the rate the customer is ready to go.
	Feels facilitative to clients and makes them feel in control.

Telegraphing Your Request

- When asking clients if it “makes sense” to do something, we’re not actually asking them to take that step yet, but **they can clearly see that’s the direction we’re heading.**
- **We are telegraphing our request.**
- Regardless of the answer it leaves us on **emotionally higher ground.**
 - Because it’s a timing question, we have more options & it sets up question two.
- These are **subtle and important differences** between question one & traditional closing methods.
- That makes it better.



The Perfect Close Model



- Only two possible outcomes to "Does it make sense to X?"—yes or no.
 - "Yes" – Great! You just successfully executed with a single question!
 - It's time to schedule that next step!.
- But... what if they say "No"?

What if they say “No”?

- What have they said “no” to exactly?
 - Have they said, “No, I will not buy?”
 - **No, because we did not ask them to buy.**
 - Did they say, “No, I will not take your action?”
 - **No, because we did not ask them to take an action.**
- When clients answer “no” to question one they are **sharing important information** about where they are in their buying cycle.
 - That is, the timing is not right yet for that step.
- This is perfectly ok. Every opportunity is different.
- Now it’s time for **question two.**



Question Two of The Perfect Close

- Question two of the perfect close is:

“What is a good next step then?”

What to expect:

- In 90% of cases—your client will simply suggest a very logical next step for advancing the sale.
- This perfectly matches the **pace** at which the client is ready to go.

Example Vignette

PROFESSIONAL: "Does it make sense for us to talk about putting together a financial assessment of your current situation to see where and what the upside might be?"

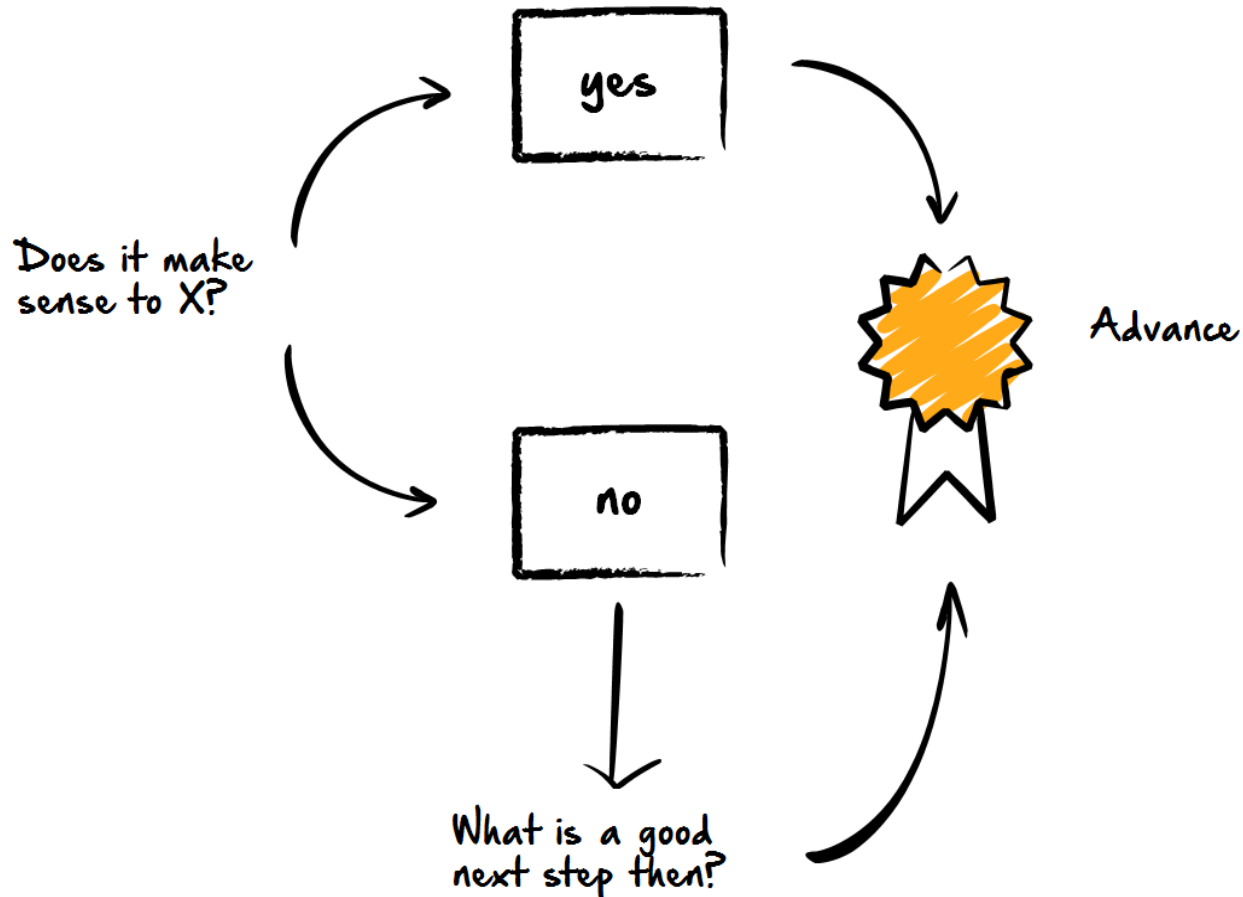
POTENTIAL CLIENT: "No, I don't think so."

PROFESSIONAL: "I see. Well what do you think would make a good next step then?"

POTENTIAL CLIENT: "The assessment sounds valuable. Do you have an example of something you've prepared for another client so we can review it as a team?"

PROFESSIONAL: "Absolutely. Let's schedule some time to go over it together so you know what you're looking at, and then you can explain it to your team. Or I'd be happy to do that for you if you like."

The Perfect Close Model



The Perfect Close model with both questions incorporated.
With my own teams this model by itself will produce a successful Advance 90-95% of the time.

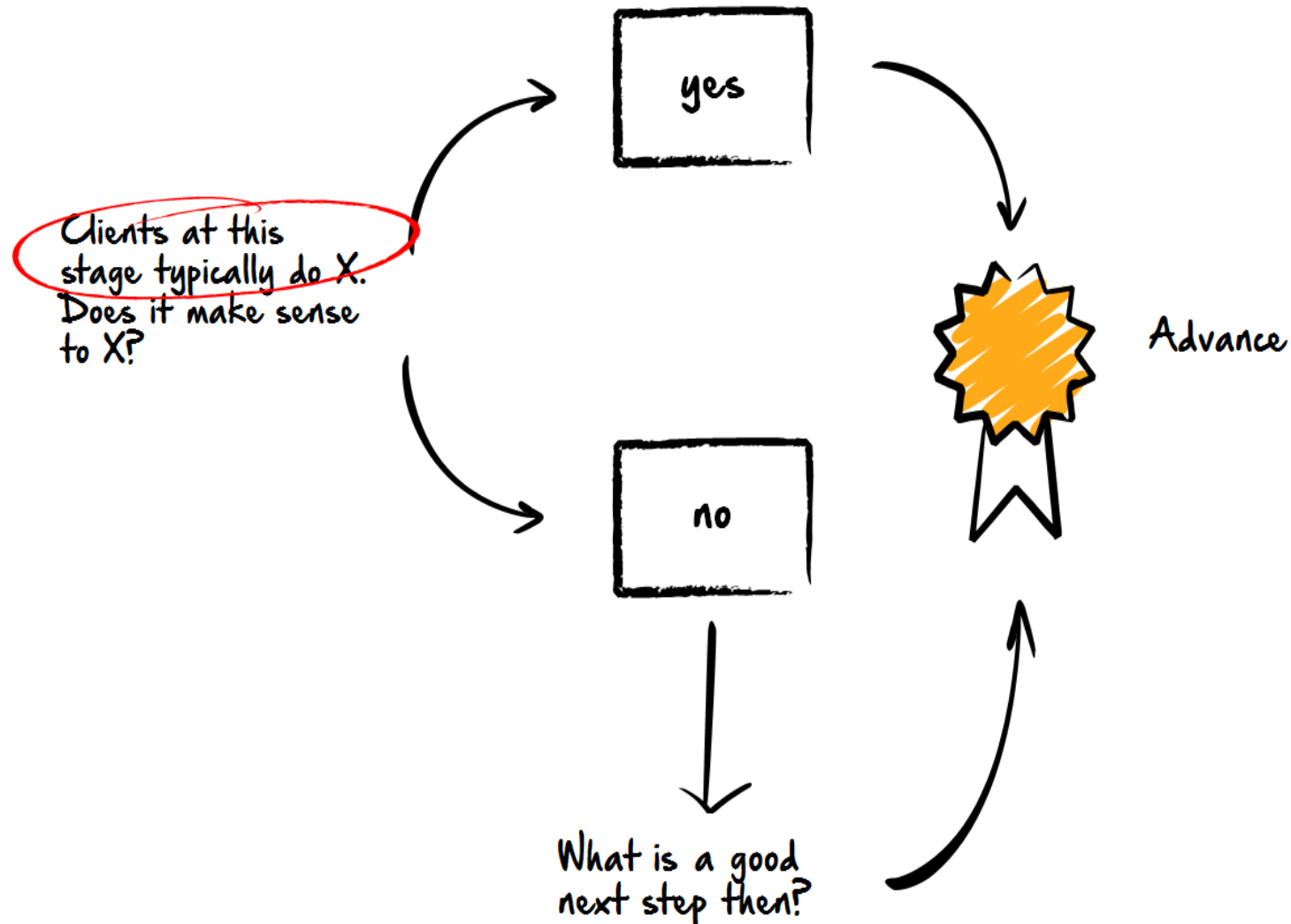
95% is pretty good but it's not "perfect".

What we're going to do now is look at some variations that will help you shore up that final 5%.

“The Suggestion”

- Minor tweak to question one.
 - Helpful when prospects have little purchasing experience or no clear vision of how they will evaluate options. These prospects need your help navigating their buyer’s journey.
- Simply add one additional statement before asking question one.
- That statement is some variation of:
 - *“Other clients at this stage typically do X as a next step in their evaluation.”*
- Here, X is the advance that you are about to check the timing of.
 - Example: “Other clients at this stage typically have us perform a workflow analysis so we can see where you’ll get the most improvement. Does it make sense for us to talk about scheduling a workflow analysis so we can see where the best efficiencies can be gained?”
- This variation changes the first question formula to:
 - *“Clients at this stage typically do X” + “Does it make sense for us to do X?”*

The Perfect Close – “The Suggestion”



“The Fall-Back”

- Use it any time you are not able to get your ideal advance.
- “Fall back” to a secondary or back-up advances if your ideal advance proves unobtainable.

Question One:

“Does it makes sense to do X?”

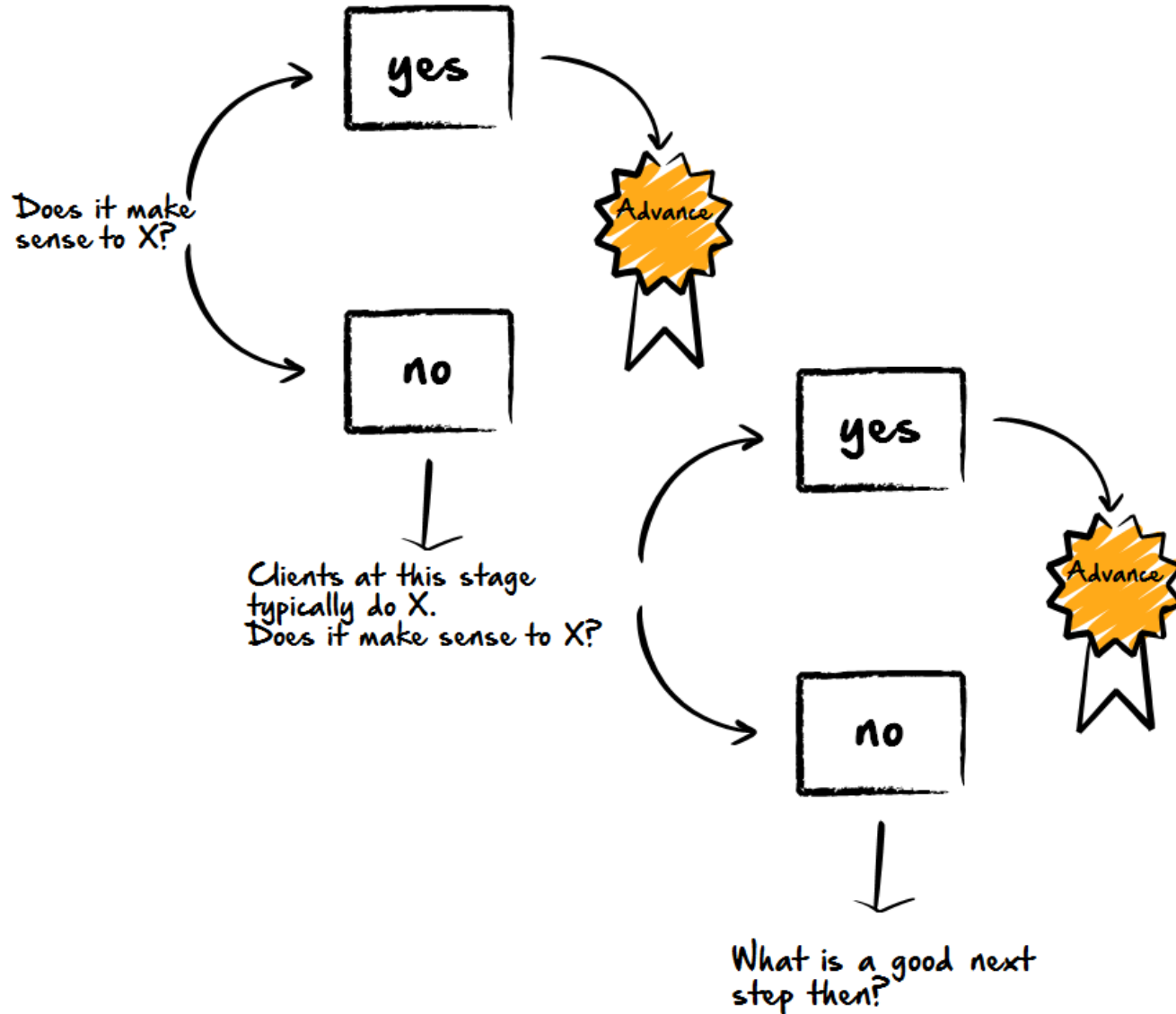
Question Two: (if question one fails)

“Clients at this stage typically do X. Does it make sense to do X?”

Question Three: (if question two fails)

“What’s a good next step then?”

The Perfect Close – “The Fall-Back”



Example Vignettes – “The Fall-Back”

PROFESSIONAL: “Nathan, does it make sense for us to talk about doing a workflow analysis so we can see where the best efficiencies can be gained?”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “Mmm... I don’t think so.”

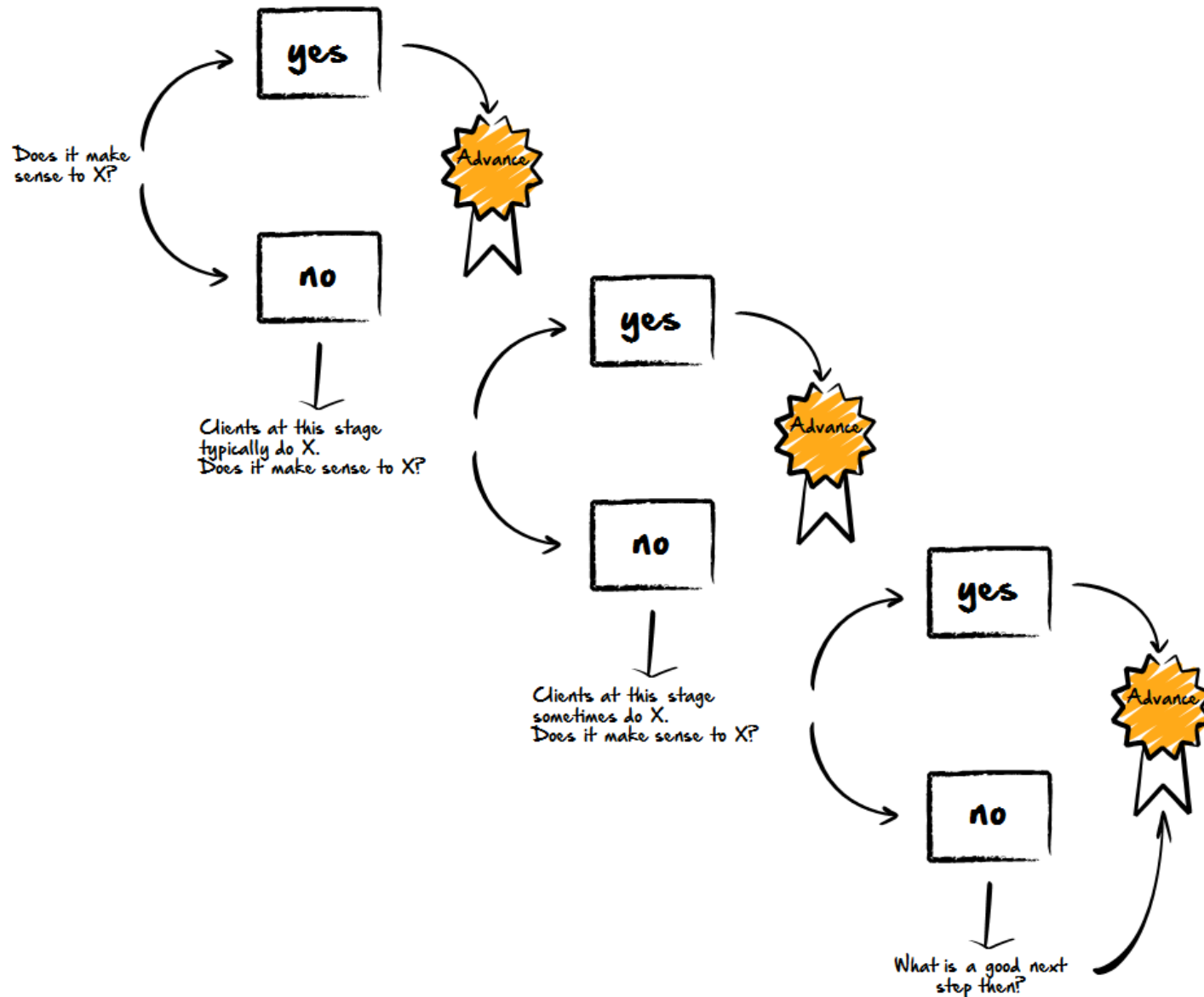
PROFESSIONAL: “Ok. A lot of folks at this stage will schedule a demonstration for their whole team so they can get their reaction and feedback. Does it make sense for us to schedule a demonstration for your whole team, so they can see it in action?”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “That’s just what I was thinking.”

Theoretically you can fall back to as many secondary/back-up advances as you have planned. In application, any more than one or two tends to come off as agenda-pushing.

Prepare multiple fall-back advances so you can select the most appropriate one for the situation if you need to fall back.

The Perfect Close – Multi-stage “The Fall-Back”



"The Add-On"

- Reverse of the Fall Back – Instead of falling back to alternate advances we **add them**.
- Upon success with your Ideal Advance you continue to suggest additional advances.
- **KEY:** We are pacing the sales cycle to match the client's buying cycle.
- One more unique element:
 - Instead of falling back to "What is a good next step then?"
 - Ask **"Are there any other logical steps we should be taking right now?"**

Question One:

"Does it makes sense to do X?"

Question Two: (after question one succeeds)

"Clients at this stage very often also do X. Does it make sense to do X?"

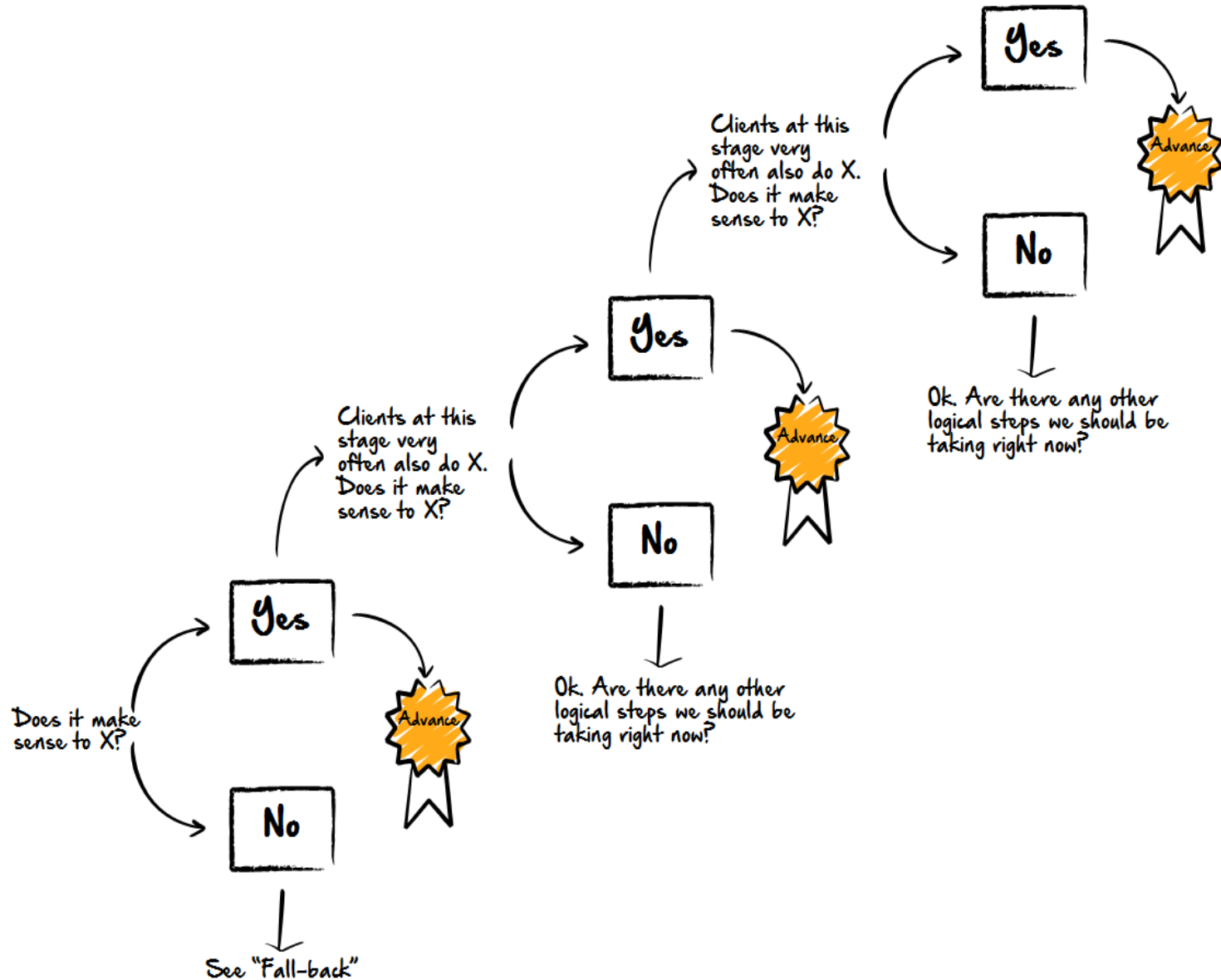
Question three: (after question two succeeds)

"We can also do X if it makes sense. Does it make sense to do X?"

Question three: (if question three fails or you're out of suggestions)

"Ok. Are there any other logical steps we should be taking right now?"

The Perfect Close – “The Add-On”



Example Vignette – “The Add-On”

PROFESSIONAL: “Hey Regan, does it make sense for us to talk about scheduling a demo for the rest of your team so we can get their input and participation?”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “Yes. We need everyone on board.”

PROFESSIONAL: “Great. Let’s look at some possible dates. A lot of clients at this stage will also have us schedule time for both our technical teams to discuss the dynamics around the conversion. Does it make sense for us to schedule our tech people to meet?”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “Absolutely. My guys are worried about that. That’s a great idea.”

PROFESSIONAL: “Ok. I’ll get some dates my team is open, and we can coordinate. I think we have everything we need for a proposal. Does it make sense for me to put together a preliminary proposal so you can get a feel for the scope of the project?”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “Yes. That would be really helpful.”

PROFESSIONAL: “Ok. I have some homework here. Are there any other logical steps we should be taking right now?”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “Well, is there any chance I can see a copy of your standard agreement? I know our legal team can be kind of slow sometimes.”

PROFESSIONAL: “Absolutely. I know what you’re talking about. I’ll get you a copy of that too so your legal team can start reviewing it.”

- Most fun of all the variations because we just keep piling on advances until we’ve **matched the pace** at which our client wants to go.
- This example above is an actual, real-life conversation.

Classic Application – “Something Special”

- How “Something Special” was born.
- **Reveals the client’s timing without telegraphing a concession.**
 - Here it is verbatim:

“Does it make sense for me to see if we can do something special for you if we can get everything wrapped up by the end of the quarter?”

- Recommend Using it Verbatim.
- Come to the conversation without any particular concession in mind.
- Determining exactly what “something special” is **requires another step** and further conversation.
 - This is good. You want this.
- Your attitude should be:
 - “Well, I don’t know what my options are without talking to some folks, but if the timing is right I’ll go see what I can do for us.”

The Beauty of “Something Special”

- If the timing isn't right for the client:
 - **You never have to discuss what that “something special”** might have been
 - **Margins are preserved** going into the next period.
- If it **IS** possible to wrap things up within your timeframe, you have options:
 1. Ask what they would find most valuable.
 2. Tell them you will go see what you can do & report back.
- You Have More Concessions Options Than Just Price.
 - Often a client's preference for a concession will be something different from what you were expecting.

Example Vignettes – “Something Special”

PROFESSIONAL: “Gary, does it make sense for me to see if we can do something special for you if we can get everything wrapped up by the end of the quarter?”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “I don’t think so. Our CEO is out until after the holidays. We wouldn’t be able to do anything until he’s back.”

[Margin Preserved]

PROFESSIONAL: “Hey Gary, does it make sense for me to see if we can do something special for you if we can get everything wrapped up by the end of the quarter?”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “Hmmm, what are you thinking?”

PROFESSIONAL: “Well, I don’t know what my options are without talking to our CEO, but if we can actually do something this quarter he said he would be willing to work with clients.”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “If the offer’s good enough we’re ready to do something. Why don’t you find out what he’s thinking?”

PROFESSIONAL: “You got it. Just to speed the process up a bit; is there any part of the proposal that you would get more value out of than another? I’ll see if that’s an area we can play in for us.”

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: “There is. Mischelle is concerned that some of our folks will need more training than usual, so anything you could do in that area will make me hero with her. From my perspective, it would be great if there was something you could do with the maintenance. Lowering it or starting it later would be great. So that’s it, maintenance and training. See if there is something he can do there. Thanks.

“Something Special” – Wrap-up

“Something Special” Accomplishes Three Important Things:

1. It doesn't telegraph any **kind** of concession or the **size** of that concession.
2. It reveals if the client is able to do something within your suggested timeframe.
3. It positions you as an **advocate** for the client. You are doing the legwork on their behalf.



If you've ever found yourself on the end-of-quarter discount rollercoaster, you will appreciate how **“Something Special” preserves both revenues & your commissions.**

Summary of Key Points

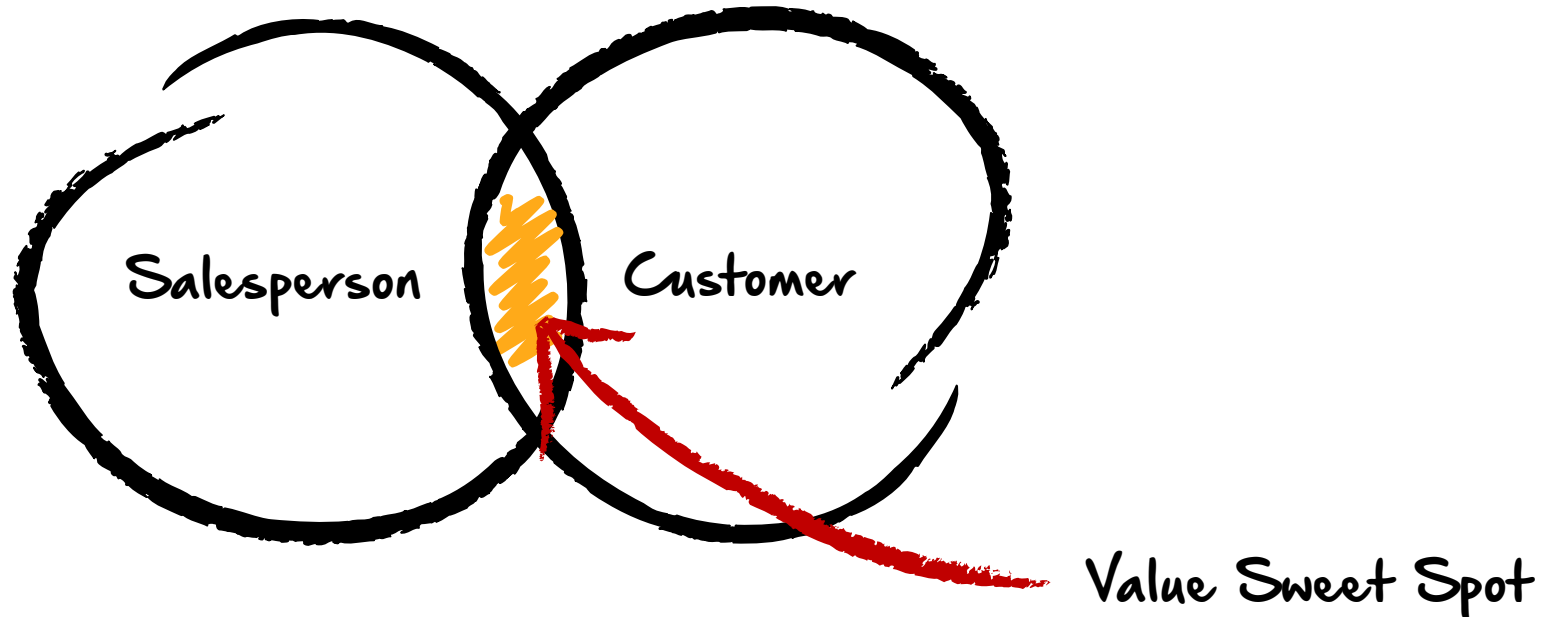
- **We Dispelled 7 Major Myths & Learned Some Surprising Facts About Closing**

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2. Past the first attempt there is a negative correlation between closing frequency & sales call success.
3. Closing gambits become counter-productive above \$109.
4. Closing gambits damage trust.
5. Customers are less satisfied with their decisions made under pressure.
6. The sale will not close itself. You must make an effort to advance or close the sale.
7. Addressing the underlying issues with closing addresses fear & reluctance. Sales is service.

- **You Learned a Close That:**

- Has the highest success rate (in the 95% range).
- Is Zero pressure.
- Involves just two questions.
- Is flexible enough to use on every kind of sale at every given stage.
- Is helpful for new or inexperienced people dislike the “stigma” of selling or find closing awkward or uncomfortable.

Sales Is Service



- We all want a coach to help us achieve our goals.
- **Be that coach for customers.**
- It's much more than advancing the sale – **it's leadership.**
- Be a better coach, problem-solver & teacher so you can serve your clients better.
- **Then you'll be living in the sweet spot of selling.**

About James Muir



For more resources & info visit:

Website Resources: <http://puremuir.com/resources/>

- THIS PowerPoint
- SPECIAL REPORT: The 7 Deadly Myths of Closing
- Research Planning Forms
- Meeting Planning Forms
- Sample Agendas
- Planning Checklists
- And more...

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