

CHAPTER 5

The Natural Buying Flow

How people actually decide — with or without you in the room

Nobody taught you how to buy a chocolate bar.

You didn't sit through a seminar on consumer decision-making before your first trip to the corner store. You just wanted it. And then a series of things happened, almost automatically, that led you to either buying it or not.

Here is what actually happened:

First, timing. Were you in the middle of something else? Then maybe not now.

Were you standing right in front of the rack with nothing pressing? Then maybe yes.

Timing either opens the door or closes it before anything else gets a chance.

Then the want. A craving. Something in you said yes, that. Not because you analyzed the nutritional content — you just wanted it.

From want came need. The want sharpened into something specific.

Then information. Where can I get this? How much?

Then feasibility. Do I have money? Do I have time?

And finally trust. You picked it up and checked — without consciously thinking about it, whether the packaging looked right. If it did not, you put it down.

When all six of those things lined up, timing, want, need, information, feasibility, trust, you made a decision. Naturally. Without being sold.

This is how every human being on the planet makes every purchasing decision. Whether they're buying a chocolate bar or a \$400,000 enterprise contract. The steps are the same. The sequence is the same. The only thing that changes is the scale.

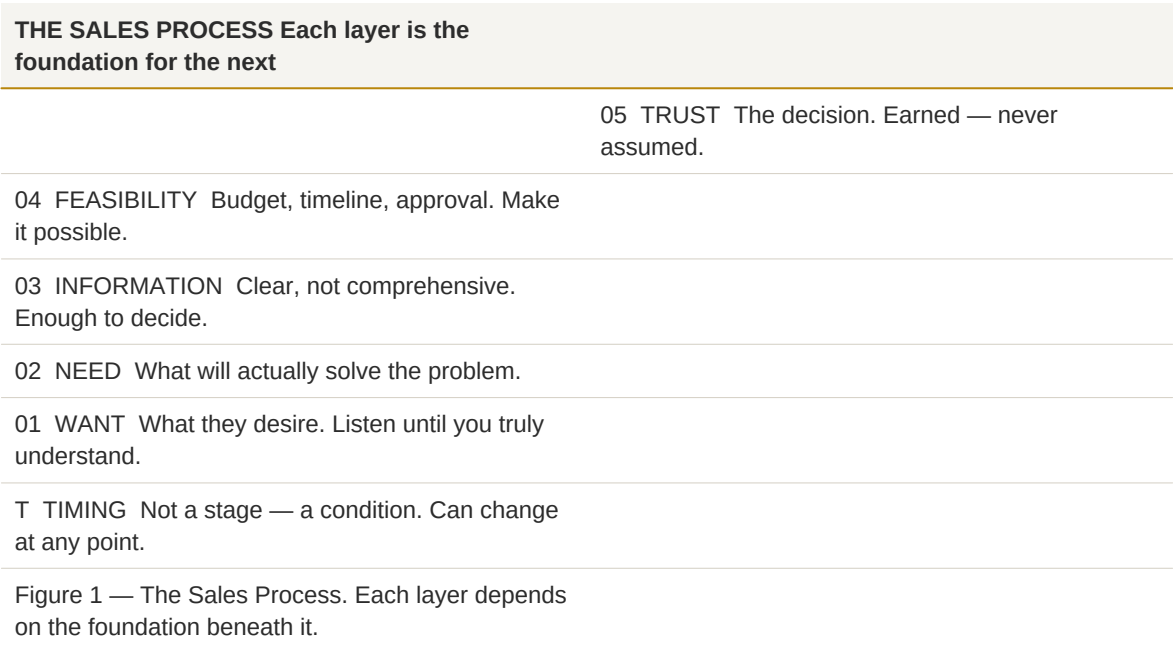
Consider what that same flow looks like on a much larger stage. A VP of Operations at a mid-sized company decides their IT infrastructure is overdue for an upgrade. The timing has to be right, budget cycle, board approval, no major projects competing for attention. The want is there — she has been thinking about this for two years. The need sharpens when a near-miss incident makes the cost of inaction suddenly visible. Information comes through

vendor conversations, peer referrals, and proposals reviewed. Feasibility gets worked through finance and procurement over several weeks. And trust — the deciding factor — is built or lost in every interaction with every person on the vendor's team from the first call to the final presentation. Six stages. Months of elapsed time. Hundreds of individual moments. The same flow as the chocolate bar. Just a longer timeline and higher stakes.

IN PRACTICE

Before your next client meeting, write the six stages across the top of a blank page: Timing, Want, Need, Information, Feasibility, Trust. Based on what you know about this client, mark where you believe they currently are. Then, in the meeting, listen for what confirms or contradicts your read. The stage they are actually in is the only stage worth working. Everything else is noise.

The Sales Process Visual



The Flow Is Not a Sales Trick

This framework is not a manipulation technique. It is a description of how human beings already think and make decisions. It was happening long before you walked in the room. Your job is not to create this flow. Your job is to understand it, respect it, and work within it.

The reason most sales engagements fail is not because the product is wrong or the price is too high. It's because the salesperson is working against the natural flow. They pitch before they understand the want. They propose solutions before they've established trust. They push for a decision when the timing isn't right. Skipping steps doesn't speed things up. It creates resistance. And resistance in a sales conversation isn't the client being difficult. It's the client telling you that you've moved ahead of them.

IN PRACTICE

After a lost deal, map it against the six stages. Where did the process break down? In most cases you will find a skipped stage — a place where you moved forward before the foundation was solid. That is not a sales failure. It is a sequencing failure. Naming it precisely makes it correctable. Without the map, it just feels like bad luck.

What Each Stage Requires From You

Timing is not in your control. What is in your control is how you respond to it. If the timing isn't right, stop. The right response to bad timing is to acknowledge it, respect it, and establish a specific next step — not a vague intention to follow up.

Want requires you to listen. Not talk. You cannot identify what a client wants if you're too busy telling them what they should want. Ask and genuinely listen. When you do, two things happen: You understand exactly what this person cares about, and they feel understood. Both are necessary for everything that follows.

Need requires you to close the gap between what the client wants and what will actually solve their problem. Your job isn't to give them what they want — it's to help them understand what they actually need. That is not manipulation. That is expertise applied in their best interest.

Information requires you to be clear, not comprehensive. More information doesn't build more confidence — it builds more confusion. This is where you explain how your solution addresses the specific problem they've told you they want to fix. Not everything your solution does — the part that matters to them. Speak to what you heard, not what you know. The client who feels like you understood their problem and explained exactly how you solve it is ready to move forward. The one drowning in features is not.

Feasibility is where deals quietly die all the time. The client might want it, need it, and trust you completely — but if it doesn't fit their budget, timeline, or internal approval process, it's not happening. Ask about it early. Make it easy. Offer options.

Trust is the one you can't rush, can't fake, and can't recover easily once it's lost. It is built through consistency, through doing what you said you would do, when you said you would do it.

IN PRACTICE

For each stage, develop one question you will ask every time. Not a script — a genuine inquiry that opens that stage. For Want: "What are you hoping this changes?" For Need: "Help me understand what solving this would actually change for your team." For Information: "Is there anything from what I've shared that isn't clear yet?" For Feasibility: "Help me understand how decisions like this get approved on your side." For Trust: "Is there anything from our conversation so far that hasn't sat right with you?" These questions are not techniques. They are invitations to the real conversation at each stage.

When You Hear an Objection

At some point in the flow, you will hear resistance. The client pushes back. Says it's too expensive. Says they need to think about it.

Here is what that objection is actually telling you: You moved too fast.

The client hasn't rejected you or your product. They've flagged that something in the flow isn't resolved yet. The right response is to step back one stage — not push harder.

The only salesperson in the room is the client. You are there to help them sell themselves on the right decision.

IN PRACTICE When you hear an objection, resist the urge to respond immediately. Instead, say: "Help me understand what's behind that." Then be quiet. The client will tell you which stage is unresolved if you give them the space. The objection is the symptom. The real issue is one layer underneath. You cannot treat the symptom without finding the layer. The silence after "Help me understand" is where the real conversation begins. Now that you understand the flow, the next question is what to do when it stalls.

FREE CHAPTER

This chapter is from *Selling Made Simple* by Christopher G. Brooks.

Selling Made Simple is 112 pages, one idea per chapter: the five stages every buyer moves through before they say yes, and why every objection you will ever hear comes from one of those five things.

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