

Robert Neivert: The fact is most decisions are made by companies when the up sales guy is not present. Decisions, really, are made in closed meetings. You're not there but your champion, they are. So, load up. Get that information from your champion. Make it to their benefit to work with you. Make it to their benefit to implement your software, and you will have an insider, that's what you need. It's very hard to win deals over a couple hundred thousand without a champion.

Mark Goldenson: This is VentureKit radio, I'm Mark Goldenson. In this episode, I interview Robert Neivert, venture partner at 500 Startups, about how to close enterprise sales. Rob has made over 70 seed stage investments with a focus on B2B startups. He has founded or worked in eight startups. Twice as CEO, with four exits and four still operating. He has led sales workshops for hundreds of companies and has two degrees in science and engineering from Stanford. We join into Rob's four-stage sales framework: how to research prospects, discover needs, run demos, and close deals. We suggest a few tools for these stages but none of our suggestions were solicited or paid.

Mark Goldenson: I also share some lessons from my experience at Breakthrough, an online therapy startup I founded that signed over 30 health insurers and covered 10 million people. I'll warn you that Rob talks fast and loud. So, you may want to lower the volume or get some coffee. This is how to close enterprise sales with Rob Neivert. Rob's framework has four steps: research, engagement, demonstration, and closing. We start by defining when this framework applies.

Robert Neivert: This generally is for enterprise selling, we're talking about things that are \$10,000 or more a year, or 100,000, or 1 million, or more. You can use the ideas for the lower one but the cost of acquisition, basically, it's an expensive structure. So, it doesn't really scale as well for low priced products, it's generally overkill. It is four things where you need reputation, where you want to do repetitive buys, or you might upsell.

Robert Neivert: If you're selling like used cars where people buy things once, it's really not the right framework because you're just trying to maximize a single transaction. Here we're trying to maximize the life cycle, the life plan, and in many cases, you'll be selling the same customer multiple time. So, you want enough of a value gap where they're actually not only buying from you but happy. They're actually, "Oh, I've created more value than I'm paying you."

Mark Goldenson: The first step of Rob's framework is a research. What should you learn about the potential customer?

Robert Neivert: So, the most common research, what that breaks down to is almost always if I'm calling somebody, sure, I'll check Twitter, and LinkedIn, a few other basic public information. I'll read a little bit, very quickly, about the company. I want to know what the revenues are, where they make money. I'm also looking for language usage, how they refer to their products, what they look like, where they sell them so that I can use the same language as they use.

- Robert Neivert: If you get on the phone with them and you're calling someone from Department of Defense, and you quickly use all the acronyms that they are used to, they will immediately identify you as sales expertise and might be able to solve their problem. If you get on and you don't even know what DoD stands for, you're wrecking that conversation. So, the context has enough information to allow the rapid flow of the early trust-building, which generally means things like: language, KPIs, metrics, the business they're in, a lot of public information. And if you're clever, I almost always will make a few phone calls to lower level employees, admins, or anyone to get a few pieces of internal information. How they reference things, departments, things like that.
- Mark Goldenson: We've all felt how uninformed sales reps are a turn-off. Whenever in Breakthrough, I was constantly contacted by vendors selling solutions billed as HIPAA compliant. HIPAA stands for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, two "As" at the end, and it's the major regular for healthcare companies. When sales reps incorrectly spelled HIPAA with two "Ps" like hippo, they revealed themselves as out of touch or sloppy, and I never replied.
- Mark Goldenson: Rob also mentions KPIs, key performance indicators, these are the business metrics that a company optimizes for. In large enterprises, examples include: monthly revenue, cost of user acquisition, or customer satisfaction score. Know your prospects' KPIs, product lines, and major customers and competitors. Rob describes how he collects this info and uses it to get initial meetings.
- Robert Neivert: The biggest thing for me is I monitor all of my contacts' released public information so that I can reach out to them. That helps me build a lot. I, also, as I am targeting certain industry's names or titles, a lot of times I'll use some Google searches and other things, which give me nice new summaries for those areas and topics, so I can talk about things that have recently happened in their industry and things like that. I do think it's well worth it because if you get on the topic and you can say, "Yeah, I see your competitor just changed his price and increased sales 10%." They know your industry knowledge right there.
- Robert Neivert: There's a lot of trust that you can help build by giving them something. I've given him something. I've given him information that he might find valuable and you get something called reciprocity, where they'll tend to want to return it. They'll tend to want to be more polite and continue with you because you've given them something, even if they didn't ask for it.
- Mark Goldenson: Sales intelligence tools you can use for research include: InsideView, Nuzzle, and Hoover's. Once you've researched the prospect, the next step is engagement. Talking with the company stakeholders to deeply understand their needs. Many startups, unfortunately, try cold calling, that is calling a stranger at the company to sell something. I asked Rob what he thinks of it.
- Robert Neivert: Calling cold is a very low yielding, very frustrating, and personally, it's a mentally draining exercise for me. I, personally, hate it. So, I avoid it. If you are cold calling, which means you don't have any marketing support, I'm going to make a

slightly different statement than expected. I'm going to say your purpose is gaining information to learn who's the persona, what the problems are, and how to define it. Those calls are simply going to be low enough yield where really your goal is learning, not selling. At the point where I learn enough, after that cycle if I am trying to sell, I'm going to have to generate something, content, something else to back me up or the cold-calling is simply low yielding.

Robert Neivert: A few exceptions, you're selling a product, which is a very known problem, there's people who well understand it, you're selling it for a competitive price point, you're saying, "Hey, I already know you buy sales force, we're half the price." Where those cases, it's a little bit easier to go into the cold call because they already have a product. They know the product. You're just going ...

Mark Goldenson: I agree cold calling is usually a poor strategy but if you try it to collect information, how can you get people to answer questions?

Robert Neivert: What you're really looking for is permission to talk. A lot of times people call and say, "Hey, is this an okay time to talk?" You want them to sort of say yes. You want them to buy in a little bit to the conversation. You want respect for their time, is that often times start with, "I'm asking a few questions. I'm just ... I'm calling ..." And sometimes you can get a lot of people. You'd be surprised if you have a great tone of voice and you're approaching people, and in the first few seconds, you can stop because you have some knowledge. You're not just some random person asking a survey because people hate that, that a lot of times you can get people to answer a few questions and then build from there.

Mark Goldenson: Whether you're cold calling or emailing, the first three sentences are key. The first can include your name and maybe company, the leaving off your company name can feel more personal. The second can describe what you want to deliver. The third can respectfully ask the prospect if they're open to a few questions or want to learn more. The best strategy is to offer credible customized value upfront, giving instead of selling. Imagine you're an engineering recruiter at Oracle and someone calls or emails you to say, "Hi. My name is Jack Williams. My startup source has engineers from top 20 schools and we have three candidates interested in Oracle. I'm wondering if you'd like to learn about them."

Mark Goldenson: I believe a decent number of recruiters would reply to that. Some won't, but if you're selling to large companies, there are likely dozens to hundreds of relevant contacts for you, like the hundreds of recruiters that work at Oracle. Of course, your tone is also important. Don't rush or anticipate failure. Be relaxed, confident, and warm. Next, what's in yielding level should you contact first? Should you start with high-level decision-makers or low-level contributors?

Robert Neivert: I'm going to give a piece of information that's different than most, I don't go high. That means most people say, "Go as high as you can and start the conversation," I don't. I think that's very, very dangerous. You're going to end up burning that conversation because you're not having enough context or

knowledge. You don't know what the problems are yet, it's very dangerous. Lower level people tend to talk much more readily. When I send out LinkedIn, sometimes I'll try to connect to LinkedIn to lower-level people who will readily accept this, and once I have 10 people in the company, it's much easier for me to get executives to accept the LinkedIn invite.

Robert Neivert: So, I'll start lower and I'll actually try to talk to lower people, what I call champions, people who gain directly from my solution but don't necessarily have buying authority. I want to collect information, what's the problem with their metrics. I might find out they have quarterly metrics, they have goals they have to achieve, so by the time I meet with the decision maker, I know what his problems look like already. So, now I can really ask really intelligent questions like, "Oh, I see you have this goal to increase your sales by 20%, we might be able to help you." It gives me a huge amount of information coming into the discussion with decision maker, so his exposure to me is he thinks I'm very well-informed and I'm knowledgeable. I don't want to spoil it. The first impressions, you only get one. I want to come in really loaded up with ammunition, basically, to win that fight.

Mark Goldenson: If you connect with junior people on LinkedIn first, when you try to add a senior person, he or she may then see that you share multiple connections. That can give you social proof for the senior person to engage. Junior people can also give you insight or info to offer compelling upfront value to senior people. They can tell you KPIs, pain points, and burning questions. Junior people are more likely to accept small incentives for this like a free lunch or a product trial. They're not used to feeling important, but they can be important to you and you can help them feel that. This is a way to create internal champions. The people who will advocate for you when you're not there.

Robert Neivert: The fact is most decisions are made by companies when the up sales guy is not present. Decisions, really, are made in closed meetings. You're not there but your champion, they are. So, load up. Get that information from your champion. Make it to their benefit to work with you. Make it to their benefit to implement your software, and you will have an insider, that's what you need. It's very hard to win deals over a couple hundred thousand without a champion.

Mark Goldenson: While outbound contact can work, inbound leads are more effective. How do you generate inbound leads?

Robert Neivert: What I do is I generate content or other things of interest. I use marketing automation tools to track them when they're on my website, so my calls are warm. I'd say, "Hey, it looks like you're interested in this content, do have any questions? Can I help you solve what challenge you're facing?" A lot of times they say, "No, I think I got," and I'd, "Okay. Well, what challenged you, because maybe I can give you a hand for five minutes?" Oh, all of a sudden, I'm free help for him. People will talk. People will tell you their problems if you've gotten past that trust level where they think you're okay to trust with this, it's amazing what people will tell me. Sometimes I literally run out of time on the conversations

because they start talking and it becomes this really long discussion. It's the trust and that they think you can help them, not that you're selling but that you can help them.

Mark Goldenson: Marketing automation tools like FullStory, HubSpot, and Pardot can tell you who is doing what on your site. Next, once a lead engages you, what should you ask?

Robert Neivert: You want to let them be able to start talking to you about their problems, not their deepest darkest ones but start with their challenges. One of the things I see a lot of junior salespeople do is they ask more general questions and they sort of meander around because it's fun to talk. No, these are questions specifically targeted to reveal the problems your software or hardware solves, and that's one of the things is if you're a founder and you're very early, you don't know what that is, these conversations start off very broad, that's okay. But you should very rapidly start moving to the point where you know what questions to ask to get people to acknowledge if they have the problem that you solve or not.

Robert Neivert: The second thing to understand is it's a completely different thing if I tell them they have a problem versus if they tell me they have a problem. Nobody's going to believe me, I'm a sales guy. But if they tell me they have the problem, they obviously believe themselves but you're actually building more authority later when you go to solve it because they've already told you they have that problem.

Mark Goldenson: The questions you ask shouldn't be brain dead ones, like, "Would you like to drive more sales?" They should be specific and genuine, like, "Are you more focused on sales if you're on low priced or high-priced product?" If your solution only makes for a high priced products, this question helps you qualify the lead and show fit. You can also frame your questions with industry standards when the prospect doesn't know what they need or their constraints.

Mark Goldenson: Instead of asking, "What's your budget?" You can say, "Companies in your space spend about 500,000 annually on this product category, is that doable for you?" Instead of asking, "What's your timeline?" You can say, "A typical timeline for a company of your size is six months to close and three months to onboard employees, does that work?" IBM created a framework for qualifying questions called BANT, budget, authority, needs, and timeline. It's a bit outdated but you can adapt the questions, just focus on needs first.

Robert Neivert: So, oftentimes, I get into this with a lot salespeople because they're treating this like a social situation at which they are in control of, and it's not. I see it the exact opposite. When I come into these meetings, a lot of times I'm asking questions. I talk 30%, they talk 70%. I'm asking questions and I'm being earnest in it, "Oh, what is your challenge with that? How does that wreck your life?" I'm not telling about my product. I'm not telling about what I do. I'm certainly not bragging about my golf game. I want to know what's bothering them.

Sometimes you do get distracted and you do need to guide conversations back, but you spend a lot more time listening and responding to what they're saying.

Robert Neivert: And in some ways, this is like dating, and it's a little bit of analogy. Imagine you go on a date and you sit with the person, and they literally never reference a single thing you say, no matter what you say. You say, "Flowers are nice," and they start talking about football. You don't connect with that person. Salespeople come in with this idea they're going to say certain things in the meeting, they don't listen. They talk, and I'm saying no. The listening is actually the more important. You need to spend a lot more time saying, "What are your challenges? How can we help you achieve your results? What are your KPIs? How can we help you get there?" Because as soon as they think there's value for them, they're willing to work.

Robert Neivert: The more you talk about yourself, the more you come off as this sort of swarmy person. Especially when you talk about, "Well, my nice watch. My Porsche out front." People think that that connects you people, but it doesn't. It sort of dissociates you. There are a few exceptions, if you happen to know he's the president of the Porsche Club, talking about Porsches, obviously, connects you, but it doesn't solve his problem yet. So, in the end, he's going to walk away not having a solution to his problem. It's nice, he likes you, but he's not buying from you.

Robert Neivert: So, you still have to get to, "What's your challenge and how do I help you get there? How do I get you your next Porsche?" I had a conversation with someone and at the end of the discussion, the conclusion of the whole thing was, basically, I was going to help him be able to get the bonus to get his next car, and that's the way we phrased it, and that became a joke between us but it mattered to him. That's what really mattered to him and that's how things got phrased. I was going to deliver value to his company but in the end, he saw it as his next car.

Mark Goldenson: After engagement, it's time for the third step, demoing your product. Rob explains why he waits so long to demo.

Robert Neivert: Believe it or not, I actually get all the way through that before I get to the demonstration, which is actually very much at the end. And the reason is, I don't demonstrate my product. What I do is I take their problems and I show how I solve their problems and so, I need all that information to successfully demonstrate the product because, at that point, I already know what their problems are. I know how valuable they are. I know that it's well above my price point, so there's a value gap there and I know that they're already going to feel good about that solution. So, it gives me lots of leeway in both the demo and the closing areas to actually close the deal.

Robert Neivert: Also, importantly, I know what deals to walk away from. This is much earlier. I haven't expended all these efforts, built all these demos, mailed all these documents, elevated to decision maker, only to find out that actually, it's a small

problem. I can generally solve this much more rapidly and actually kill off deals quicker, much quicker than most other people do, which allows me to double down my resources and the ones I think I can win at.

Mark Goldenson: Rob goes on to describe how he starts the demo and one thing to avoid.

Robert Neivert: Always start with something ... What I call small quick wins. You always want to come in your initial topic, you want to be able to win that initial thing, whatever that is to show you can win it. Don't start a disputable point. I get this all the time with inexperienced people, they come in because there's been some dispute or discussions on something, they start with that top because it's top of mind, terrible. Once you're starting off with this debate, everything becomes a debate, and once you start off with a negative, it just slides into negative. Start off with a clear win upfront. Go to the debatable stuff later. A lot of times you never even get to it. In some cases, you'll have to get to it but you do that in private, not in a meeting.

Mark Goldenson: Quick wins are great at creating champions, that can mean demonstrating features that no one else has, service level guarantees, or product customizations. Rob describes one example.

Robert Neivert: Sometimes, by the way, little wins can be quite little, color changes. Goofy, I actually had a major deal contingent on us changing the color and we're talking more than \$2 million, and I will give you an example of why that was important. We didn't have the color red and we were shipping product in Japan. In Japan, the color red is critical for many, many, many things. They said, "Please, change your icon on the screen to red. Trust me, this is really, really important to us. It doesn't have to be all red but just put red in it and give us this like red background thing for it." My internal team was like, "Come on, man. This is a really big change for us," but for various reasons, it was actually quite hard for us to make those changes. We went back and forth and we actually implemented and you literally could see the day it went live at how different the interactions went.

Mark Goldenson: I saw an example of this had Breakthrough when we engaged Blue Shield of California about reimbursing online therapy for their members. During a demo, one of their VP's asked if we supported email attachments. We said, "No, but give us a week," because we were built on ruby and rails, our engineering team could install a common module for email attachments. We also knew our users would want them, so we deployed the module, returned to Blue Shield a week later, and showed attachments in action. The VP was impressed. She was used to internal features taking months and we just delivered what she wanted in a week. It didn't matter that attachments are a fairly easy feature to build, we could show the California became our first sine insurer making break through a covered benefit for their 2 million members. While showing features can create quick wins, Rob focuses on how those features solve problems.

Robert Neivert: I understand people want to do this whole, “Here's how you log in. Here's the high-level dashboard screen,” but if that's not how you win, people are going to start thinking about their email. So, oftentimes, I will cede it by saying, “Hey, you log in, you wanted to know this problem. I'm going to show you how you solve this problem,” and I walk them through. And what I have is a bunch of tabs that are prepped for each of their problems and that's the header for my discussion. “This is your stated problem, you said that if I do this that this is worth about \$3 million a year, or whatever it is, or this is the project you want to make sure you're going to be successful at, so I'm going to show you how to do it,” and I walk them through the product exactly solving their problem because they don't actually care about my product.

Robert Neivert: They don't care what my screens look like, 90% of it. Yeah, okay. Occasionally, you get a designer in the room who hates the fact that you rounded corners or something, but most of those people in the room, if you say, “I solved this problem,” and you walk them through how it solves it, at the end, they might go, “Yeah, it solves the problem,” and then you win.

Mark Goldenson: Here are nine ways to optimize your demo: one, prepare for technology failures. Bring your own WiFi hotspot, computer cables, paper backups, even a mobile projector. If you end up using them, you'll score points for being prepared. Two, read your audience. If they seem warm and social, invest a few minutes asking about their day or interests. If they seem cold or hurried, get to the point quickly. Three, dress to the company's culture. If you're pitching a law firm or a bank, you'll likely need a suit. If you're pitching a startup, business casual is probably fine. One startup selling to the military, employed veterans dressed in uniform. Show your prospect that you're one of them.

Mark Goldenson: Four, don't condescend by explaining widely understood facts or acronyms. Speak to the prospect as a peer. Five, customize the demos design with the prospects and logo, colors, and real looking data. Six, summarize past discussions. You'll show you're organized and ready to dive into new points. Seven, consider some light humor especially an inside joke that shows you understand the market. Comedian Victor Borge said, “The shortest distance between two people is in laughter.” For example, one cybersecurity firm joked about the poor state of enterprise IT with a classified ad, “For Sale: Parachute. Only used once, never opened, small stain.”

Mark Goldenson: Eight, if you don't know whether the prospect wants a certain feature, ask. If they say no, don't demo it. just move on. Nine, admit if your product can't do something. Your credibility is too important to fudge facts, especially in enterprise sales that depend on long-term contracts. Most of all, be a partner. It sounds cheesy but if you can flip the pitch from feeling adversarial to collaborative, for the prospect, means you can and will help, you'll earn the trust that closes deals. Next, when do you switch from pitching to the final stage of closing?



Robert Neivert: It's really not until the point where they, basically, say, "This solves my problem, and it creates lots of value, and it's very important to me," that I basically close out the deal. But at that point, think about how much ammunition you have in that ... how much leverage you have on price. You know how value is, you know they're saving \$5 million this year, you say, "I'll tell you what, I'm just going to capture 20%. It's a \$1 million deal, you're making \$4 million this year. How much leverage do you have?"

Robert Neivert: I have a lot of salespeople who get to try to go too close and they don't have enough leverage to close because they don't know how much value they're creating. They don't know what it's really solving. They don't know how it's going to land in the organization. They don't know its political risk. So, they're trying to fight against that at the close and at that point, they know you're a sales guy. You're trying to sell them a product. You've given them a quote. So, they're not going to share information that readily anymore.

Mark Goldenson: If you're closing, how do you negotiate for the pricing you want?

Robert Neivert: When you get to the end and it gets to the buyers, the people are supposed to buy this thing, they always come back to you if they want this 20% discount or whatever. I've got a baseball bat because let me tell you, I've got a bunch of guys. I have a clear value statement. I know I might say, "Look, you guys are going to save \$4 million. Every week you delay, you're losing \$50,000. I know you're losing 50,000," so I'll wait a week and I'm going to call up the guys and tell them they just lost another 50,000. You're coming in with ammunition. I'm not saying be that aggressive, my point is that you have that bat coming in.

Robert Neivert: Now, many people won't give you dollars like, "Hey, we said \$4 million." I'm using that as an example today and I want to be careful. That's actually an unusual case. Usually, though, it's a strategic objective, or a KPI, or something like that, everybody's got objectives. So, a lot of times, the bat you're using is this is their KPI, they need to accomplish it by the end of next quarter. It has to be live by next week or they won't make their KPI. You need to call them back and tell them they're going to miss their KPI unless I can use their own KPIs, their own management objectives to drive that guy at the end, which is normally the purchasing agent or whatever, to basically force deal close without giving them a discount.

Mark Goldenson: Whatever stage you're at, what do you do when a sales process stalls?

Robert Neivert: Let's define what a stall is. So, first of all, many people have an expectation that sales works in the smooth linear line and that's just not true. Most of my sales process, if you tried to tat them out, it would look like a five-year-old's drawing. It's just all over the place. That's just the way they are. But let's assume for the moment, you've sent them three emails, they stop responding all of a sudden, I generally do flip them to drip campaigns. I sort of send them content or useful ... I'm looking to be useful or informative to them.

Mark Goldenson: Can you define a drip campaign?

Robert Neivert: Oh, sorry. So, let's assume they don't respond, I will have a small series of content in an email where they'll get an email but the email is not pitching or selling them, it's trying to provide something to them. A piece of information or something useful based upon my previous conversation, I listen to them. So, I talked to them before, they said, "Yeah, we'd love to have this. That's really going to be useful. Let's talk next week," and they go quiet, I might send them an article saying, "Here's how to solve that problem that we talked about," and then a week or so later, they get another article from you, "Here's how ... You might want to solve it this way."

Robert Neivert: What I'm actually tracking for those who have marketing automation, I'm tracking who's opening and what they're coming ... If I get absolutely no traffic at all back on things that should be solving, this really is something going a little colder. I might look for somebody else in the organization, "Did that person get hit by a bus? Did they retire? Is this not a problem?" So, I'm going to look around. If they're opening and coming in, then sometimes I'll follow up with them and say, "Hey, maybe you're not ready to buy, is there something I could provide? Just let me know what's going on." Usually, after a few things, if they've opened in red content, they feel that obligation to respond. Reciprocity, and a lot of times, you'll get a response at that point.

Robert Neivert: I generally avoid two or three things: continuing to push a sale. "Here's the quote, here's the quote, here's the quote," type of stuff, and I also generally try to avoid, "Hey, you didn't answer my last email." Reminding someone they didn't answer your email, to me, it doesn't work. Now, the big thing is to know their budgetary cycle. If they sign all their deals at the end of the year, I won't name them, but some large software companies, I know, do 71% of their quarterly business on the last day, something like that. To know that cycle, using that information to try to drive it.

Robert Neivert: Sometimes, I will offer them what's called close upsell where I say, "Hey, if you sign by next Friday, we'll give you 13 months for the price of 12. Sort of give me ... It gives us extra module if you can." I try to upsell, discount is my last option, "If you buy by this day you get a 10% discount." I do offer end of quarters, things like that, try to take advantage of budgets. People have an expectation of this in many industries. I try to avoid it but sometimes that's your last call.

Mark Goldenson: Next, I asked Rob how much of the sales process should be done by founders versus dedicated salespeople.

Robert Neivert: Somebody's got to do this work on the founding team. I do not recommend a bunch of founders, say three engineers, and, "Let's just hire a sales guy," I actually don't recommend that because you don't understand it all the process. It's very, very difficult to do that first hire. An exception to the rule, I've been through eight companies. At this point, I know five sales reps. I can call today that I know exactly, yes. If you have that sort of network where you've worked

with them in the past, they have been successful in achieving their quarters and growing, and they have worked in small companies, I'm emphasizing that last point. Hiring a guy from HP or from Oracle is not the same, totally different sales process to startup to large.

Robert Neivert: I recommend against salespeople from large companies coming to startups unless they've proven they can do it. But you know people, great. You can bring those in. Minus that, you need to do it first. You need to learn the process because you're doing the initial learning. You've got to get some of that initial persona. You've got to understand who your target is, what the value is because always you're going to hire the wrong people, and you're not going to even know if they're bullshitting you.

Robert Neivert: And remember, sales guys, it's their job to be able to present themselves. Every interview, it's going to sound awesome unless you know what it really is. So, my statement is somebody on the founding team should spend the time unless you're really well connected with people you've seen perform in the past, you get along with and fit your startup, in which case, it's okay to bring them on but understand that you're taking a big risk with that person. It could be many months before you figure out that they're deceiving you.

Robert Neivert: Rule of thumb for me sales cycle times 1.5, is the length of time in which you give someone to prove themselves. If you sell a product, sales cycles a month, 45 days, the contract ... When I hire, I hire them on terminating contracts for 1.5 times sale ...

Mark Goldenson: Contracts that terminate by default may sound harsh, but they can set queer expectations, motivate eager salespeople, and make terminations smoother when performance is not strong enough. Finally, we talked about what to do after a sale has closed.

Robert Neivert: So, here are some basic things. The first thing is, usually, there's check-in, are you getting your value. Be careful about getting dragged into free consulting time, you should offer a little bit of assistance but be careful. But if you can offer a little bit and help them learn the system, great. We usually do a quick audit of system a week or two to make sure they're using it, and there are things going on, and sometimes we'll call and follow up. We definitely want to help them with the sort of the initial work but be careful that doesn't become a sinkhole. I've got a couple of our customers who come on and they literally start using us their IT department.

Robert Neivert: "Oh, somebody left the company, would you remove them?" And they hang up. They literally leave me a voicemail and hang up. You don't want to get into that. You want to be, "We're here to help you if you have a support contract," especially, but make sure that they build their own skill. So, you're there as a trainer not as the employee. A lot of times, afterwards, is I look for a key person whose one to get them to do marketing with me. To get their name, or a quote, or things like that, or show up to events, and a lot of times I, usually, do you

want to be famous, which is basically I try, “Hey, do you have minutes to attend my event. Would you like to go to an event and a speaking engagement?” I try to get them a speaking engagement. Benefits both of us.

Robert Neivert:

I think one of the other things that I mentioned is if your price point is 20%, they should be getting that value gap. They should be absorbing that, and you should actually check back in with them and see if they know. This is something I found, it was really clever. I got this email from this company, it used to tell me about all the activities, “Oh, I see you did all this, this quarter.” They reminded me how much usage and value I was getting from the system and they reminded me on a fairly regular basis. In this case, they’re doing it quarterly and I noticed that it specifically landed a little bit before renewals have happened. They got a nice yearly summer before my yearly renewal happened, really important if you have renewals every month that they get a report every month before that renewal pops to remind them they’re getting valuable.

Mark Goldenson:

That's a wrap on this episode. Sincere thanks to Rob Neivert for sharing his thoughts. If you'd like to reach Rob, his email is [robertneivert@gmail.com](mailto:robertneivert@gmail.com). If you found this podcast helpful, I'd really appreciate it if you share it or write a review on iTunes. You can subscribe to future episodes at [venturekit.com](http://venturekit.com) and reach me at [mark@venturekit.com](mailto:mark@venturekit.com).