MASTERY PODCAST | EPISODE 13 COMPANION

The Sales Discipline Playbook

What it really means to be a professional — and how to build it deliberately.

Seventeen percent of sales reps generate eighty-one percent of revenue. Across four million opportunities and fifty-four billion dollars of recorded revenue, that is the gap. And what separates that seventeen percent is not talent. It is discipline.

This playbook is the practical companion to Episode 13. Use it to audit your current discipline honestly, study the five observable behaviours of the professional, build a weekly rhythm you can actually run, spot the drift signals before they turn into lost deals, and follow a thirty-day plan to rebuild what may have slipped.

Designed for salespeople, sales leaders, business owners, and managers of sales teams — from sole traders through to multi-national corporate sales functions.

TOOL 1

The Discipline Self-Audit

Five disciplines. Score yourself out of five. Total out of twenty-five.

This is the starting line. Score yourself honestly against each of the five disciplines. There is no judgment in the number — only data. Most professionals fall between twelve and seventeen. The seventeen percent — the consistent revenue-generators — score consistently at twenty-one or higher. The gap is closeable, by anyone, including you.

#	Discipline	The honest test	Your score
1	**Time** Calendar ownership	Did I plan this week before it started? Are my selling hours blocked and protected? Could I tell you, right now, how many hours I spent in front of customers last week?	1 2 3 4 5
2	**Pipeline** The deals I would defend	Could I walk my pipeline in front of my board today? Is every deal in the right stage? Are dead deals killed? Is every active deal current within the last week?	1 2 3 4 5
3	**Preparation** Never going in cold	Did I prepare properly for every meeting this week — research, hypothesis, questions, desired outcome? Or did I rely on chemistry to carry me through some of them?	1 2 3 4 5

4	**Follow-Through** Doing what I said	Of every commitment I made to a customer this week — was every single one honoured, on time? Or did one or two slip a day, two days, a week?	1 2 3 4 5
5	**Self-Awareness** Knowing my numbers	Do I know my conversion rate at each stage? My average deal size? My average cycle? My win rate? My slippage rate? Could I bring them to a one-to-one today?	1 2 3 4 5

TOTAL / 25	INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE **21+** Top quartile. Protect what you've built. **17–20** Solid. One discipline is letting you down. **12–16** Average. The gap is real — and closeable. **Below 12** Start with the 30-day reset (Tool 5).

TOOL 2

The Five Disciplines Framework

The observable behaviours of the consistent professional — and the amateur.

Each of the five disciplines, in detail. What the professional does. What the amateur does. Use this as a coaching tool with yourself or your team — these are observable behaviours, not personality traits. Anyone can adopt them. The choice is the only barrier.

DISCIPLINE 1 TIME

Calendar ownership. The professional decides where their time goes before anyone else can. Selling time is treated as the most valuable currency in the business and is protected accordingly.

THE PROFESSIONAL

- ✓ Plans the week on Friday afternoon, before it starts
- ✓ Knows exactly how many selling hours are in the week, and protects them
- ✓ Blocks prep time and follow-through time before meetings get booked
- ✓ Pushes back on internal meetings that eat selling time
- ✓ Reviews the calendar weekly and corrects drift

THE AMATEUR

- ✗ Lets the week happen to them
- ✗ Selling time gets squeezed by whatever shouts loudest
- ✗ Cannot tell you, on Friday, how many customer hours they actually had
- ✗ Says yes to every internal meeting without challenge
- ✗ Realises Wednesday afternoon they've been busy, not effective

DISCIPLINE 2 PIPELINE

A pipeline you would defend in front of your board. Every deal is in the right stage, with a next action and a date, a known decision-maker, and an honest probability. The pipeline is clean, current, and brutally honest.

THE PROFESSIONAL

- ✓ Updates the CRM weekly without being asked
- ✓ Kills dead deals rather than carrying them
- ✓ Downgrades soft deals honestly, even when it hurts the forecast
- ✓ Knows the decision-maker, champion and buying process for every active deal
- ✓ Could walk the pipeline in front of a board with confidence

THE AMATEUR

- ✗ Updates the CRM under duress, the night before the forecast review
- ✗ Carries dead deals because killing them feels like losing
- ✗ Forecasts on hope rather than evidence
- ✗ Cannot name the decision-maker on several active deals
- ✗ Pipeline looks impressive on the screen and falls apart under questioning

DISCIPLINE 3 PREPARATION

Never going in cold. Every customer meeting is preceded by deliberate preparation — research, hypothesis, questions, desired outcome. The professional walks in with a plan and a perspective.

THE PROFESSIONAL

- ✓ Spends a minimum of 20 minutes preparing for every customer meeting
- ✓ Researches the company, the contact, and the industry context
- ✓ Forms a hypothesis about the buyer's situation before the meeting
- ✓ Prepares three or four sharp, specific questions
- ✓ Decides what a good outcome looks like before they walk in

THE AMATEUR

- ✗ Wings it. 'I'll figure it out in the room.'
- ✗ Relies on chemistry to carry them through
- ✗ Cannot articulate, before the meeting, what they're hoping to achieve
- ✗ Buyer is left wondering why the salesperson knows so little about them
- ✗ Closes the laptop and realises they don't know what to do next

DISCIPLINE 4 FOLLOW-THROUGH

Doing what you said, when you said. Every commitment to a customer is honoured on time. Reliability is the professional's brand. The buyer never has to chase.

THE PROFESSIONAL

- ✓ Tracks every commitment made to a customer
- ✓ Delivers promised proposals, follow-ups and information on or ahead of time
- ✓ Replies to customer emails same-day, or the next morning at latest
- ✓ If something slips, communicates proactively before the buyer has to ask
- ✓ Maintains a 100% on-time rate as a non-negotiable personal standard

THE AMATEUR

- ✗ Enthusiastic in the room, quiet outside it
- ✗ Promised proposals arrive a day late. Then two. Then a week.
- ✗ Customer emails sit unanswered for days
- ✗ Buyer has to chase — gently at first, then with frustration
- ✗ Trust drains out of the deal without anyone naming it

DISCIPLINE 5 SELF-AWARENESS

Knowing your own numbers, your own patterns, your own gaps. The professional runs themselves the way a coach runs a team — with data, honesty, and a deliberate plan for improvement.

THE PROFESSIONAL

- ✓ Knows conversion rates at every stage of the pipeline
- ✓ Knows average deal size, average sales cycle, win rate, slippage rate
- ✓ Knows which kinds of deal they win and which they lose
- ✓ Recognises their own patterns — when they coast, when they push, when they need to reset
- ✓ Brings data, not stories, to one-to-ones

THE AMATEUR

- ✗ Judges themselves by feel — good week, bad week
- ✗ Cannot tell you their own conversion ratio
- ✗ Cannot explain why their last deal closed or why the one before it didn't
- ✗ Brings anecdotes to one-to-ones — 'that deal was unusual'
- ✗ Running on instinct and hoping for the best

TOOL 3

The Professional's Weekly Rhythm

A template week — adapt it to your context, but don't skip the blocks.

This is what a disciplined week looks like in practice. The colours map to the five disciplines. Adapt the times to your context, your time zone, your sector — but the blocks themselves are the point. Selling time is the biggest block. Prep, follow-through and review sit around it. Nothing happens by accident.

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
8:00 – 9:00	Plan day	Plan day	Plan day	Plan day	Plan day
9:00 – 10:00	Prep	SELL	Prep	SELL	Pipeline review
10:00 – 12:00	SELL	SELL	SELL	SELL	SELL
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch / break	Lunch / break	Lunch / break	Lunch / break	Lunch / break
1:00 – 3:00	SELL	SELL	SELL	SELL	SELL
3:00 – 4:00	Follow-through	Follow-through	Follow-through	Follow-through	Follow-through
4:00 – 5:00	CRM hygiene	Open / flex	CRM hygiene	Open / flex	PLAN NEXT WEEK

LEGEND

SELL	Prep	Follow	Review	Plan	Open

Notice what is not on this calendar. 'Catch up on email' is not a block. 'Internal meeting that could have been an email' is not a block. 'Wait for the buyer to chase me' is not a block. The week is built around customer-facing time, with everything else organised to serve it.

TOOL 4

The Drift Signals Diagnostic

How discipline erodes — and how to spot it before deals start slipping.

Discipline rarely collapses. It erodes — quietly, gradually, often in good people. These are the five early-warning signals to watch for. In yourself. In your team. Catch them early, and the fix is conversational. Catch them late, and the fix is structural.

SIGNAL 1 The CRM goes stale

Early signs to watch for:

— Pipeline updates happening only just before forecast reviews

— Several deals haven't had a next-action date refreshed in over a fortnight

— Dead deals still sitting in active stages

— Vague entries: 'follow up', 'keep warm', 're-engage'

First action: Pull the pipeline up together in the next one-to-one. Walk every deal. Force the hygiene conversation.

SIGNAL 2 The calendar gets invaded

Early signs to watch for:

— Internal meetings outweighing external ones in any given week

— Selling time being given away to whoever asks last

— Friday afternoon and the rep cannot say which hours were spent on customers

— Prep time has quietly disappeared from the calendar

First action: Rebuild the week from a blank calendar. Sales blocks go in first. Defend them.

SIGNAL 3 Preparation goes thin

Early signs to watch for:

— Walking into customer meetings without a written plan

— Saying 'I'll figure it out in the room'

— Deals taking longer to close — and the rep cannot articulate why

— Buyer feedback hinting that the salesperson didn't seem to know much about them

First action: Mandate a 20-minute prep block before every external meeting. Spot-check by asking 'what's your hypothesis going in?'

SIGNAL 4 Follow-through slips

Early signs to watch for:

— Promised proposals arriving a day late, then two days late

— Customer emails sitting more than 24 hours unanswered

— Buyers having to chase for things that were committed to

— The rep's explanations starting with 'sorry for the delay…'

First action: Track on-time commitment rate for two weeks. Make the data visible. Discuss it without judgment.

SIGNAL 5 The numbers go quiet

Early signs to watch for:

— One-to-ones moving from data to anecdote

— ‘It’s been a strange month’ appearing in conversation

— Rep can’t recall their own conversion rates without checking

— The narrative is moving away from numbers because the numbers are uncomfortable

First action: Bring the numbers back to the centre of every one-to-one. Conversation about conversion before conversation about feeling.

TOOL 5

The 30-Day Discipline Reset

A structured month to rebuild one discipline at a time.

You will not go from twelve to twenty-five in a week. You will not even do it in a month. But you can pick one discipline, improve it for thirty days, and feel the compound effect by the end of that month — and feel it dramatically by the end of the quarter. This is the structure.

WEEK 1 Honest Assessment

— Complete the Self-Audit in Tool 1. Note your starting score honestly.

— Pick the single discipline with your lowest score. This is your focus discipline.

— Read the relevant page in Tool 2. Mark the three behaviours you are not currently doing.

— Tell one person — a colleague, manager, peer — what you are working on. Public commitment, private effort.

WEEK 2 Build the Habits

— Implement the three behaviours from Tool 2 every working day.

— Adapt the relevant section of Tool 3 (Weekly Rhythm) to your own calendar.

— End each day with two minutes of reflection: did I do the three things today?

— Friday — review the week. Be honest. No judgment, just data.

WEEK 3 Spot the Drift

— Continue the daily habits.

— Use Tool 4 to check for drift signals in your other four disciplines — they often slip while you are concentrating on one.

— Halfway check: notice what is starting to feel automatic, and what is still effortful.

— Adjust your weekly rhythm based on what is working and what isn't.

WEEK 4 Re-Audit and Choose the Next

— Re-run the Self-Audit. Compare to your starting score.

— Identify your next focus discipline — usually the next lowest score.

— Document what you've learned about yourself this month. Save it. You will refer back.

— Begin the next 30 days with the next discipline. Then the next. Then the next.

THE COMPOUND TRUTH

Five disciplines. Thirty days each. Five months from today, you will be operating at a level that the seventeen percent operate at — not because you became a different person, but because you became a more disciplined version of the same one.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

Three ways in.

If you are a salesperson

Start with Tool 1 and Tool 5. Score yourself honestly. Pick the lowest discipline. Run the 30-day reset. Do not try to fix everything at once — pick the one that is hurting you most right now. The compounding will do the rest.

If you lead a sales team

Use Tool 2 as your coaching reference. The professional / amateur lists are designed to give you observable, behavioural language for your one-to-ones — no more ‘how’s it going?’ conversations. Use Tool 4 to spot drift in good people before it costs you deals. Use Tool 3 to defend your team’s selling time from internal noise.

If you are a business owner or sales director

Make the standards explicit. The disciplines in Tool 2 are the answer to the question ‘what does a professional look like in our business?’ Write them into your sales operating model. Hire against them. Coach against them. Promote against them. Make discipline a defined, measurable expectation — not a vague aspiration.

If you would like a Sales Geek to work with your business on building this discipline into your sales operation — auditing your team, defining the standards, embedding the rhythm — get in touch. We do this work across the world, every day, with businesses of every size. Discipline is the most learnable skill in our profession. It just has to be taught deliberately.

Sales Geek. The world’s largest provider of part-time sales directors.