

THE
VENTURE
MENTORING
TEAM



Effective Sales Techniques for Early-Stage Companies

**Helping Founders
Get to “Yes”**



Today's Goals



Helping founders assess their sales aptitude



Guiding founders in their preparation and sales planning



Asking the right questions about key sales tactics



Preparing founders for their role as sales leader



Sales Planning

- Core Problem
- Value Proposition
- Unique Selling Proposition
- Ideal Customer
- Buying Triggers
- Repeatable Process

Why...What...Who...When...How...



Sales Execution

- Lead Generation
- Lead Qualification
- Sales Pipeline (Company)
- Sales Funnel (Customer)
- Follow-up

ACCELERATORS

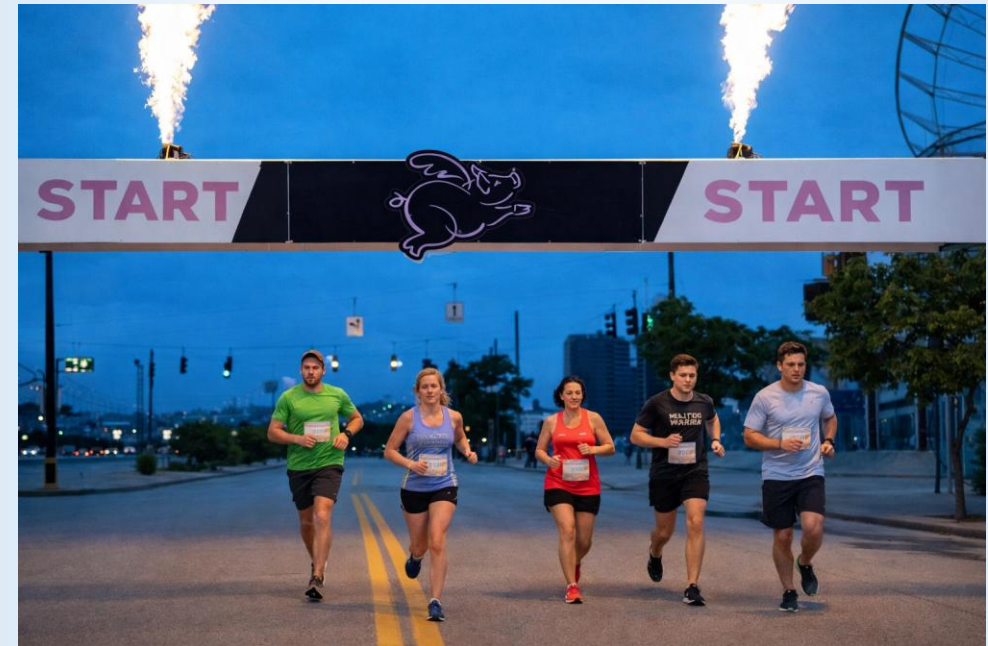
- Tools and Resources
- Partnerships



Before You Begin

Is the Company Ready?

- Product Market Fit
- Minimum Viable Product



Before You Begin

Is the Founder Ready?

Attitude Test

Personal Strengths

Concerns or Limits

Past Experience



The Founders Superpower... “Sales EQ”

- Read the room
- Adapt in real time
- Build trust
- Project confidence
- Manage rejection
- Stay curious
- Lean into strengths



Why Founder Led Sales Matters

- Founders drive early growth
- Sales = insights + learning + improvement
- Inspire a growth culture
- Part of VMT methodology
- Mentors are enablers...



Founder Led Sales Evolution



Discussion

How have you helped a founder who was intimidated by the sales role?

What techniques can we use to help founders build their sales EQ?

What are the greatest challenges in mentoring founder led startup sales?





Sales Planning



Core Problem

Q1: What Core Problem Do Customers Experience?

- Discovery uncovers real needs
 - Operational
 - Emotional
 - Financial
- Ask open-ended questions
- Dig into workflow, cost, and emotion
- Founder should be able to describe the pain clearly
- Sharper pain = faster sale



Slack

“Relief from Chaos”

- Pain from disparate emails, message boards, dev apps
- Promises calm, clarity, and control
- Focuses on feeling, not features
- Short, universal, and aspirational



Value Proposition

Q2: How would you express your value proposition in one clear, specific sentence?

- Start with the pain / not the product
- Make the outcome stupidly specific
- Anchor the differentiator in something real
- Tailor it to the role



Example

“We solve [pain] by delivering [specific outcome] unlike [alternative] because we [differentiator]”



Canva

“Design anything in minutes — no experience required.”

- Real advantage: speed
- Users amazed at fast results
- Emotion became the brand
- Universal workflow: template → drag-drop → done



Ideal Customer Profile

Q3: What is your Ideal Customer Profile (ICP), and how precisely can you describe it?

- Highest-pain segment
- Fastest to buy
- Longest to retain
- Feel the Urgency
- Negative ICP



HubSpot

- Filtered for high intent projects
 - Target small businesses
 - No marketing expertise
 - Need predictable leads
- Avoid customization
- Negative ICP



Buying Triggers

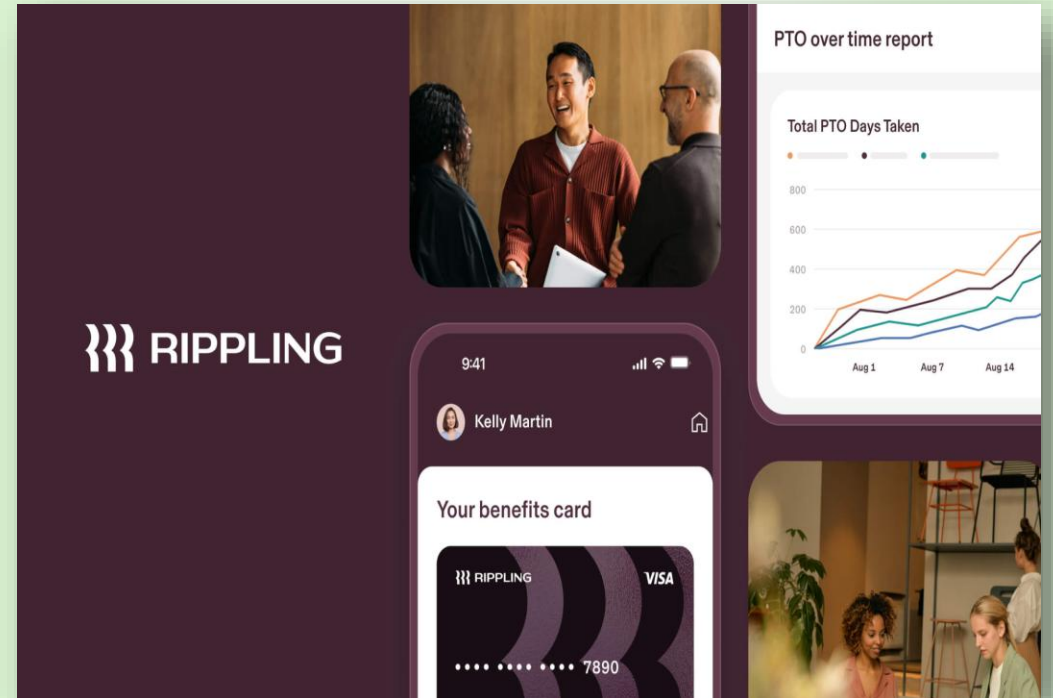
Q4: What buying triggers indicate a prospect is ready now?

- Force action
 - Disruption
 - New leadership
 - Compliance events
 - Rapid growth
- Urgency can't be created
- Look back at prior short sales



Rippling - HR Software

- Nailing perfectly timed outreach
- They tracked triggers like funding and hiring spikes.
- Triggers signaled pain
- Messages referenced the trigger event
- Timing boosted replies



Unique Selling Proposition

Q5: What makes your solution different from the competition?

- Unique insight
- Unique method
- Unique tech
- “Only we...” test
- USP can be applied universally



Drift – BtoB MarCom

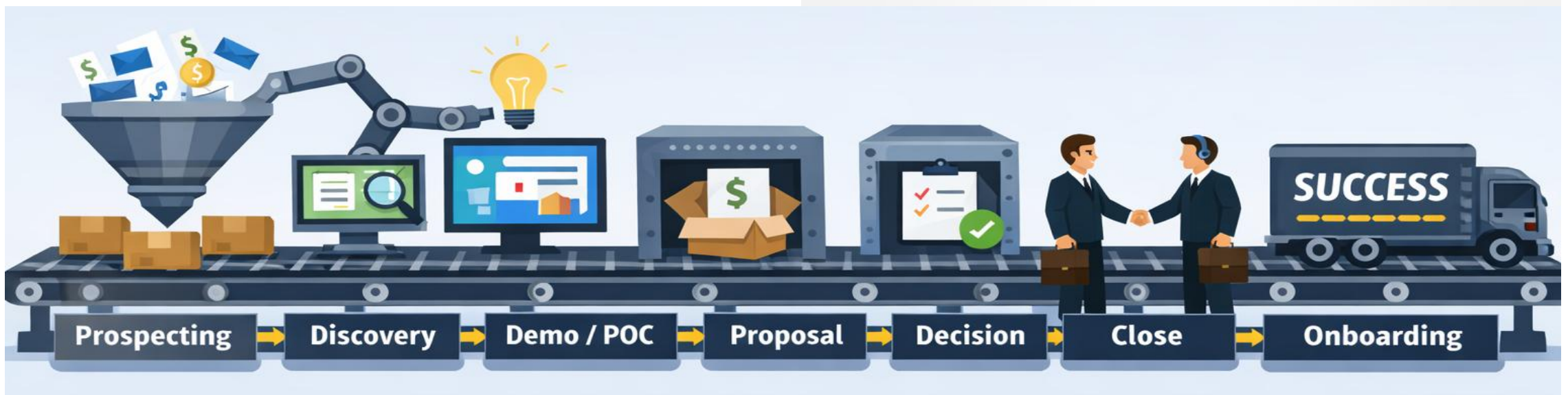
“Only we...combine conversational marketing with real-time sales acceleration to help you convert more leads faster.”

- Instant clarity
- Part all sales material
- Differentiator
- Defensible



Sales Pipeline

Q6: What does your repeatable sales process look like?



1) Prospecting = Filling the pipeline (ICP)

2) Discovery = Documenting the Pain

3) Demo = Showing the Transformation

4) Proposal = Making it Real

5) Decision = Objection Handling

6) Close = Securing Commitment (ABC)

7) Onboarding = Ensuring Adoption

Salesforce

- Disciplined approach
- Strict pipeline management
- Clear positioning
- Accountability Operational rigor



Planning Review/Discussion

- *How have you helped a founder prepare for the sales mission?*
- *Why is planning so important?*
- *Why do founders sometimes skip this step?*
- *Why is planning an ongoing process?*





Lead Generation

Q7: How are you generating leads today?

- Outbound vs Inbound
- Referrals/Networking
- Thought Leadership/Podcasts
- Communities/Social Media



Loom

Loom grew its network because users shared branded videos publicly — instant credibility.”

- Naturally viral product.
- Expand audience with shareable screen recordings .
- Drove massive adoption without marketing
- Referrals amplified the loop.



Qualifying Leads

Q8: How do you qualify whether a lead is worth your time?

- Poor qualification = long sales cycles
- Strong qualification = clarity, confidence
- Assess: pain, fit, urgency, and authority
- Track metrics: best channels, conversion
- Data reveals patterns



Shopify – Commerce Platform

- Focus on successful merchants
- Who were ready
- Resulted in higher activation
- Efficiency



Company Journey

Q9: Describe your current sales process (pipeline), what are the elements?

- Every active prospect categorized
- Clear next steps
- Stuck deals identified
- Forecastable revenue
- Monitor core metrics
- Rinse and repeat
- CRM vs Spreadsheet



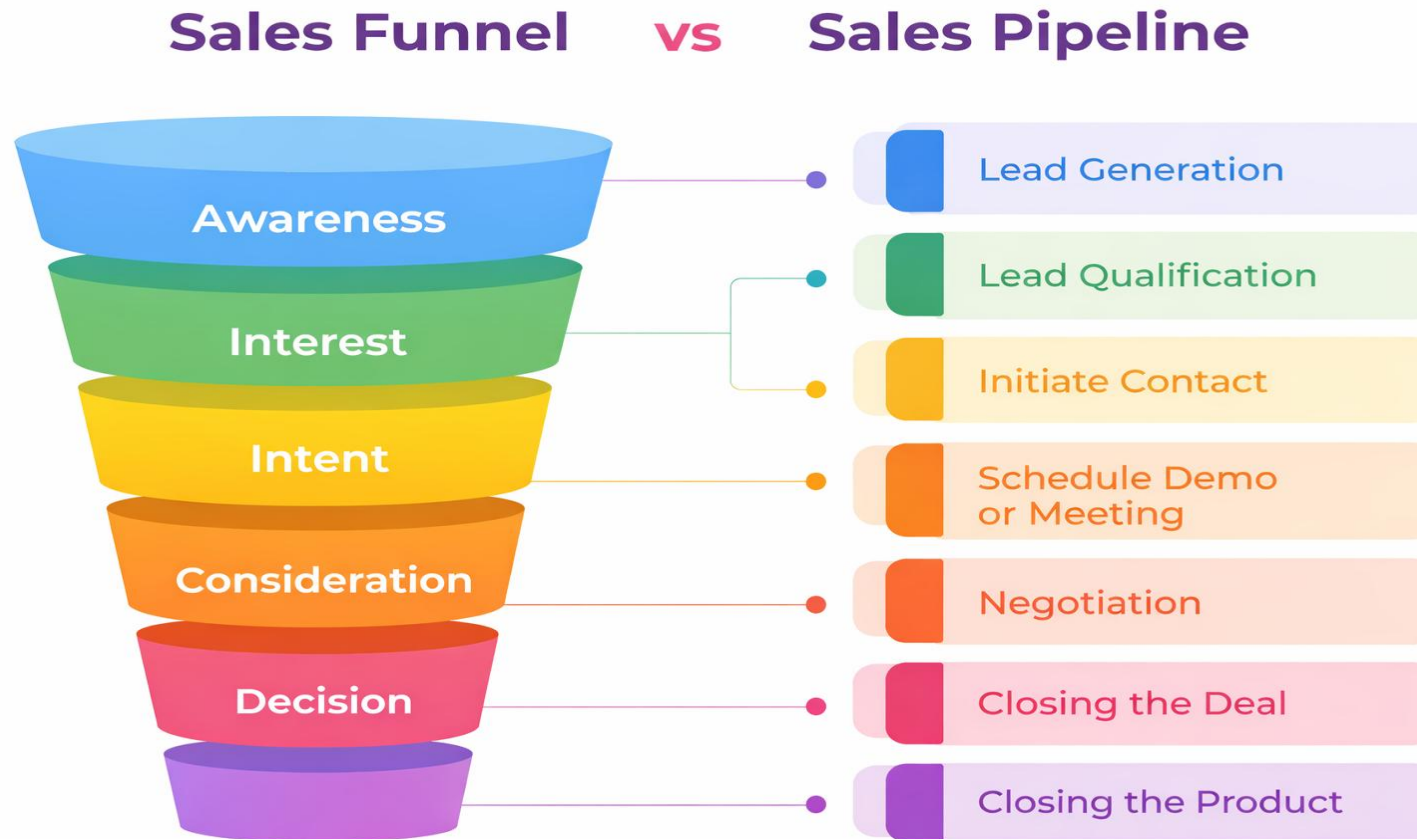
Figma – Collaborative Design

- Stalled deals were caused by missing champions
- Champions drive momentum
- Deals without one rarely closed
- Shifted to finding champions early
- This boosted velocity, accuracy, and win rates.



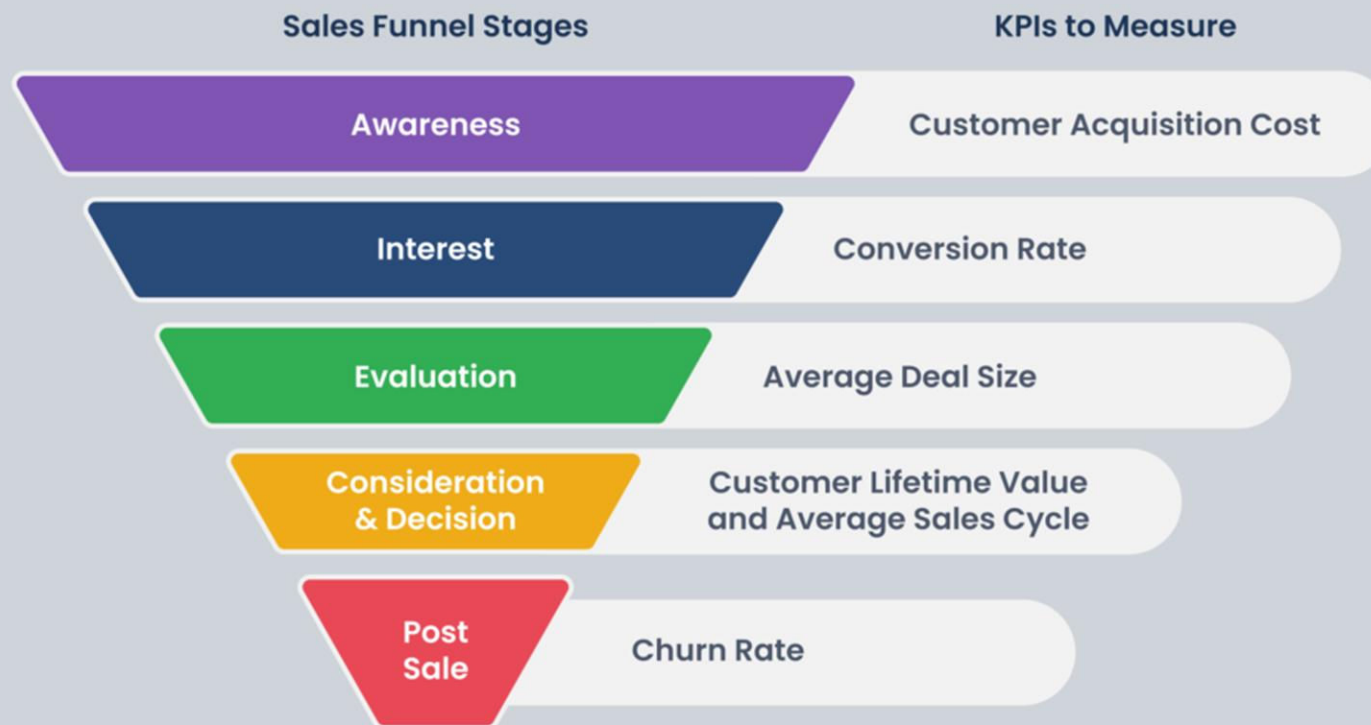
Funnel vs Pipeline

Q10: Where do deals typically get stuck, and why?



Metrics

KPIs to Measure at Every Sales Funnel Stage



Fullcast – GTM Strategy

Problem

- Unclear Next Steps

Solution

- Standardized qualification
- Clarified buyer milestones
- Watched metrics



Follow Up

Q11: How consistently do you follow-up with prospects?

- Follow-up wins more deals
- Engage prospects with added value messaging
- Check for urgency
- Be persistent and patient
- Stop only at yes/no



Outreach – Sales Training

- Best reps send 8-12 follow ups
- Through multiple channels
- With “value added” messaging
- Engagement after the 6th touch



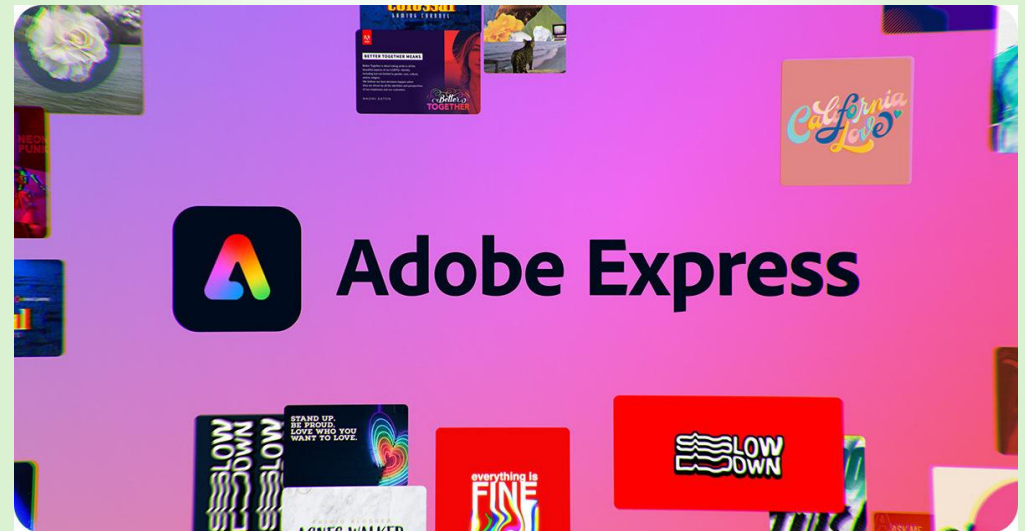
Q12: What sales tools do you currently have available?

- ✓ Brand Guidelines
- ✓ Discovery Question List
- ✓ Purchased Lists
- ✓ Email Template (cold/warm)
- ✓ Testimonials/Case Studies
- ✓ Phone Scripts
- ✓ ROI Calculators
- ✓ Podcast Links
- ✓ Presentations/Videos
- ✓ Demo Script/Links/Video
- ✓ Virtual Salesperson (Avatar)



Adobe

- Diverse collateral formats
- But consistent design included
- Customer specific messaging
- High production value
- Narrative-driven storytelling



Accelerators - Partnerships

Q13: Which partnerships or alliances could accelerate your growth and why?

- Borrow trust brand equity
- Unlock rapid growth at low cost
- Criterion
 - Shared ICP
 - Complementary offerings
 - Clear value exchange
 - Simple structure
 - Reciprocal benefits
- Negative components
 - Control of Brand
 - Cash control
 - Dependence



Zapier – Data Sharing Between Apps

- Made partners want to integrate
- They filled a technology gap
- Added value, made it easy
- Growth Model = more integrations → more users → more partners
- Became a self-reinforcing ecosystem



Wrapping Up



The Founder Led Mindset

Sales “EQ”

- Founders are the first/only salesperson
- Early customers are buying the founder's vision + brand
- “EQ” helps founders be effective and efficient



The Founder Led Mindset

- Selling is not beneath you
- Not something you delegate early
- Something you embrace
- Requires resilience
- Provides insights
- Customers buy on fear, trust urgency.



The Founder Led Mindset

What motivates your passion for learning?

In what ways do you feel called to help others?

How do you inspire people around you?

How do you stay organized and disciplined in your daily life?



The Founder Led Mindset

How would you describe your confidence in handling challenging situations?

What drives your curiosity and how does it show up in your work?

In what ways do you take ownership of the company and its outcomes?



Success is Within Your Reach

- Founder led sales is not a phase.
- It's building foundation
- Through commitment and culture
- VMT: Opportunity to nurture Sales EQ



Ready for the Next Step?

