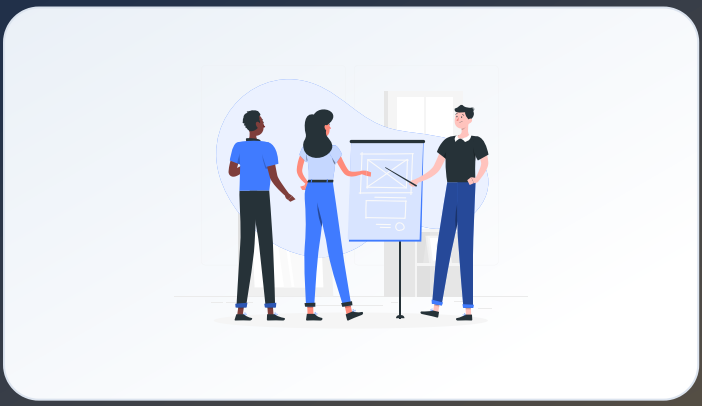
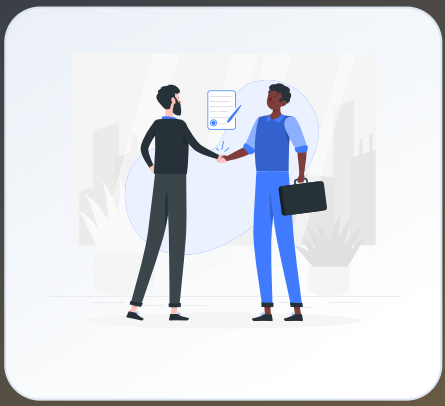
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MODULE 4 · FREELANCER-TO-STARTUP TOOLKIT

Winning Clients

Turning conversations into clients, sell by understanding, not pressuring. Uncover the real problem, and let the right solution sell itself.





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MODULE FOUR

Winning Clients

04

Most freelancers dislike selling because they think it means convincing or pressuring. It doesn't, good selling is just understanding, then helping.

Clients don't buy a service for its own sake, they buy a **solution to a problem**. This module replaces the sales pitch with a simple, repeatable **conversation**: understand the client's situation, uncover the real pain, help them picture success, and only then recommend. Sales stops being persuasion and becomes helping people make good decisions.



By the end, a participant can

- Run a structured sales conversation without pressure or scripts.
- Uncover a client's real pain and needs through good questions.
- Handle objections by returning to value, and agree a clear next step.

⏱ ~3 hrs facilitated | 3 facilitator-led + 2 self-directed | 🌍 Localised · PT · LT · SI | Youthpass · Communication + entrepreneurship

CONCEPTS IN THIS MODULE

1 · Sell the outcome, not the task
2 · Understand first, sell later
3 · The four-step conversation
4 · Step 1 · Discover the pain
5 · The 5-Why method
6 · Bridge today to the future
7 · Handle objections like a pro
8 · Closing is just the next step

ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

F1 · Discover Before You Sell, 60 min
F2 · Handling Objections, 60 min
F3 · Right Time to Recommend, 60 min
S1 · Reframe Your Pitch, 30 min
S2 · Your Discovery Questions, 40 min
+ Case study · resources · templates

WHAT CLIENTS ACTUALLY BUY

Sell the outcome, not the task

The biggest shift from freelancer to trusted professional is what you think you're selling. Beginners sell the task, the logo, the website, the hours, and end up haggling against everyone who offers the same task. Professionals sell the outcome, the result the client actually wants, and become almost impossible to compare on price. This sub-chapter is that shift.



WHAT IT IS

Selling the outcome means leading with the **result** your work creates, not the **deliverable** you hand over. A client doesn't want “a website” (a task); they want more enquiries, more trust, more sales (outcomes). Same work, completely different conversation: the task is *what you do*; the outcome is *why it matters to them*. Your job is to talk about the why, and let the what follow.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

When you describe the task, you invite comparison, every freelancer offering that task, listed by price, and you lose to the cheapest. When you describe the outcome, there's nothing to compare you to, because you're the only one promising that specific change. Outcomes also justify higher prices: a logo priced by hours is worth a little; a logo that makes a business look instantly credible is worth a lot. Selling the outcome moves you out of the price war and into value.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Listing your deliverables and your process (pages, revisions, hours, tools) and assuming the client will work out the value themselves, they won't. Talking about your craft instead of their result puts you straight into a price comparison you'll usually lose. Also over-promising an outcome you can't influence: promise the change your work genuinely drives, not a miracle.

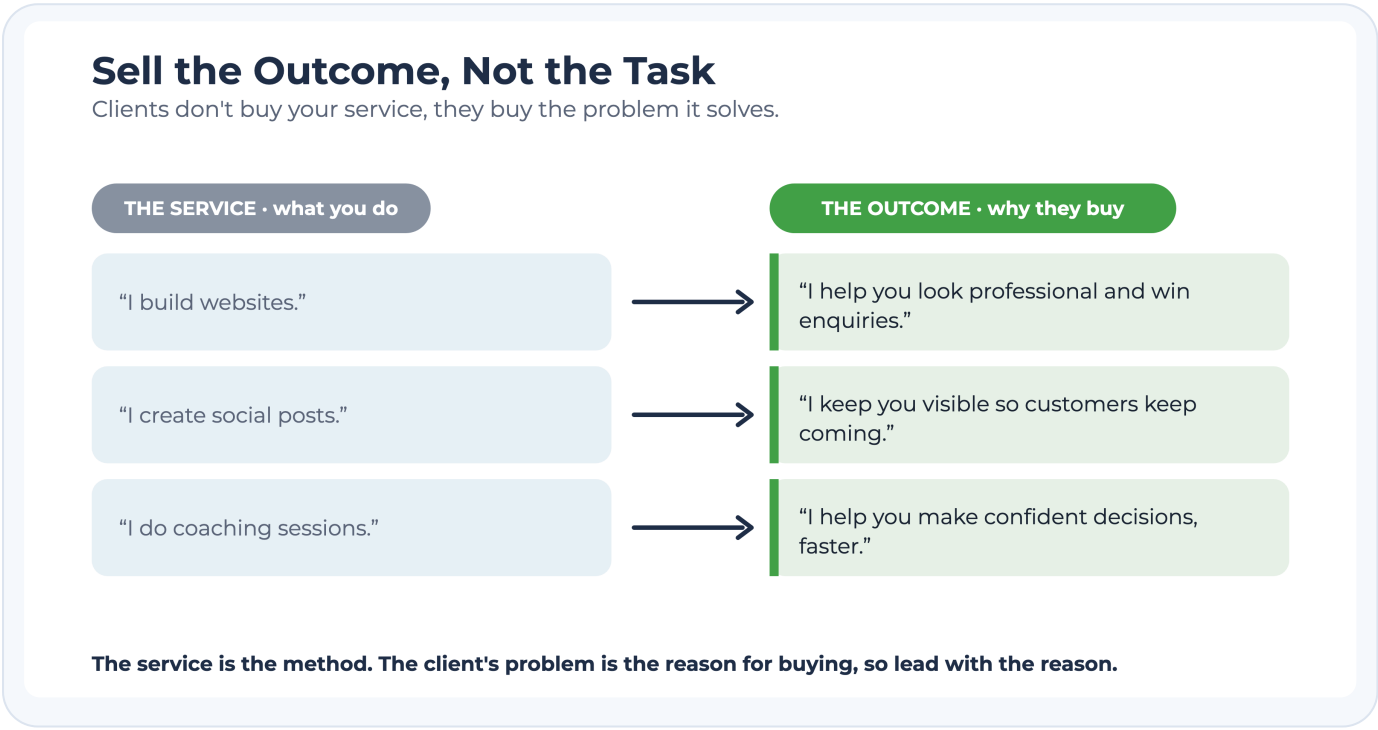
The service is the method. The client's problem is the reason for buying, so lead with the reason.

WHAT CLIENTS ACTUALLY BUY

Sell the outcome, not the task

HOW IT WORKS

Before every pitch, translate your service into the client's result. Ask “so that…” until you reach something they actually care about: I design logos, so that your business looks professional, so that clients trust you before you speak, so that you win more work. Lead with that end result, then explain the task as the way you'll deliver it. Talk about their world (customers, trust, sales), not yours (files, revisions, deliverables).



A WORKED EXAMPLE

Miguel used to quote “a 5-page website, €600.” He kept losing to cheaper offers. Now he says: “You'll have a site that turns visitors into enquiries, so more of the people who find you actually get in touch.” Same website. But clients stop comparing him to the €300 quote, because no one else is promising more enquiries, and he wins the work at €900.

Clients buy results, not tasks. Translate your service into the change the client will feel, lead with that, and the task becomes the method, not the pitch. Sell the outcome and you leave the price war behind.

THE MINDSET THAT WINS

Understand first, sell later

Most freelancers lose the sale in the first five minutes, by talking. Nervous to prove their worth, they pitch their services before they understand the client's problem, and end up recommending the wrong thing to a person who doesn't yet trust them. The professional mindset is the reverse: come to understand, not to sell. Do that, and the sale takes care of itself.



WHAT IT IS

"Understand first, sell later" is a mindset, not a tactic. It means every early conversation is aimed at **understanding the client's situation and problem**, not at presenting your services. You ask, you listen, you dig, and you hold your recommendation until you genuinely grasp what they need. Selling isn't a separate performance at the end; it's the natural result of having understood better than anyone else did.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Two things happen when you understand before selling. First, you earn trust, people buy from those who clearly get their problem, and every good question signals that more than any pitch. Second, you find the **real** problem, which is often not the one they first named, so your eventual recommendation actually fits. Freelancers who pitch first do neither: they seem self-interested, and they solve the wrong problem. Understanding first is what separates a trusted advisor from a salesperson people avoid.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Pitching in the first five minutes: reciting your services, your process and your prices before you understand what the client needs. It signals you care about selling, not solving, and it locks you into whatever task they first named, which is rarely the real problem. Talking more than you listen is the single most common way freelancers lose winnable work.

Approach every conversation to understand, not to pitch. Success begins with understanding, not presenting.

THE MINDSET THAT WINS

Understand first, sell later

HOW IT WORKS

Walk into every first conversation with one goal: understand, not impress. Ask open questions about their situation, their frustration, what they've tried, what success would look like. Listen more than you talk, resist the urge to jump in with solutions. Only once you can describe their problem back to them better than they did should you start to recommend, and even then, connect it to what you heard. Treat the sale as the by-product of understanding.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

A client told Sofia "I need a new logo." The old Sofia would have quoted a logo. Instead she asked why now, what's not working, what they wanted clients to feel. It turned out the real problem was that their whole brand looked amateur and lost them deals. She recommended a small brand refresh, worth five times a logo, and won it, because she'd understood the actual problem, not the requested task.

Come to understand, not to sell. Ask and listen until you grasp the real problem better than the client stated it, trust and the right recommendation both follow. Understanding first isn't a soft skill; it's how the sale is won.

A SIMPLE STRUCTURE

The four-step conversation

A good sales conversation isn't improvised charm, it follows a shape. The four-step conversation gives freelancers who "hate selling" a reliable structure: **Discover the pain, Identify the need, Envision success, Recommend.** The magic is that only the last step is a pitch; the first three are pure understanding. Master the shape and selling stops being a performance and becomes a conversation.



WHAT IT IS

Four ordered steps. **1 · Discover the pain**: understand what's actually frustrating the client, past the surface symptom. **2 · Identify the need**: turn that pain into a clear statement of what they need to change. **3 · Envision success**: help them picture what life looks like once it's solved. **4 · Recommend**: propose your solution as the bridge to that vision. Three steps of understanding, then one of proposing, always in that order.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

The order is everything. Recommend too early (the common instinct) and you're pitching a solution to a problem you haven't understood, to someone who doesn't yet want to change. Work through the first three steps and by the time you recommend, the client has already agreed there's a painful problem, named what they need, and pictured the better future, so your recommendation lands as the obvious next step, not a hard sell. The structure does the persuading, so you don't have to.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Jumping to step 4. The overwhelming freelancer error is to recommend a solution in the first few minutes, before discovering the pain, naming the need or building the vision. It turns a conversation into a pitch and forces you to persuade against resistance. The other mistake is doing the steps out of order, envisioning success before you've understood the pain feels hollow.

Understand fully before you recommend. Do steps 1–3 well and step 4 sells itself.

A SIMPLE STRUCTURE

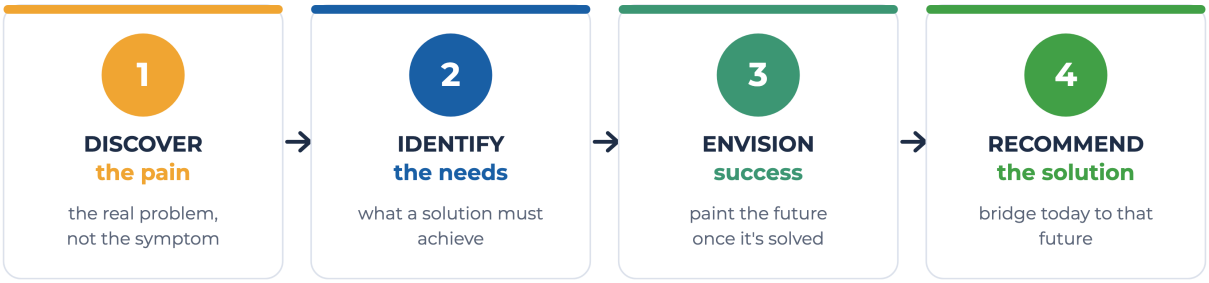
The four-step conversation

HOW IT WORKS

Consciously move through the steps and don't skip ahead. Start by exploring the pain with open questions (step 1, the longest). Reflect back the need you're hearing until they agree you've got it (step 2). Ask what solving it would make possible, and let them describe the win (step 3). Only then recommend, explicitly connecting your solution to the pain and vision they just described (step 4). If step 4 feels like a struggle, go back, you rushed the understanding.

The Four-Step Sales Conversation

A simplified Solution-Selling flow, understand fully before you recommend.



Steps 1–3 are all questions. Get them right and step 4, the actual selling, becomes the easy part.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

With a café owner, Tomás spends most of the meeting on the pain (empty weekday afternoons) and the need (more regulars, not more passers-by), then asks what a fuller café would mean (steady income, less stress). Only then does he recommend a simple loyalty campaign, framed as exactly that bridge. The owner says yes immediately, because Tomás is offering the future she just described.

Selling is a structure, not a talent: discover the pain, identify the need, envision success, then recommend. Spend your time in the first three steps and the fourth sells itself. If the pitch feels hard, you skipped ahead.

THE LONGEST STEP

Discover the pain

Step one of the conversation, discovering the pain, is where deals are won or lost, and it's the step freelancers rush most. Clients almost never hand you their real problem; they hand you a requested task that's really a symptom. Your job is to gently dig underneath it, with open questions and real curiosity, until you reach the pain that's actually driving them. Solve the symptom and you disappoint; solve the pain and you're indispensable.



WHAT IT IS

Discovering the pain means uncovering the **real frustration** behind what the client asked for. The request ("I need a logo", "I need a website", "I need social media") is usually a symptom; the pain is the deeper problem it points to (losing clients, looking amateur, feeling invisible). You discover it by asking open questions and listening, going past the first answer to what's really wrong. It's step one because everything else, the need, the vision, the recommendation, depends on getting it right.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

If you solve the symptom instead of the pain, you do exactly what was asked and still leave the client unsatisfied, because the real problem remains. Worse, you miss the chance to offer something more valuable: the deeper the pain you reach, the bigger and better-paid the solution you can honestly recommend. Discovering the pain also builds trust, clients feel understood when you reach the thing they couldn't quite name themselves. It's the longest step because it's the one everything rests on.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Taking the client's first request at face value and quoting it, solving the symptom while the real pain, and the bigger opportunity, go untouched. The other mistake is interrogating instead of conversing: firing questions without listening, or leading the client to the answer you want. Discovery is patient, curious listening, not a checklist you rush through to get to the pitch.

Clients describe symptoms; your follow-up questions reach the cause. Understand the pain before anything else.

THE LONGEST STEP

Discover the pain

HOW IT WORKS

Ask open, non-leading questions and let the client talk: what's prompting this now? what's not working? what happens if it stays like this? what have you already tried? Listen for the frustration behind the facts, and gently ask “why” or “tell me more” to go deeper. Don't accept the first answer as the whole story, and don't rush to solutions. You've discovered the pain when you can state it back and the client says “yes, exactly.”



A WORKED EXAMPLE

“I need a new logo,” said the client. Instead of quoting, Rita asked why now. “Our sales are down.” Why do you think? “People pick competitors over us.” Any idea why? “Honestly... we look cheap next to them.” There it is, the pain isn't the logo, it's looking cheap and losing sales. Rita can now solve something that matters, not just draw a symbol.

The client's request is a symptom; the pain is underneath it. Ask open questions and keep gently digging until you can state the real frustration back and hear “yes, exactly.” Discover the pain first, everything else depends on it.

REACH THE ROOT

The 5-Why method

The 5-Why method is the simplest tool in this module and one of the most powerful. Borrowed from problem-solving, it's just this: when a client states a problem, ask “why?”, and keep asking, roughly five times. Each answer takes you one layer deeper, from the surface symptom down to the root cause. It's the practical technique that makes step one, discovering the pain, actually work.



WHAT IT IS

The 5-Why method is a chain of questions. You start with the stated problem and ask **why** it's happening. To that answer you ask **why** again, and again, typically five times, though the number isn't sacred. Each “why” strips away a layer, moving from symptom (“sales are down”) toward root cause (“clients don't trust how we look”). The last answer is usually the real problem, the one worth solving, and the one your competitors never reached because they stopped at the first.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Problems present as symptoms, and symptoms are shallow, fixing them changes nothing for long. The root cause is where a real, lasting solution lives, and where your value is greatest: anyone can address the surface complaint, but solving the underlying cause is what makes you worth paying properly. The 5-Why method also protects you from solving the wrong problem, by forcing you to keep going until the answers stop being symptoms. It turns vague frustration into a clear, addressable root.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Stopping at the first “why” and treating that answer as the problem, it's still a symptom. The opposite mistake is making it an interrogation: rattling off “why” like a machine until the client feels cross-examined. Keep it conversational and collaborative. And don't cling rigidly to exactly five, the point is to reach the root, whether that takes three whys or six.

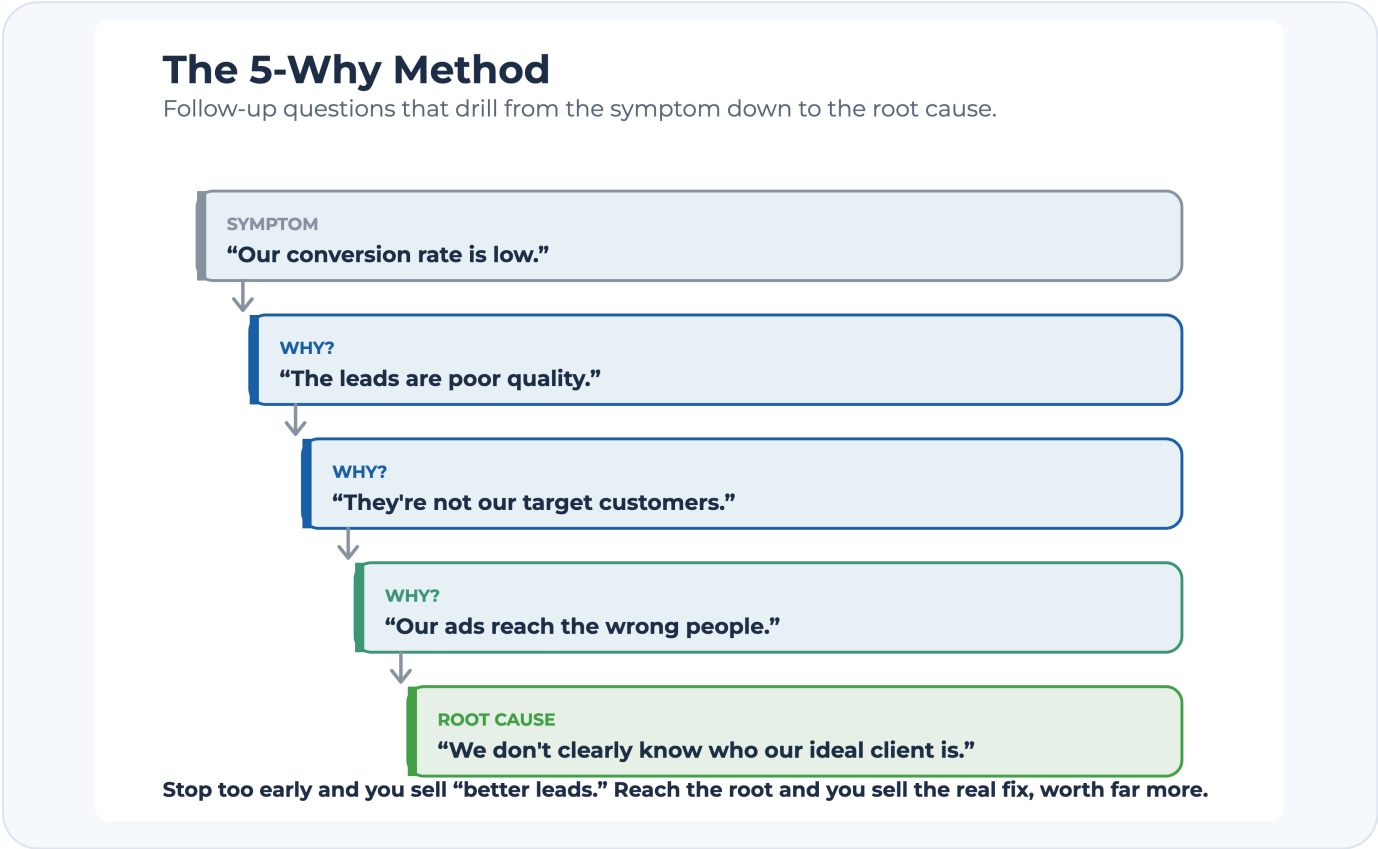
Drill past the symptom to the root cause, that's where the real problem, and your real value, live.

REACH THE ROOT

The 5-Why method

HOW IT WORKS

Take the client's stated problem and ask, out loud or together, “why does that happen?” Take their answer and ask why again. Repeat until the answers stop pointing to a deeper cause, usually around the fifth why. Stay genuinely curious, not interrogating, and let the client do the reasoning. When you reach something that, if fixed, would dissolve the whole chain above it, you've found the root, and that's what you build your recommendation around.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

Sales are down. Why? Fewer enquiries. Why? People visit the site but leave. Why? It looks untrustworthy. Why? It was built quickly years ago and never updated. Why? No one owned it. Five whys turned “sales are down” into “no one has owned our online credibility,” a root cause Léa can actually solve, and price, far beyond a quick patch.

Ask “why?” about five times and each answer digs a layer deeper, from symptom to root cause. Solve the root, not the surface, that's where the real value, and the real price, live.

CONNECT THE GAP

Bridge today to the future

Steps two to four of the conversation, identify the need, envision success, recommend, are really one movement: building a bridge. On one bank is the client's present pain; on the other is the future they want. Your solution is the span that carries them across. The whole art is to make both banks vivid and then present your recommendation as the natural bridge between them, using the client's own words, not your sales script.



WHAT IT IS

The bridge has four parts in order. **Pain**: the real problem you discovered. **Need**: what that pain means they must change ("you need to look as credible as you actually are"). **Vision**: the future once it's solved, described so they can feel it ("imagine winning the deals you're currently losing"). **Solution**: your recommendation, presented as the bridge from the pain to that vision. Each part builds on the last, and the solution comes only at the end.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

A recommendation offered without this bridge is just an opinion, easy to doubt, easy to price-shop. Built on the bridge, the same recommendation feels inevitable, because the client has already agreed to the pain, accepted the need, and wanted the vision. You're no longer persuading; you're connecting two points they already believe in. And because you use their own words for the pain and vision, the solution feels custom-made, because it is, which is exactly what justifies a real price.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Recommending before the far bank exists, pitching a solution when the client hasn't yet felt the pain or pictured the vision, so there's nothing for the bridge to connect. The other mistake is switching into your own language and generic benefits at the recommendation, dropping their words. The bridge only holds if both banks are vivid and the solution is tied to exactly what they said.

Recommend only once pain, need and vision are clear, then connect the solution to exactly what you heard.

CONNECT THE GAP

Bridge today to the future

HOW IT WORKS

After discovering the pain, say it back and get agreement. Turn it into the need (“so what you really need is…”) and check that lands. Then paint the vision: ask or describe what success looks like, and let them feel it. Only now recommend, and explicitly tie your solution to the pain and vision you just shared: “to get from [their pain] to [their vision], here's what I'd suggest.” Use their language throughout, so the bridge is clearly built for them.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

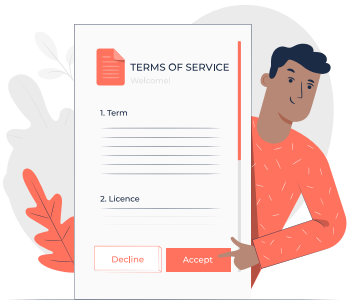
“So the pain is you're losing deals because you look amateur (pain). You need to look as trustworthy as you are (need). Picture winning those deals instead of watching them go elsewhere (vision). To get you there, I'd suggest a brand refresh and a sharper website (solution).” The client hears their own problem and their own dream, joined by Ana's recommendation, and simply agrees.

Your solution is a bridge from the client's pain to their vision. Make both banks vivid, name the need between them, and present your recommendation as the span, in their words. Built that way, the sale feels less like persuasion and more like the obvious way across.

WHEN THEY PUSH BACK

Handle objections like a pro

Objections are where nervous freelancers panic, either caving instantly (“okay, I'll drop the price”) or pushing hard (“but it's really worth it!”). The professional does neither. They treat every objection as what it usually is: a question about value or risk that hasn't been answered yet. Instead of defending, they get curious, understand the real concern, and calmly guide the conversation back to the outcome. This sub-chapter turns objections from a threat into an opportunity.



WHAT IT IS

An objection is any hesitation a client raises, “it's too expensive,” “I need to think,” “can you do it cheaper,” “I'm not sure.” The key insight is that an objection is almost never a flat no; it's a **question in disguise**, usually about whether the value is worth the cost or risk. Handling it well means not arguing and not caving, but uncovering the real concern behind the words and addressing that, then reconnecting to the outcome the client wanted.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Freelancers lose good work by mishandling this moment. Cave, and you train clients to distrust your prices and devalue your work. Push, and you make them defensive and dig them in. Neither addresses the actual concern, which stays unspoken and unresolved. Treating the objection as a question lets you answer what's really worrying them, and often reveals it was never really about price at all. Handled with curiosity, the objection becomes the exact point where trust, and the sale, are won.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

The two panic responses: caving (dropping price the instant anyone hesitates, which devalues you and invites more haggling) and pushing (arguing the client out of their objection, which makes them defensive). Both skip the real move, understanding what's actually behind the hesitation. Assuming “too expensive” literally means your price is too high, rather than a question about value, is the classic misread.

An objection is a question about value. Never push, understand the hesitation, then guide back to the outcome.

WHEN THEY PUSH BACK

Handle objections like a pro

HOW IT WORKS

When an objection comes, don't react, get curious. Acknowledge it (“that's fair”), then ask what's behind it: “when you say it's too much, is it the budget, or not yet clear it's worth it?” Listen to the real concern. Address that specifically, often by reconnecting to the outcome and value they cared about, not by dropping your price on reflex. Then check you've resolved it. Stay calm and on their side; you're solving their hesitation together, not defending yourself against an attack.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

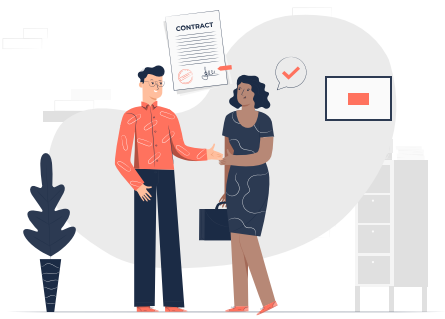
“It's too expensive.” The old Diogo would have discounted. Instead: “Fair enough, can I ask, is it the budget, or are you not yet sure it'll pay off?” “I'm not sure it'll bring enough clients.” Now the real concern is on the table, and Diogo can reconnect to the outcome (more enquiries, worth many times the fee) rather than slashing his price. The objection wasn't about money; it was a question about value, and he answered it.

An objection is a question about value, not a rejection. Don't cave and don't push, get curious, uncover the real hesitation, and answer that while reconnecting to the outcome. Handled with calm curiosity, the objection is where the sale is actually won.

THE RIGHT NEXT STEP

Closing is just the next step

"Closing" scares freelancers because they picture pushy, manipulative sales tactics. Real closing is nothing like that. It's simply **agreeing the next step** with a client who, thanks to the earlier steps, already sees the value. No pressure, no tricks, just proposing the logical way forward and confirming they're happy to take it. If the discovery and the bridge were done well, the close is the easiest part of the whole conversation.



WHAT IT IS

Closing means **reaching agreement on a concrete next step**, not necessarily a signed contract today. Depending on where the conversation is, the right next step might be sending a proposal, starting a small paid trial, booking a follow-up, or, yes, agreeing to begin. The skill is choosing the next step that fits how ready the client is, and inviting them to take it clearly and without pressure. A "yes" to the right small step is a successful close.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

The hard-sell "close today or lose it" mindset backfires with the relationship-based work freelancers do: it creates pressure, erodes trust, and pushes clients who need to think into a defensive no. Reframing the close as "agree the next step" removes the pressure for both of you and keeps momentum, which is what actually leads to won work. It also meets clients where they are: a not-yet-ready client can still say yes to a call or a proposal, so the conversation moves forward instead of dying at a forced decision.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Two errors. Applying pressure, pushing for a yes today, using urgency or guilt, which damages trust and backfires in relationship work. And the opposite: doing all the hard understanding work and then failing to propose any next step, leaving the conversation to fizzle out. Also asking for too big a commitment too soon, requesting a signature from a client who'd happily have said yes to a smaller step.

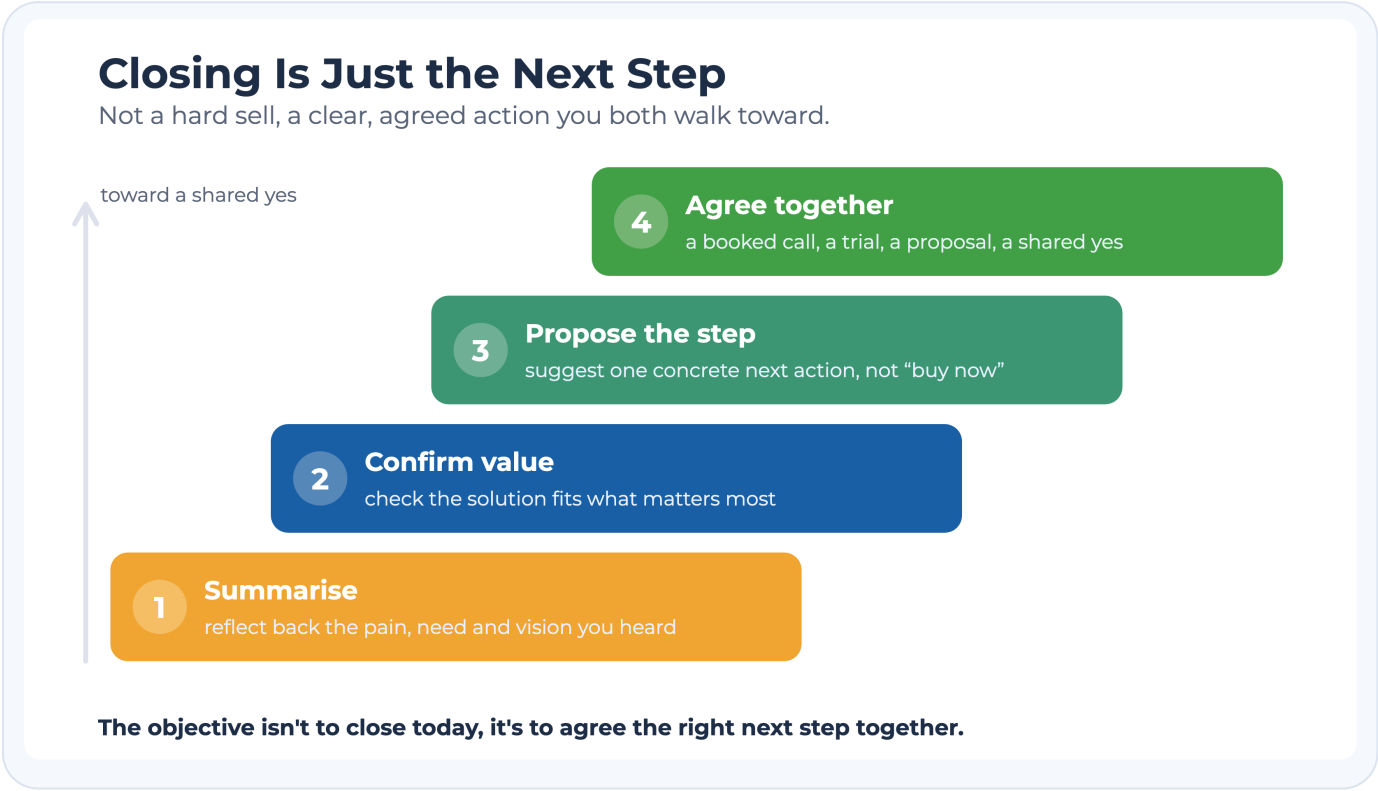
The objective isn't to close today, it's to agree the right next step together.

THE RIGHT NEXT STEP

Closing is just the next step

HOW IT WORKS

When the recommendation has landed, propose a specific, appropriately-sized next step: “shall I put this in a short proposal?”, “want to start with a small first piece?”, “shall we book a call to finalise?” Match it to their readiness, don't ask for a big commitment from someone still deciding. Then simply check they're happy to proceed, and confirm who does what by when. Keep it calm and collaborative; you're agreeing a direction together, not extracting a signature.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

After building the bridge, Nuno doesn't ask “so, will you hire me?” She says, “How about I send a short proposal by Thursday, and we talk it through Friday?” Easy yes. That agreed next step keeps everything moving, and the proposal-plus-call closes the actual work a week later, with no pressure moment at all, because the “close” was just the natural next step.

Closing isn't pressure, it's agreeing the right next step together, sized to how ready the client is. Do the earlier steps well and the close is natural: propose the logical next move, confirm they're happy, and keep the relationship moving forward.

FACILITATOR-LED

F1 • Discover Before You Sell

60 min

Role-play & discussion

BASED ON

Selling a service · Solution Selling · the first client conversation · the 5-Why method.

BY THE END, PARTICIPANTS CAN

Run a discovery conversation without pitching, and uncover a client's real pain and needs.

Step by step

1. **Frame it** · 5 min
   The goal is to understand, not to sell. Today nobody is allowed to pitch, only ask and reflect.
2. **Demo the two mindsets** · 10 min
   Role-play a pitchy conversation, then a curious one. Ask the group to spot the difference in how the "client" responds.
3. **Discovery in pairs** · 20 min
   A plays a client with a vague complaint; B asks situation, cause and impact questions, no offer. Then swap.
4. **Reach the root** · 10 min
   Each pair uses follow-up questions (5-Why) to move from the symptom to the underlying cause.
5. **Debrief** · 10 min
   What was the real pain vs the first complaint? What was hardest? (Usually: resisting the urge to pitch.)
6. **Commit** · 5 min
   Each person writes three discovery questions they'll use in a real conversation this week.

THE FRAMEWORK

Understand the situation, pain and needs before ever discussing a solution.

→ See the full diagram

MATERIALS

Printed Discovery Question Bank; role-play briefs (a client with an outdated website / few enquiries); a listening-tally sheet.

FACILITATOR PREP

Read the four-step framework. Prepare one relatable client scenario. Be ready to model a bad (pitchy) and a good (curious) conversation yourself.

Facilitator tips

The pitch reflex is universal, enforce "questions only." For shy learners, give the full question bank to read from. For migrant/Roma youth, discovery can happen in their community and first language, their networks are a real client source, not a limitation.

→ What can I do next?

Hold one real discovery conversation this week and write down the client's exact words about their problem.

Reflection & Youthpass

What did I learn by asking that I would have missed by pitching? **Youthpass:** Communication (active listening) + entrepreneurship, "I can learn the real problem instead of guessing."

★ Expert extension

Map each question you asked to a step (situation / cause / impact). Gaps show which part of the client's world you didn't yet understand, and where objections would later have come from.

FACILITATOR-LED

F2 • Handling Objections

60 min

Practice & discussion

BASED ON

Handling objections by returning to value, pain and desired outcomes.

BY THE END, PARTICIPANTS CAN

Respond to common objections without pressure, by reconnecting to the value discovered earlier.

Step by step

1. **Frame it** · 5 min
   An objection isn't rejection, it's a request for more clarity, usually about value.
2. **The wrong instinct** · 10 min
   Show what pushing for a decision does. Then show acknowledging + exploring the concern instead.
3. **Objection stations** · 20 min
   In pairs, draw an objection card and practise: acknowledge → explore → return to the pain and outcomes.
4. **The price reframe** · 10 min
   Rehearse reconnecting "too expensive" to the cost of NOT solving the problem discovered earlier.
5. **Debrief** · 10 min
   Which responses felt honest and which felt like tricks? Keep only the honest ones.
6. **Commit** · 5 min
   Each person writes their calm, value-based answer to the objection they fear most.

THE FRAMEWORK

An objection is a question about value, go back to the pain, not the price.

→ See the full diagram

MATERIALS

Objection cards ("too expensive", "need to think", "send a proposal"); the discovery notes from F1 to reconnect to.

FACILITATOR PREP

Read the objections section. Prepare 4–5 real objection cards. Have example value-based responses ready to model.

Facilitator tips

Some learners fear objections as personal rejection, reframe them as normal and useful. Ban manipulative closing tricks; everything here is about honesty and understanding. Let anxious learners script their exact sentence.

→ What can I do next?

Next time you hear an objection, ask one exploring question before you answer anything.

Reflection & Youthpass

Which objection do I fear most, and what honest question could I ask instead of defending? **Youthpass:** Communication + entrepreneurship, "I can turn a 'no' into a better conversation."

FACILITATOR-LED

F3 • Is It the Right Time to Recommend?

60 min

Judgement & role-play

BASED ON

Envisioning success and recommending a solution, knowing when the conversation is ready.

BY THE END, PARTICIPANTS CAN

Judge whether pain, needs and vision are clear enough to recommend, and make a recommendation that bridges to them.

Step by step

1. **Frame it** · 5 min
   Recommending too early is the classic mistake. First check: are pain, need and vision all clear?
2. **Ready or not?** · 15 min
   Groups read transcripts and decide if it's time to recommend. If not, what's still missing?
3. **Envision success** · 10 min
   Practise the step-3 questions that help a client picture the future once the problem is solved.
4. **Build the bridge** · 20 min
   Each learner writes a Pain → Need → Vision → Solution recommendation for one scenario, in the client's words.
5. **Share & refine** · 10 min
   A few read theirs aloud; the group checks the solution connects to what was actually heard.

THE FRAMEWORK

Recommend only when pain, need and vision are clear, then bridge today to the future.

→ See the full diagram

MATERIALS

The Pain→Need→Vision→Solution bridge sheet; short conversation transcripts (some ready to recommend, some not).

FACILITATOR PREP

Read steps 2–4. Prepare transcripts at different stages of readiness. Model one clear pain→solution bridge.

Facilitator tips

Watch for learners racing to the recommendation, send them back to gather the missing piece. Keep the vision step concrete and in the client's language, not yours.

→ What can I do next?

For a real prospect, write out their pain, need and vision before you draft any proposal.

Reflection & Youthpass

Was my last recommendation built on what the client said, or on what I wanted to sell? **Youthpass:** Entrepreneurship, "I can time my recommendation and connect it to the client's real goals."

★ Expert extension

A weak recommendation usually traces to a weak discovery. When a proposal is ignored, go back and find which of pain / need / vision you never actually established.

SELF-DIRECTED · ~30 min · Mini-mission

S1 • Reframe Your Pitch

Turn what you do into why it matters, the outcome the client actually buys.

1. **Write your service line**
   the plain "I do X" version.
2. **Ask "so that what?"**
   keep asking until you reach a real client outcome.
3. **Write the outcome line**
   "I help [client] achieve [result]."
4. **Test it on someone**
   does it make them ask "how?", that's a good sign.



→ Next

Use your outcome line as your intro everywhere, profile, proposals, first hellos.

✎ Your workings

Reflection & Youthpass

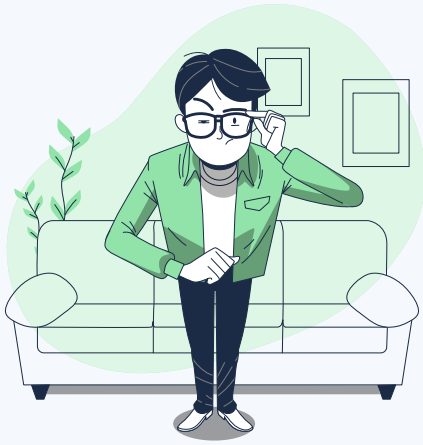
Did I understand before I recommended? Where did I talk when I should have asked?

SELF-DIRECTED · ~40 min · Planning exercise

S2 • Your Discovery Questions

Build the question set you'll bring to every client conversation.

1. **Pick a real client type**
   one kind of client you want more of.
2. **Write 2 questions per group**
   situation · root cause · impact, use the bank.
3. **Add a needs and vision question**
   "what would success look like in 6–12 months?"
4. **Rehearse staying quiet**
   ask, then let the silence do the work.



→ Next

Take your questions into one real conversation this week, and only listen.

✎ Your workings

Reflection & Youthpass

Did I understand before I recommended? Where did I talk when I should have asked? **Youthpass:** "I can hold a sales conversation that helps the client decide, without pressure."

A WORKED CONVERSATION

The construction company's website

A freelancer who builds websites for small businesses gets an enquiry: a **local construction company** wants a new website because "the current one is outdated." The easy move is to quote for a website. Instead, the freelancer runs the four steps.

Discover the pain. "How are enquiries coming in now?" It turns out the site barely appears on Google and the few visitors never call. The outdated look is the *symptom*; the real pain is **not enough enquiries to plan the year or hire with confidence.**

Identify needs & envision success. What would success look like? "A steady stream of local enquiries, enough to keep the crew busy through winter." Now the goal is clear, and it's not "a prettier website."

Recommend. The freelancer bridges it back: "A new site built around local search, so people looking for a builder in your area find you and call, steadying your enquiries through the quiet months." Same website work, but sold as the outcome the client actually wanted, at a value that reflects it.

Composite scenario from the SHIFT partnership's real-life sales worksheet. Facilitator tip: run it live as a role-play (see F1), pausing at each step to ask "what's the real pain now?".



THE MODULE 4 IDEAS IN THIS STORY

- **Outcome, not the task →**
- **Discover the pain (not the symptom) →**
- **The 5-Why root cause →**
- **Bridge pain → solution →**

What you can borrow, for any service

1. **Don't quote the request.** The first ask ("a new website") is rarely the real need. Slow down and find it.
2. **Sell the outcome.** "Steady local enquiries" is worth far more than "a website", and it's what they actually want.
3. **Bridge it back.** Recommend in the client's own words, connecting the fix to the pain and the future they described.

Same work, sold differently: not "a website," but the steady enquiries the client was really after.

GO DEEPER

Resource library

Everything to go further with Module 4. The **printable templates are built into this booklet** (next pages) and also at shift.elnlab.eu/resources.

SHIFT printable templates

- First-Contact / Cold-Call Guide · S1 ↗
- Discovery Question Bank · F1/S2 ↗

Reading & further learning

- Solution Selling, Michael Bosworth
- SPIN Selling, Neil Rackham
- The Mom Test, Rob Fitzpatrick
- To Sell Is Human, Daniel Pink

Practise the skill

- Role-play with a peer, questions only
- Record one real call and review your talk-vs-ask ratio
- Write pain→need→vision before any proposal
- Keep a "great questions" list that works

Where to find first clients

- Your existing network, tell them the outcome you deliver
- Local businesses that serve the same clients
- Community groups & the weekly market
- Referrals, every happy client feeds the top

Watch & listen (free)

- Solution Selling, explained
- SPIN questions, walkthrough
- The Mom Test, talk

Case study

A worked four-step conversation is on the previous page, the construction company's website. Run it live as a role-play with F1.

PRINTABLE TEMPLATE · 1 OF 2

First-Contact / Cold-Call Guide

A structure for reaching out for self-directed activity **S1**, stay curious, and aim only for the next step.

First-Contact / Cold-Call Guide

SHIFT · print & use

A structure, not a script, stay curious and aim only for the next step.

1 · Open warmly
Who you are, and one sentence on who you help.

2 · The reason
"I'm reaching out because businesses like yours often struggle with ..."

3 · Ask, don't pitch
One genuine question about their situation. Then listen.

4 · Offer a next step
"Would a short call to explore it be useful?", not "do you want to buy?"

5 · If not now
"No problem, may I follow up in a month?" Leave the door open.

▶ **Your goal is a conversation, never a hard sell. Curiosity opens more doors than pressure.**

1. **Open with the outcome**, one line on who you help and how, not a list of services.
2. **Ask, don't pitch**, one genuine question about their situation, then listen.
3. **Aim for a next step**, a short call to explore, never "do you want to buy?"

A first contact is a conversation, not a sale. Curiosity opens more doors than pressure.

PRINTABLE TEMPLATE · 2 OF 2

Discovery Question Bank

The questions for facilitator activity **F1** and self-directed **S2**. Ask one, then be quiet.

Discovery Question Bank

SHIFT · print & use

Bring these to any client conversation, ask, then be quiet.

SITUATION	" How are you handling this today? " What's working about it?
ROOT CAUSE	" When did you first notice it? " What have you tried, and what happened?
IMPACT	" How is it affecting the business? " What's it costing your team or customers?
NEEDS	" What would you like to achieve? " What must a solution deliver?
VISION	" What would success look like in 6–12 months? " How would that change things?

1. **Stay in questions** through steps 1–3, situation, cause, impact, needs, vision.
2. **Reach the root**, follow up until you're past the symptom to the real cause.
3. **Only then recommend**, once pain, need and vision are all clear.

Bring these to every client conversation. The best questions, and the silence after them, win the work.