

From the
Author of "[The Badass B2B Growth Guide](#)"

12 Timeless Principles of Selling

Battle tested sales principles that generate consistent results.

By Josh Braun

These principles are designed to help you start more conversations with your ideal prospects. And doing so in a way where people don't feel sold, manipulated or pressured. The result? More truth, higher win rates & less time chasing.

PRINCIPLE 1

People Buy Superpowers, Not Swords

Remember Link from the Legend of Zelda?

Link bought a sword from an old man in a cave.

The sword shot energy beams.

But Link didn't buy the sword to shoot energy beams.

He bought the sword to handle stronger enemies so he could rescue Princess Zelda in hours instead of days.

Link bought a superpower, not a sword.

Here's Jason Fried:

"Here's what the product can do" and "Here's what you can do with the product" sound similar, but they completely different approaches.

You probably don't want to be a camera expert (sword).

You want to take pro-quality pics so friends and family can experience the joys and sights of your life with you (superpower).

What can people now do because of X that they can't do without it?

Here's a superpower copywriting formula you can steal:

You do X and Y happens. Y is the superpower.

Example for a washing machine: You put dirty clothes in a box and 20 minutes later they come out clean.

PRINCIPLE 2

Stop Changing Minds

"We're working with another vendor."

Salesperson 1.0 was taught to overcome objections by saying things like:

"We'd just like an opportunity to show you why we're different."

"Is there anything you would change?"

Changing minds doesn't get you very far. People dig their heels in even deeper because you're taking away their freedom to choose. It's called the backfire effect.

Here's salesperson 2.0 with the Christopher Voss EQ update. Understand objections, don't overcome them.

Mirroring: "I'm sorry, another vendor?" Repeating the last few words or most critical pieces of info builds rapport because it shows you're listening.

Labeling: "It sounds like they've been a great partner." Describing what someone is feeling makes them feel heard. Everyone has a hunger to be heard. Again it gets back to making people feel understood.

Go for no: "This is probably a ridiculous question, but would you be opposed to seeing if there are opportunities beyond what you have now to avoid overpaying for property taxes?"

Here's Voss: "When you say 'no' you feel safe and protected. You feel like you've made no commitment, so you're going to give me a lot more information."

PRINCIPLE 3

Innocent Until Proven Guilty

My wife and I went on a bike tour in Napa Valley. The tour guide was in a grumpy mood. So I found him guilty of being unfriendly.

His sentence? A negative Tripadvisor review.

During lunch, the guide told me he recently lost his son. His son's name was Josh. I felt like such a jerk.

That's not the first time I've felt like a jerk. I found a cyclist guilty of wheel sucking—not pulling his weight by moving to the front to reduce wind resistance. I later found out he was recovering from cancer. Yup, what a jerk.

Here's the point.

When you have conversations with people, it's easy to forget that you're only seeing through your perspective. It's easy to find people guilty.

Instead, practice shifting your perspective when having professional and personal conversations.

There's always another lens to view things from.

For example, I don't believe that 95% of the time prospects lie. Prospects are afraid they're going to be sold.

They might lack some information you have. Maybe they don't want to be the bearer of bad news.

Giving people the benefit of the doubt will not just make you a better salesperson, it will make you a better person too.

PRINCIPLE 4

Be Crispy

My Pop Quiz

If you wanted banana gelato, which ad hits you more?

Gelato John's Ad

Gelato John has wonderful homemade banana gelato.

Gelato Jane's Ad

Gelato Janes uses a whole fresh banana in every pint to create a creamy and rich banana gelato. Then we hand swirl in our house-made chocolate fudge and Italian Amarena Cherries (a fancy cousin to the Maraschino Cherry).

Gelato Jane right? Jane's ad makes you feel good. Her words put a movie in your head. You probably saw and perhaps even tasted the gelato in your mind.

Why am I talking about gelato?

When you're "crispy" or specific in your cold emails, you're more believable and therefore, more persuasive.

The psychology? The length-implies-strength heuristic. The principle says that the more specific or "crispy" you are, the more likely it is you'll be believed.

For example, here's the first "crispy" sentence of Rippling CEO Parker Conrad's cold email:

"What I used to hate about my job (cofounder and CEO at Rippling), is the admin work of running a business - stuff like paperwork, IT tasks, setting up new employees, payroll, creating an account in gmail, github, AWS, our VPN, etc."

Do your cold emails sound like Gelato Jane or Gelato John?

PRINCIPLE 5

Don't Chase Cats

When I was 14, my mom bought a Persian cat.

Snowflake was elusive. The more I chased her, the more she'd run away. I hated getting "ghosted" by that cat.

My dad never chased the cat. Instead he'd sit on the couch reading Car & Driver. After 20 or so minutes, Snowflake would sit on his lap. He'd calmly pet the cat without taking his eyes off the magazine.

Why am I sharing this?

When you chase, prospects become elusive too.

How do you get prospects to sit on your lap? (Wait, did this just get weird?)

Detach from the outcome. Lean back. If your prospect wants to continue the conversation great. If not, that's okay too. The world is a big place. Have an abundance mindset.

Here's what leaning back sounds like:

"Our product isn't a fit for everyone. Based on what you told me, here are the benefits and drawbacks."

"What next step if any would you like to take?"

"Where would you like to go from here?"

As .38 Special said, "If you cling too tightly, you're going to lose control."

PRINCIPLE 6

Be Meaningfully Different

"Edit video fast."

A salesperson tried to persuade me to switch products. The problem? His product sounded similar to my current solution.

I can already "edit videos fast".

Me: "How is Y different than X?"

Salesperson: "With Y, you can customize the video player."

Um okay, that's different, but it's not meaningfully different.

What can I now do because of Y that I can't do without it?

To unseat the competition, educate me on something new that can help me kick more ass.

Here's how.

Step 1: Have a point of view

TikTok's rise to stardom suggests there's a lot of attention and not a lot of content to fill it. As the app "ages up" (similar to what happened with Instagram and Facebook) there's an opportunity for content creators to extend their reach organically (without ad spend). More reach equals more revenue.

Step 2: Share your point of view

"Instead of spending hours online more prospects are consuming video in short bursts on TikTok. What should your video strategy be to extend your reach as this shift happens? Would you be opposed to hearing a few new ideas?"

Me: Yes, please.

PRINCIPLE 7

Don't Toot Your Own Horn

"I'm the best sales trainer."

"We have the best B2B leads."

Whenever companies toot their own horn, my B.S. meter goes off. I don't believe hype-y claims from salespeople or companies because they're biased.

When you're hype-y in cold emails you make prospects skeptical.

Instead, be the arbiter of unbiased information. Let prospects decide for themselves if you might be better than their current solution rather than you telling them.

Like this:

"Josh - Noticed The American Association of Veterinarians came out with a statement about the hazards of rawhide based dental treats for dogs (choking and blockages.) What are you doing to avoid these potential hazards?"

Or this:

"Not sure it's a fit for you, but Peter Bowing, the Director of Analytics at Coke, is using an unconventional approach to make sense of 4.5 million rows of bottling data without blowing up Access or Excel. Would you be opposed to learning how he's doing it?"

Saying you're the best doesn't make you the best.

Let prospects come to their own conclusions.

PRINCIPLE 8

Out-Teach Your Competition

Here's my cold call script.

Opening

"Hi Lisa, I'm Josh. You don't know me, but I was hoping you could help me out for a moment."

Offer (The Deposit)

"Thank you. My timing is probably off, but I'm hosting a free educational event next week about an unconventional approach Directors of Business Development are using to help SDRs start more conversations over cold email. Would it be a ridiculous idea for you to attend?"

Typically what happens next is the prospect starts asking me questions.

Instead of pitching a demo, I'm offering to teach them something they care about.

Here's another example:

"You're probably too swamped, but X is hosting an educational event next week showing a new approach Accounting Managers in small agencies are using to minimize the time spent billing and invoicing clients. Would you be opposed to attending?"

You'll start way more conversations with prospects if you offer to teach them something useful than you will if you try to book a demo. That's because most people aren't in "buy mode" when you contact them.

Teaching has the potential to forge strong bonds with people.

It's what I'm doing now.

PRINCIPLE 9

10,000 Kicks

Martial arts legend Bruce Lee said, "I fear not the man who knows 10,000 kicks, but the man who has practiced the same kick 10,000 times."

Repetition and deliberate practice are crucial to kicking ass.

I was having trouble swimming. A swim coach said my head was too high which created drag. He held my head in the correct position. I swam laps. When I stopped he'd say, "Lower."

After 20 laps I became frustrated and said, "I'm not getting this." My coach said, "It takes time to rewire your brain."

11,000 meters later my lap time improved by 28%.

The takeaway?

Find ways to integrate the Bruce Lee technique into practicing sales. Don't practice on your prospects.

For example, make a die with objections on each side. Roll the die and respond.

The lesson here is a simple one once said by Samuel Johnson, the immortal English author. "People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed."



PRINCIPLE 10

Be Curious

You're having a conversation with a friend. Their phone buzzes. You notice their eyes glance to the screen and then back up.

When you're done talking, they say, "That's super interesting."

Do you believe them? Probably not.

In this era of always-on communication, fake listening is an epidemic. You listen to respond instead of listening to listen.

How can you practice being a better listener?

Whenever I had a conversation with my former boss Harry, he closed his laptop screen and put his phone in a drawer.

Harry didn't tell you he was going to listen, he showed you. It wasn't just his body language.

It was Harry's words too. Harry was a great "tennis player." He knew how to keep a rally going.

Here's the phraseology he used:

"Wait. What?"

"Sorry, I'm not tracking."

"What do you mean?"

"How'd that make you feel?"

"Give me an example."

"It sounds like that was tough.""

Whenever I had a conversation with Harry, I felt he was genuinely curious about what I was saying.

When people feel heard, they want more of you.

When people don't feel heard, they want less of you.

PRINCIPLE 11

Flaunt Your Flaws

Several years ago, I was looking for an apartment to rent in Chicago.

The real estate agent, Richard, took me to a place on Chestnut and Rush.

Before giving me the tour he said, "Look, I don't want you to get too excited about this place until I tell you about the air conditioner. It's a window unit which means it can be a bit loud."

Not only did I end up renting the apartment, but I also referred a few people to Richard.

Here's the point:

When you say, "This apartment isn't for everyone: here are the pros, and here are the cons," you build more credibility and trust than if you say, "Here's why you're going to love this apartment."

Are you telling people part of the story or the whole story?

PRINCIPLE 12

Make Deposits

Whenever my neighbor George rings my doorbell he wants something.

"Josh, could you help me move a dresser?"

"Josh, can I borrow your drill?"

"Josh, my computer keeps freezing can you take a look?"

Lately, when George rings the doorbell, I pretend I'm not home. That's because George is overdrawn.

He's made too many withdrawals and not enough deposits.

Most salespeople make too many withdrawals in their cold emails by saying things like:

"Do you have 15 minutes for a brief intro call?"

"Would you mind pointing me to the right person?"

"Please click my calendar link to schedule a demo."

Withdrawal. Withdrawal. Withdrawal.

When you're overdrawn prospects duck and dodge you.

Instead of making withdrawals, make deposits.

For example, I sell to Directors of Business Development. What would make them happier? Higher cold email response rates.

Here's a deposit:

Lisa - Here's a fun slideshow called, "What Zelda can Teach You About Writing Effective Cold Emails."

I'll send 4 email deposits like this before making a withdrawal.

Deposits build credit.

Withdrawals ruin credit.