

THE EMOTIONAL EDGE

The Hidden Conversation That Determines Every Sale

By Don Phin, Esq.



“All the world’s a stage” - Shakespeare

The Sale That’s Lost Before You Ever Walked Into the Room

Have you ever lost a sale where the prospect needed what you offered, your product was strong, your pricing was competitive, and the buyer seemed genuinely interested — and somehow you still didn’t get the sale?

Most salespeople reach for the logical explanation. The price was wrong. The competitor was cheaper. The timing wasn’t right. The buyer needed more information.

But after forty years as a trial lawyer, entrepreneur, executive coach, and speaker, I’ve learned something: most sales aren’t lost because of what happens in the room. They’re lost because of what happened before you entered it — because of the conversation happening inside your own head. The story you’re telling yourself. The story you may not even realize you’re carrying.

Because people don’t just walk into sales conversations. They walk onto an emotional stage with history, with assumptions, with fears, with expectations. And those invisible emotional forces shape everything that follows.

I spent decades studying why intelligent people make decisions that don’t seem to make sense. Jurors ignore facts. Employees resist good ideas. Leaders damage relationships they desperately want. Customers choose competitors with inferior solutions. For years, I thought these were different problems. I no longer do.

Whether you’re leading a company, managing a team, negotiating a deal, or closing a sale, the real conversation is rarely the one being spoken out loud. There’s always another conversation — a hidden one, filled with stories, assumptions, experience, fear, hope, judgment. That hidden conversation often determines the outcome long before anyone says yes or no.

Most sales training teaches people what to say. I’m far more interested in what people are saying to themselves, because that conversation — not the presentation — is usually the one deciding the sale.

One of my favorite sayings: ***If it doesn't make sense, don't try to make sense out of it!*** Instead, become curious. Something always makes sense. You just don't know the story yet.

That's the Emotional Edge.

Chapter 1 — Every Sale Has Two Conversations

The obvious sales conversation is easy to hear. What does it cost? When can you deliver? What makes you different? What kind of guarantee do you offer? How do you support enablement?" Those are the questions everyone hears.

But underneath is another conversation. The buyer is silently asking: Can I trust you? Are you going to actually listen to me? Do you care about solving my problem, or just about making a sale? Am I going to regret this?

At the same time, the salesperson is having their own hidden conversation: Are they serious? Are they just looking for free consulting? Do they already have another vendor? Why won't they decide?

Neither side says any of this out loud. Both sides feel every bit of it. And that's where sales are won — or quietly lost.

Chapter 2 — The Story You Carry Into the Room

Most salespeople underestimate the power of their own story. They tell themselves things like: I'm getting tired of this. They're just trying to use me for free consulting. I really need this sale. I must hit quota. What can I do to convince them? I know this is going to be a waste of my time. How will it blow up this time?

This is fear-based selling. And fear is almost always connected to judgment — and I know this: nobody judges us harder than we judge ourselves. Trust me, I've been there!

Facts tell, and stories sell — and that's just as true when you're selling yourself on the opportunity in front of you. When a prospect meets someone carrying the wrong story, they feel it. Their internal alarm system activates. Their Spidey senses go on high alert. It doesn't matter how good the product is; the opportunity can disappear before the salesperson ever gets a real chance.

The question is: *what story are you telling yourself about sales?*

Here's something worth sitting with: go back to the fact that nearly every one of those fears traces back to somebody's judgment. Not always the prospect's. Sometimes it's a sales manager watching the board, a spouse counting on the commission, a rival rep you used to outsell, or a kid you promised something to and don't want to explain why you can't deliver.

Even the “I really need this sale” isn't about the money — it's about who judges you if the money doesn't show up. Ask it straight: if no one — not your manager, not your family, not the version of you keeping score — would ever know or judge the outcome, what would you actually be afraid of? Most people go quiet at that question. That's the tell. The fear was never about the sale. It was about being judged.

Chapter 3 — It's Not Just Sales: The Gabriel Story

Before we go further into the sales floor, I want to show you where I first saw this mechanism operate in a room that had nothing to do with selling anything, even if it's just yourself — because if you think this is a sales technique, you're about to see it isn't.

Gabriel was head of IT for a large financial technology firm. Brilliant, hardworking, hired directly by the CEO, sitting on the leadership team because they wanted his input. None of that mattered, because Gabriel had the wrong story running in his head, and it was quietly wrecking his career.

In weekly leadership meetings, Gabriel would sit there unable to listen or contribute, consumed by worry about what he'd say when his turn came. The story kept spinning: the team wasn't listening to him. They were just waiting to judge and dissect anything he said. Maybe they didn't like him. Maybe it was his accent. He wasn't sure what it was, but he was sure it was something.

When his turn finally came, he'd freeze, creating an awkward silence — and then overcorrect, launching in with “we need to do this” and “we need to do that,” not realizing he was speaking for the whole team without asking. It didn't land well. Feeling attacked, teammates either dismissed him or argued with him, and no amount of being technically right made a difference. Gabriel doubled down on the very story that was sinking him: maybe it's me. Maybe I'm not that good. Maybe I'm an imposter. Maybe I should leave.

The CEO liked Gabriel but was running out of patience, and asked me to coach him. My job wasn't to teach Gabriel more IT. It was to help him see that his story about the situation was just that — a story — and because it was a story, he could let it go and replace it with a truer one.

So, we built a new story together: the team needed and valued his input. His accent added something, not a liability. IT is foreign to most people in that room, so his job was to be patient with them, not the reverse. His most important role in that meeting was to be of service.

Once Gabriel changed his story, he changed. He became a confident, contributing member of the leadership team — not because his skills improved, but because the conversation running silently in his head finally matched reality instead of fighting it.

Same mechanism as the sales floor. Different room. The same invisible conversation, deciding the outcome before anyone says a word out loud.

Chapter 4 — Of Course, Both Sides Feel Like Victims

Sales has always carried a singular cultural story: *the buyer is the victim, the salesperson is the villain*. Think about every stereotype you've ever heard — the pushy salesperson, the used-car salesman, the person who'll say anything to close. The time your mom was taking advantage of. The buyer's job, we're told, is to protect themselves. *Caveat emptor*, ancient Latin for buyer beware.

But here's the problem: that victim story runs in both directions. As we've been discussing, sellers carry their own victim story right back. They're wasting my time. They only care about price. They're shopping me. They don't like me. They'll never make a decision.

So, two people walk into the same room already protecting themselves. The buyer thinks, I'm just another commission to this person. The seller thinks, I'm just another vendor being used. Both are reacting to stories that may not even be true — and both stories create the very behavior each side fears.

Chapter 5 — The Villain Mentality

Every victim story needs a villain to make sense of itself, and sales has cast the salesperson in that role since before anyone alive was born. It's a seductive role to play, too — the pushy close, the manufactured urgency, the script that says never let them think about it overnight. There's a reason those tactics stay in circulation: in the short run, they work, and playing the villain can feel powerful in a way that playing the patient advisor never quite does.

But strip away the sales-floor language and villain energy always shows up the same way: manipulation, intimidation, and a distinct lack of heart. It pulls things toward itself rather than giving generously. “This price is only good today.” “If you don't decide now, you'll lose the slot.” “Everyone else on the team has already signed.” None of that is illegal. All of it is villain energy, and buyers can feel it the moment it shows up, the same way you can feel someone raising their voice at you even before you register the words.

We've all played the role. Have you ever pushed a close past the point where the other person's discomfort was obvious? Manufactured urgency that wasn't real? Guilted someone into a decision instead of earning it? That's the villain mentality on full display — and like yelling at someone, it lowers what Stephen Covey called the emotional bank account, and it stays lowered longer than the close was worth.

Here's the trap: it pays, at least for a while. Villain energy gets you a name on a form today. What it costs you is the referral, the renewal, and the reputation, none of which show up on this month's commission report — which is exactly why it's so easy to keep doing.

The same dynamic runs vertically inside your own company, not just across the table. Reps feel victimized by quota. Sales leadership feels victimized by reps who “won't hustle.”

Everybody's got a villain story about somebody else in the building. It's the identical loop from Chapter 4, just running between floors instead of across a conference table.

There's a simple way out of being cast as the villain, and it isn't a script. If you don't want to be villainized, show people you care about them. That's it. That's the whole countermeasure. Which brings us to Gary.

Chapter 6 — What Is Emotional Energy?

Every victim story, every villain move, and every real moment of trust in a sales conversation is carried by something underneath the words. You can't always name it, but you can feel it the second you walk into a room: someone's energy pulling everything toward them, or pushing everything away, or opening up and giving generously. That's emotional energy, and it's the actual currency of every sales conversation you've ever had, whether or not anyone called it that.

Most sales training treats a conversation as transactional — features, benefits, objections, close. But everyone who's genuinely good at selling will tell you, if you ask them honestly, that they're reading energy, not just words: the flicker of hesitation, the doubt underneath a stated objection, the enthusiasm that's there but hasn't been given permission to show itself yet.

Gary is the clearest example I know of someone doing this on purpose. Gary is a master of taking a prospect's emotional energy from where they have it to where they need it. That's not a metaphor — it's the actual mechanism behind everything he does. We'll come back to Gary in a minute.

Every conversation starts at some emotional address: guarded, curious, tired, skeptical, quietly excited. The real job isn't reciting features. It's closing the distance between where the buyer's energy actually is and the place it needs to be for them to say yes with confidence, not pressure.

I'm not going to unpack the entire discipline of reading and shifting emotional energy here — that's its own body of work. I just need you to leave this chapter with one idea: the words in the meeting are the transcript. The energy behind them is the actual meeting.

Chapter 7 — Becoming Your Own Hero

There's one more story running underneath all of this, and it's the one about you.

One of the most destructive stories any of us carry is the belief that to be a hero, you have to sacrifice yourself. I lived that story for seventeen years as a trial lawyer, and it caught up with me. It cost me a marriage, a stretch of financial stagnation, and a real bout of career burnout.

The hero's journey follows three stages, and I've now lived all three. In the first stage, you're the naive hero — sacrificing your time and energy for others, gullible, often working for people

who present themselves as mentors but are really villains in disguise. Most people land here right out of school, and I did too.

In the second stage, you become the hero of strength — driven, righteous, triumphing over the obvious villain out front. I spent this stage litigating whistleblower and glass-ceiling cases seventy hours a week, at my family's expense. I told my wife I was doing something heroic, working for the cause, and that she should support me in it. Her answer still stings: “What about us, Don?” It's no surprise our marriage ended.

I only found the third stage — the hero with a heart — after reading Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell's own conclusion, after tracing the hero myth across every culture he studied, was that today's hero gets to put down the sword. No self-sacrifice required. Around the same time, Tim Ferriss's *The 4-Hour Workweek* offered a different story entirely: you don't have to exhaust yourself to win. I went from seventy hours a week to forty, made more money doing it, and finally had time for my family. Same Don. Completely different story about what it meant to be heroic.

This mirrors something I see in almost every sales career, just measured in quotas instead of verdicts. Early on, the fear is can I even do this. Then it becomes I have to hit the number, whatever it costs me. And eventually, if you're paying attention, it becomes a quieter and harder question: why am I still proving this to anyone? That third stage is where the best salespeople I know get really good — not because they've mastered a new close, but because they've stopped needing the sale to prove something about themselves.

One more piece of this story is worth naming: the belief that the work must be hard. When I went to law school, most of my classmates carried the story that it would be brutal, and a lot of them suffered through three years proving themselves right. I told myself a different story — that I got to read and listen to smart people and repeat back what I learned, which is something I already loved doing. We did the same coursework. I had more fun, because the story I told myself about the work is what the work became.

You get to choose that story too. Guess what — sales doesn't have to be hard. What if you told yourself it was about creativity and having fun?

Chapter 8 — “When ... Then” vs. “... In the Making”

Most people run their career on a formula: when I hit quota, then I'll relax. When I close this deal, then I'll know I'm good at this. When I make President's Club, then I'll finally feel like a real salesperson. That's a *when/then story*, and it has a defect built into it that nobody notices until they've lived it for a decade: the goalpost never actually arrives, because the story was never really about the goalpost. It was about proving something, and proof doesn't have a finish line.

Compare that to a different sentence: I am a great (or even better) salesperson *in the making*. Not I will be. Not I'll prove it once I close this one. Just: already becoming, already in progress, no finish line required for it to be true today.

The difference isn't just semantic. A when/then identity is on layaway — you don't get to own it until you've paid for it with a result. An in-the-making identity is owned now, while you're still developing it, which changes how you show up in the room today, not just how you'll feel afterward.

I ask clients this question constantly: are you telling yourself a when/then story about your career, or an in-the-making story? Almost everyone can answer instantly, because they already know which one they're living in — they've just never had language for it before.

Here's why it matters for sales specifically. When/then energy is scarcity energy. It's the fear-based selling from Chapter 2, wearing a business-casual disguise. If your sense of being good at this job is conditional on how this one call goes, you walk in needing something from the buyer before you've even said hello — and buyers can feel a need in the room the same way they can feel villain energy. In-the-making energy is different. You already are what you're trying to prove. This call is more evidence. It was never the verdict.

This is what Gary inherently knows, without ever needing the language for it. He didn't walk into that Tuesday meeting needing to prove he's a great salesperson. He already was one, in the making, whether that meeting went well or not. That's exactly why he could afford to like people before he ever met them — he wasn't asking them to complete him.

Chapter 9 — The Gary Principle: Make People Feel Good About Themselves

Now let me tell you about Gary, one of the best salespeople I know. Year after year, Gary outsells everyone at his insurance agency by three to one — same products, same training as everyone else. He didn't think he had any secrets. But I did, so I got his entire sales team together, eight other people. We went into his conference room, and I began by asking them one question: what's the most important thing you do every day?

All eight of them gave me the logical answer you'd expect — make the plan, work the plan, learn the prospect's needs, satisfy their needs. Solid, textbook stuff. Blocking and tackling. It works, to a point. I'd consider most of the people in that room successful at sales — but they don't have Gary's success.

Gary answered last, and differently, and it blew me away, and I've been talking about it since. He said, “I make people feel good about themselves.”

“I make people feel good about themselves.”

Think about the last person who made you feel genuinely good about yourself. You get only a few of those people in your lifetime, and you'll do almost anything for that person, because they're so rare. The way I think about it, Gary allows the buyer to be the hero in the sales process — not the target of it.

How much of your prep, right now, goes into making the person across the table feel that way? Like the hero? For most salespeople: none. It isn't part of the story they're carrying, because they are trying to become the hero.

I asked Gary what his secret was for making people feel good, and he said, "That's simple. I find the good in them." OMG. Rocket science.

You find the good in them.

I once asked Gary to walk me through exactly what that looks like in real time. He gave me an example: a manufacturer sitting across from him with a workers' compensation modifier so high it was bleeding the business. Most brokers lead with the number — the competitive quote, the size of the financial burden, the fear of what happens if it doesn't come down. Gary does the opposite. He asks the manufacturer how he got good at building his business in the first place. What values, what strategies got him here. How long did it take for the flywheel to kick in for you to know you had a successful business?

The man always answers, because everyone loves being asked that question and almost nobody is. Once he does, Gary says something like, "Good. With my help, we're going to use those same values and strategies to bring your modifier down. And just like it took time for the flywheel to get moving when you built this business, it'll take a little time for the flywheel to get moving here too. But we'll get there."

Notice what Gary isn't doing. He isn't selling insurance. He's reminding the man of a story he already believes about himself — that he's someone who builds things patiently and well — and then attaching today's problem to that existing identity instead of manufacturing a new, fear-based one about the money he's losing. Gary allows the buyer to be a hero in the making.

When I started my company and began my own sales training, I was reminded that pain pills sell for more than vitamins. I asked Gary about that, and he said, "Why would I want to put anybody into pain? Isn't there enough of that already?" I didn't disagree with that- it's just what had been drummed into me. What I learned from Gary is that it's just fear-based selling.

I asked Gary how he prepares for a meeting. Everyone else gave the obvious answers — LinkedIn, Google, find out who the current vendor is. Gary's answer, again, was different. He also did his research in advance, but then he said something unique once again: "*I focus on liking them before I ever meet them.*"

“I focus on liking them before I ever meet them.”

That's the story and vibe Gary walks in with. I've stolen it. I use it all the time. Before I speak or advise, I focus on liking the people in the room before I ever meet them. Once I adopted Gary's internal conversation, my own results improved — and yours will too, even if the only thing you're selling is you.

Chapter 10 — It Works on Any Sales Stage: Holly's Story

Gary isn't a one-off. I've watched the same principle work all the way up to seven-figure sales, in a completely different world.

Holly sells to some of the wealthiest people you'll ever sit across a table from — yachts, private planes, high-end real estate. Year after year, she was the top-selling agent at every company, and her explanation for why sounds almost identical to Gary's, even though the two of them have never met.

Holly's approach: build the relationship from the heart before you ever get near the pitch. Many of her clients, she says, buy from her simply because they feel good being around her — because, like Gary, she finds the good in them first. Most sales training treats selling as a numbers game, she told me once, and a numbers game is just the old Victim/Villain story wearing a spreadsheet. Relationship-building isn't. Rich people, in her experience, are still just people with the same needs everyone has — and they're usually more on guard against manipulation than the average buyer, not less, because more people have tried it on them.

Holly also watched, up close, what happens when a company chooses the other path. Her boss for years managed quietly, personably, and mostly let his people do their jobs. Unfortunately, many those people didn't step up because he wasn't exactly motivating. Then the company decided they wanted more aggressive numbers and replaced him with what Holly called a real mover and shaker — someone who churned people and burned people and lost no sleep over it. His entire management style was fear-based. Any short-term bump in performance came from fear, and none of it lasted. Most of the team eventually got pushed out. A few, worn down, ended up taking things that weren't theirs. The company landed in real legal trouble, because the man made promises to employees and clients he had no intention of keeping.

I call executives like that the million-dollar executive club — not because of what they get paid, but because of what it costs the company to have hired them. They rarely get fired outright, since nobody wants that on a resume. They just move on, polish the story, and do it again somewhere else, protected by every employer too nervous about a defamation claim to give an honest reference.

Holly stayed the top performer through all of it, because her story was never dependent on her manager's energy. She'd already decided who she was in the room. That's this entire book, scaled up to selling yachts: the story you carry with you is your emotional edge.

Chapter 11 — The Manager as Hero (or Villain)

Everything in this book so far has been about the story a salesperson carries into a room with a buyer. There's a second version of the exact same dynamic, one level up: the story a sales manager carries into a room with their own sales team.

The principle doesn't change. Gary lets the buyer be the hero of the sale instead of making himself the hero of it. A great sales manager has to do the identical thing with their own reps — let the sales executive be the hero of their own sales process, instead of making the manager the hero who swoops in to save every deal. The true hero, in this framework, isn't the one who does the rescuing. It's the one who helps someone else become their own hero, and then gets out of the way.

Most sales floors don't run on that principle. Most run on the other one. You know the manager I mean even if you've never worked for him, because Hollywood already wrote him for you: Blake, from *Glengarry Glen Ross*, striding into the office to tell a room of experienced, exhausted salesmen that they're all fired unless they close. Coffee's for closers. Second prize is a set of steak knives. Third prize is you're fired. He dangles a Cadillac in front of the top performer and a watch that costs more than the car anyone else in the room drove there in. It's villain energy pointed down at the sales team instead of out at the buyer, and it produces exactly what villain energy always produces: short-term panic, a little bit of performance born entirely out of fear, and a room full of people who now see their own manager as the enemy they have to survive, not the person developing them.

Holly's manager, from the last chapter, was that same character with the names changed. Churn them, burn them, promise them anything, lose no sleep. It works, briefly, on a scoreboard. It fails everywhere else, and eventually it fails the scoreboard too.

Here's the trap a well-meaning manager falls into without ever meaning to play the villain: rescuing. A rep comes in overwhelmed and says, essentially, I don't know what to do, you have to help me — and a manager who wants to be needed will take the deal, take the call, take the problem, and solve it for them. It feels generous. It's actually the opposite of what Gary does for a buyer. It teaches the rep that their own judgment isn't trustworthy, and it makes the manager responsible for every deal on the team instead of responsible to the people running them.

The better move looks almost identical to what Gary does with that manufacturer and his workers' comp modifier: ask the rep how they got good at this in the first place. What's worked before. What they already know. Then attach the current problem to that existing competence instead of taking it off their hands. Take their emotional energy from where they have it to where they need it. It's slower than just closing the deal yourself. It's also the only version of the

job that produces more Garys and more Hollys instead of more co-dependent people waiting to be rescued.

Chapter 12 — Rewrite. Listen. Encourage.

The Emotional Edge comes down to three behaviors.

Rewrite. Your stories are invisible until you examine them. What do you actually believe about sales, about buyers, about yourself the moment someone says no? Then ask: is that story producing the results I want? If not, rewrite it. A rep who goes quiet after sending a proposal and immediately thinks they're ghosting me has written a victim story out of silence — when just as often, silence means the buyer is doing exactly what they should be doing: discussing it internally, checking budget, getting a second opinion. Same silence. Two completely different stories. Only one of them helps you make the follow-up call with any confidence.

Listen. Listening isn't a technique — it's an act of respect. The best salespeople ask better questions. They are truly curious. They don't interrupt, rush, or assume. There's a statistic from medicine worth borrowing here: the leading cause of malpractice isn't a bad diagnosis, it's a doctor who didn't listen long enough to take a proper history — and the number one reason a patient sues a doctor who actually did commit malpractice isn't the error itself, it's the doctor's bedside manner. Buyers operate the same way. They rarely leave over price. They leave because they didn't feel heard on the way to the price. *Salespeople who don't listen will surround themselves with people who don't want to buy.*

Encourage. The salesperson's job isn't to pressure someone into courage — it's to help someone find it. Buying requires courage; every meaningful decision carries risk. The buyer is silently asking: will this work, will I regret this, will I look foolish in front of my boss? Great salespeople don't increase that fear. They name it directly and reduce it — something as simple as, if this doesn't pan out the way we both expect, I'll help you explain why it was still the right call. That single sentence does more to create emotional safety than any feature or benefit ever will. You'll see exactly what this sounds like out loud in the next chapter.

Chapter 13 — “Let's Try This as a First Safe Step”

When I left the courtroom and started consulting with employers, I was unsure of myself. I didn't know if anyone would listen to a former trial lawyer telling them how to run their workforce — though I liked to say I could do for them what a divorce attorney does for a marriage: tell you exactly what not to do, because I'd already seen where it goes wrong.

A few companies took a chance on me, and I produced real results. Word got around. Referrals started coming in. And somewhere in there, I stopped feeling unsure and started feeling full of myself.

I knew I could produce results. I knew I had a great product. I knew I charged fairly for it. So I walked into meetings telling business owners what they needed to do and what they needed to stop doing. I wasn't humble anymore. I was full of myself, and I was too strong.

Here's the part that surprised me: the clients I landed with that energy were exactly the clients you don't want! They wanted me to save them. It was a codependent relationship from the first meeting, and it was exhausting — I was playing the hero, and I'd unknowingly recruited a room full of victims to complete the story.

About that time I started learning to use my emotional energy better, and I understood something that changed how I sold from then on: my job was to let the buyer be the hero of the sales process, not me. I stopped selling from across the line and started speaking from my own side of it — talking about what I'd done for other companies, not insisting anyone go all-in on the spot.

That shift led me to the most useful sentence I've ever taught a salesperson, an executive, or a parent. It came out of some study I'd done in NLP, and I've used a version of it in nearly every important conversation since.

“Let's try this as a first safe step, and see how it feels.”

There's more packed into that sentence than people realize.

Let's means we're doing this together — not me convincing you, us deciding.

Try means it isn't pass or fail. It's an experiment, not a commitment.

This is whatever the easiest possible yes is — not the whole deal, just the smallest real step toward it.

First implies there's a second, and a third. It tells them we're not asking for the ending yet.

Safe speaks directly to their Spidey senses — the part of them quietly checking whether they're about to be manipulated. I'm answering that question before they have to ask it.

See how it feels — not “see if it works.” I'm still speaking to those same senses, not their logic.

Now they're in an internal dialogue that goes: if this is safe and it doesn't feel right, I don't have to keep going. Which is exactly what makes it easy to say yes.

I've taught that sentence for decades because it works on everyone — clients, employees, teenagers, spouses. It's the whole Emotional Edge in one sentence.

So, before your next sales meeting try to think how you can make that buyer feel good about themselves, as your first step, and see how that feels.

Chapter 14 — Relationships Are the Last Competitive Advantage

Artificial intelligence can answer questions. Technology can compare products. Algorithms can recommend solutions. Pricing is transparent, features are increasingly similar, and knowledge has become a commodity. Relationships have not.

The future belongs to the salesperson who creates the best conversation — not the one with the best script or the most aggressive closing technique, but the one who understands people. Because relationships create trust, and trust creates decisions.

Final Thought

After decades of studying people, I've come to believe the difference between average salespeople and extraordinary ones comes down to one question: how do people feel after spending time with you? Do they feel heard, respected, understood, safer? Do they trust you more than before? Do they feel better about themselves because they have been around you?

If the answer is yes, you're no longer just selling. You're leading. People don't buy because they understand your product. They buy because they feel good.

Every dance has a leader. It isn't the person with the title, the budget, or the best presentation. It's the first person willing to change the music. When buyers stop assuming manipulation and sellers stop assuming rejection, curiosity replaces defensiveness, listening replaces persuading, and trust replaces suspicion. Sales stop feeling like transactions. They become relationships.

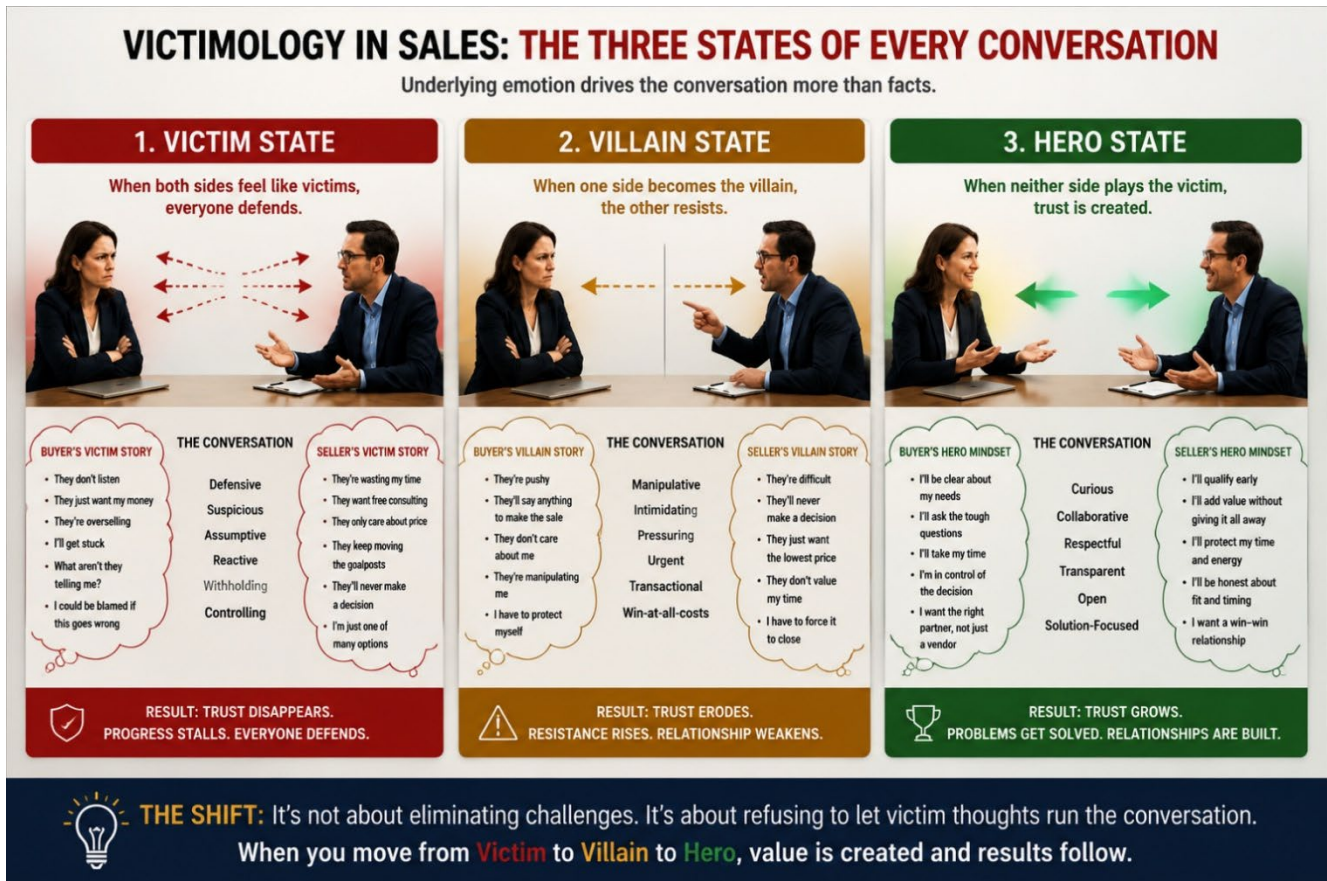
That's the Emotional Edge.

Before Your Next Conversation

A short field guide. Use it before any sales conversation that matters.

- ☐ What story am I carrying into this meeting — and is it true, or just familiar?
- ☐ Is what I'm feeling right now fear, ego, or genuine curiosity about this person?
- ☐ What would I do differently in the next five minutes if I already liked this person?
- ☐ Where am I about to play the villain — pushing for a close faster than this moment has earned?
- ☐ What would the hero-with-a-heart version of me do here, instead of the version still trying to prove something?
- ☐ What's the good in this person that I haven't found yet?

- If I manage other salespeople: am I rescuing them right now, or letting them become their own hero?
- Am I telling myself a when/then story right now, or an in-the-making story?
- What's the first safe step I could offer instead of asking for the whole decision right now?



I didn't write this book to teach you a new closing technique. Closing techniques are what people reach for when they don't trust the relationship to close itself. What I've given you instead is the thing underneath every technique — the story running in the room before either of you says a word. Your sales org already has a culture. The question is whether it's Gary's culture or Blake's — whether your people are becoming heroes in the making or burning out proving something to a scoreboard. That's not a training problem. It's an emotional one, and it's the conversation I have with sales floors for a living. If this book got under your skin even a little, that's the conversation worth having next.

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