

The Sagentix Signal

ISSUE #5 · 2026-10-13 · SALES PROCESS

Your pipeline isn't a forecast. It's a list of deals nobody disqualified.

The commit slipped again this quarter. Not because the deals died. Because most of them never belonged in the forecast.

Matthew Dixon, co-author of *The Challenger Sale*, puts a number on it: "anywhere between 40 and 60% of all deals are actually lost to the customer doing nothing" ([Swinscoe, 2022](#)). The usual reading is that buyers love the status quo. Dixon's research says otherwise: status-quo preference accounts for "less than half" of those losses. The bigger share comes from buyers who are "worried about making a big mistake."

That changes what a sales process is for. A deal that ends in "no decision" sat in someone's forecast for a quarter or two. It used rep time, skewed territory math, and taught you to trust a number the rep already knew was soft. Losing a bake-off is expensive. Refusing to disqualify is worse.

The buying side has also grown. Forrester's 2026 buyer research puts the typical decision at "13 internal stakeholders and nine external influencers" ([Forrester Research, 2026](#)). And the room does not agree with itself: 74% of B2B buyer teams show "unhealthy conflict" during the decision, in a Gartner survey of 632 buyers ([Gartner, 2025](#)). A rep who runs scripts into that room without a way to qualify every thread isn't selling. They are spectating.

MEDDPICC works as a gate, not a form

Most founders adopt MEDDPICC (Metrics, Economic Buyer, Decision Criteria, Decision Process, Paper Process, Identify Pain, Champion, Competition) as a scorecard the rep fills in after the call. That version fails, because a form records what the rep believes. A gate decides what the deal is allowed to be.

Here are the five stages this issue refers to, each with the test that ends a deal rather than delays it. They are a simplified version of the model we use in our own sales-process work, not an industry standard, so map them to the stage names in your own CRM.

THE FIVE PIPELINE STAGES USED IN THIS ISSUE, AND WHAT KILLS A DEAL AT EACH

Stage 1 Qualify

Ask first: is there a date on this, and who set it? Exit: a real pain and a date someone set. Kill: no date and no pain. That is a nurture contact, not a deal. Forecast: Pipeline.

Stage 2 Discover

Metrics and Decision Criteria written down. Exit: three named stakeholders. Kill: the buyer has no way to buy from you (no purchasing route, vendor list or contract vehicle). Forecast: Pipeline.

Stage 3 Validate

Champion tested and equipped; Economic Buyer met. Exit: the Economic Buyer agrees the problem is worth solving. Kill: no access to the Economic Buyer. Forecast: Best Case.

Stage 4 Propose

Decision Process, Paper Process and Competition documented; a mutual action plan agreed. Exit: five named stakeholders. Kill: the buyer will not co-own the plan. Forecast: Best Case.

Stage 5 Close

The contract is issued and moves through the buyer's procurement. Exit: signed. Kill: the decision slips past two budget cycles with no new trigger. Forecast: Commit, from the day the contract is issued.

Simplified from the Sagentix sales-process model (Phase 05), used throughout this issue. Not an industry standard; rename the stages to match your CRM.

So make each letter a stage gate. No Economic Buyer confirmed by week three? The deal leaves Stage 3, whatever the rep says. No documented Paper Process by Stage 4? The deal stays in Best Case; it counts as Commit only once the contract is issued. That is the rule we use with clients; it is our operating judgment, not a published benchmark, and you should tune the weeks to your own cycle length.

The cost of skipping the gates lands on people. The average chief revenue officer's tenure is "among the shortest in the C-suite, averaging just 25 months" ([Toman et al., 2024](#)). Founders who refuse to disqualify hire revenue leaders into forecasts they can't defend, and then replace them.

DECISION RULE:

if two MEDDPICC letters are blank at the end of a stage, the deal regresses.
The rep's commit does not.

Multi-threading is the defence against committee conflict

A single-threaded deal (one champion, one relationship) is a coin flip on whether that person still has a job, a budget or political capital ninety days from now. Gartner's 2026 study of technology buying found that "when executive sponsors move on to other projects, unhealthy conflict rises by 75%" ([Gartner, 2026a](#)). Your champion loses an internal vote you never saw, and your pipeline learns about it two weeks after the close date.

The fix isn't more calls. It is more named contacts per deal, set as a minimum the system enforces. Ours is three stakeholders by Stage 2 and five by Stage 4.

THE MULTI-THREAD MINIMUM, ENFORCED BY STAGE

By Stage 2		3 stakeholders
By Stage 4		5 stakeholders

Sagentix operating rule, not a published benchmark. A minimum is a gate the system enforces, not a target a rep aims at.

Those numbers are deliberately small against Forrester's 13 internal stakeholders, and the group grows with the product: when a purchase includes generative AI features, "the buying group size doubles" (14 members against seven), in a survey of nearly 18,000 business buyers ([Winters, 2026](#)). You will never meet them all; the gate makes sure you meet enough of them that one departure doesn't end the deal.

Do this this week. Pull your Stage 3+ pipeline and count named contacts per deal. Any opportunity with fewer than three isn't a deal. It is a lead with a close date.

The Second Signal

The second failure isn't the choice of methodology. It is Challenger run without a champion.

Challenger without a champion is just confrontation

Challenger selling asks the rep to teach, tailor and take control of the sale ([Dixon & Adamson, 2011](#)). Done well, it reframes how the buyer sees the problem. Done in a room where nobody inside has been equipped to carry the idea, it adds to the conflict the buying team already has. Gartner found that content focused on individual-level relevance "can create conflict within the buying group, resulting in a 59% negative impact" on consensus ([Gartner, 2025](#)). The rep delivers the insight; the CFO objects; nobody in the room owns the rep's framing after the rep leaves.

That is why champion enablement outranks every other Stage 3 activity. Give your champion three things: a one-page business case they can forward, short answers to the three objections the committee will raise, and one metric tied to the Economic Buyer's stated priority.

How you teach matters as much as what you teach. A 2026 study of 60 buyer and seller interviews found that "psychological safety is a critical catalyst for optimizing education prior to a purchase decision" ([Lähtevänoja et al., 2026](#)). A champion who feels safe admitting what they don't understand will ask you before the meeting. One who doesn't will stay quiet in it.

For every Stage 4+ opportunity, ask the rep what the champion is doing for them this week. If the answer is nothing, or that they are waiting to hear back, the deal isn't Stage 4. It is unequipped, and the forecast is wrong.

From the Field

The same disqualification discipline runs through four recent pieces from our desk.

- **Scripts Are Tactics. Playbooks Are Strategy.** "Scripts optimize conversations. Playbooks optimize decisions." The piece follows a VP of Sales whose best rep closed four times the average, not because she had better scripts (everyone had the same ones) but because she knew which deals to pursue and which to abandon. That is the stage-gate logic of this issue, done by instinct instead of by system. Read it if your top rep's pipeline looks nothing like your team's.
- **From Market Intelligence to Evidence Discipline: The 10 Phases of a Complete GTM Strategy** The piece argues that a fragmented go-to-market produces fragmented proof, and that fragmented proof loses to the vendor who closes the evidence gap. Read it if your stage gates don't yet require a documented artifact at each handoff.
- **B2B SaaS Took Tens of Billions in VC Funding. Most Founders Are Still Guessing Their GTM.** It names four guesses that survive from beta into the board room. The second is "Sales Process: Founder-Driven, No Methodology": the CEO closes deals personally, with "no documented qualification framework, no stage-gated pipeline." The piece pairs it with the 25-month CRO tenure above. Read it before your next account-executive hire, not after.
- **We Have the Best Product. We Just Can't Explain Why.** "The product is not the problem. The positioning is." When every competitor describes itself with the same vocabulary, buyers can't tell vendors apart. In the deal pattern the piece describes, won deals had

an external forcing function, such as a regulatory deadline, and lost deals were open-ended improvement projects. For a sales process, that is a qualification question: does this deal have a date someone outside the company set?

Together they make the claim this issue defends: the sales process, not the script or the deck, decides the outcome.

What We're Watching

The first discovery call now happens without you. Gartner's May 2026 survey of 645 B2B buyers found that 45% "used GenAI, primarily to gather information on vendors and products," and that 67% prefer a rep-free experience ([Gartner, 2026b](#)). The same survey has a turn in it: 69% still go to a sales rep to check what the AI told them.

And the shortlist forms early. In 6sense's 2025 buyer survey, "ninety-five percent of the time, the winning vendor is already on the Day One shortlist" ([6sense, 2025](#)). When Google shows an AI summary, people click a result link in 8% of visits, against 15% without one ([Chapekis & Lieb, 2025](#)).

Put together: before your qualification process starts, buyers have already qualified you, often through an AI assistant that read your website. If that assistant can't read your pages, or your site shows no person to reach and no next step, you aren't on the Day One list. Your stage gates never get a deal to gate.

What we're watching next: whether buyer surveys start reporting AI assistants as a source of the Day One shortlist itself, not only of research. That would move part of qualification from the sales team to the website.

Work With Us

Two free checks answer the two questions that come before a sales process: is your website working for you, and is the market worth entering?

Is your website working for you? Three readers look at it. A buyer decides whether to contact you (your sales surface); Google and AI assistants decide whether to quote you (your source for search and AI); anyone on the internet looks for a way in (your attack surface). The free website scan reads all three from the outside. Part 1, Sagentix Go-to-Market, reads the first two; Part 2, Sagentix Cyber & AI, reads the third. Each of five dimensions gets a plain label (Good,

Needs improvement or Poor) by one stated rule, and one serious finding makes a dimension Poor. There is no single score. It is passive, takes three to five minutes, needs no account, and every problem comes with a fix plan your webmaster can follow: sagentix.ca/free-website-scan.

WHAT THE FREE WEBSITE SCAN READS: THREE READERS, FIVE DIMENSIONS, BY CHECKS

Sales surface · Ready for buyers		14 checks
Sales surface · Speed and quality		7 checks
Search and AI · Found by search and AI		12 checks
Attack surface · Security and trust		26 checks
Attack surface · Email and domain		12 checks

Sagentix free website scan, method 2026-10-12.3. Part 1 (Sagentix Go-to-Market) reads the sales surface and the source for search and AI; Part 2 (Sagentix Cyber & AI) reads the attack surface. The checks show how deep each dimension is read, not a score. HTTPS (the SSL check) is 7 of the 26 in Security and trust.

Is the market worth entering? Before you put money into a new market, province or vertical, the free market snapshot asks three questions. Do buyers show the need? Do they already pay for this? How hard is it to get in? Code, never the AI, counts the public evidence behind each answer as strong, some or little. No verdict, no market size, no forecast. It takes five to ten minutes, needs no account, and comes back as up to four pages with every claim cited: sagentix.ca/market-snapshot.

Same idea, two depths. We ran one idea, physiotherapy clinic software in Canada, through both the snapshot and Phase 1. The snapshot found four vendors, two with a published price. Phase 1 profiled twelve, mapped the separate billing channels an Ontario clinic has to reach to get paid, and sized the market behind them. Four pages of that study are public: [the Phase 1 pre-view \(PDF\)](#).

When the decision is close (a forecast that is really a list of deals nobody disqualified, or a market you are about to commit budget to), Phase 1 Market Intelligence is the evidence-first starting point: a flat CA\$4,500, delivered in 5–7 business days, with a full refund if it reveals nothing you didn't already know (commercial engagements).

Reply with "Phase 1" or book at sagentix.ca/contact.

— Stephane Raby CMC · CISSP · P.Eng. · 25+ Years · Executive MBA

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