

The anatomy of a brilliant discovery call

Six concepts every seller
should master to close more
deals and win buyer trust

Presented by

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Whether you're a seasoned sales professional or just starting out, we're here to help you upgrade the way you think about discovery calls

Every sales conversation you have is going to be different than the last one. Relying on a rigid discovery question template won't cut it.

“The greatest closers are planned, not canned,” says Jeff Hoffman, creator of the award-winning “Why You? Why You Now?”[®], “Social Paradigm”[®], and the Basho Strategies sales training programs.

Instead of depending on whatever sales hack is trending right now, great sellers operate from a deeper level of understanding.

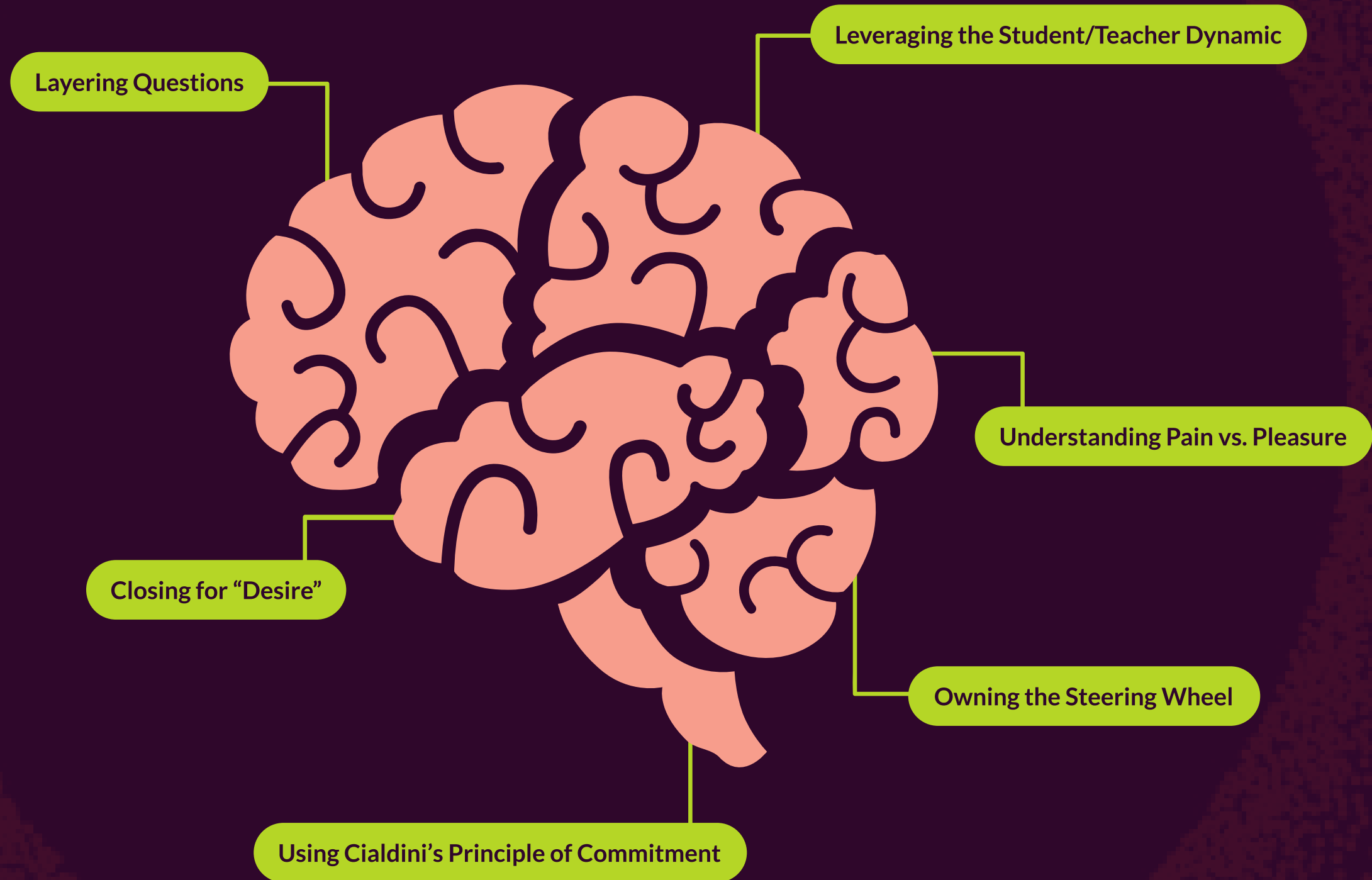
They tap into their powerful Discovery Brain, and these six concepts, to close more deals and win their buyers' trust.

- 1 Layering Questions
- 2 Leveraging the Student/Teacher Dynamic
- 3 Understanding Pain vs. Pleasure
- 4 Owning the Steering Wheel
- 5 Using Cialdini's Principle of Commitment
- 6 Closing for “Desire”

It's important to note that these approaches aren't meant to work alone. They're designed to work in tandem with your personal and team best practices.

So go find a comfy recliner. Crack open a beverage. And let's get into it.

Unlock your Discovery Brain



Layering Questions

Separate your questions by topic, moving from broad to specific, but be sure to leave room for genuine curiosity.

Why do so many new reps fumble in discovery calls?
Because they stay on script. They work down a list of stock questions without connecting the dots or exploring ideas.

What ends up happening is that they fail to adapt to the buyer's responses or ask probing questions. Meanwhile, the call ends up feeling like a job interview.

Real conversations are sporadic. By layering, you can prepare for the wayward path that conversations tend to take.

Layering, in its simplest terms, means that you organize your questions by subject matter and topic. Great sellers take it further by injecting additional layers of questioning (usually unscripted) to uncover the “why” behind a response.

As a master of layering, you'll improvise between questions so the conversation will feel as natural as possible.

How to put it into practice:

- 1 If you have 15 great questions, try splitting those up into 5 sections.
- 2 Go from broad to specific with your line of reasoning. Allow yourself to be curious, so the conversation feels more natural and less like an interrogation.
- 3 Try to find the reason behind your prospect's questions and responses: “Why is it important to solve that problem?” or “If you could see [result] in [timeframe], how would that impact your [goal]?”



Leveraging the Student/Teacher Dynamic

Learn from your buyer before they learn from you. You'll earn trust by shifting from a curious student to an expert teacher.



The Student/Teacher concept requires adopting a mindset of continuous learning and humble acknowledgment of your own vulnerabilities while gradually transitioning into an authoritative role.

You'll know you're ready to master this concept when you can answer yes to two questions:

- Are you willing to be vulnerable in the first half of your discovery call while you try to understand the customer's world — and they play the role as a teacher?
- And are you willing to patiently embrace curiosity, knowing that in the second half of the meeting, when you'll be presenting your stuff, you'll be the teacher in the sales call?

Patience and an eagerness to learn is the key to wearing your student hat. Understanding how your solutions solve the buyer's problems is where you become a teacher. You have to be both.

How to put it into practice:

- 1 Ask opinion-based questions about your buyer's industry that have zero to do with your offering. This showcases your curiosity and positions the prospect as a teacher.
- 2 Admit your areas of vulnerability or lack of knowledge in certain aspects of the discussion.
- 3 As the conversation unfolds, gradually shift into an authority role. Share relevant insights, industry knowledge, or success stories related to your offering. This will ensure that the prospect sees you as both a learner and an expert.

Understanding Pain vs. Pleasure

Probe into language cues instead of depending solely on subject matter. Your buyer will reveal whether they operate from a position of power or vulnerability.

Just like great detectives, successful sellers are experts at spotting underlying motivations in people.

Discovery calls are your case to unravel, but you'll need to prove one of two things about your buyer in order to succeed: Are they motivated by pain or they are motivated by pleasure?

With the Pain & Pleasure concept, you'll pay attention to what kind of language, not subject matter, triggers your buyer's responses. Sell pain to the painful, sell pleasure to the pleasant. If you can't find either, you don't have a buyer.

Become aware of the kind of terminology your buyer uses. Are they trying to solve a problem? Are they trying to distance themselves from a competitor? It's typically one of those two things. You have to have the courage to pick a lane before your customer does.



How to put it into practice:

These types of questions don't necessarily have to do with your product, but they can start to tell you if you're dealing with a pleasure buyer or a pain buyer.

Pleasure buyers	Pain buyers
Try asking questions that put the buyer in a position of power. Example: "So why did you choose to work at XYZ company?"	Try asking questions that put the buyer in a position of vulnerability. Example: "How did you wind up at XYZ company?"
If you have a pleasure buyer, you'll want to get to their boss quickly before the budget runs out.	If you have a pain buyer, you'll want to close quickly because they're shopping around and it could turn out to be a bake-off with your competitors on price.
Tip: If you give a "pain" word to a "pleasure" buyer, they'll usually correct you.	

Owning the Steering Wheel

Separate your questions by topic, moving from broad to specific, but be sure to leave room for genuine curiosity.

You have to own the steering wheel or none of this works. The customer controls the gas and brakes.

Start on time, end on time. Be professional. But whatever you do, don't invite a "no" into the room with questions like, "Are you still interested in this? Is this still a priority? Last time we talked, you said this...is that still true?"

With the Steering Wheel concept, you take control of the interaction by setting the tone early on and framing your questions to serve a "yes" answer from your buyer. The goal is to avoid unnecessary recaps, tie-downs, or inviting negative responses.



How to put it into practice:

Try using this intro as the close:

"[Buyer], I only know you from the emails we've exchanged. I was looking at my notes in my CRM, and in the conversations my company has had with yours, I couldn't find any notes that were that helpful. So if it's alright with you, I want to do this meeting in a weird order.

I know you have a bunch of questions about our offering, and about our cost, and implementation. I'm sure we're going to get to everything you want to know in our 30 minutes. But in order for me to get you any details that are relevant to you, I have a handful of questions that I want to ask first in a really specific order because it helps me get my head around what you need.

Are you cool if I ask you some questions about your company and your project before we get to this?"

The buyer will be impressed by your confidence. You've already addressed their questions up front (e.g. pricing), so they're more likely to follow your agenda and trust you. You're not necessarily trying to build rapport here, you're using the intro to grab the steering wheel.

Using Cialdini's Principle of Commitment

Something in this process has to include an action. You'll get the buyer to commit in small increments.

Robert B. Cialdini's principle of commitment, also called the "resolution and investment payoff," is the idea that when you decide to do something small at first, it makes you more likely to keep doing it.¹

Let's say you start a puzzle. Once you begin moving the pieces around, you might feel a stronger urge to finish it because you've already put in the effort. This is because our brains like to stick to what we've decided or worked on before. This is how commitment works in getting people to do things.

In the context of a discovery call, you'll want to get your buyer actively engaged in the process. Once you do, they're more likely to seek a resolution. If they walk away at this point, they've wasted time. Because it's not always about being efficient — it's about being effective.

¹ Cialdini, R. B. (2001). *Influence: Science and Practice* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

How to put it into practice:

Buyers don't want to reveal intent, but we need them to get off the fence at this stage. Try using this framework in your next call.

The Appetite for Change Framework

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Question | "On a scale of 1-4, where are you in terms of your appetite for change?" |
| Analysis | You've picked an even number, which makes 1 and 4 so extreme that 2 and 3 become the only real answers. The result is binary: "Are you in, or are you out?" If you get the ideal 3 for an answer, it doesn't mean that they're going to buy right now. But it can be an effective way of getting commitment. |

Bonus tip: Little meetings, more frequently, can be massively successful for reps. Instead of booking an hour-long meeting with "all hands on deck," try five 10-minute meetings with two different people at each. The sum of those meetings equals fewer minutes overall, but the frequency and diversity of the people involved in those meetings can lead to a higher likelihood of closing because they've invested their time.



Closing for “Desire”

The emphasis isn't on closing for purchase. You'll cultivate a sense of desire by inviting the verb “want” into the conversation.

Discovery calls are not designed to close for purchase. You close for desire. Your conversation is a mechanism for bridging the gap between “I think I understand” and “I think I want this.”

Think about when you say the word “want” out loud in the real world. It doesn't happen very often, but if you're at a restaurant and you want a hamburger, you're going to get it.

The verb “want” has to show up in the discovery call. Up until now in the sales process, the buyer has likely been using brain words to describe their interest: thinking, evaluating, analyzing. When you're Closing for Desire, you're looking to influence heart words: want, yes, maybe.

This idea expands upon the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action) which explains the stages a buyer goes through before a purchase.

How to put it into practice:

Use language that feels non-confrontational and allows the prospect to comfortably express their level of interest on a personal level.

Example: “I know we've been talking for about 20 minutes, do you think you might want something like this?”

Even if they respond with something like “I don't know yet” or “this is my first call” — it doesn't matter. In fact, a “maybe” is a big deal, and it's usually better than “I want you to meet my boss.” You're not asking them to buy your specific solution yet. You're just asking for them to own the decision at the personal level.



Upload complete. You're ready.

With your new Discovery Brain firing on discovery calls, you can toss out those rigid templates and lean into your natural curiosity, detective skills, and adaptive mindset to win over buyers.

Internalize these core concepts and start working them into your calls. Experiment. Learn. And keep going. You'll be surprised at the results.

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