

Stopping the Sales SKID:

A 4-Step Playbook to Regain Deal Momentum

BY BRADLEY HARTMANN

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It was late April, and construction season was clanging away in the Southwest. On a Zoom call, the frustration of the 48-year-old sales manager named Dan was unmistakable. With just six selling days left, missing this month's goal wouldn't just be four in a row—it would trigger a renewed discussion about layoffs.

Dan had been in the LBM industry for 25 years and could value-engineer a home from a hundred yards out, but lately he couldn't make sense of his team's sales performance.

"Yeah, the market is softer, but there's construction happening all around us," Dan said. "And we're quoting plenty. We're just not winning."

"Why not?" I asked. "What do buyers say when reps follow up?"

"They don't say anything. Calls go ignored. Voice-



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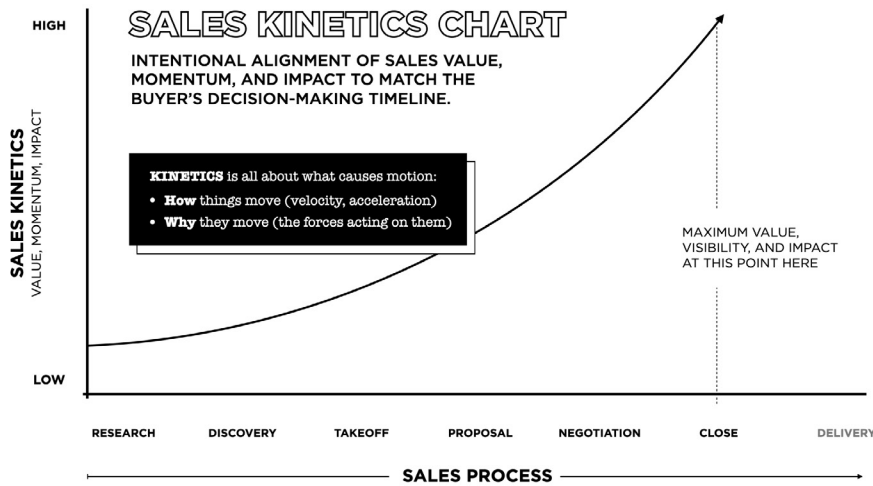
"And we're quoting plenty. We're just not winning."

mails are unanswered. We assume it's price. One of my reps even staked out a job site at 5 a.m., hiding in the neighbor's bushes to confront the builder."

"Did it work?"

"Damn near gave the guy a heart attack. Builder screamed at him. Told him never to come back."

We reviewed the team's sales process, designed to mirror the buyer's decision journey. The goal was to add value at critical moments. The sales manager, influenced by his physicist wife, had built a framework he called the **Sales Kinetics Chart**, drawing from Newtonian terms like force, momentum, and acceleration.



His philosophy: If deals aren't moving forward, they're going backward. But the theory wasn't translating into real-world results.

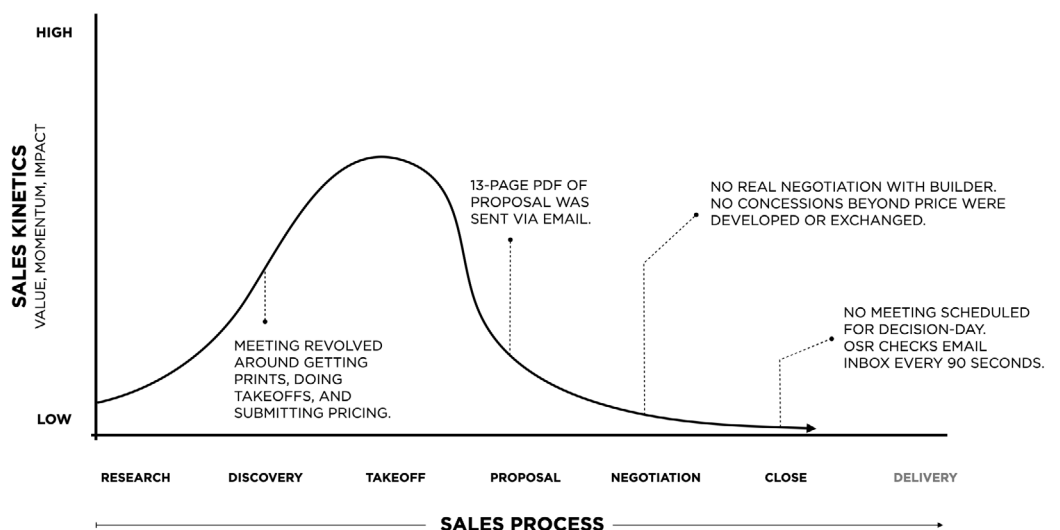
As we retraced the reps' efforts, a disturbing pattern emerged: **Sales Kinetics Inversion Disorder**, or **SKID**.

As defined by the *New England Journal of Sales Medicine (NE-JSM)*, SKID is when sales reps exert maximum energy early in the process and lose momentum when it matters most, causing deals to slide off the road before reaching the finish line.

On paper, the team's process was sound. In practice, however, reps were front-loading their effort—getting plans, doing takeoffs, submitting prices—then drifting away. The only negotiation taking place was internal: begging Dan to lower prices.

After meeting with each of his reps, the picture of what was happening became clearer in Dan's mind. He transferred what was actually happening to paper:

"Reps were front-loading their effort—getting plans, doing takeoffs, submitting prices—then drifting away."



To stop the SKID, the team adopted four changes.

1. Ask Strategic Questions

During Discovery meetings, reps went beyond specs and pricing:

- What are your top three initiatives this year?
- Were any 2024 goals not achieved?
- Are customers requesting different products or features?
- Who are your top competitors and what are they doing differently?
- Which other suppliers are bidding?
- Would you be open to suggestions to improve the product?
- Will your buying decision be based solely on price?

2. Request a Future Meeting

Reps began closing Discovery meetings with this script: “We’ll provide a full takeoff and pricing at least one day before your deadline, including some value-add and cost-saving options. But I need a favor. Can we schedule a 20-minute face-to-face meeting when I deliver the proposal? That way, I can walk you through the key assumptions and insights, ensuring nothing gets lost in translation.”

Every buyer agreed. They needed the proposal, after all.

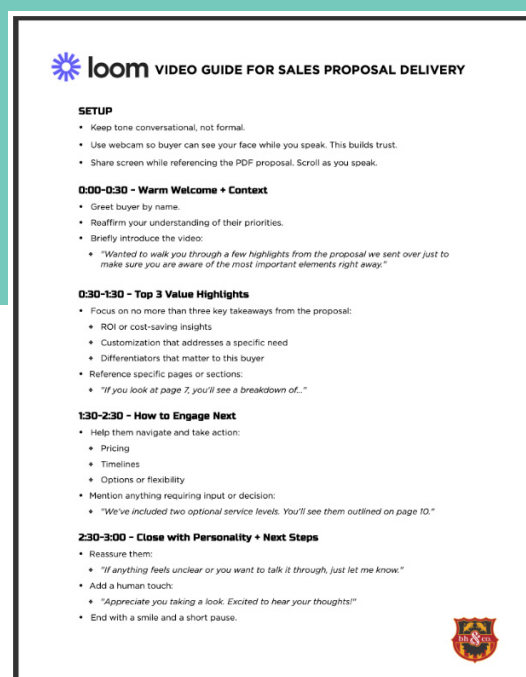
3. Identify an Advocate

An advocate is someone in the builder’s organization who wants you on the job. If not already known, the time between Discovery and Proposal is the window to find one. Visiting job sites and engaging with the people doing the work uncovered more builder pain points—and opportunities for Dan’s team to help.

4. Send a Loom Video With the Proposal

Each proposal email was now accompanied by a Loom video (under 3 minutes), explaining key takeaways, assumptions, and choices for the builder to consider.

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These adjustments didn't solve everything, but they stopped the SKID.

Strategic questions posed in the Discovery meeting changed the tone. With clearer insights into the builder's goals, reps delivered more compelling and customized proposals. The scheduled meetings ensured real-time conversations and live negotiations.

Advocates—often construction managers and framers frustrated with dealing with the same issues over and over again—spoke up internally.

The Loom videos stood out. One VP of Operations

even asked for Loom training to improve communication between his purchasing team and field staff. Another builder said, "If you want me to do more than simply scroll to the end of the proposal and look at the price, send me more proposals like these."

In May, Dan and his team still lost deals. But for the first time this year, they hit their monthly sales goal.

Dan chuckled and said, "Apparently, face-to-face conversations are more productive at a builder's office than hiding in the bushes near their jobsite."

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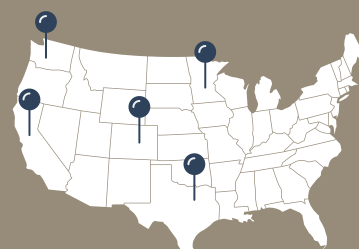
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