

NOVEMBER 2026

Conquering the Fear of Selling High-End: An Interview With Corey Anthony

Featuring Corey Anthony
With Tim Reed

Tim Reed: *Joining me live from Sackville, New Brunswick, is Corey Anthony. He's the sales manager at Stûv and a returning guest to the show. I think it's been two years since we did our last podcast together.*

Corey Anthony: It has, Tim—two or three years.

TR: *I've been excited for this. I knew we'd be at this event together. We're at the Compact Appliances Open House, and every year that I'm here, I'm reminded how special this event is. I think there's something really unique to Atlantic Canada, and it's neat to be a part of it. But I knew we'd be in the same room, so we had to talk sales. In our past conversations, we've gone back and forth on all kinds of ideas for sales and marketing. For anybody who's not familiar with you, can you talk a little bit about what you do at Stûv and the journey that you had to get there?*

CA: Yeah, for sure. First, thank you, Tim, for the opportunity. And I totally agree that the Maritimes are so special when it comes to solid

fuel and hearth appliances. It's one of the areas in Canada where a lot of people actually have one hearth appliance in their houses, maybe even more, whereas elsewhere in Canada or the U.S., we don't necessarily see that.

I've been at Stûv now for almost 10 years. My role has changed over the last couple of years as the needs of the business have evolved, and now we're dealing with distributors, which is why we're here. We have two new distributors in the U.S. as well. So now my role is really more of an umbrella: to educate, train, promote, and, mostly, motivate, which is what I think I do best within the whole sales structure. We have distributors, distributor reps, and direct agent reps, and now we have territory managers who work direct territories for Stûv.

TR: *And you're managing all of this. I think this is really cool. Were you, Vincent, and Nadia the first three employees at Stûv?*

CA: Vincent and Nadia were, of course, the founders. They were definitely the first here in North America, and then there were two other people. So when I started with Stûv, we were five. I was employee number five.

TR: *That's crazy. Here's what I think is so cool: Just from our conversations, I know you've directly won a lot of the dealers that have been set up for Stûv. You've been in their showrooms and talked to them all over North America. Now it's grown to a point where your role isn't flying and driving everywhere to win the business directly. It's motivating and teaching and raising other people up to do it. What's that transition been like?*

CA: It's like any transition. There are difficulties, and there are opportunities. For me, the biggest thing was learning how to teach someone to win. Being a competitor by trade, I enjoy the victory myself. But now it's really, "How can I motivate people so they win?" And what has really helped me is becoming a father. Now I can take wins from someone else and feel that same gratitude. Interestingly enough, we have a victory bell in the office. It's a little bell that I picked up in Kansas City on a work trip, and every time something good happens, whether it's a payment we were waiting for, a sweet installation, a new dealer, or a beautiful picture that went up on Instagram, we go and ring the bell.

TR: *I love that.*

CA: It's a feel-good moment. So what has really evolved for me is motivating people. Historically, I'm more of an individualist. I'm a team player for sure, but now I have to deal with all kinds of personalities. I have to deal with different barriers because, in some cases, they're not our company, so the approach isn't identical. So it's really about navigating that. I really see myself as a chameleon that adapts to all kinds of decors. In our situation, we have so many different sales methods and distribution models now that we have to adapt to who we're dealing with and their world.

TR: *Really, one of the main things that drew me to you was something I saw one of the first times we met. It might have been at this show, but I saw you teaching people about the products that you sell, and it really floored me. You knew the technical side inside and out, but your ability to communicate with metaphor and analogy and really explain things felt like a teacher's gift. I really believe that to be a great salesperson, in many ways, you need to be a teacher, especially if you're going to train people. And I don't see that a lot. Sometimes, I just see people charging ahead with their own agenda to try to win dollars. How has the teaching approach helped you, both as an individual winning all the business you've won for Stûv directly and now in your role as a manager?*

CA: I think the biggest thing—at least for me personally and in what I try to teach our sales team—is being curious and wanting to under-

stand more of why the gasket's placed that specific way. It's one thing to say, "This is the part number, and that's the price." It's another thing to say, "The reason this gasket gets replaced or changed this way is that these two clips or this bracket hold it a specific way." So for me, the biggest takeaway, especially when you're doing education rather than training, or you have a father mentality or a big brother mentality, is explaining what the item does and, of course, what the features and benefits are, but also why it was made that way behind the scenes. What's the intention behind a door hinge with two bearings on the side? It's sweet to have, but the intention is 20 years of smooth door closure.

TR: *I love that. You could say, "This door was built this way," or you could say, "Here's the problem this solves. This is why they built it this way." One of those is a teaching moment, and one of them is a factoid. That's really good.*

CA: Correct. And all kinds of individuals learn in different ways, but one of the best ways is understanding the sales feature and, of course, the teaching method. I've had the opportunity to work with a lot of stores. Now, we have a lot more that I haven't had the chance to work with directly, which kind of breaks my heart. But now we have a really good team through distribution and our territory managers to do that. Of course, being who I am, I'd love to have contact with everyone, but it can't be that way anymore. Stûv has grown into more than just Corey and Vincent and Nadia's project.

TR: *Sure. And I think that's something for retailers and companies listening: understanding how to make that transition. There's a time and place to grind individually to get to a point. But at some point in the journey, you have to get off the treadmill, share the load, and raise up leaders. Otherwise, you're going to get tired, and you're going to burn out. I think a lot of people only know how to go. They don't know how to pass on what they've been given to give other people a chance.*

CA: And you see that as much as I do, Tim, across North America. With a lot of the businesses we work with, it's been the same people doing the same thing for 15 to 35-plus years. So the hardest thing for them comes down to two things, I think: what the succession plan looks like, and whether that's what they're going to do for the remainder of their career. For us, especially being a smaller company, it was, "How can we scale the knowledge we have?" It's taken some time to figure out, but I think now we've found a good formula: Vincent scaling it to me, me scaling it now to the rest of our team, and now through our distributors. Even Vincent ground so hard the first couple of years. He still does. But then he gave me the opportunity to go and continue to do things that he couldn't do because of his capacity.

TR: *Everyone's arms only go so far. If the company is going to grow, it can't be one person holding it all.*

CA: No, and you're a great example, Tim. Look at you now. You guys are three at WhyFire, right?

TR: *We're up to five and a half.*

CA: So it's all about scaling, trusting, empowering, and giving people the ability to take some space. They'll make a mistake or two, but you want them confident in their roles and growing. And of course, the same goes for me. I haven't been perfect at Stûv, but for the better part, I'm always trying to do something to better the company's intentions and our partners' intentions and to give everyone a better chance at succeeding with these appliances.

TR: *Let's shift focus and get really practical. You've been in literally hundreds of showrooms, and you've seen a lot that's out there. I think you've grown the*

business through relationships and through product knowledge. How do you work on building relationships with people from a sales perspective?

CA: Good question, Tim. Right out of the gate, I don't think there's one perfect answer. If we go back to the chameleon discussion, we have to adapt to who's in front of us. I think one of my good qualities is understanding what the needs of this customer are in today's time, whether I'm in Texas or Oklahoma or North Dakota or Quebec or Ontario or here in the Maritimes. When I'm visiting a new store, which doesn't happen as frequently anymore, nine times out of 10, they're going to say, "We're not interested in Stûv. It's too contemporary. It's too this or too that." So then, and for those of you listening, this is potentially happening to you, I'll go and dissect the business by segments: "Okay, let's talk about your wood insert market. Are there any products you're happy with? Perfect. Are there any you're unhappy with? Perfect. Are there sizes that you're missing?" Then I'll go through different product categories, and in most cases, we try to agree: "Okay, let's start doing business together in this category, and then work our way out." My goal is to get everything in your store, but let's start with one thing that you need and that I have a solution for.

Now, we're thankful that we have an array of wood products to offer. But I think the relationship comes from understanding the needs of dealers and distributors. What do they need? It's the same for Compact here. They needed a product line that could offer a little more than what they currently had. Their existing products are all great, but they don't have a cylinder stove that turns like ours, and they don't have big wood fireboxes with that much glass. Now we have the opportunity to have this with Compact.

TR: *I think that angle is really good. I'm just thinking from the retail perspective, piggybacking on what you said. When customers walk into the store, you as the salesperson want to sell them everything. You'd love to sell them a great fireplace, the vent pipe package, and installation, but you take the time to understand their problem first: "Hey, I'd love to get you all this cool stuff, but let me take a step back. Let's talk about the problems you're having and where there's a need. I'll start there." I think that's a really important attribute, because a lot of people just steamroll the customer. And if we don't understand the problem, chances are our solution won't work out.*

CA: Totally. And it's funny you say that. A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to spend some time in a store. I was going to do some coaching on our brand, but I ended up helping them with customers. A customer came in, and the other salesmen were around, kind of listening to what my first questions for consumers in a store would be. There's no perfect method, but what I try to teach our stores, as frequently as I can, Tim, is to not talk about product. Instead, I say, "Show me pictures of what you have." I ask questions. I probe and probe, just to get an idea of why this customer is coming into this store today—because no one goes to a fireplace store just because. I think you'd agree. With this particular customer, we went through everything, and we didn't even talk about a product for the first 20 minutes. I was just getting information, and in my head, I was picturing the direction I'd like to go. Funny enough, it's now been two or three weeks, and that customer is actually going ahead with a purchase from that store. Not once in that discussion did I pitch a product first. It was, "What did you not get in your last purchase? When do you plan to do this? How does this look in your mind? If you had one wish in this acquisition, what would it be?" And from there, I was just nailing down product opportunities. The salesman at the store said, "Man, we don't do it that way." And I said, "Yeah, but in 2026, we have to do it a different way."

TR: *There's a phrase I think about a lot, and I'd love to get your take on it. Essentially, when we start with products, we lose the customer. When we start with the customer's situation and problem, that's when we win the customer. Talk about the difference between those.*

CA: The situation and problem definitely aren't associated with a product. They're associated with a need that needs to be fulfilled. And in the customer buying cycle, sometimes it's an immediate need, sometimes it's a wish, and sometimes it's love. In life and in any purchase, I really feel that people buy things for two reasons: because they love them or because they need them. And when we can merge the love and the need at the right time, we can sell them the appropriate good. A perfect example is you. If your shoes have holes in them, you're going to need a new pair of shoes. Or I know you play sports, so if you go to a store and see a new pair of basketball shoes with compression, you're going to love them and want to buy them. The same goes for fireplace goods. How do we get people to love them and need them? I think dealers often forget (and manufacturers do too) that acquisitions at these values come down to need and love.

TR: *That is really, really good. And that's cultivated from an understanding of the problem. When we present the product as the solution to the problem, it makes all the sense in the world to take action. I think Donald Miller talks about this quite a bit, something like this: A solution without a problem means nothing. If you're walking down the street and someone hands you a bag of pills and says, "Here you go, take these," it doesn't mean anything. But if you realize, "I've got a heart condition," and your doctor, after understanding your problem, says, "Hey, Tim, here are some pills you need to take," then in one of those situations, you're going to take the pills, and in the other one, you're going to throw them in the garbage can. It's really the same thing. It's about whether we understand that there's a problem. I think that's a really big deal.*

The second thing I think is really important is what you talked about when you were forming the image in your mind as you talked to customers. In our seven-step sales process that we teach, this is step two: Understand the customer's problem. And in my view, this is the step in the sales process that should take the most time. A lot of salespeople rush through it. They want to get to advising the solution and pitching the product. But none of that matters until we've understood the problem. So we want to take the time to do that, and that takes the ability to listen, ask questions, take notes, and be thoughtful.

But the way I like to think about it is the famous statue of David that Michelangelo carved. There's a retelling of how he made the statue. Someone asked him, "This marble block that you carved into David is an incredible work of art. How did you do it?" And supposedly he said, "Well, there were a lot of different marble blocks that I looked at, and I had to find the one that David was inside of." I think that approach is so important in sales. In my mind, with any customer who walks into a store, or any store you walk into to sell Stûv, there's a statue of David in there. But right now, it's a block of marble. Every question I ask to understand the situation chips off a little bit of that marble until we get to the statue. I think this is really important when it comes to customers in a showroom. There's a fireplace in that block of marble, but right now, we don't know what it is, and the customer probably doesn't know what it is either. So with every question we ask, we're like master craftsmen chipping away, chipping away, chipping away, and all of a sudden, the statue's there, and we go, "Okay, let me show this to you now." But if we don't go through those steps and we're trying to guess, it doesn't work—because all we have is a big block of marble. That's what I was reminded of as you talked about painting that picture. How does that analogy sit with you?

CA: Man, Tim, that's so good. Because step two in the sales cycle, as you mentioned, is the most

uncomfortable step for a lot of people. You're asking questions you don't know the answers to. But when they're talking about the product or the financing or the installation or the chimney or the house, these are all things in their control, right? In that step, they don't have control over the answers, and the customers don't know what they want. So a lot of our stores and partners speed through that step, as you said, and it ends up being a projection of what they want as a store owner or a salesman in the store. But what we're trying to do more and more, especially over the last couple of years, is give customers the opportunity to tell us what they want. That step is so crucial, especially when you're selling high-end.

TR: *Since you mentioned selling high-end, I'd love to go there. I'm putting you on the spot: At some point, we need Corey Anthony to teach a class called "Conquering the Fear of Selling High-End." Why do salespeople struggle with it? And what are some basics? If a salesperson listening to this is struggling to sell high-end, what would you say?*

CA: Well, the first thing is that a lot of people are afraid of the price. But one thing that happens here in North America—in Canada or the U.S.—is that there's no shortage of wealth. And the biggest thing is that financing here is some of the cheapest in the world to get. So when people are renovating or building, a lot of the time, we get sticker shock on things we maybe wouldn't put in our own homes because we don't have the budget for them. But what we often forget is that 30% to 40% of the population can afford two to four times what we can. So a lot of the time in high-end, what I see, and what we're educating on a lot, is less of a defensive approach and more of going in with the mentality of selling them something you're passionate about.

You talk about your seven-step process. I've adapted it a little for in-store selling and turned it into a six-step process, but one step in it is crucial, and you talk about it all the time: the follow-up. Our territory managers work the same way, and we're very rigid about it. When a new dealer reaches out, we call back the next day, or we try to. A week later, it's an email. Two weeks after that, it's another call. If you're a dealer, this has probably happened to you. In a lot of cases, stores make two or three follow-ups and then give up on the customer. But there are stats out there proving that on purchases above $10,000, most sales don't close until the fifth or sixth follow-up.

TR: *Or later.*

CA: One stat I came across recently was that 81% of sales close on the seventh follow-up at a $10,000 value and above. And if we look at our industry, most people follow up about two times.

"Selling high-end is selling a story."

TR: *If that.*

CA: If that, right? So how do we beat our competition? I hear this a lot: "Business is down. Markets are down." Sure, fine, I get it. The economy is doing what it's doing. Sure, fine. But what are you doing in your business? What is your sales approach? What is your sales practice? Of course, you guys are great preachers of that with WhyFire and what you offer. But a lot of stores still only do two follow-ups and say that they're losing sales. For a high-end product, whether it's our brand or another brand, if you

want to beat your competitor, you've got to follow up five, six, seven, eight, nine times.

TR: *I think about this all the time. With a purchase like this, or with someone in a new construction project with a $30,000 wall or more, those decisions are not made flippantly, and the process can lag. There are schedules, and there are trades involved. It's easy for stuff to get missed. So the salesperson who's persistent will make that phone call, learn to leave a gracious, amazing voicemail, and send an email after every call: "Hey, I just left you a voicemail, but I wanted to leave it here for you too, so you have it." Every time we do that, we win points. Grant Falco always says sales is a race to 10 points. But the thing is, you don't know what's worth a point to your customer, so you have to do all these things to try to get points. You never know, man. That seventh follow-up might be the final point you need. So if you want to conquer the fear of high-end, the first thing is to start following up. What's something else?*

CA: There's more than one answer for sure. But of course, in the steps that we try to teach our territory managers, following up is one of the biggest things. And we talked about it before: step two, understanding your customer. In a lot of cases, people don't ask the right questions. So for me, it's probing, and I think the best training for me has been my kids and understanding what their needs are. At two or three years old, it's hard. They don't have a lot of words. So I have to ask a question, they have to answer in a short period of time, and I need to understand what they need quickly, right? And you, being a father, can attest to that. I think a lot of stores are often asking, "Okay, what square footage am I trying to heat? What BTUs am I trying to hit?" And so on. And what happens is that people just get lost in the world of our science.

TR: *And it commoditizes itself. When you reduce it to BTUs and square footage, all of a sudden it's, "Well, wait a minute. There's something that's two-thirds the price that has the same BTUs. Why would I pay more for this?" Well, if you reduce yourself to BTUs, I don't know what to tell you.*

CA: That's it, right? In our case, we're obviously not the least expensive appliances out there. But if people are going to buy BTUs, they might as well go to the hardware store and buy a heater on the side. But I think in high-end, there are a couple of things. I did a course on that for a couple of stores a couple of weeks ago, and the takeaway was amazing. I continuously do that with our team and individually with the stores we work with in direct markets. And I think dealers, after that, unconsciously create a method within their business practices, whether it's a CRM, a paper method, or a file method. The important thing is to have a method. And you'd be surprised, Tim, how many stores here are just complacent. They've just been lucky.

TR: *We sell a product that's in demand just enough that people will come in at certain times of the year. You can ride that wave just long enough, tighten your belt for a little while, and then do it again. But that's not making the most of the opportunity we've been given.*

CA: No, exactly. And in our case, we're not a product that's known everywhere. So the biggest thing for us is getting people to convert opportunities. A lot of our stores and partners are amazing, but one thing they can always improve on is converting new opportunities.

TR: *Again, with your perspective as a teacher, I think that's an area where manufacturers and distributors can really step up to help retailers. Not telling them, "Hey, you've got to run your business this way." But instead, just giving them resources: "Here's a framework for a follow-up method that can work really well. You could do this digitally; you could do it on paper; you can do it however you want. Here's a sales process that could work really well. Here's a questionnaire for when customers come in. You can use it in any process you want." I think resources like*

that are really where companies can shine, and I know you guys are at work doing some of this. I heard you have an analogy about cubic feet and heating capacity. Can you go through it? It's so simple, but I think it's an example of how we need to work to make things easier for our customers and for the salespeople on our teams.

CA: Yeah, and I think the biggest thing is that stores have a lot of brands, right? So there are a lot of salesmen and women in stores who are dealing with a lot of brands, and it's busy. It's hectic. When you've been in stores, you know: doors swinging, phones ringing, emails coming in, the dog barking. And they need to know about 150 different products off the top of their heads, give or take five to 10 product lines times whatever. So for me, the biggest thing is curiosity and comparison. As a sales rep, I probably know most of our competitors' products better than some of their employees do. And it's not to understand how their product works or burns. It's to see how mine fits in the pie chart of solutions alongside another brand. So if that brand has a white side or a back side or a catalyst or whatever, what does that solve in the world? And then, of course, how do our products fit into all that?

When I was looking at all this, the biggest thing for me was the huge discrepancy in square-footage heating claims. One brand will say, "We heat 5,000 square feet," but then the firebox would be, say, 1.5 cubic feet. And I'm like, "Well, that doesn't make sense, because the correlation between fuel potential and heat capacity is so direct." So I came up with something that I've been using for a long time, and it works super well. You just take the firebox size and add three zeros. So if we're dealing with a 2.0-cubic-foot firebox, it'll heat 2,000 square feet. And if you do that with every single brand on the market in North America right now, you're pretty safe saying it's going to heat that much. So if you take one of the best-selling stoves in your store and look at it, you're going to say, "Wow, it's pretty close." The manufacturer might say a little more or less, but use that, no matter which brand.

TR: *Because the amount of fuel is the amount of fuel.*

CA: Correct. The usable cubic footage of the firebox is the most important factor for me when I'm educating a store. And when we're talking with architects and designers, of course, we're not educating them on our specific product.

TR: *They can't learn all of the details, but they can remember that.*

CA: Yeah. What they do remember is, "Okay, I'm building an A-frame in Wisconsin for 1,600 square feet." So on that spec, they're going to put a 1.5-cubic-foot firebox. That's what they need.

TR: *That's terrific, man. And again, the BTU rating in a brochure isn't giving you the maximum amount of BTUs if you load this sucker totally full of wood. It's giving you a number from a test with the unit at a certain rating. And I think that's a factor a lot of salespeople don't understand. When you're looking at a gas appliance, and it says it's 30,000 BTUs, it's 30,000 BTUs. That's not how it is with wood. It's always funny when you look at a stove that has a 1.5-cubic-foot firebox and another one that's 2.7, but their BTU outputs are within 2,000 BTUs of each other. One of them can hold almost twice as much wood. It can put out more heat. The math works. So I think things like that are so good, especially as a jumping-off point: "Every house is a little bit different, but if you're looking to heat around 1,500 square feet, we'd like to look at fireplaces that are about this big." What a way to create a common understanding. We can nuance that as we get to the home and look at ceilings and other things like that. But I think so many dealers are afraid to use simple analogies and tricks like that as a starting point, because it's easy to go, "I went to a home one time that had no insulation, and..." But we're not using*

this as an ironclad argument. We're saying this is a starting point, and it's going to be a bridge to get us into problem-solving mode.

CA: I think it goes back to what we talked about with selling high-end, Tim. One thing people often forget, especially in high-end sales, is that when the decision-maker comes to the point of making a purchase, he wants to feel that he's owning that situation and that he knows it's the right way to go. In the sales process, as you said before, the best salesmen and women are the best listeners. Our duty is to listen and help guide that feeling because we're always trying to increase the interest level and match it with a price that makes customers want to go for the purchase, right? A lot of times in sales, people don't want to feel like potential customers know more or are more involved in that equation. They want to show customers that they're the best. And they are. But if you can make it simple so customers feel like *they're* the best, I guarantee you're going to increase your sales.

TR: *When you said that, something clicked in my mind. When you're selling high-end, customers have to feel like they have the power and the knowledge to make the right decision.*

CA: Really. But how do we simplify that? Everyone in our industry, including us, goes crazy on BTUs and square footage, and that's where I'll come in with opportunities for stores when we do training on our brand or on sales: "Okay, so we have a technology. When the door opens, the bypass opens. What does that mean for a homeowner?" Talk about a fridge. When you open the door of the fridge, the light goes on. It's as simple as that. You open the door, and the chimney opens up. The light goes on, right? As simple as that.

TR: *That's another analogy. So brilliant. Customers will remember that. They'll buy for that reason above everything else.*

CA: Every single time they open their fridge for the rest of their lives, they're going to think about the stove. So I think it's our duty as manufacturers to create selling discussions, and to help stores with them, that simplify the method so homeowners, architects, and designers feel like they're in the empowered position to make the purchase, right?

TR: *We think and process life through the language of story. That's why, if you have little kids, you could sit them down with a stat sheet for a baseball team and go through slugging percentage, on-base percentage, and batting average, and they won't remember anything about it. But if they follow a sports team, they could tell you everything that happened inning by inning in the game the night before. The reason is that one of those is through the lens of story, and one of those is through the lens of information. And people buy because of the story they believe.*

So the analogy you shared about cubic firebox size and square footage, "Hey, if you're at about 2,000 square feet, we want about a 2.0-cubic-foot firebox," is a story that all of a sudden makes the customer a little bit smarter. That might be the reason for the purchase. And you just did the same thing with the refrigerator: "Hey, you know how when you open a refrigerator, the light turns on, and when you shut the refrigerator, the light turns off? There's no reason to leave the light on when the door's shut. Well, these wood stoves work exactly the same way. With a lot of wood stoves, when you open the door, the chimney stays shut, which pushes all the smoke into the room. With our wood stoves, just like your fridge, when that door opens, the chimney opens up, so all that smoke just keeps going right up. When you shut that door, it engages again." That's a story that will change someone's mind about which product to choose. And I think it's really important for manufacturers and for retailers: You need to find those product stories everywhere. And if you're a retailer with different brands, you need to have different stories for your different products.

CA: This is one of the things we talk about when you sell high-end: Selling high-end is selling a story. We're not selling something out of need, right? Of the two reasons why people purchase—need or love—we're selling love. So what story can be associated with that to make them love it enough to spend X amount of dollars, right? But you're 100% right there, Tim. Manufacturers in all industries often get caught up in the information, but it's the storytelling that creates the emotional attachment.

TR: *And I think too many people hear "story," and they think "fabrication." But no, these are true stories. Take the bypass example. When you open the door, it's true that the chimney opens, because the smoke goes up there. Tell it as a story, though, and connect it to something familiar, like a fridge, and all of a sudden, a light bulb goes on in customers' minds.*

CA: They can visually see it.

TR: *Sometimes we avoid stories because we think, "Well, I don't want to pull the wool over their eyes." And my thing is, no, as long as the story's true, tell it. Because if you hand people a brochure with a bunch of factoids, they have no attachment to it. But tell them a true story about how some products struggle with letting smoke into the house because of X, Y, and Z, but we do this instead, just like when you open your refrigerator. That's so brilliant, because they see it every day. The next time they open the fridge, they'll remember that.*

Stories like that help out a ton during what we call the coffee table battle. I just imagine a husband and wife who have been on the internet, printed out some stuff, or gone to hearth stores. There's a night when all the brochures are on the table, they're having a glass of wine, and they're asking, "Which one are we going to get?" That's the coffee table battle. At the end of it, the best option wins, and that's what they buy. But what wins the coffee table battle is the story. They're going to be going through factoids: "Well, wait, what did this one do? What did that one do? What did this other one do? The price was this." And someone's going to say, "Yeah, but this one was like the refrigerator, and we don't want smoke coming into the house." Now, there could be many different stories that win that battle, but if you reduce your products to a bunch of factoids, then I hope you like scrounging for what's at the bottom.

CA: Well, that's it, right? And especially when we're in the high-end realm, it becomes a comparison of factoids, and then we're getting priced on factoids. Just like you said, the coffee table experience is where the store has the best opportunity, two to six weeks after the interaction with the homeowner, but so do the brands. If that customer went to the store and went on a brand's website, this is our opportunity to work together. I think that's where a lot of brands need to collaborate more closely with their partners in specific regions, and we're one example: "Hey, we've got these customers in Kemptville, Nova Scotia, or Wichita, Kansas, or wherever. Have they been to your store yet? Because they've downloaded 14 brochures on my website. Let's put them in a funnel. Let's get them two reach-out points. Let's call them on Monday."

TR: *That collaboration is it. That is absolutely it. I feel like I could talk to you all day about this. I think there's so much value in what you're saying about story, about metaphor, and about partnership between manufacturers and dealers. Let me ask you this as we close out: I know that, for you guys as a company, it's really important to continue to sharpen the saw. You're doing a bunch of internal sales training and getting aligned around the same messaging. A lot of companies don't do that. They kind of let old Bob do it old Bob's way, and Susan does it this way, and Jimmy does it that way. Where have you seen the value in really coming together to study the craft, practice the craft, and get aligned?*

CA: Well, I think the biggest thing is the ambition of ownership. My boss, Vincent, and, of course, his partners in Europe are extremely ambitious about our project here in North America, and we have the opportunity right now to transform wood burning, because we have the biggest and widest range of wood products for stores. So for us, the biggest thing in changing the craft is, of course, education on our end: How can we be better, and how can we therefore educate our stores to be better salesmen? We went through a whirlwind over the last five to 10 years, right? We had a soft 2017 through 2019 or 2020, and then everyone absolutely made bank for two years. And now it's inventory issues, production, staffing shortages, an economy that's a little uncertain, government changes, and fluctuating prices. So what do we do as an industry—and of course, as a manufacturer—to give ourselves the best opportunity every single time a customer calls, reaches out, or even goes to a store, so that we can be the potential winner in that purchase opportunity, right?

So for us, the biggest thing over the last couple of years has been a lot of personal growth with our team and with our partners. A lot of new opportunities have come in from different territories, and we've just been very selective about where we're going to put our time. We're only a finite number of people, just like stores are. Which category of products do I want to focus on? In our case, it's which territories in North America we want to do more with, right? So that's really what we've been doing the last two years: better planning, better structure, and, of course, giving the people on our team more confidence to take more ownership.

TR: *But you guys have also really invested in the craft of selling company-wide, making sure you're all using the same playbook. What has that alignment done for you? And I know that's got to happen again and again and again. You can't just have a yearly sales meeting to talk about your direction.*

CA: Yeah, so I won't get into too many details here and spill the gravy, but there are a couple of things we do. Obviously, every brand does things differently, just like stores. We have a lot of stores and partners that do a weekly Wednesday or a weekly Friday, or a quarterly or a monthly. Of course, I encourage you all—whether you're a manufacturer, a store, or a retailer—to start putting something in place so that you have at least a weekly. After that, you can dissect it into monthly, then quarterly, then biannually, with specific topics. There are different ways to do that. There are platforms some people may have heard of, like EOS, 10X, and a whole bunch of different things. In the world now, especially with access to information everywhere, there's no reason anyone can't start putting something into place with a team.

For us, we have a weekly meeting every Monday with the sales team, and then a quarterly meeting with management. But we also have a daily call with the whole management team at Stûv, every morning for 15 minutes. We each have three things we talk about every single day of the week for the entire year. That way, I know, "Okay, we're having a production issue with our paint supplier," or, "We have X, Y, and Z customers with a huge order coming in," or, "We're doing a marketing event with WhyFire."

TR: *I'll hold you to that.*

CA: One day, it'll happen. But it's just better for cross-communication and sharing, and then it's my duty to dispatch that to the sales team, as it would be for our customer service team or the engineering team. I think a lot of people today aren't using technology as they should, and AI is a great solution for many things. But one thing it doesn't do is communicate between teams.

TR: *That's great. I think the alignment of daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly is so important.*

CA: And you talk about it in your sales coaching, right? So here's what we do, and this could be for any store or any brand. All our sales reps have to bring three things: What's the top task this week? What was the top task last week? And what's the biggest hurdle going on in their work life right now? Sometimes it's repetitive, but they come to me with what they have, and then I see how I can help them. Within that, I'll also give two tasks that we do as a team. So every week, we have two tasks that we try to accomplish, even something as simple as checking five dealers on the dealer locator. Super simple. But that's how we take little steps to the big accomplishment.

TR: *That is so good, man. It's water on the rock. Over time, repetition will form that rock. But it doesn't happen if you do it once.*

CA: And the problem you see, as you know, Tim, is that you get people who have been in positions for a long time at certain places, like Bob, for example.

TR: *Old Bob.*

CA: Old Bob. And they don't want to change. And it's tough for us, because we're hiring people with all kinds of backgrounds who've worked in all kinds of different fields, and they're all used to different methods. So now we're just trying to align them so that people work the same way within their own personalities.

TR: *I love that. I'm a big fan of guardrails, not rules. Set up some guardrails, and then let people thrive within their personalities inside those guardrails. But I think that cadence is so important. The famous pastor Andy Stanley says vision leaks, and it always has to be refilled. Well, the sales process leaks too, and it always has to be refilled. Sales training leaks, and it always has to be refilled. Your vision for what you want to do this quarter leaks, and it always has to be refilled. So I love hearing that, and I think it can be applied in so many ways by the companies that are listening.*

Corey, thanks for spilling a little bit of the gravy. I appreciate that. If people want to find Stûv and get their hands on it, what's the best way for them to do that?

CA: Yeah, well, of course, if they're interested in hearing about Stûv or understanding what Stûv offers, we have a dealer and retailer application on our website that they can fill out. Of course, they can always write to us, email us, or call us. And for those of you who know our distributors in certain markets, you can always reach out to them as well. I'm definitely available, but I'm becoming more and more of a shadow, so depending on the territory, you might talk to me, but most of the time, you won't. But we have great people in place everywhere. We have an amazing company, and we have amazing products, as do others across the entire industry. But I encourage you, if you're looking to change something in your business model, to give us a chance to help you change your business.

TR: *That's awesome, man. Corey, you're a great sales mind, and you're a great teacher. Thanks for all the value you gave us today.*

CA: Thanks, Tim.

This article is brought to you by Valor Fireplaces.

