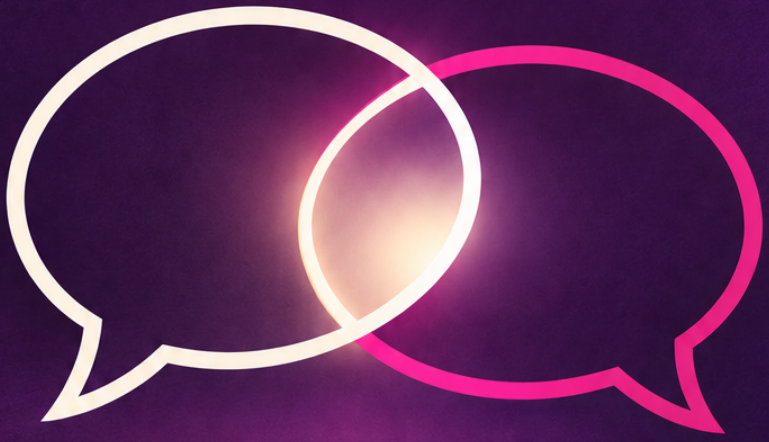
CONFIDENT SALES CONVERSATIONS

What to Say, What to Ask and How to Handle Objections Without Being Pushy



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FREE SAMPLE

Try a better response

An extract from Confident Sales Conversations by Sanjay Srivastava

This sample contains Chapter 6 and a companion pack of 25 adaptable sales questions. Start with one customer concern you hear regularly. Read the chapter, choose a useful question and rehearse it in your own words.

The full book takes you through preparation, opening, discovery, listening, value, objections, price and next steps, with exercises and a seven-day practice plan.

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The dialogue is illustrative. The questions are practice aids, not promises of a particular result.

CHAPTER 06

Understand the Objection Before Answering It

The discount that answered the wrong question

In this illustrative example, Priya has just presented a scheduling system to the owner of a small maintenance business. The demonstration went well. Then the owner leans back.

> “It looks useful, but it’s too expensive.”

Priya feels the conversation slipping away. She explains the features again, mentions the support package and offers to ask her manager for a discount.

The owner listens politely. “Let me think about it.”

What Priya has not discovered is that the business installed another system last year. The change disrupted bookings, frustrated the team and eventually had to be abandoned. The owner is worried about paying for another difficult transition.

A lower price might help the budget. It would not resolve that concern.

You may recognise Priya’s instinct. You have worked hard to reach this point, and now you want to keep the opportunity alive. Explaining more or reducing the price feels like taking action.

But before you decide what to say, you need to understand what you are answering.

The first sentence is only the beginning

“It’s too expensive” could mean the customer cannot afford it. It could mean they have a cheaper alternative, cannot see sufficient value or do not feel confident about the outcome.

Sometimes it means exactly what it says. We should not assume every objection hides something deeper, or that every customer can be persuaded to proceed.

Your job is to find out which situation you are in.

Confidence here does not require an immediate answer. It requires enough composure to ask a useful question and listen to the reply.

My advice is simple: treat your first interpretation as a possibility, not a conclusion.

PCRC: Pause, Clarify, Respond, Check

Use PCRC as a practical memory aid: Pause, Clarify, Respond, Check. You do not need to announce these actions or deliver them in a rigid sequence. Let the customer’s answers shape the conversation.

1. Pause before you defend

Take a breath. Give yourself a moment to absorb the concern rather than rushing into an explanation.

You could say:

> “Thank you for being direct. Can you tell me a little more about what feels expensive?”

Then give the customer room to answer. If you tend to fill every silence, quietly counting to three can help you practise waiting. It is a reminder to listen, not a technique for making someone uncomfortable.

2. Clarify what the customer is weighing

Begin with an open question. If the answer remains broad, offer a tentative interpretation they can correct.

> “It sounds as though you’re not yet sure the benefit justifies the cost. Have I understood that correctly?”

The words “have I understood” matter. You are checking your interpretation, rather than telling the customer what they think.

Ask one question at a time. Listen to the answer before deciding whether you need another. A conversation can quickly feel like an interrogation if you keep searching for a different objection after the customer has already explained the real constraint.

3. Respond to the concern you have confirmed

Summarise what you heard before offering an answer:

> “So the main concern is the disruption of changing systems, especially after last year’s experience. Is that right?”

If the customer agrees, discuss the transition. If they correct you, adjust your understanding.

Offer relevant evidence, an honest explanation or a practical next step. Where you do not have an answer, say so and agree how you will obtain it. Avoid promises about savings, implementation or performance that you cannot support.

4. Check what remains unresolved

After responding, ask:

> “How does that address your concern?”

This invites an assessment rather than a polite yes. The customer may feel reassured, need more information or remain unconvinced.

If something remains unresolved, explore it without restarting the entire pitch. If the answer is a clear no, respect it. A useful conversation does not always end in a sale.

Two conversations behind the same words

Let us return to Priya and try a different response.

Situation 1: The concern is implementation

Customer: “It looks useful, but it’s too expensive.”

Priya: “Can you tell me a little more about what feels expensive?”

Customer: “We spent money on something like this last year. Getting everyone onto it was a nightmare.”

Priya: “It sounds as though you’re concerned about paying for another difficult change.”

Customer: “Exactly. I can’t have bookings getting lost again.”

Priya: “What happened with the bookings last time?”

That question helps Priya understand the implementation risk before suggesting a solution. She can then ask her delivery team to assess what a realistic transition would involve. She has a specific problem to investigate, rather than a discount to negotiate.

Situation 2: The concern is value

Customer: “It looks useful, but it’s too expensive.”

Priya: “Can you tell me a little more about what feels expensive?”

Customer: “I just don’t see us saving enough time to justify it.”

Priya: “What would we need to understand about your current scheduling work to judge that properly?”

Customer: “Probably how many hours we spend rearranging jobs every week.”

Priya: “Would it help to map that together and see whether the benefits justify the cost?”

Here, the next step is to examine value. They might discover a worthwhile benefit, or conclude that the system is unnecessary. Either outcome is more useful than building a proposal on an untested assumption.

The opening objection was identical. The appropriate response depended on what came next.

When the constraint really is the budget

Suppose the customer explains that their spending limit is fixed and your offer exceeds it. Accept that information. Do not keep asking questions in the hope of uncovering an easier answer.

You might explore a smaller scope, a different timing or another suitable option, provided those choices are genuinely available. Be clear about what would change and whether the reduced offer would still meet their needs.

> “Within that budget, we could cover these two priorities. The third would remain outside the scope. Would that still be useful?”

If there is no suitable fit, say so. The commercial discussion belongs on an honest foundation. We will explore price and trade-offs further in the next chapter.

Three mistakes to watch for

Answering before understanding. Repeating the benefits can feel reassuring to you while leaving the customer’s concern untouched. Clarify first.

Turning empathy into a script. “I understand” means little if your next sentence ignores what was said. Reflect the specific concern in language you would naturally use.

Treating every objection as something to defeat. Customers may have legitimate reasons to delay, choose another supplier or do nothing. Help them assess the decision. Do not make them defend it indefinitely.

This approach reflects the Negotiate element of the SERVING$™ Sales System: understand what matters to both sides before discussing terms. Here, your first task is to establish what the customer is actually weighing.

Try it in your next conversation

Choose one objection you have heard recently. Keep PCRC in mind as you take five minutes to prepare:

1. Write the customer's exact words, as closely as you remember them.

2. Note what you assumed those words meant.

3. Write two other possible explanations. Keep them as hypotheses.

4. Prepare one neutral question that could clarify the concern.

5. Rehearse saying it aloud, then leave space for an answer.

After your next relevant conversation, record what you learnt, how you responded and what remained unresolved. Did you act on the customer's explanation or on your original assumption?

You can also practise with a colleague. Ask them to choose a concern privately and reveal it only as your questions make room for it. Afterwards, ask whether they felt understood or steered towards your preferred answer.

Remember this

PCRC: Pause. Clarify. Respond. Check.

Use PCRC to understand the concern and discuss it honestly. When the issue is genuinely about price or terms, you need a clear way to explore what is workable. In Chapter 7, we'll look at how to have that discussion without conceding automatically.

YOUR CONVERSATION QUESTION PACK

25 questions to adapt

Choose a question because it helps you understand this customer. Use your own language, listen to the answer and follow it. Do not work through the pack as a checklist.

1. Understand the enquiry

1. What prompted you to look at this now?

2. What would make this conversation useful for you?

3. What have you already explored or tried?

4. Which part of the situation would you like us to start with?

5. What would you like to be clearer about by the end of our discussion?

2. Discover the practical problem

6. Could you walk me through a recent example?

7. Where does the difficulty tend to begin?

8. Who is affected when that happens?

9. What does your team do to work around it?

10. What would a workable improvement look like?

3. Explore value and evidence

11. Which outcome matters most to you?

12. How would you judge whether the change was worthwhile?

13. What evidence would help you assess this option?

14. Which of these capabilities would make a difference in your work?

15. What would need to be true for this estimate to apply to your situation?

4. Understand a concern

16. Could you tell me a little more about what concerns you?

17. When you say it is expensive, what are you comparing it with?

18. What happened the last time you made a similar change?

19. What have I missed or misunderstood?

20. How does that address your concern, and what remains unresolved?

5. Discuss terms and next steps

21. What would that adjustment help you achieve?

22. Which parts of the proposed scope are essential?

23. If we can agree those adjustments, would that be enough for you to proceed?

24. What else would need to be resolved before you could decide?

25. What action would help you make that decision, and who needs to be involved?

PUT ONE QUESTION TO WORK

Your next conversation

Choose a real situation and one question from the pack. Before the conversation, write down what you are assuming. Afterwards, note what the customer actually said and what you will do differently.

For a fuller approach, explore Confident Sales Conversations. The complete book covers all eight conversation skills, practical exercises, a seven-day practice plan and quick-reference tools.

For book enquiries, webinars, courses and Sales Success Society™ membership information, visit:

www.seagta.com

Bring one specific conversation you want to improve. Keep customer names and confidential information out of anything you share.