

GAMECHANGER 2.0

A Workbook for Building Profitable Fan Relationships

Second Edition

Read the Evidence. Work the Reps. Compete to Win.

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How to Train With This Book

Welcome to a different kind of textbook. Most sport sales texts ask you to read about selling. This one asks you to read about selling and then sell. Every chapter pairs the peer-reviewed evidence on what actually works with hands-on practice modeled on the exact events you will face at competitions. The premise is simple and is borne out by research on how salespeople are made rather than born: knowledge and skill are trainable, and structured, feedback-rich practice is what converts a curious student into a championship-ready competitor (Verbeke et al., 2011; Knight et al., 2014).

Each chapter follows a deliberate rhythm: read some, then work it out. You will encounter a research-grounded concept, see how it is tested in the championship through a Championship Connection callout, and then immediately apply it in a Work It Out scenario that you can practice in four ways: in writing, out loud, by email, and on camera. The chapter then closes with a Train Like a Champion block that turns the concept into a repeatable drill. This is not decoration. Experiential, competition-style practice has been shown to increase students' sales knowledge, self-efficacy, and readiness for a sales career more than reading or passive role-play alone (Magnotta et al., 2020; Bolander et al., 2014).

Why Practice, Not Just Reading, Wins

A contemporary meta-analysis of what drives sales performance found that the two strongest, most coachable predictors are selling-related knowledge and the degree to which a salesperson adapts to each customer (Verbeke et al., 2011). Both are built through repetition against varied buyers, not through memorization. Sales educators have reached the same conclusion: experiential learning is the most studied and most endorsed method in the field, and role-play is its workhorse, used in nearly every advanced sales course (Spiller et al., 2020). Competitions

intensify the effect. Students who compete in structured sales competitions emerge with greater sales knowledge, a clearer grasp of the sales process, and stronger intent to pursue the career, outperforming peers who complete ordinary in-class role-plays (Magnotta et al., 2020). Even the virtual rounds you will rehearse for here have been refined through the same competition ecosystem (Inks et al., 2020).

The takeaway for you as a competitor is direct: the reading builds the knowledge, but the reps build the win. Treat every Work It Out as a live attempt, score it honestly, fix one thing, and run it again. Your self-efficacy is the genuine belief in your ability to perform. It increases most rapidly when practice is intentional, and feedback is precise (Knight et al., 2014).

At a Glance...

This book includes fifteen scenarios that simulate various situations.

Each can be practiced in four channels, matching how you will be evaluated in competition and on the job:

- **Written** — account plans, proposals, memos, and scripts you prepare in advance.
- **Verbal** — live role-plays modeled on the Presentation Pro brackets, with a peer or coach playing the buyer.
- **Email** — concise, professional outreach and follow-up with a single clear call to action.
- **Video** — self-recorded pitches mirroring the virtual Showcase and Man vs Machine submissions.

Note: The scenarios here are realistic, study-guide-style practice cases, BUT are not official competition cases designed to build transferable skills.

The Universal Practice Rubric

Use this rubric to self-assess or peer-assess any Work It Out scenario in any channel. It blends the Speed Sell delivery criteria with the customer-oriented, ethical, value-based selling principles taught throughout the book. Score each row 1 (developing) to 5 (championship-ready), and aim to raise every row to a 4 or 5 before you compete.

Criterion	What Championship-Level Looks Like	Score 1–5
Discovery & Listening	Asks open questions and uncovers the real need before pitching (Drollinger & Comer, 2013; Jacob et al., 2024).	
Customer Orientation	Recommends what fits the buyer, not the priciest option (Franke & Park, 2006).	
Value Communication	Frames benefits and experience, not just price (DeTienne et al., 2022).	
Objection Handling	Reframes objections calmly without high-pressure tactics (Anand et al., 2022).	
Transparency & Ethics	Honest, accurate claims that build trust (Greer & Zoroya, 2025).	
Delivery	Confident, flowing, professional; minimal filler words.	
Call to Action	Ends with a clear, specific next step.	

This rubric appears again, in fillable form, in the Championship Toolkit at the back of the book.

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Part I — The Playbook

The twelve chapters that follow are the playbook. Each one builds a single competency, anchors it in peer-reviewed research, shows how it is scored at the championship, and then hands you a scenario to run in all four channels. Read actively, pen in hand. When you reach a Work It Out, stop reading and start selling.

Chapter 1 — Introduction to Sport Sales

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Explain how sport sales generate the revenue that sustains college and professional sport organizations.
- Identify the major components of sport sales: tickets, premium seating, sponsorship, merchandise, and digital experiences and how they reinforce one another.
- Describe why building customer relationships and delivering value matter more than any single transaction.
- Explain the role of market research and segmentation in tailoring sales strategies to specific audiences.
- Recognize the ethical foundations that make sport sales sustainable and trustworthy.
- Connect first-contact selling skills to the Competition Ticket Sales bracket and convert a one-time attendee into a relationship.

Introduction

Sport sales are the engine room of the sport industry. Behind every sold-out arena, every corporate logo on the outfield wall, and every jersey in the stands is a revenue process that funds the entire enterprise. This chapter introduces that process: the channels through which organizations turn fan passion into financial sustainability, and the principles that separate durable, relationship-driven selling from the short-term scramble for a single sale. From tickets and premium seating to sponsorship and digital experiences, sports sales, finance operations,

athlete development, and facility investment, the revenue it generates is what allows organizations to grow rather than merely survive (Merkle et al., 2020). Because ticket sales remain the most visible barometer of organizational health, declines in attendance pressure teams to rethink how they create value for fans rather than simply discounting their way to a full house (Merkle et al., 2020).

Over the past two decades, the field has matured from an afterthought into a cornerstone of financial stability. That maturation was driven by new revenue streams, more sophisticated fan engagement, and the global reach of sport itself. Fan engagement, in particular, has been transformed by technologies that let organizations interact directly with supporters, reshaping how teams connect with their audiences (Mahajan et al., 2023). The salesperson sits at the center of this transformation. Indeed, a contemporary meta-analysis of sales performance describes the modern seller as a knowledge broker, someone whose value lies in understanding the customer and the product deeply enough to match them well, not in pressure or charm (Verbeke et al., 2011). That reframing matters for you as a future competitor: the skills that win at the championship are the same knowledge-and-adaptation skills that drive revenue on the job.

It is worth stating plainly why this book treats selling as a trainable craft rather than an inborn talent. Research on sales education has repeatedly found that formal instruction, paired with experiential practice, raises both the knowledge and the confidence that predict on-the-job success (Bolander et al., 2014). You are not reading to admire the evidence from a distance; you are reading to build a repertoire you will deploy under pressure. Every concept in this chapter is something you will eventually perform.

Revenue, Operations, and the Stakes of the Sale

Sports sales are a primary revenue source in both college and professional settings, and the money flows directly into the things fans care about. In college athletics, ticket sales and booster

contributions fund scholarships, coaching salaries, and facility maintenance. In the professional ranks, sales revenue supports player salaries, venue upkeep, and the administrative backbone of the franchise. Without substantial revenue from sales, the financial viability of these organizations would be compromised, which is precisely why the marketing assets that drive attendance and broadcast exposure are studied so closely (Merkle et al., 2020).

Revenue from sport sales also shapes athlete development directly. It funds training programs, coaching staff, sports science, and the facilities in which athletes prepare. Upgraded facilities, in turn, enhance the fan experience, and because perceived service quality is a meaningful predictor of spectator satisfaction, facility investment and revenue generation reinforce one another in a virtuous cycle (Cant & Wiid, 2012). A salesperson who frames a season-ticket purchase as participation in this cycle, supporting the program while enjoying a better game-day experience, sells more than a seat.

Operational sustainability is the quieter benefit. Stable sales revenue allows organizations to invest in marketing, community engagement, and the loyalty initiatives that compound over time. Relationship marketing provides a framework for converting those investments into durable loyalty rather than one-off transactions; when organizations cultivate involvement, trust, and attachment, fans develop stronger, more lasting bonds with the team (Tsiotsou, 2013). The strategic implication is that a sale is rarely just a sale. It is the opening move in a relationship that, managed well, returns revenue for years.

Digital Engagement and the Modern Sales Funnel

The sport sales funnel is the path from awareness to first purchase to loyal renewal and has been reshaped by digital engagement. Where prospecting once relied on phone lists and walk-up traffic, today's seller begins where fans already gather. Technologies that enable direct, two-way interaction have transformed fan engagement, giving organizations new ways to identify, attract,

and convert prospects (Mahajan et al., 2023). Comparative analysis of league social-media activity shows that sustained, well-targeted posting measurably increases fan engagement, widening the top of the funnel from which all sales eventually flow (Romero-Jara et al., 2024). For the entry-level seller, this means the first 'contact' with a prospect is often digital long before it is personal.

Moving a prospect down the funnel still depends on relationship-building, but digital tools make that movement more efficient and more personalized. Online relationship-marketing tools enable organizations to sustain tailored, ongoing engagement at scale rather than relying on episodic outreach (Steinhoff et al., 2018), and top-performing salespeople increasingly fold social media into their prospecting to identify interested fans and time their outreach (Warren, 2016). Customer relationship management systems sit beneath this activity, storing fan data that enable a seller to pick up a conversation exactly where it left off and recommend what genuinely fits (Kamakura et al., 2005). The funnel, in other words, has become a data-informed pipeline rather than a numbers game of cold calls.

None of this displaces the human core of selling; it amplifies it. The contemporary evidence on sales performance is unambiguous: knowledge and adaptiveness, and not technology alone, drive results, casting the seller as a knowledge broker who translates data into a fitting recommendation (Verbeke et al., 2011). Digital channels reveal which fan is ready and what they value; the salesperson's judgment turns that signal into a relationship. The competitor who learns to read digital cues, organize them in a CRM, and convert them through skilled conversation is practicing the complete modern funnel and precisely the capability the Ticket Sales bracket rewards when a single inbound inquiry must be turned into a lasting customer.

CHAMPIONSHIP CONNECTION — FIRST CONTACT IN THE TICKET SALES BRACKET

In a Ticket Sales Competition bracket, a recruiter playing a buyer will judge how well you understand the product and how well you adapt to the person in front of you, the very capabilities the meta-analysis identifies as the strongest, most coachable drivers of performance (Verbeke et al., 2011). Chapter 1 is where you internalize the why behind the pitch. You are not moving inventory you are starting a revenue relationship that funds the whole organization. Use the discovery-first habit from the very first round. Judges can see when a competitor pitches before diagnosing. Lead by learning what the buyer actually wants from game day, then connect your recommendation to it.

The Components of Sport Sales

Sport sales can be viewed as a collection of interconnected channels, each aimed at generating revenue, increasing engagement, and supporting financial stability. Ticket sales, including single-game, season, and group packages, remain the primary and most visible revenue source (Merkle et al., 2020). Corporate partnerships and sponsorships establish relationships with businesses that provide financial backing in exchange for brand visibility, and well-structured agreements can also enhance the sponsor's brand value (Donlan, 2013). Additionally, premium seating and hospitality options, such as luxury suites, club seats, and VIP packages, offer enhanced experiences for individuals and organizations seeking comfort and exclusivity.

Merchandise and apparel extend the brand into fans' daily lives, and effective licensing strategies maximize these sales, particularly when fans use purchases to express their identification with the team (Tsiotsou, 2013). Digital and virtual experiences like digital ticketing, immersive content, and online fan platforms have expanded the menu well beyond the turnstile, an area where technological innovation continues to reshape the industry (Mahajan et al., 2023). Advertising and

broadcasting generate additional revenue through signage, team media, and rights deals (Merkle et al., 2020), while fan engagement and membership programs build relationships through loyalty rewards and exclusive content, reflecting the relational logic that moves organizations beyond one-time transactions (Tsiotsou, 2013).

Group sales and promotions like themed nights, school groups, and community organizations can fill blocks of seats while creating word-of-mouth, and data analytics and personalization tie the whole portfolio together by revealing what each fan actually wants. Social media data, in particular, can show what drives engagement and reach (Romero-Jara et al., 2024). Collectively, these components work in concert: a first-time single-game buyer becomes a flex-plan holder, then a season member, then perhaps a group organizer or a referral source. Online relationship marketing has made these transitions smoother because exchanges increasingly occur through seamless, networked, and personalized digital channels (Steinhoff et al., 2018). Understanding the portfolio lets a salesperson see the next logical step for every fan and sell it at the right moment.

Market Research, Segmentation, and the Power of Identification

Effective sport sales begin with knowing the audience. Market research and segmentation divide a broad fan base into groups with similar needs, allowing organizations to tailor offers rather than broadcast a single message to everyone (Spence et al., 1997). A family seeking an affordable, flexible outing, a young professional chasing social experiences, and a die-hard who structures weekends around the team each respond to a different value proposition. Segmentation is what lets a salesperson choose the right one.

Beneath segmentation lies a powerful psychological driver: team identification, the degree to which a person feels psychologically linked to a team. Research on customer retention in sport organizations finds that team identification has a greater impact on consumption behaviors such

as attendance, merchandise purchases, and word-of-mouth than satisfaction with the team's on-field performance (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012). The strategic lesson is striking: an organization's continuing effort to bond with its fans may yield greater returns than the pursuit of wins it cannot guarantee. For a salesperson, this means the most durable sales are built on identity and belonging, not on the promise of a winning season. It is also why a discouraged booster can be re-engaged through mission and identity even after a losing year, and why a casual attendee can be converted by deepening their connection rather than merely discounting their ticket.

Ethical Foundations

Because the emotional connection fans feel toward their teams is so strong, the ethical stakes of sports sales are unusually high. Far from constraining profits, ethical sales practices create value through increased customer satisfaction, retention, and referrals; companies with higher ethical standards tend to enjoy greater customer loyalty (DeTienne et al., 2022). Delivering value beyond the transaction, including honoring promises, pricing transparently, and recommending what fits, is therefore central to fostering the loyalty on which long-term revenue depends. The remainder of this book treats integrity not as a footnote but as a competitive advantage, a theme you will carry into every scenario.

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 2: THE FIRST-TIME SINGLE-GAME BUYER

Division: Ticket Sales **Reinforces:** Chapters 1 and 5

The Situation

A young professional bought a single-game ticket through a third-party resale site for the first time this season and had a great experience. Your CRM captured their email at entry.

They have never purchased directly from the team. Your task is to convert this one-time attendee into a repeat direct buyer and introduce the idea of a small ticket package.

Your Objectives

- Convert a resale-channel attendee into a direct, first-party relationship.
- Use active listening to surface what made the first visit memorable.
- Introduce a mini-plan without overwhelming a brand-new buyer.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Create a discovery-call worksheet: five open-ended questions designed to learn the buyer's motivations (social, entertainment, team identification) and a short value proposition tailored to each likely answer. Ground your questioning in the finding that listening ability is a core driver of sales success (Jacob et al., 2024).

VERBAL — Conduct a 5-minute role-play that opens with rapport and discovery, then offers a 6-game flex pack. Demonstrate adaptive selling by changing your pitch depending on whether the buyer reveals a social motive or a die-hard motive (Franke & Park, 2006).

EMAIL — Write a post-game follow-up email thanking the buyer for attending, highlighting two upcoming marquee games, and offering a first-time-direct-buyer incentive. Keep it under 150 words with one clear call to action.

VIDEO — Record a 60-second Speed Sell-style video introducing yourself as their personal account representative and previewing the value of buying direct. Apply the Speed Sell rubric: clear name and role, a research-informed hook, a creative link to the buyer's interest, and a CTA.

Coaching Note. *A first visit is a relationship waiting to happen. Lead with what they enjoyed, not with what you sell; identification and belonging convert one-time attendees more reliably than a discount does (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Chapter 1 is your foundation round.

Before you ever handle an objection, you must be fluent in why the sale matters and what the fan actually wants. Build that fluency with the following reps.

Map the portfolio. Write the six revenue components from this chapter and, for one fictional fan, sketch the next logical purchase for each. Selling is easier when you can see the path.

Run the discovery five. From Scenario 2, deliver your five open-ended questions aloud to a peer until they flow without notes. Listening is the most-valued competency in the field (Jacob et al., 2024).

Sell identity, not wins. Draft two sentences that connect a purchase to belonging and mission rather than to the team's record (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012). You will reuse this move in the booster-renewal scenario in Chapter 3.

Score your Scenario 2 attempts on the Universal Practice Rubric. Re-run the channel where you scored lowest — deliberate practice on your weakest link is what raises self-efficacy fastest (Knight et al., 2014).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do sport sales fund the operations, athlete development, and facilities that fans care about? Trace the flow of a single season-ticket dollar.
2. Why might bonding with fans (team identification) produce more durable revenue than winning more games (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012)?
3. Choose three components of the sport sales portfolio and explain how they reinforce one another for a single fan over time.
4. How does market segmentation change the value proposition you would offer a young professional versus a family of four?
5. Why is ethical conduct described as a competitive advantage rather than a constraint in sport sales (DeTienne et al., 2022)?
6. Reflect on Scenario 2: what is the risk of pitching a package before completing discovery, and how would you avoid it?

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Chapter 2 — Sales in Professional Sports

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Understand the sales dynamics unique to professional sport and their impact on revenue.
- Explain how dynamic pricing, early-bird, group, and membership strategies balance revenue with the fan relationship.
- Describe the role of premium seating and hospitality in diversifying revenue and enhancing experience.
- Explain how corporate partnerships create mutually beneficial relationships between teams and brands.
- Analyze how fan engagement, perceived value, and emerging technologies shape professional sport sales.
- Apply win-back skills to the Competition Ticket Sales bracket by re-establishing a lapsed relationship.

Introduction

Sales in professional sport is both an art and a science: the disciplined promotion of products, services, and experiences to fans, businesses, and partners in a fiercely competitive market. Ticket sales, corporate partnerships, merchandise, and premium experiences each generate revenue, deepen engagement, and underpin financial stability, and the strength of the audience connections a team builds ultimately shapes its financial performance (Merkle et al., 2020).

Success depends on creating memorable experiences on and off the field while reading and responding to fan behavior in real time. Technological innovation has accelerated this evolution, reshaping how organizations engage fans and sell to them (Mahajan et al., 2023), so the professional seller must anticipate change rather than merely react to it.

This chapter moves from the foundational view of Chapter 1 into the specific machinery of professional sales and how tickets are priced and packaged, how premium inventory and sponsorship diversify revenue, and how engagement and perceived value determine whether a fan returns. Throughout, the recurring tension is the same one you will manage in competition: maximizing revenue without damaging the relationship that produces it.

Selling Tickets and Premium Seating

Tickets are the lifeblood of the live event, and selling them well requires balancing accessibility with demand. Declining attendance in some leagues has heightened the urgency of pricing and packaging tickets intelligently (Merkle et al., 2020). The leading tool is dynamic pricing, which adjusts ticket costs based on opponent strength, day of week, seat location, and real-time demand. This demand-based approach mirrors the revenue management practices long used by airlines and hotels (Drayer et al., 2012), and empirical work on professional soccer shows that demand-responsive pricing can increase total revenue compared with static pricing (Şahin & Erol, 2017). Timing matters too: price paths shift systematically as the event date approaches (Kemper & Breuer, 2016). Used carefully, dynamic pricing fills seats and optimizes revenue by reflecting current market conditions.

Pricing is only persuasive when fans perceive value, and value is what ultimately drives the purchase decision. Research on ticket purchase intention finds that perceived value mediates the relationship between price and the decision to buy. Fans buy when the total experience feels worth the cost, not simply when the price is low (Drayer et al., 2018). This is why the most effective

sellers talk in the language of experience and worth rather than discount. Early-bird offers reward advance planning and smooth demand across the season; group sales attract organizations, schools, and social circles with tailored packages; and membership and loyalty programs convert occasional buyers into committed supporters by integrating involvement, trust, and attachment (Tsiotsou, 2013). Promotions such as bobblehead nights, theme nights, and postgame fireworks, add value and a festive atmosphere that lifts attendance.

Premium seating extends the portfolio upward. Luxury suites, club seats, and VIP packages offer comfort, amenities, and exclusivity that command higher prices. Because perceived service quality strongly shapes spectator satisfaction, premium amenities can meaningfully raise the value a fan assigns to attendance and thus the price they will willingly pay (Cant & Wiid, 2012). The seller's job with premium inventory is to quantify that added value in terms the buyer can feel, a skill you will practice directly in Chapter 8.

Diversified Revenue Streams and the Professional Sales Operation

Professional sport organizations no longer rely on any single source of income; they operate diversified revenue portfolios in which ticketing, premium hospitality, sponsorship, and digital products reinforce one another. Because ticket revenue remains the most visible barometer of organizational health, declining attendance pressures franchises to rethink how they create value rather than simply discount, which is why brand-equity research treats the components of the fan relationship as strategic assets to be managed (Merkle et al., 2020). A mature sales operation therefore coordinates these streams deliberately: a season-ticket relationship becomes the entry point for premium upgrades, group outings, and the kind of engaged fan a corporate partner most wants to reach.

Within this operation, dynamic and demand-based pricing has become a central professional competency. Borrowed from airline and hotel revenue management, demand-based pricing

adjusts in real time to opponent, day, and timing (Drayer et al., 2012), and empirical studies confirm it can lift total revenue relative to static pricing when applied well (Şahin & Erol, 2017). The discipline extends to the timing of the purchase itself, since price paths shift systematically as the event approaches (Kemper & Breuer, 2016). Handled transparently, this sophistication strengthens rather than strains the fan relationship, because openness about how prices are set is linked to fan trust and satisfaction (Greer & Zoroya, 2025).

The professional operation is also increasingly experiential and data-driven. Sponsorship has matured from passive signage to brand experiences that engage fans directly and amplify partners' impact (Fransen et al., 2013), while analytics and direct-engagement technologies enable organizations to personalize offers across every stream (Mahajan et al., 2023). For the aspiring professional seller, the lesson is that competence means understanding the whole portfolio: how a ticket sale, an upgrade, a sponsorship activation, and a digital touchpoint connect into one revenue system. That systems view is exactly what distinguishes a championship-level competitor from someone who can only sell a single product in isolation.

Corporate Partnerships in Professional Sport

Corporate partnerships enable teams to collaborate with brands through arrangements that enhance exposure, revenue, and fan experiences. Sponsorship can build a partner's brand equity, though its effect depends on the sponsor's existing brand knowledge and the fit between the brand and the property (Donlan, 2013). Hospitality elements such as catering, private lounges, and dedicated parking enhance the fan and partner experience while creating additional revenue streams. Increasingly, sponsors value brand experiences that put them in direct, participatory contact with fans rather than passive signage (Fransen et al., 2013). Seasonal and multi-event packages secure revenue in advance and build a committed audience, and by providing value, convenience, and exclusivity, they strengthen both revenue and relationships. Chapter 11

develops corporate selling in depth; here it is enough to see that partnerships are a relationship business, governed by fit and mutual value.

Fan Engagement, Perceived Value, and Emerging Trends

Fan engagement and customer experience determine whether fans return and how much they spend. Comparative research on league social media shows that thoughtful, consistent content deepens engagement and widens reach (Romero-Jara et al., 2024), and online relationship marketing has become a dominant mode of exchange with seamless, networked, and personalized that expands what sellers can offer (Steinhoff et al., 2018). Data analytics lets organizations anticipate preferences and personalize offers at scale (Merkle et al., 2020), while mobile platforms and immersive experiences extend engagement well beyond the gates (Mahajan et al., 2023). The professionals who embrace these tools capture new revenue while strengthening existing relationships. Crucially, every channel ultimately competes on the same currency: perceived value. The seller who can articulate why an experience is worth its price over a phone call, an email, or a video will outperform one who competes on price alone (Drayer et al., 2018).

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 1: THE LAPSED SEASON TICKET HOLDER

Division: Ticket Sales **Reinforces:** Chapters 2 and 10

The Situation

A fan held full-season tickets for six years but did not renew last season after a job relocation moved them 45 minutes farther from the arena. They still follow the team closely on social media. Your inside-sales list flags them as a high-value win-back. Your task is to re-establish the relationship and present a renewal or partial-plan option that fits their new commute and budget.

Your Objectives

- Diagnose the real reason for non-renewal before pitching a product.
- Match a plan (full, half, or flex) to the fan's changed circumstances.
- Reframe distance and cost objections around value and experience.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Draft a one-page win-back account plan. Open with what you know about the account (tenure, lapse reason, engagement signals), state two plan options with price points, and script the three discovery questions you would ask before recommending either. Cite how relationship marketing and attachment inform your approach (Tsiotsou, 2013).

VERBAL — Run a 5–7 minute Presentation Pro role-play with a recruiter as the lapsed fan. Lead with discovery, then transition to a flex-plan recommendation. When the buyer raises the commute objection, reframe around game-day experience and parking rather than discounting (Franke & Park, 2006; Drayer et al., 2018).

EMAIL — Write a warm re-engagement email (120–160 words). Reference a specific recent team moment, acknowledge the lapse without guilt, and offer a single low-friction next step (a call or a hold on two flex seats). End with a clear call to action.

VIDEO — Record a 60–90 second personalized video message. On camera, greet them by name, name one reason you noticed them, and invite them to a specific upcoming game. Deliver as Man vs Machine would assess it: flowing, confident, free of filler, with strong eye contact.

Coaching Note: *Transparent value framing beats discounting and protects the long-term relationship (Greer & Zoroya, 2025).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Professional sales rewards fluency with pricing logic and a relentless habit of leading with value. Drill both before you enter a bracket.

- **Explain dynamic pricing in 30 seconds.** Without notes or jargon, explain why a rivalry game costs more than a midweek game, framed around fairness and demand (Drayer et al., 2012). You will need this exact move in Chapter 7.
- **Translate price into value.** Take any ticket product and rewrite its pitch so the first sentence names the experience and worth, not the dollar figure (Drayer et al., 2018).
- **Win one back.** Run Scenario 1 verbally, then again by email. Notice how the same diagnosis powers both channels, elite competitors sell one idea fluently across formats. Also rehearse Scenario 3 (the youth-group outing) to practice selling an outcome rather than seats.

Score each attempt and target your weakest channel. The ability to adapt your delivery to the situation is among the strongest coachable predictors of performance (Verbeke et al., 2011).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do dynamic pricing and other demand-based strategies affect both revenue and the fan relationship? When is each appropriate?
2. Why does perceived value, rather than the lowest price, drive ticket purchase intention (Drayer et al., 2018)? How should that change a sales pitch?
3. Discuss the role of premium seating and hospitality in diversifying revenue. How do these offerings create value for both fans and organizations?

4. What factors make a corporate sponsorship mutually beneficial, and how does brand fit influence the outcome (Donlan, 2013)?
5. How are social media and emerging technologies changing fan engagement in professional sport? Give an example of an effective digital strategy.
6. Reflect on Scenario 1: how would you reframe the commute objection without discounting?

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Chapter 3 — Ethical Practices in Sport Sales

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Explain why ethical conduct is foundational, not optional to long-term success in sport sales.
- Recognize common ethical challenges in sales interactions and how to navigate them.
- Describe how transparency, honesty, and fairness build the customer trust that drives loyalty.
- Explain how confidentiality and responsible data use protect the fan relationship.
- Analyze how leadership, culture, and training sustain ethical selling.
- Apply ethical reasoning under competitive pressure in a corporate Partnerships scenario.

Introduction

Ethical practice is the foundation on which durable sport sales are built. Ethics in selling concerns how a salesperson's moral standards shape the promotion and sale of products, services, and experiences. Promoting constrained profit, ethical sales practices create value through increased customer satisfaction, retention, and referrals, and firms with higher ethical standards tend to enjoy greater customer loyalty, making integrity a strategic asset rather than a cost (DeTienne et al., 2022). In sport, the emotional connection fans feel toward their teams raises the stakes further: a fan who feels misled does not simply churn; they tell their network.

Personal selling routinely confronts ethical issues, and salespeople benefit from explicit training to navigate them; teaching sales ethics has been shown to develop students' moral sensitivity and reasoning (Castleberry, 2014). Because salespeople occupy a boundary-spanning role between the organization and the customer, their behavior signals the integrity of the brand as a whole (Ameer & Halinen, 2019). And because formal sales education, paired with practice, raises the competencies that predict success, ethics is best learned the same way as every other skill in this book: by reading the principle and then rehearsing the decision under pressure (Bolander et al., 2014). This chapter examines the principles, pitfalls, and culture that keep sports sales both profitable and principled.

Transparency and Honesty

Transparency and honesty are central to ethical selling, especially in pricing, product claims, and contract terms. Ethical selling behavior means delivering accurate, credible information and communicating clearly. When fans perceive a salesperson's conduct as ethical, they tend to perceive the organization itself as ethical (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022). This perception is consequential because customer trust mediates the relationship between ethical behavior and loyalty: behave honestly, earn trust, and loyalty follows (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022). Transparency in pricing, in particular, has been linked to greater fan trust and satisfaction in professional sport settings (Greer & Zoroya, 2025).

Honest communication also protects organizations from the long-term costs of deception. Reviews of the sales literature show that high-pressure and deceptive tactics can damage relationships and erode the trust on which repeat business depends (Anand et al., 2022), and overpromising and exaggeration rank among the most frequently identified unethical behaviors toward customers (Ameer & Halinen, 2019). The disciplined alternative accurate claims, clear terms, and realistic expectations have been found to lift both satisfaction and trust (Okolo &

Mmamel, 2022). In a competition that scores transparency directly, this is not merely good ethics; it is a points strategy.

Fairness, Confidentiality, and Customer Trust

Fairness requires treating all customers equitably and avoiding manipulation, particularly of vulnerable or less-informed buyers. Trust is the bridge between a salesperson's ethical behavior and the customer's eventual loyalty, and respecting customers' views and honoring their expectations strengthens a seller's ethical standing over time (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022). In dynamic-pricing contexts, fans respond more favorably when pricing is transparent and incentives are clearly communicated (Greer & Zoroya, 2025), which turns a potential fairness complaint into a trust-building moment.

Confidentiality is a second dimension of fairness. Ethical conduct entails safeguarding customers' personal and private information, and misusing or leaking confidential data is recognized in the literature as a serious ethical violation (Ameer & Halinen, 2019). As organizations gather richer data for personalization, handling it responsibly reinforces the very trust that underpins durable relationships (DeTienne et al., 2022). The principle is simple: the data fans share is a loan, not a gift, and it must be repaid with care.

Building and Sustaining an Ethical Sales Culture

Ethical behavior is not solely individual; it is shaped by the culture and leadership of the sales organization. Sales ethics is increasingly understood as a practice formed and reproduced through socialization and interaction, which means leaders' and peers' behavior directly influences frontline conduct (Ameer & Halinen, 2019). Organizations must therefore model the standards they expect. Structured education helps, since teaching ethics develops moral reasoning (Castleberry, 2014), and concrete tools give expectations teeth: instruments such as the Personal Selling Ethics Scale help educators and managers assess ethical sensitivity and

guide discussion (Donoho & Heinze, 2011). Yet a formal policy alone cannot guarantee ethical behavior without a supporting culture (Ameer & Halinen, 2019). When ethics is embedded in everyday practice, it pays for itself through stronger satisfaction, loyalty, and referrals (DeTienne et al., 2022).

Building an Ethical Culture: Training, Standards, and Decision-Making

Ethical selling is not merely a matter of individual conscience; it is a cultural and structural achievement. Organizations that hold higher ethical standards tend to enjoy greater customer loyalty, which makes integrity a strategic asset rather than a constraint on profit (DeTienne et al., 2022). Cultivating that advantage requires deliberate effort: explicit standards, ongoing training, and leadership that models honest conduct. Sales-education research underscores that ethics is teachable and that structured instruction measurably shapes how future salespeople reason about ethical dilemmas (Castleberry, 2014; Donoho & Heinze, 2011). An ethical culture, in short, is built on purpose, not assumed.

Understanding why unethical behavior occurs is part of preventing it. Rather than treating misconduct as the failing of a few bad actors, contemporary scholarship adopts a practice-based view, examining how everyday pressures, incentives, and norms can nudge otherwise honest sellers toward questionable choices (Ameer & Halinen, 2019). Reviews of the (un)ethical-salesperson literature similarly stress that situational pressure of an aggressive quota, a tempting shortcut, a client's improper request, is often the proximate cause of lapses (Anand et al., 2022). For the competitor, this is a practical warning: the moment of ethical risk usually arrives disguised as a reasonable-sounding pressure, which is exactly why a prepared response matters.

Sound ethical decision-making therefore benefits from a rehearsed framework. When a request would require an inflated claim, a hidden term, or a misrepresented number, the disciplined seller pauses, names the conflict, and redirects toward an honest alternative that still serves the buyer.

Transparency and fairness build the customer trust that drives loyalty and repeat business (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022), and ethical conduct creates durable value through satisfaction, retention, and referrals rather than one-time gains (DeTienne et al., 2022). Practicing this response is not just about believing in it; it is what allows a competitor to hold the line gracefully under live pressure, which is precisely what the ethics scenario in this chapter is designed to train for.

CHAMPIONSHIP CONNECTION — INTEGRITY IS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The championship rewards character as well as skill, and the toughest scenarios test whether you will hold the ethical line when bending it would help you advance. The research is unambiguous: verified data and honest claims build the trust that wins repeat business and referrals (DeTienne et al., 2022), while overstating figures is a recognized unethical practice that backfires (Ameer & Halinen, 2019).

In a role-play, you can decline to misrepresent and still win the business, by reframing verified numbers as a trust advantage. That move, executed calmly, separates the competitor who closes once from the one judges would actually hire.

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 13: ETHICAL PRESSURE — THE INFLATED-AUDIENCE REQUEST

Division: Corporate Partnerships **Reinforces:** Chapters 3 and 12

The Situation

A prospective sponsor asks you to round up your stated attendance and impression figures to justify a bigger internal budget. Closing this deal would help you advance in the bracket.

Your task is to win the business ethically, declining to misrepresent data while still demonstrating enough value to earn the partnership.

Your Objectives

- Refuse data misrepresentation while preserving the relationship.
- Reframe verified numbers as a trust advantage.
- Demonstrate that ethical selling protects long-term value.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Write a short position memo on why accurate audience reporting protects both parties, and how to present verified figures persuasively. Reference that ethical practice creates value and that overstating is a recognized unethical behavior (DeTienne et al., 2022; Ameer & Halinen, 2019).

VERBAL — Role-play a 5–6 minute conversation in which you tactfully decline to inflate numbers, then pivot to the strength of verified data and a legitimate value-add. Hold the ethical line while keeping the relationship warm (Castleberry, 2014).

EMAIL — Draft an email providing the accurate figures, framing transparency as a partnership asset, and proposing a value-add that genuinely strengthens the deal. Keep it under 160 words with one CTA.

VIDEO — Record a 60-second video on your personal selling philosophy and why you compete with integrity — suitable for the competition's character emphasis. Deliver authentically, not as a recited script.

Coaching Note. *Integrity is a competitive advantage, not a constraint. Verified data and honesty build the trust that wins repeat business and referrals (DeTienne et al., 2022).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Ethics is a reflex you build by rehearsing the hard moment before it arrives. Practice saying no without losing the relationship.

- **Script the graceful decline.** Write three sentences that refuse an unethical request, affirm the relationship, and pivot to verified value (Castleberry, 2014). Rehearse until it sounds calm, not preachy.
- **Audit your own claims.** Take any pitch you have drafted and flag every number or promise. Can you verify each one? Overpromising is the most common unethical sales behavior (Ameer & Halinen, 2019).
- **Frame transparency as value.** Practice one line that turns honest, modest figures into a trust advantage a sophisticated buyer will respect (Greer & Zoroya, 2025).

Bring this reflex to the booster-renewal scenario in Chapter 7 as well, where honest framing about a losing season, rather than overpromising next year, is what earns the renewal.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is ethical conduct especially important in sport sales given the emotional bond fans have with their teams?
2. How do transparency and honesty in pricing and product claims influence customer trust (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022)? Give a professional-sport example.
3. Explain the role of trust as the bridge between ethical behavior and loyalty. How can an organization strengthen it?
4. What steps build and sustain an ethical sales culture? Consider leadership, training, and codes of ethics.

5. Describe an ethical dilemma a sport sales professional might face and resolve it in a way that preserves both integrity and the relationship.
6. Reflect on Scenario 13: how can you decline to inflate figures and still win the business?

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Chapter 4 — Building Relationships in Sport Sales

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Explain why relationship building, not transaction chasing, drives long-term revenue.
- Apply the principles of relationship marketing to sport organizations.
- Describe how trust, communication, and value combine to cultivate fan loyalty.
- Explain how team identification deepens and sustains the fan relationship.
- Use digital and social tools to build relationships at scale without losing the human element.
- Apply relationship-entry selling to convert a hesitant family into a multi-year flex-plan relationship.

Introduction

Relationship building sits at the heart of successful sport sales because it transforms one-time buyers into lifelong supporters. Relationship marketing shifts the focus from short-term, discrete transactions toward retaining long-term, intimate customer relations, and in sport that means cultivating the involvement, trust, and attachment that bind fans to a team (Tsiotsou, 2013). Because acquiring a new customer is generally more costly than retaining an existing one, relationship building is also a sound financial strategy, not merely a feel-good aspiration.

The emotional intensity of sport fandom makes the industry especially fertile ground for this approach. A hierarchy-of-effects model shows how cognition, affect, and conation combine to develop strong consumer-team relationships, with team attachment acting as the bridge between

fans' evaluations and their ultimate loyalty (Tsiotsou, 2013). This chapter explores how sport sales professionals deliberately nurture those bonds, and why doing so pays off even when the team is losing.

Trust, Communication, and Value

Trust is the foundation on which lasting relationships are built. Ethical, honest behavior strengthens customer trust, which in turn drives satisfaction and loyalty (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022). Communication is the mechanism through which trust forms, because relationship marketing depends on ongoing interaction and the mutual creation of value (Williams & Chinn, 2010). The most important communicative skill in this regard is listening. Active empathetic listening has been shown to be an antecedent of a salesperson's communication skill, relationship quality, and trust, the very ingredients of relationship selling (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). A seller who listens well does not merely gather information; they signal respect and build the relationship in the act of listening itself.

Delivering genuine value beyond the transaction is what finally distinguishes a relationship from a sale (DeTienne et al., 2022). Sport sales professionals create value by tailoring offerings to individual fans, an approach rooted in customer orientation that prioritizes long-term satisfaction over the immediate close (Franke & Park, 2006). Loyalty programs and supporters' clubs formalize these relationships and tap into a substantial reservoir of fan commitment that might otherwise go unrealized (Theysohn et al., 2009). By rewarding ongoing support, such structures reinforce the sense of belonging that keeps fans engaged season after season.

Relationship Marketing in Practice

Relationship marketing in sport means attracting, developing, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships over time. The process model emphasizes communication, interaction, and value as its core elements, and recognizes that modern fans often act as prosumers who

actively participate in the relationship rather than passively receiving messages (Williams & Chinn, 2010). Designing two-way interactions, inviting input, responding personally, and rewarding engagement that deepens the bond.

Different fans occupy different stages, from casual awareness to devoted allegiance, and matching effort to each fan's level of involvement and trust maximizes the chance they progress toward stronger commitment (Tsiotsou, 2013). Supporters' clubs illustrate how structured membership converts latent enthusiasm into active, revenue-generating loyalty (Theysohn et al., 2009). For a salesperson, the practical art is to identify where a fan sits and to offer the next step that fits, a flex plan for the cautious, a full membership for the committed, an exclusive experience for the devoted.

Identification: The Deepest Driver of the Relationship

Under every loyalty program and supporters' club lies the psychology of identification. The degree to which fans feel psychologically linked to a team predicts attendance, merchandise purchases, and word-of-mouth. Identification has been found to exert a greater influence on these behaviors than satisfaction with the team's performance (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012). The strategic implication for relationship building is profound: efforts to bond fans to the team's identity and community may yield greater returns than anything that depends on winning. A salesperson who frames products around belonging: your team, your community, your tradition, builds a relationship that endures losing streaks and price changes alike.

Digital Tools for Relationship Building

Digital and social platforms have become indispensable for building relationships at scale. Social media offers sport marketers a direct channel to pursue relationship-marketing goals through communication, interaction, and value creation (Williams & Chinn, 2010), and comparative analysis of football leagues shows that consistent, well-crafted content strengthens engagement

(Romero-Jara et al., 2024). Online relationship marketing extends these benefits by making relationships more seamless, networked, and personalized (Steinhoff et al., 2018), and emerging technologies continue to expand the toolkit (Mahajan et al., 2023). Used thoughtfully, digital tools complement rather than replace the human listening and personalization that drive loyalty, a balance you will practice every time you choose between an email, a call, and a personalized video.

Trust, Identification, and the Lifetime Value of a Fan Relationship

Relationship selling rests on a simple economic truth: a fan kept is worth far more than a fan won once. The lifetime value of a loyal supporter across renewals, upgrades, concessions, merchandise, and referrals dwarfs the revenue of any single transaction, which is why relationship marketing frames the goal as cultivating involvement, trust, and attachment rather than closing isolated sales (Tsiotsou, 2013). Trust is the load-bearing element. Transparency, honesty, and consistent follow-through build the trust that converts satisfaction into loyalty (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022), and once established, that trust lowers the friction of every future interaction the seller has with the fan.

Team identification gives sports sellers a relationship asset that few other industries enjoy. When fans strongly identify with a team, that identification often predicts consumption and loyalty more powerfully than satisfaction with on-field results, so an identified fan stays engaged even through losing seasons (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012). The relationship-driven seller leans into this by connecting the purchase to identity and belonging rather than to price alone, and by recognizing that highly committed fans and supporters' structures often hold loyalty value the organization has barely tapped (Theysohn et al., 2009). Selling becomes an act of deepening an existing bond, not manufacturing interest from nothing.

Sustaining these relationships at scale is now a digital and data-enabled practice. Online relationship-marketing tools allow personalized, ongoing engagement across a large fan base (Steinhoff et al., 2018), social media gives sport marketers a conceptual and practical channel for meeting relationship goals (Williams & Chinn, 2010), and customer-relationship-management approaches have been shown to enhance retention by enabling anticipatory, individualized service (Simanjuntak et al., 2020). The competitor who treats every contact as an investment in a multi-year relationship, logging what they learn, following through on promises, and personalizing the next touch is building the lifetime value that the flex-plan scenario in this chapter asks them to begin.

CHAMPIONSHIP CONNECTION — THE FLEX PLAN IS RELATIONSHIP ENTRY, NOT A DISCOUNT

In ticket sales, hesitant buyers frequently cannot commit to fixed dates.

The winning move is to position flexibility as a feature and as the entry point to a long-term relationship, not as a lesser, cheaper product. Frame perks as switching value that builds retention (Simanjuntak et al., 2020), and ground your discovery in genuine listening, the antecedent of relationship quality and trust (Drollinger & Comer, 2013).

Sell the relationship; the plan is merely its first expression.

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 6: FLEX PLAN FOR THE BUSY FAMILY

Division: Ticket Sales **Reinforces:** Chapters 4 and 10

The Situation

A family of four loves the team but cannot commit to a fixed-date season plan because of the children's activities. They have declined full plans twice. Your task is to sell a flexible ticket plan (choose-your-own games) that fits an unpredictable schedule and to position it as the start of a long-term relationship.

Your Objectives

- Match product flexibility to a real scheduling constraint.
- Position a flex plan as relationship entry, not a lesser product.
- Build switching value through perks and personalization.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Draft a personalized flex-plan recommendation with three sample game bundles a family might choose (weekend, promotional/giveaway, and rivalry games). Explain how loyalty perks build retention (Simanjuntak et al., 2020).

VERBAL — Conduct a 5-minute role-play emphasizing discovery of the family's constraints, then present the flex plan as the solution. Handle the 'we tried season tickets before' objection by differentiating flexibility (Franke & Park, 2006).

EMAIL — Write a friendly email proposing the flex plan, listing family-friendly perks (giveaway games, kids' run-the-bases day), with a single CTA to reserve credits. Keep it under 150 words.

VIDEO — Record a 75-second video pitching the flex plan, narrating how a typical family might use their game credits across a season. Apply Speed Sell delivery standards.

Coaching Note. *Flexibility is a feature, not a discount. Framing perks as switching value increases retention and turns a hesitant family into a multi-year relationship (Simanjuntak et al., 2020).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Relationship selling is built on listening and on framing every product as a step in a longer journey. Train both deliberately.

- **Listen to build, not to wait.** In a role-play, paraphrase the buyer's last point before you respond. Active empathetic listening directly raises relationship quality and trust (Drollinger & Comer, 2013).
- **Find the stage, offer the step.** For three fictional fans at different involvement levels, name the single next product that fits each (Tsiotsou, 2013).
- **Sell belonging.** Rewrite a flex-plan pitch so it leads with community and identity rather than schedule convenience (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012).

Run Scenario 6 in two channels and score both. The flex-plan habit is a small commitment now, but the relationship later returns in the retention work of Chapter 10.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is relationship building more financially sustainable than focusing solely on acquiring new customers?
2. How do trust, communication, and value combine to cultivate loyalty? Illustrate with a sport sales scenario.

3. Explain the role of active empathetic listening in building relationships (Drollinger & Comer, 2013).
4. How should the stages of fan involvement, from awareness to allegiance, shape an organization's relationship-marketing efforts?
5. Why might identification matter more than winning for long-term consumption behavior (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012)?
6. Reflect on Scenario 6: how do you position a flex plan as relationship entry rather than a cheaper option?

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Chapter 5 — Effective Practices in Sport Sales

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Identify the learnable practices that distinguish high-performing sport sales professionals.
- Explain how adaptive selling and customer orientation drive sales performance.
- Describe the roles of product knowledge, listening, and value communication.
- Explain how technology and data amplify, rather than replace, core selling skills.
- Connect self-efficacy and deliberate practice to measurable performance gains.
- Apply effective practices to the Speed Sell by selling yourself as an entry-level hire.

Introduction

Effective sport sales rests on a set of learnable practices that consistently separate high performers from the rest. The most authoritative evidence on the question comes from a contemporary meta-analysis of sales performance, which found that the strongest predictors are selling-related knowledge and the degree of adaptiveness a seller brings to each interaction, not fixed personality traits (Verbeke et al., 2011). This is liberating news for a competitor: the qualities that win are precisely the ones you can build through study and repetition. The same study reframes the modern salesperson as a knowledge broker whose value lies in understanding and matching, a description that fits the consultative sport seller perfectly (Verbeke et al., 2011).

The most effective salespeople treat every interaction as an opportunity to understand and serve the customer rather than simply to close. Adaptive selling, altering behavior in response to the

situation and the customer, and customer orientation are all positively associated with performance (Franke & Park, 2006), and customer orientation in particular, which prioritizes long-term satisfaction over the immediate sale, is strongly linked to better outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2022). This chapter examines these practices and, crucially, how to develop them through deliberate training.

Adaptive Selling and Customer Orientation

Adaptive selling is the ability to use different approaches based on the situation and the customer encountered. It involves gathering information about prospects, developing a strategy, and adjusting the presentation based on feedback (Franke & Park, 2006). Selling skill shapes this capacity, because knowledge of sales situations guides the strategies chosen, and the more a salesperson can see things from the customer's perspective, the better they tend to perform (Nguyen et al., 2022). Adaptive skill is also one of the presentation competencies most reliably tied to job performance, alongside the ability to handle objections and to close (Johlke, 2006).

Customer orientation complements adaptiveness by focusing attention on genuine needs. Highly customer-oriented salespeople avoid actions that sacrifice customer interest for an immediate sale (Franke & Park, 2006), and because salespeople are an important determinant of how customers feel about a purchase, this orientation tends to raise satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2022). In sport, it means recommending the ticket plan or experience that truly fits the fan, even when a pricier option is available, is a discipline judges reward, and customers remember.

Product Knowledge, Listening, and Value

Deep product knowledge is foundational, equipping a seller to match offerings precisely to needs. Studies of sales competencies find product knowledge among the most frequently used and valuable skills (Jacob et al., 2024), and the meta-analytic evidence places selling-related knowledge at the very top of the performance drivers (Verbeke et al., 2011). Listening ability is its

essential partner: effective listening is one of the most important contributors to a salesperson's success (Jacob et al., 2024). By pairing knowledge with attentive listening, a seller can craft a value proposition that resonates with the individual fan rather than reciting a generic script.

Communicating value clearly is what converts interest into action. A strong value proposition emphasizes the unique experiences and benefits a fan gains, not merely the price paid, and delivering value beyond the transaction enhances loyalty and retention (DeTienne et al., 2022). Persuasive but honest communication moves the buyer through the process while preserving trust (Jacob et al., 2024). The practiced seller develops the experience and training that underlie strong presentation skills, since both experience and quality training are antecedents of the skills that produce performance (Johlke, 2006).

Technology, Data, and the Discipline of Practice

Technology and data increasingly underpin effective sport sales by enabling personalization and smarter prospecting. Top-performing salespeople integrate social media into their outbound efforts to identify and engage prospects (Warren, 2016); customer data lets organizations anticipate preferences and tailor offers, an approach validated by brand-equity research (Merkle et al., 2020); and online relationship-marketing tools make these data-driven interactions more seamless and personalized (Steinhoff et al., 2018). Yet technology amplifies rather than replaces core skill: data reveals which fans are likely to respond, but adaptive selling determines how to approach them (Franke & Park, 2006).

The final effective practice is the one this whole book is built around: deliberate practice. Sales knowledge and self-efficacy are established determinants of future performance, and both rise fastest when students engage in experiential, feedback-rich repetition (Knight et al., 2014). Competitions intensify the effect, producing greater knowledge and readiness than ordinary classroom role-play (Magnotta et al., 2020). The implication is direct: an effective seller is not

simply informed but rehearsed. The Speed Sell that follows is your chance to apply every effective practice in this chapter on knowledge, adaptiveness, listening, value, and disciplined delivery to the most demanding product you will ever pitch: yourself.

Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and the Habits of Top Performers

Beyond knowledge and adaptiveness lies a psychological dimension that separates good sellers from great ones: self-efficacy, the genuine belief that one can perform a task successfully. Self-efficacy is an established determinant of future sales performance, and crucially, it is built through experience and mastery rather than inherited as a trait (Knight et al., 2014). This matters enormously for the competitor, because it means confidence is an outcome of preparation, not a prerequisite for it. Each successful rep, each clean Speed Sell, each handled objection, raises the belief that fuels the next performance, creating an upward spiral that deliberate practice sets in motion.

Resilience is the companion virtue to self-efficacy in a profession defined by rejection. Sales involves frequent 'no's, and top performers are distinguished not by avoiding rejection but by metabolizing it, treating each setback as information rather than indictment. The experiential, feedback-rich learning that sales educators endorse is effective precisely because it normalizes failure as part of skill-building, increasing both knowledge and the confidence to persist (Magnotta et al., 2020; Knight et al., 2014). A competitor who has already weathered a hundred practice rejections in low-stakes reps walks into the bracket with a composure that no amount of reading alone can produce.

These psychological habits are reinforced by concrete behavioral routines. Top performers prepare obsessively, building product knowledge they can recall instantly (Verbeke et al., 2011); they integrate modern tools, using social media and data to work smarter rather than merely harder (Warren, 2016; Merkle et al., 2020); and they pursue continuous improvement, treating

every interaction as a rep to be reviewed and refined. The meta-analytic evidence that knowledge and adaptiveness drive performance (Verbeke et al., 2011), combined with the finding that listening and value communication are among the most valuable competencies (Jacob et al., 2024), points to a clear training agenda: rehearse deliberately, seek feedback relentlessly, and let accumulating mastery build the self-efficacy that the Speed Sell will put on display.

CHAMPIONSHIP CONNECTION — THE SPEED SELL APPLIES EVERY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE TO YOU

The Speed Sell is a 60-second elevator pitch that sells you as an entry-level inside-sales hire.

It is scored on content (name, major, graduation date; demonstrated research; new-hire characteristics; a creative link to your skills; a call to action) and on delivery (professional, flowing, confident, well-paced, free of filler).

Treat it as a live demonstration of customer orientation, you are matching your knowledge and adaptiveness to the recruiter's need (Verbeke et al., 2011).

Self-efficacy is built by reps, not by reading. Rehearse the pitch until it is smooth but never robotic; confidence on camera and in the room is a trainable outcome of deliberate practice (Knight et al., 2014).

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 14: THE SPEED SELL: SELLING YOURSELF TO THE HOST TEAM

Division: Both Divisions (Career) **Reinforces:** Chapters 5 and 6

The Situation

At the championship, recruiters from the host professional team are watching. Your task is to deliver a 60-second Speed Sell that sells YOU as an entry-level inside-sales hire, the competition's signature elevator-pitch event, and to prepare the supporting written and email follow-up that turns a strong pitch into an interview.

Your Objectives

- Deliver a rubric-perfect 60-second elevator pitch.
- Translate research about the team into a creative personal hook.
- Convert a pitch into a concrete next step (interview or networking).

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Write your Speed Sell script and a one-page 'brag sheet' mapping your skills to the inside-sales role. Build it on the listening, product-knowledge, and value-communication competencies that predict sales success (Jacob et al., 2024; Verbeke et al., 2011).

VERBAL — Deliver the 60-second Speed Sell live. Hit every rubric element: name, major, graduation date; demonstrated research on the team; key new-hire characteristics; a creative link to your experience; and a clear CTA — all without filler words.

EMAIL — Write the post-pitch thank-you/follow-up email to the recruiter, referencing your conversation and requesting a formal interview. Keep it under 140 words with one CTA.

VIDEO — Record a polished 60-second video version for virtual submission

(Showcase/Man vs Machine style). Apply the full delivery rubric: confident, flowing, professional dress, strong eye contact, no filler.

Coaching Note. *The Speed Sell is scored on content AND delivery. A creative, research-driven link between you and the team, plus a crisp CTA, separates finalists from the field.*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Effective practice is the chapter's whole point: you become effective by rehearsing effectively. Use these reps to turn knowledge into performance.

- **Know it cold.** Build a one-page fact sheet on a target team and recite three specifics from memory. Selling-related knowledge is the top driver of performance (Verbeke et al., 2011).
- **Adapt on the fly.** Deliver the same 30-second value statement two ways — once for a social buyer, once for a die-hard — changing only emphasis (Franke & Park, 2006).
- **Drill to zero filler.** Record the Speed Sell, count every 'um' and 'like,' and re-record until you reach zero across three consecutive takes. Each clean rep raises self-efficacy (Knight et al., 2014).

Score the Speed Sell on the Universal Practice Rubric's Delivery and Call to Action rows especially. The communication craft you build here carries straight into Chapter 6.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is adaptive selling, and how does it differ from a one-size-fits-all approach? Give a sport sales example.
2. Why are selling-related knowledge and adaptiveness identified as the strongest, most coachable drivers of performance (Verbeke et al., 2011)?
3. How does customer orientation influence both satisfaction and performance, and why might it mean steering a fan away from a pricier option?
4. Discuss the roles of product knowledge and listening in supporting a compelling value proposition (Jacob et al., 2024).
5. How can technology and data enhance effective selling without replacing core interpersonal skills?
6. Reflect on Scenario 14: what is your single most creative, research-driven link between you and a host team?

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Chapter 6 — Proper Communication Techniques in Sport Sales

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Explain why communication skill is a learnable, performance-driving competency in sport sales.
- Apply active, empathetic listening and strategic questioning to uncover fan and partner needs.
- Align verbal and nonverbal signals to build credibility and trust.
- Adapt tone and register across written, email, verbal, and video channels.
- Use digital and social channels to extend professional communication to prospects.
- Compete in the Man vs Machine sprint by producing clear, customer-oriented responses under time pressure.

Introduction

Communication is the medium through which all other sales competencies are delivered. A seller may possess deep product knowledge and genuine customer orientation, yet without the ability to listen, question, and respond clearly, none of it reaches the buyer. Presentation and communication skills are consistently identified among the competencies most reliably tied to sales performance, and unlike fixed traits, they respond directly to training (Johlke, 2006). The contemporary meta-analytic view of sales performance reinforces the point: the modern seller

succeeds as a knowledge broker who must encode and transmit understanding, a fundamentally communicative act (Verbeke et al., 2011).

Proper communication techniques operate at every stage of the sport sales process, from the first cold call to the renewal conversation years later. Active listening and thoughtful questioning allow salespeople to understand and serve customer needs (Jacob et al., 2024), aligned verbal and nonverbal signals build the credibility and trust that sustain relationships (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022), and digital channels extend these techniques to fans and prospects wherever they are (Williams & Chinn, 2010). This chapter treats communication as a trainable craft and culminates in the competition's most communication-intensive event, the Man vs Machine sprint, where your words are literally measured.

Listening as the First Communication Skill

The most common misconception about selling is that it is primarily about talking. In reality, the highest-performing salespeople listen more than they speak, because listening is the mechanism by which needs are discovered. Active empathetic listening is sensing, processing, and responding to a customer's spoken and unspoken messages, a function that serves as an antecedent to relationship selling, strengthening trust and the quality of the buyer-seller relationship (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). Effective listening is repeatedly cited as one of the most important contributors to a salesperson's success (Jacob et al., 2024), and it is precisely the skill that allows a seller to adapt rather than recite (Franke & Park, 2006).

Listening in sport sales is layered. At the surface, a seller hears the stated request for a price, a date, and a section. Beneath it lies the motivation: a father wants memories with his children, a business wants visibility with a specific community, and a lapsed buyer feels unappreciated. Active empathetic listening surfaces these deeper drivers, and research links the salesperson's listening ability directly to the trust on which long-term relationships depend (Drollinger & Comer,

2013). The disciplined practice is to listen for the emotion behind the logistics, reflect it back to confirm understanding, and only then respond, a sequence that also reads as customer orientation, itself a documented driver of both satisfaction and performance (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Questioning, Clarity, and the Architecture of a Conversation

If listening is reception, questioning is the steering mechanism. Strategic questions move a conversation from rapport to discovery to recommendation without the buyer ever feeling interrogated. Open questions invite the prospect to describe goals and constraints in their own words; clarifying questions confirm understanding; and confirming questions secure small agreements that build toward commitment. Because adaptive selling depends on accurate information about the prospect, the quality of a seller's questions largely determines the quality of the eventual recommendation (Franke & Park, 2006). Skilled questioning is itself a presentation competency associated with stronger performance (Johlke, 2006).

Clarity is the companion virtue. A value proposition that is technically sound but muddled in delivery fails to persuade, while the same idea expressed simply and confidently advances the sale. Persuasive yet honest communication moves the buyer through the purchasing process while preserving the trust that underpins loyalty (Jacob et al., 2024). Clarity is also an ethical matter: transparent, plain-language communication shapes customers' perceptions of the organization and strengthens trust (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022). The competitor's discipline is to say the essential thing in the fewest words, a habit that pays off most visibly in the Man vs Machine event, where verbosity and filler are penalized.

Verbal, Nonverbal, and the Signals That Build Credibility

Communication is never only words. Tone, pace, posture, eye contact, and energy carry as much meaning as vocabulary, and when these nonverbal signals align with the verbal message, they build the credibility that sustains relationships (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022). In a live pitch, a confident

and well-paced delivery free of filler communicates competence before a single fact registers; in a recorded video, professional dress and steady eye contact do the same work. The competition's delivery rubric is confident, flowing, well-paced, free of filler; it is not arbitrary etiquette but a codification of the nonverbal signals that real buyers read as trustworthiness.

Adapting these signals to the audience is the mark of an advanced communicator. The same value statement should be delivered with different emphasis to a data-driven corporate buyer than to an emotional die-hard fan, a flexibility that experience and quality training cultivate (Johlke, 2006). Reading the room is noticing when a buyer leans in or pulls back and adjusting accordingly; it is adaptive selling expressed in real time (Franke & Park, 2006). The practiced seller rehearses not one delivery but a repertoire, so that the channel and the listener, not the script, determine how the message is shaped.

Digital Channels and Communicating Under Measurement

Modern sport sales conversations increasingly unfold across email, social media, and video, each with its own conventions. Social and digital channels let sellers meet relationship-marketing goals and engage fans where they already are (Williams & Chinn, 2010), and top performers integrate social media into outbound prospecting to identify and warm leads (Warren, 2016). Yet the underlying competencies do not change: an email still requires a clear structure, a warm professional tone, and a single next step; a video voicemail still rewards a research-informed hook and a crisp call to action. Digital channels expand reach without lowering the bar for clarity and customer orientation (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Storytelling and the Persuasive Structure of a Sales Message

Clarity tells a buyer what you mean; structure makes them feel it. The most persuasive sales messages are not random collections of facts but deliberately ordered narratives that move a buyer from their current situation to a desired future. Persuasive yet honest communication is

what carries a buyer through the decision while preserving trust (Jacob et al., 2024), and the ordering of a message materially shapes how it lands, a principle that holds even at the level of a single opening offer or framing statement (Verbeke et al., 2011). A competitor who masters message structure can make the same evidence far more compelling simply by sequencing it as a story the buyer recognizes as their own.

Effective sales storytelling follows a recognizable arc: establish the buyer's situation, surface the tension or unmet need, and resolve it with a recommendation framed as the natural answer. This arc depends entirely on discovery, because a story only resonates when it is built from what active, empathetic listening has uncovered about the specific buyer (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). Adaptive sellers tailor the narrative to the listener, emphasizing community and belonging for a family buyer, and return on investment for a corporate buyer. Thereby expressing adaptive selling through narrative form (Franke & Park, 2006). The structure stays constant; the content flexes to the audience.

Across channels, structured messaging is what scoring systems reward. In written and video formats analyzed for clarity and tone, signposting (“First... / The reason... / So my ask is...”), one idea per sentence, and a single clear call to action read as professionalism and competence (Inks et al., 2020; Okolo & Mmamel, 2022). Digital channels extend this discipline rather than relax it: an email or video voicemail still benefits from a tight narrative and a clean close (Williams & Chinn, 2010). The competitor who learns to structure a persuasive message and to deliver it with the customer orientation that drives satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2022) holds an advantage that compounds across every event in the championship, the Man vs Machine sprint most of all.

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 15: MAN VS MACHINE — THE INBOUND INQUIRY SPRINT

Division: Both Divisions (Communication) **Reinforces:** Chapters 6 and 8

The Situation

In the virtual Man vs Machine challenge, your written and verbal communication is analyzed for clarity, tone, and professionalism. Your task is to respond to a series of rapid inbound prospect inquiries, across both ticket and corporate contexts with concise, professional, customer-oriented responses under time pressure.

Your Objectives

- Respond to inbound inquiries with clarity and professional tone.
- Demonstrate customer orientation under time pressure.
- Adapt register across written, email, and verbal channels.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Prepare a 'response playbook': for five common inbound questions (price, availability, group rates, refunds, sponsor inquiries), write a 2–3 sentence professional reply for each. Ground the tone in the finding that clear, ethical communication shapes customer trust (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022).

VERBAL — Role-play a rapid-fire 5-minute session answering inbound questions aloud as the 'machine' would assess them measured, confident, and jargon-free, applying customer orientation throughout (Nguyen et al., 2022).

EMAIL — Draft three crisp email replies (each under 90 words) to inbound leads, demonstrating clear structure, warm professionalism, and a next step in every message.

VIDEO — Record a 60-second video responding to one challenging inbound objection as if leaving a video voicemail for a prospect. Deliver with the clarity and tone Man vs Machine rewards.

Coaching Note. *Communication analysis rewards clarity, positive tone, and low filler.*

Customer-oriented, concise responses score highest, the same traits that drive real-world satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2022).

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Communication is built rep by rep. These drills sharpen the listening, questioning, and clarity that the machine and every real buyer measures.

- **Listen to reflect.** In a 3-minute partner exercise, the partner describes what they want from a season; you may only respond by reflecting back their underlying motivation before recommending anything. This builds the empathetic listening that anchors relationship selling (Drollinger & Comer, 2013).
- **Cut to clarity.** Take a 120-word reply and rewrite it under 60 words with no lost meaning and zero jargon. LIWC-style measurement rewards exactly this discipline (Inks et al., 2020).
- **Match the channel.** Deliver one value statement four ways: written, email, verbal, video, changing register but not substance, then check each for a single clear CTA (Williams & Chinn, 2010).

Score every rep on the Clarity, Delivery, and Call to Action rows of the Universal Practice Rubric. Communication is the skill that carries the next six chapters.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is listening, rather than talking, often described as the most important communication skill in sales? Reference active empathetic listening (Drollinger & Comer, 2013).
2. How do open, clarifying, and confirming questions each move a sales conversation forward?
3. Explain how nonverbal signals build or erode credibility, and connect this to the competition's delivery rubric (Johlke, 2006).
4. How should a seller adapt the same message across written, email, verbal, and video channels (Williams & Chinn, 2010)?
5. What does it mean to communicate as if your words are being measured, and how does LIWC-based assessment change preparation (Inks et al., 2020)?
6. Reflect on Scenario 15: which of your five playbook replies is weakest, and how would you tighten it for clarity and tone?

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Chapter 7 — Ticket Operations in Sport Sales

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Explain the role of ticket operations as a strategic revenue and engagement system.
- Describe dynamic, demand-based pricing and the evidence for its revenue effects.
- Use data analytics and customer relationship management to personalize offers.
- Identify the distribution, security, and accessibility practices that protect the fan experience.
- Apply transparency to pricing communication as an ethical and trust-building practice.
- Compete by handling a dynamic-pricing fairness objection while retaining the fan and closing the sale.

Introduction

Selling a ticket is not merely granting entry to a game; it is the front end of an entire revenue system and the first tangible promise of an experience. Ticket operations in sport sales are multifaceted, requiring strategic planning, technological integration, and a fan-centric approach, and from pricing through distribution to analytics, every facet contributes to revenue generation and event success (Merkle et al., 2020). Because ticket sales remain a primary financial pillar for most sports organizations, the discipline of ticket operations sits close to the center of the commercial enterprise (Merkle et al., 2020).

This chapter treats ticket operations as a connected system rather than a series of transactions. Effective pricing maximizes revenue while accommodating fan segments; data analytics and

customer relationship management convert ticketing into a personalization engine; and transparent, ethical practice protects the trust on which repeat business depends (Greer & Zoroya, 2025; Kamakura et al., 2005). The chapter culminates in the single most common objection a ticket seller faces, the fairness complaint about dynamic pricing, and shows how to turn that objection into a trust-building moment.

The Strategic Role of Ticket Operations

Ticket operations orchestrate a seamless experience from purchase to entry and form the backbone of the event-day economy. They are central to revenue generation, and effective pricing strategies, dynamic adjustments, and targeted promotions ensure tickets are priced to capture revenue while still serving diverse fan segments (Merkle et al., 2020). The operation is also a relationship instrument: the way a fan is treated at the point of purchase shapes their perception of the whole organization, and service quality at this stage is a significant predictor of spectator satisfaction and the intention to return (Cant & Wiid, 2012).

Because the ticket is the most frequent and visible touchpoint, ticket operations carry a disproportionate share of the brand experience. A fan may interact with a sponsorship activation once a season but buys tickets repeatedly, and each purchase either reinforces or erodes loyalty. Perceived value, not merely price, mediates the intention to purchase, so an operation that communicates value clearly will outperform one that competes on price alone (Drayer et al., 2018). Treating ticketing as a strategic system, rather than a clerical function, is therefore a competitive decision.

Dynamic Pricing and the Evidence Behind It

Dynamic pricing has become a defining feature of modern ticket operations. This demand-based approach adjusts prices in real time, mirroring the revenue-management practices long used by the airline and hotel industries (Drayer et al., 2012). Empirical work demonstrates that demand-

responsive pricing can increase total revenue relative to static pricing (Şahin & Erol, 2017), and analyses of real price paths show that ticket prices shift systematically as the event date approaches, so the timing of a purchase is itself a variable the operation manages (Kemper & Breuer, 2016). For the seller, dynamic pricing is both an opportunity for more revenue, smarter inventory, and a communication challenge.

The challenge arises because fans often experience dynamic pricing as unfairness rather than efficiency. A loyal supporter who sees a rivalry game priced well above a midweek matchup may feel the team is exploiting demand. The decisive variable is transparency: communicating openly about how and why prices vary is linked to greater fan trust and satisfaction (Greer & Zoroya, 2025). The seller's task is to explain the model in plain, non-defensive language, the same demand logic that lets the team offer genuinely low prices for lower-demand games, and to offer value alternatives that respect the fan's budget. Handled well, the pricing objection becomes a demonstration of honesty rather than a point of friction.

Data, Analytics, and Personalization

Ticket operations generate a continuous stream of behavioral data, and the organizations that act on it convert ticketing into a personalization engine. Analytics reveal purchasing patterns, popular sections, and fan preferences (Merkle et al., 2020), while customer relationship management systems maintain the fan databases that enable targeted marketing and cultivate loyalty (Kamakura et al., 2005). When fans feel understood, offered the plan, the seats, and the promotions that actually fit them, they are more likely to become loyal supporters who attend and advocate (Tsiotsou, 2013). Emerging technologies continue to widen the range of insights an operation can capture and use (Mahajan et al., 2023).

Personalization is also a prospecting tool. Top-performing salespeople increasingly use social media to extend data-informed engagement to new buyers, identifying interests and timing

outreach to match (Warren, 2016). The operational discipline is to let data inform the human conversation rather than replace it: analytics indicate which fan is likely to upgrade or which lapsed buyer is ripe for a win-back, but the adaptive, customer-oriented exchange still closes the sale (Franke & Park, 2006). Data tells you whom to call and what to offer; skill determines what happens on the call.

Distribution, Security, Accessibility, and Ethics

Smooth distribution and dependable service complete the operation. Electronic and mobile ticketing with scanning technologies reduce counterfeiting and unauthorized entry, while well-trained box office staff and frictionless pickup create the positive on-site experiences that reinforce satisfaction (Cant & Wiid, 2012). Accessibility and inclusivity must be designed in, not bolted on, so that events remain genuinely open to all fans, a matter of both ethics and market reach. An operation that is efficient but exclusionary leaves both goodwill and revenue on the table.

Ethical practice runs through every part of ticket operations, most visibly in pricing and transparency. Transparent communication about pricing strengthens fan trust and satisfaction (Greer & Zoroya, 2025), and ethical conduct creates value over time by fostering loyalty and repeat business rather than chasing short-term gains (DeTienne et al., 2022). The operation that pairs efficient systems with fair, transparent practice protects both revenue and reputation and equips its sellers to face the fairness objection not with corporate deflection but with confident honesty.

Timing, Inventory, and the Mechanics of Demand-Based Pricing

Beneath the fan-facing simplicity of a ticket price lies a sophisticated inventory-management problem. Every seat is a perishable good, worthless the moment the game begins, so the operation's task is to sell the right seat to the right fan at the right price before that deadline. Demand-based pricing draws directly on airline and hotel revenue management to address this,

adjusting prices in real time by opponent, day, and demand signals (Drayer et al., 2012). Empirical modeling confirms the payoff: demand-responsive approaches can increase total revenue compared with static pricing, capturing value on high-demand games while filling seats on quieter ones (Şahin & Erol, 2017).

Timing is the dimension fans least understand and operations most carefully manage. Analyses of real ticket price paths show that prices move systematically as the event date approaches, reflecting how remaining inventory and accumulating demand interact (Kemper & Breuer, 2016). This is why the same seat may cost different amounts at different moments, and why a seller must be able to explain the logic without sounding evasive. The operational goal is not to extract maximum dollars from every fan but to match price to willingness-to-pay across segments, which, communicated openly, can actually expand access by surfacing genuinely low prices for lower-demand games.

The mechanics only succeed when paired with transparency and data discipline. Pricing transparency is linked to fan trust and satisfaction, so the operation that explains its model plainly protects the relationship even as it optimizes revenue (Greer & Zoroya, 2025). Customer-relationship-management systems and analytics make the whole apparatus smarter, revealing which segments respond to which prices and promotions and enabling personalized offers rather than blunt across-the-board changes (Kamakura et al., 2005; Merkle et al., 2020). For the competitor, understanding these mechanics is what transforms a defensive 'that's just our pricing' into a confident, trust-building explanation, the exact skill the dynamic-pricing objection in this chapter demands.

CHAMPIONSHIP CONNECTION — THE PRICING OBJECTION

Dynamic-pricing fairness complaints are among the most common objections in the Ticket Sales bracket. Judges reward sellers who explain demand-based pricing transparently, hold the fan's trust, and still close, because transparency is empirically tied to trust and satisfaction (Greer & Zoroya, 2025).

The strongest competitors reframe the complaint: the same demand model that raises rivalry-game prices is what makes genuinely low prices possible for lower-demand games.

Demand-responsive pricing, well communicated, can raise revenue and serve budget-conscious fans at once (Şahin & Erol, 2017).

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 5: DYNAMIC PRICING OBJECTION AT THE BOX OFFICE

Division: Ticket Sales **Reinforces:** Chapters 7 and 2

The Situation

A loyal fan is upset that a ticket for a marquee rivalry game costs significantly more than a midweek game against a weaker opponent. They feel the team is 'gouging' fans. Your task is to handle the fairness objection, explain demand-based pricing transparently, and retain the fan's trust while still closing the sale.

Your Objectives

- Explain dynamic pricing without sounding defensive or corporate.
- Use transparency to convert a fairness complaint into trust.
- Offer alternatives (lower-demand games, value sections) that respect the budget.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Write a short internal talking-points memo on how to explain dynamic pricing to fans, framed around fairness and transparency. Cite that pricing transparency is linked to fan trust and satisfaction (Greer & Zoroya, 2025) and that demand-based pricing mirrors airline and hotel revenue management (Drayer et al., 2012).

VERBAL — Role-play a 4–5 minute objection-handling conversation at the box office. Acknowledge the frustration, explain the 'why' transparently, and offer a value alternative, avoiding high-pressure tactics that erode trust (Anand et al., 2022).

EMAIL — Draft an email reply to a fan who emailed a pricing complaint. Validate their concern, explain the model in plain language, and offer two lower-demand games as alternatives. Keep it calm, transparent, and under 160 words.

VIDEO — Record a 60–75 second explainer video the team could send to season members introducing how dynamic pricing works and why it benefits committed fans. Deliver with empathy and clarity; Man vs Machine rewards a professional, non-defensive tone.

Coaching Note. *Fairness objections are trust opportunities. Transparent explanation strengthens loyalty, while demand-responsive pricing can also increase revenue when communicated well (Şahin & Erol, 2017).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Ticket operations reward sellers who can make a complex pricing system feel fair and simple. Drill the explanation until it is calm, clear, and convincing.

- **Explain it in 30 seconds.** Describe dynamic pricing to a skeptical fan in under 30 seconds, using an everyday analogy (airline or hotel) and zero defensiveness (Drayer et al., 2012).
- **Lead with transparency.** Practice acknowledging the fan's frustration first, then explaining the 'why.' Transparency is the variable most tied to trust and satisfaction (Greer & Zoroya, 2025).
- **Always offer the bridge.** End every pricing objection rep with two concrete value alternatives (a lower-demand game, a different section) so the fan never hears only 'no' (Franke & Park, 2006).

Score on the Objection Handling and Closing rows of the rubric. A fan who leaves trusting you and holding a ticket, is the win condition.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do ticket operations contribute to revenue and event success beyond simply granting entry (Merkle et al., 2020)?
2. What is dynamic pricing, and what does the evidence say about its effect on revenue (Şahin & Erol, 2017)?
3. Why is transparency the decisive factor in how fans receive dynamic pricing (Greer & Zoroya, 2025)?

4. How do analytics and customer relationship management enhance personalization in ticket operations (Kamakura et al., 2005)?
5. Why are distribution efficiency, security, and accessibility important to the fan experience (Cant & Wiid, 2012)?
6. Reflect on Scenario 5: what is your single best value alternative to offer a budget-conscious fan, and why?

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Chapter 8 — Customer Service in Sport Sales

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Explain why customer service is a core driver of fan satisfaction and loyalty, not a back-office function.
- Describe how service quality predicts spectator satisfaction and intention to return.
- Apply customer-oriented service behaviors before, during, and after the sale.
- Connect premium amenities and hospitality to measurable increases in perceived value.
- Identify the ethical foundations of trustworthy service.
- Compete by upselling a hesitant buyer to premium seating through quantified, experienced value.

Introduction

Customer service shapes how fans feel before, during, and after every interaction, and in sport sales it is far more than an operational courtesy. Service quality is a significant predictor of spectator satisfaction and of the intention to attend future events (Cant & Wiid, 2012), which makes service a direct input to revenue rather than a cost center. Because salespeople are an important determinant of how customers feel about a purchase, the service behavior of the sales team carries substantial weight in the fan relationship (Nguyen et al., 2022).

This chapter frames customer service as a competitive advantage and a sales skill in its own right. Attentive, ethical service builds the trust that underpins long-term loyalty (Okolo & Mmamel,

2022), and consistently high-quality service makes fans more likely to return and to recommend the organization to others (Cant & Wiid, 2012). The chapter culminates in a premium-seating upsell, a scenario in which excellent service and skilled selling become indistinguishable, because the seller succeeds by helping the fan see value they have already felt.

Service Quality as a Predictor of Loyalty

The link between service quality and fan behavior is well established. Across sporting contexts, perceived service quality significantly predicts spectator satisfaction and the intention to attend future events (Cant & Wiid, 2012), and studies of service-quality attributes at major events confirm that the dimensions of service fans encounter shape their overall evaluation (Kim et al., 2016). Satisfaction, in turn, is not an end state but a driver: event satisfaction feeds team identification and the intention to revisit, linking a single positive experience to repeat attendance (Lee & Kang, 2015). Service is therefore an investment in future revenue.

Service quality also predicts the behavioral intentions that marketers care about most: returning, spending, and recommending. Research on outdoor sport events shows that perceived service quality drives both satisfaction and the behavioral intentions that follow (Tzetzis et al., 2014). For the sport seller, the implication is that every service interaction is a retention decision in miniature: a fan whose problem is handled with care becomes a more loyal customer, while a fan who feels dismissed becomes a churn risk regardless of how good the product is.

Customer-Oriented Service Across the Lifecycle

Excellent service is not confined to the moment of sale; it spans the full lifecycle of the relationship. Before the sale, it appears as responsiveness and genuine needs discovery; during the sale, as honest guidance toward the right fit; after the sale, as proactive follow-up that confirms the fan made a good decision. Customer orientation, prioritizing the fan's long-term satisfaction over the immediate transaction, is consistently linked to better performance and higher satisfaction

(Nguyen et al., 2022), and salespeople who avoid sacrificing customer interest for a quick close build the trust that compounds over time (Franke & Park, 2006).

Service quality in the hospitality and event context depends heavily on salesperson behavior. Studies of service settings find that the conduct of front-line staff is a key determinant of customer satisfaction (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022), and in sport the same pattern holds: the seller who remembers a fan's preferences, anticipates needs, and follows through becomes part of the value the fan is buying. This is why service cannot be separated from selling. The most effective sport sellers treat service as the engine of referrals and renewals, recognizing that a satisfied, well-served fan is the lowest-cost source of the next sale (Cant & Wiid, 2012).

Premium Experience, Hospitality, and Perceived Value

Service quality becomes a selling argument when it is attached to premium experiences. Amenities and hospitality club seating, lounges, catering, and dedicated service measurably raise spectator satisfaction, and the quality of these service attributes shapes how fans evaluate the overall experience (Kim et al., 2016). Crucially, what justifies a higher price is not the price itself but the perceived value the buyer attaches to the upgrade, and perceived value mediates the intention to purchase (Drayer et al., 2018). The seller's job in an upsell is therefore to make the added value vivid and concrete, not to defend a larger number.

The most persuasive upsell connects the upgrade to value the buyer has already experienced. When a half-season holder has sampled a club-level game as a guest and enjoyed it, the seller's task is to quantify and reanimate that experience, the comfort, the hospitality, the view, rather than to introduce an abstract premium. Because premium amenities demonstrably increase satisfaction (Kim et al., 2016), and because customer-oriented selling means recommending the option that genuinely fits, the ethical and the effective path align: help the fan see whether the

upgrade is worth it to them, and offer a bridge option if the full jump is too large a step (Franke & Park, 2006).

Ethics and the Trust Foundation of Service

Service that is attentive but manipulative ultimately fails, because trust is the substrate of loyalty. Transparency, honesty, and fairness in service interactions build the customer trust that drives repeat business (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022), and ethical conduct creates value over time through satisfaction, retention, and referrals rather than short-term extraction (DeTienne et al., 2022). In an upsell, this means never overselling: the seller who pushes a fan into a premium product that does not fit may win one transaction but loses the relationship and the referrals that flow from it.

The disciplined service professional therefore treats every interaction as a deposit in a trust account. Honest guidance, proactive problem-solving, and a genuine focus on the fan's satisfaction accumulate into loyalty that competitors cannot easily poach. This is the through-line that connects customer service to every other chapter in this book: the relationship-building of Chapter 4, the communication craft of Chapter 6, and the retention work of Chapter 10 all rest on the same foundation of trustworthy, customer-oriented service that this chapter describes.

Service Recovery: Turning Complaints into Loyalty

No service operation is flawless, and how an organization responds when something goes wrong often matters more than the error itself. Service recovery, the deliberate effort to resolve a problem and restore goodwill, is one of the highest-leverage moments in the entire fan relationship. Because service quality is a significant predictor of spectator satisfaction and the intention to return (Cant & Wiid, 2012), a poorly handled complaint can convert a loyal fan into a lost one, while a well-handled one can deepen loyalty beyond its pre-problem level. The complaint, counterintuitively, is an opportunity.

Effective recovery follows a customer-oriented sequence: listen fully, acknowledge the fan's frustration as legitimate, take ownership, and resolve with a concrete remedy and follow-through. Because salespeople and service staff are an important determinant of how customers feel about an experience (Nguyen et al., 2022), the human response carries decisive weight, and transparent, honest handling is what rebuilds the trust a problem has shaken (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022). The disciplined professional resists the instinct to defend or minimize; instead they validate the emotion first, because a fan who feels heard becomes receptive to a solution in a way an unheard fan never will.

Effective recovery actively builds value rather than merely containing damage. Resolving a problem generously signals that the organization values the relationship over the transaction, precisely the customer orientation linked to satisfaction and performance (Franke & Park, 2006). That signal compounds into loyalty, referrals, and the durable value that ethical, relationship-minded service creates (DeTienne et al., 2022). A recovered fan often becomes a more vocal advocate than one who never had a problem at all. For the competitor, internalizing service recovery means treating every objection, complaint, or hesitation in a role-play as a chance to demonstrate care under pressure, the same instinct that powers the premium upsell this chapter asks them to perform, where reassurance about value is itself a form of service.

CHAMPIONSHIP CONNECTION — THE UPSELL IS SERVICE AND SELLING AT ONCE

Premium-seating upsells appear throughout the Ticket Sales bracket. Judges reward competitors who quantify the upgrade in terms the buyer has already felt and who justify the price with service-quality value, since perceived value, not price, drives purchase intention (Drayer et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2016).

Customer orientation wins here too: offering a bridge option when the full upgrade is too big a step signals that you serve the fan, not the commission. That trust is what converts a one-time upgrade into a renewing premium relationship (Franke & Park, 2006).

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 4: PREMIUM SEATING UPSELL — THE HESITANT UPGRADER

Division: Ticket Sales **Reinforces:** Chapters 8 and 2

The Situation

A current half-season holder in the lower bowl has attended a club-level game as a guest and enjoyed it. They are interested in upgrading to club seats but are anxious about the price jump. Your task is to upsell to premium seating by quantifying the added value (amenities, hospitality, comfort) rather than simply naming a higher price.

Your Objectives

- Quantify premium value in terms the buyer already experienced.
- Use service-quality evidence to justify a price increase.
- Offer a bridge option if the full upgrade is too large a step.
-

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Prepare a value-comparison sheet contrasting the buyer's current seats with club seats across comfort, amenities, hospitality, and view. Note how perceived service quality drives spectator satisfaction and willingness to pay (Cant & Wiid, 2012).

VERBAL — Run a 5-minute upsell role-play. Anchor on the buyer's positive club-level memory, present the upgrade, and when the price objection surfaces, reframe around per-game amenity value and offer a partial-club bridge plan (Franke & Park, 2006).

EMAIL — Write a follow-up email recapping the value comparison and proposing a no-pressure club-level trial for one premium game. Under 150 words, one CTA.

VIDEO — Record a 60-second video that 'walks' the buyer through the club experience they already sampled, reinforcing the emotional high point. Apply Speed Sell delivery standards: confident, flowing, no filler.

Coaching Note. *Upselling works when the seller connects the upgrade to a value the buyer has already felt. Premium amenities measurably raise satisfaction, which supports the higher price (Kim et al., 2016).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Great service and great selling are the same move: help the fan see value clearly. These reps build the upsell instinct.

- **Quantify the intangible.** Take a premium amenity (club lounge access) and express its value in concrete, per-game terms a buyer can feel, not abstract features. Perceived value mediates purchase intention (Drayer et al., 2018).
- **Anchor on memory.** Practice opening an upsell by reanimating a value the buyer already experienced, then bridging to the upgrade (Kim et al., 2016).
- **Build the bridge.** For every full upsell, prepare a smaller 'bridge' option so a hesitant buyer always has a comfortable yes. Customer orientation, not pressure, closes premium deals (Franke & Park, 2006).

Score on the Discovery, Value Communication, and Objection Handling rows. The service mindset you build here powers the retention work in Chapter 10.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is customer service described as a core driver of revenue rather than a back-office function (Cant & Wiid, 2012)?
2. How does service quality predict spectator satisfaction and intention to return (Tzetzis et al., 2014; Lee & Kang, 2015)?
3. What does customer-oriented service look like before, during, and after the sale (Nguyen et al., 2022)?
4. How do premium amenities raise perceived value, and why does that justify a higher price (Kim et al., 2016; Drayer et al., 2018)?

5. Why is trust the foundation of service, and how does overselling damage it (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022)?
6. Reflect on Scenario 4: what is the single most vivid, already-experienced value you would use to anchor the upsell?

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Chapter 9 — Strategic Planning and Solutions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Explain why strategic, data-driven planning distinguishes consultative sport selling from transactional selling.
- Use market segmentation and psychographics to define and target audiences.
- Apply analytics and brand-equity evidence to build defensible, solution-oriented proposals.
- Align a multi-asset partnership to a sponsor's stated business and community goals.
- Adapt a strategic pitch based on which objective the buyer prioritizes.
- Compete by building and defending a data-backed multi-asset package for a healthcare partner.

Introduction

Strategic planning is what separates a salesperson who reacts from one who designs solutions. In sport sales, the most valuable deals, especially corporate partnerships, are rarely won by reciting an inventory list; they are won by understanding a partner's goals deeply and engineering a package that serves them. The contemporary view of the high-performing seller as a knowledge broker captures this shift: value lies in the ability to gather, interpret, and apply knowledge about the customer and the market (Verbeke et al., 2011). Strategic planning is the disciplined application of that knowledge.

This chapter treats planning as a research-and-design process: segment the audience, interpret the data, and assemble a solution that maps each asset to a goal. Segmentation sharpens targeting (Spence et al., 1997), analytics and brand-equity evidence make proposals defensible (Merkle et al., 2020), and customer relationship management turns accumulated data into strategic insight (Kamakura et al., 2005). The chapter culminates in a multi-asset healthcare partnership, a scenario that demands all of these capabilities at once.

Segmentation and Knowing the Audience

Strategic planning begins with knowing precisely who the audience is. Market segmentation is dividing a broad audience into meaningful groups, it allows an organization to target offers and messages with precision, and psychographic segmentation in particular, which groups people by values, interests, and lifestyles rather than demographics alone, sharpens that targeting considerably (Spence et al., 1997). For the sport seller, segmentation answers the foundational question a corporate buyer always asks, implicitly or explicitly: does your audience contain my customers?

Answering that question with data is what makes a pitch persuasive. A team that can profile its family segment size, location, attendance frequency, and spending behavior can demonstrate alignment with a sponsor whose customers are families, turning a generic claim into a defensible argument. Brand-equity research underscores that understanding the components of the audience relationship is central to commercial strategy (Merkle et al., 2020), and customer relationship management systems are the practical instrument for maintaining the fan data that segmentation requires (Kamakura et al., 2005). The strategic seller treats audience data as the opening argument, not an afterthought.

Analytics, Brand Equity, and Defensible Proposals

Data transforms a proposal from an assertion into a case. Analytics help organizations understand purchasing patterns, audience composition, and engagement, and brand-equity research shows how these components combine to create commercial value (Merkle et al., 2020). When a seller can show a healthcare system that the team's audience over-indexes on the families the system wants to reach, the proposal becomes difficult to dismiss. Data-backed audience alignment is, in practice, the most persuasive argument a corporate seller can make, because it speaks directly to the buyer's return on investment.

Defensibility matters because sophisticated corporate buyers scrutinize claims. A proposal built on enthusiasm collapses under scrutiny, whereas one grounded in segmentation evidence and analytics withstands it (Spence et al., 1997; Merkle et al., 2020). The strategic seller anticipates the buyer's questions: How do you know? What is the reach? How will we measure it? The seller then builds the answers into the proposal. This is the consultative posture the performance literature rewards: the seller as a broker of credible, decision-relevant knowledge (Verbeke et al., 2011).

Designing Multi-Asset Solutions

The highest-value partnerships are solutions, not products. Rather than selling a single signage placement, the strategic seller assembles a multi-asset package, signage, an experiential activation, digital content, and a community series — in which each element maps to a specific partner goal. Experiential and brand-experience elements amplify a sponsorship's impact well beyond passive exposure (Fransen et al., 2013), and segmentation evidence ensures each asset is aimed at the right audience (Spence et al., 1997). The art is in the alignment: a healthcare system pursuing community wellness should see a 'healthy game day' activation and a youth-clinic series, not merely a logo on a wall.

Adaptiveness governs how the solution is presented. Different stakeholders within a partner organization prioritize different goals; one cares about visibility, another about community impact and the effective seller adjusts emphasis based on which goal the buyer in the room values most (Franke & Park, 2006). The package stays the same; the framing shifts. This is adaptive selling applied at the strategic level, and it is why planning and communication are inseparable: the best-designed solution still requires a reading of the buyer to land.

From Plan to Measurable Outcome

A strategic plan is incomplete without a measurement framework. Corporate partners increasingly demand evidence that a partnership works, and frameworks that assess sponsorship effectiveness from customer, partner, and social perspectives give sellers a structured way to define and prove value (Yu & Tan, 2017). Building measurement into the proposal from the outset, specifying what will be tracked and how success will be judged, converts a hopeful pitch into a credible, accountable plan and lays the groundwork for the renewal conversation years later.

Measurement also disciplines the design. When a seller must specify how each asset's impact will be measured, weak or vanity elements fall away and the package tightens around what genuinely serves the partner. This closes the strategic loop: research defines the audience, data builds the case, design assembles the solution, and measurement proves the outcome, the full consultative cycle that distinguishes a strategic partner from a vendor (Verbeke et al., 2011). The competitor who internalizes this cycle can walk into any corporate pitch and build a defensible, goal-aligned solution on the spot.

From Insight to Execution: Building and Testing the Plan

A strategic insight is worthless until it is built into an executable plan. The discipline of strategic planning, therefore, moves through stages: research the audience, interpret the data, design the solution, and critically specify how it will be executed and measured. Segmentation provides the

foundation by dividing a broad audience into actionable groups, and psychographic segmentation in particular sharpens targeting by grouping fans on values and lifestyles rather than demographics alone (Spence et al., 1997). Analytics and brand-equity evidence then convert that segmentation into a defensible case, turning 'we think you'll reach your customers' into 'here is the data showing you will' (Merkle et al., 2020).

Execution is where many otherwise-sound plans fail, which is why the strongest proposals build implementation and measurement in from the start. Frameworks that assess effectiveness from customer, partner, and social perspectives give planners a structured way to define success and prove it after the fact (Yu & Tan, 2017), and experiential activation elements give a plan tangible execution that fans actually encounter rather than abstractions that never materialize (Fransen et al., 2013). Customer-relationship-management systems supply the operational backbone, maintaining the data that lets a plan be monitored and adjusted in flight (Kamakura et al., 2005). A plan with a measurement framework is a plan that can be defended in the renewal conversation a year later.

Testing and adaptation complete the cycle. The best strategic sellers treat a plan as a hypothesis to be checked against feedback, adjusting emphasis based on which goal the buyer prioritizes and which assets actually perform (Franke & Park, 2006). This consultative, iterative posture is exactly what the contemporary performance literature describes when it casts the high-performing seller as a knowledge broker who continually refines the match between offering and need (Verbeke et al., 2011). For the competitor, the implication is to arrive with not just a clever package but a clear account of how each asset will be executed and judged, the very rigor that the multi-asset healthcare scenario in this chapter is designed to develop.

CHAMPIONSHIP CONNECTION — DATA-BACKED SOLUTIONS WIN THE CORPORATE BRACKET

The Corporate Partnerships bracket rewards strategic, data-driven thinking. Judges look for proposals that use audience segmentation and analytics to justify a multi-asset package, because data-backed alignment is the most persuasive corporate argument (Spence et al., 1997; Merkle et al., 2020).

Adaptiveness is the differentiator under pressure: defend the data, then adjust your emphasis based on whether the buyer prioritizes visibility or community impact (Franke & Park, 2006). A package that maps every asset to a stated goal reads as a solution, not a sales pitch (Fransen et al., 2013).

- Cross-reference: the activation-rescue logic of Scenario 12 and the at-risk renewal of Scenario 9 both build on the measurement framework introduced here.

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 11: MULTI-ASSET PACKAGE FOR A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Division: Corporate Partnerships **Reinforces:** Chapters 9 and 11

The Situation

A regional healthcare system wants to reach families and promote community wellness. Your task is to build and pitch a multi-asset partnership (signage, a 'healthy game day' activation, digital content, and a youth-clinic series) backed by audience data showing alignment with the team's family demographic.

Your Objectives

- Use audience data to justify a multi-asset package.

- Align partnership assets to the sponsor's community-wellness goal.
- Demonstrate strategic, data-driven planning.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Create a data-backed package proposal: the team's family-segment audience profile and how each asset serves the healthcare brand's goals. Reference how segmentation sharpens targeting (Spence et al., 1997) and how analytics inform strategy (Merkle et al., 2020).

VERBAL — Role-play a 7-minute pitch presenting the package and defending the data behind the audience fit. Adjust emphasis based on which goal is visibility or community impact the buyer prioritizes (Franke & Park, 2006).

EMAIL — Draft an email delivering the proposal summary with the four assets as a short list and a CTA to schedule a working session. Under 160 words.

VIDEO — Record a 90-second video narrating the 'healthy game day' fan experience the partnership would create. Apply Man vs Machine communication standards.

Coaching Note. *Data-backed audience alignment is the most persuasive corporate argument. Segmentation evidence turns a generic pitch into a tailored, defensible package (Spence et al., 1997).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Strategic selling is built by practicing the research-to-solution cycle until it is second nature.

These reps develop the consultative instinct.

- **Profile the segment.** Build a one-page psychographic profile of a target fan segment and state, in one sentence, why a specific sponsor's customers live inside it (Spence et al., 1997).
- **Map asset to goal.** Take a four-asset package and write the single partner goal each asset serves. If an asset maps to no goal, cut it (Fransen et al., 2013).
- **Adapt the emphasis.** Pitch the same package twice, once to a visibility-focused buyer, once to a community-impact buyer, changing only emphasis, not content (Franke & Park, 2006).

Score on the Discovery, Value Communication, and Adaptiveness rows. The measurement framework you build here is exactly what Chapter 10 uses to drive renewals.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does strategic, data-driven planning distinguish consultative selling from transactional selling (Verbeke et al., 2011)?
2. What is psychographic segmentation, and why does it sharpen targeting in sport sponsorship (Spence et al., 1997)?
3. How does analytics and brand-equity evidence make a corporate proposal defensible (Merkle et al., 2020)?
4. Why is a multi-asset solution often more valuable than a single asset, and how do you align assets to goals (Fransen et al., 2013)?

5. Why must a strategic plan include a measurement framework from the outset (Yu & Tan, 2017)?
6. Reflect on Scenario 11: which single data point would most convince the healthcare buyer of audience fit, and why?

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Chapter 10 — Customer Service and Retention

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Explain why retention is more economical and strategic than constant new acquisition.
- Describe how satisfaction, team identification, and loyalty interconnect to drive repeat business.
- Apply customer relationship management to anticipate needs and prevent churn.
- Use activation and shared measurement to convert an at-risk account into a renewal.
- Identify the relationship-marketing practices that deepen long-term loyalty.
- Compete by retaining and re-activating an at-risk sponsor with an evidence-backed renewal plan.

Introduction

Acquiring a new customer is expensive; keeping an existing one is the foundation of a sustainable sport business. Retention rests on the same service quality that drives first-time satisfaction, but it extends that service across the full arc of the relationship. Service quality predicts both satisfaction and the intention to return (Cant & Wiid, 2012), and satisfaction in turn feeds the team identification and revisit intention that make a fan loyal (Lee & Kang, 2015). Retention, in other words, is service quality compounded over time.

This chapter examines retention as a discipline with its own tools and evidence. Customer relationship management systems make proactive, anticipatory service possible (Kamakura et al., 2005; Simanjuntak et al., 2020), relationship-marketing practices deepen loyalty (Theysohn

et al., 2009), and on the corporate side, activation and shared measurement convert passive, at-risk sponsorships into renewing partnerships (Fransen et al., 2013). The chapter culminates in an at-risk sponsor renewal, the corporate bracket's defining test of retention skill.

Why Retention Outperforms Acquisition

The economics of retention are decisive. A retained season-ticket holder or renewing sponsor generates revenue year after year at a fraction of the cost of finding a replacement, and the loyalty that drives retention also produces referrals that lower future acquisition costs. In sport specifically, team identification is a powerful retention force: identification with a team predicts consumption and loyalty, sometimes more strongly than satisfaction with on-field performance, which means a connected fan stays even through losing seasons (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012). The strategic seller therefore invests in identifying and satisfying customers who stay, rather than perpetually chasing new ones.

Retention is also a relationship strategy, not merely a transaction-renewal task. Event satisfaction builds team identification, which in turn drives the intention to revisit (Lee & Kang, 2015), so each well-served interaction strengthens the bond that secures the next renewal. The discipline is to treat every current customer as the most valuable prospect for the next sale, the upgrade, the additional plan, the expanded partnership, because a satisfied, identified customer is both the easiest to sell and the cheapest to keep (Cant & Wiid, 2012).

CRM and the Practice of Anticipatory Service

Customer relationship management turns retention from reactive to anticipatory. CRM systems maintain detailed customer databases that enable targeted, personalized engagement and cultivate loyalty (Kamakura et al., 2005), and applied research in relationship-driven industries demonstrates that a CRM approach measurably enhances customer retention (Simanjuntak et al., 2020). For the sport seller, CRM data signals which season-ticket holder has stopped

attending, which sponsor has gone quiet, and which fan is ready to upgrade, early-warning intelligence that allows intervention before a relationship lapses.

Anticipatory service is the practical expression of that intelligence. Reaching out before a problem becomes a complaint, offering a relevant benefit before a fan thinks to ask, and checking in with a sponsor between activations all signal that the organization values the relationship beyond the transaction. Because salespeople are an important determinant of customer satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2022), the seller who uses CRM data to personalize and pre-empt becomes the human face of a retention strategy. The tool reveals the risk; the customer-oriented seller acts on it.

Relationship Marketing and Deepening Loyalty

Loyalty deepens when an organization invests in the relationship itself. Relationship marketing research on supporters' clubs and fan structures shows that organizations frequently underuse the loyalty already present among their most committed fans, leaving value untapped (Theysohn et al., 2009). Online relationship-marketing tools make sustained, personalized engagement scalable (Steinhoff et al., 2018), and integrating relationship marketing with the hierarchy of effects helps explain how repeated positive interactions build durable team loyalty (Tsiotsou, 2013). Retention is thus an active program of relationship investment, not a passive hope that satisfied customers will return.

On the corporate side, the equivalent of relationship investment is partnership performance. A passive signage sponsor who 'can't tell if it's working' is an at-risk account precisely because the relationship has gone dormant. Reactivating it requires converting passive exposure into brand experience. Activations and experiential elements amplify sponsorship impact well beyond static signage (Fransen et al., 2013), and pairing those activations with a shared measurement plan that proves and projects value. Retention here means co-creating a more engaged, more measurable partnership rather than simply asking the partner to re-sign the same deal.

Turning an At-Risk Account into a Renewal

Retaining an at-risk account follows a clear sequence: acknowledge the concern, demonstrate past value, and propose an improved, measurable future. When a sponsor doubts ROI, the worst response is defensiveness; the strongest is to reframe the measurement gap as a co-created success plan. Frameworks that evaluate sponsorship effectiveness from customer, partner, and social perspectives give the seller a structured way to demonstrate and project value (Yu & Tan, 2017), while introducing an activation moves the partnership from passive to performing (Fransen et al., 2013). The renewal conversation becomes an upgrade conversation.

This sequence rewards customer orientation over pressure. A renewal won through guilt or hard selling does not survive the next cycle, whereas one built on demonstrated value and a credible measurement plan renews again and again (Nguyen et al., 2022). The retention specialist, therefore, listens to the doubt, validates it, and answers it with evidence and a better plan, the same consultative posture that wins new business, now applied to keeping and growing existing business. Mastering this turns a vulnerable account into a longer, larger, and more loyal partnership.

Measuring Retention: Loyalty Metrics and the Renewal Cycle

Retention can only be managed if it is measured, and the metrics that matter go beyond a single renewal rate. Sophisticated operations track satisfaction, team identification, and behavioral intention because these are the leading indicators of whether a fan will return. Satisfaction with the event experience feeds team identification, which in turn drives the intention to revisit, so monitoring these constructs gives an organization early warning long before a fan actually lapses (Lee & Kang, 2015). Identification is an especially durable metric, since strongly identified fans remain loyal even when on-field results disappoint, making it a more stable predictor of retention than win-loss record alone (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012).

Customer-relationship-management systems turn these metrics into an operational early-warning system. By maintaining detailed fan records, CRM lets an organization spot the declining-attendance pattern, the unanswered renewal notice, or the quiet sponsor before the relationship is lost, and applied research confirms that a CRM-driven approach measurably improves retention (Kamakura et al., 2005; Simanjuntak et al., 2020). Online relationship-marketing tools then make the intervention personal and scalable, sustaining tailored engagement across thousands of relationships at once (Steinhoff et al., 2018). The metric identifies the risk; the anticipatory, customer-oriented outreach acts on it before churn becomes inevitable (Nguyen et al., 2022).

The renewal cycle is where measurement pays off, especially on the corporate side. A sponsor who 'can't tell if it's working' is voicing a measurement gap, and the retention specialist's answer is a shared, evidence-backed success plan that demonstrates past value and projects future return (Yu & Tan, 2017). Pairing that measurement plan with an activation converts a passive, hard-to-measure deal into a performing, demonstrable one (Fransen et al., 2013), while on the fan side, recognizing and rewarding the loyalty already present in committed supporters captures value organizations routinely leave untapped (Theysohn et al., 2009). Mastering the metrics of loyalty is what lets a competitor walk into the at-risk-sponsor renewal in this chapter with evidence in hand rather than hope.

CHAMPIONSHIP CONNECTION — RENEWALS ARE THE CORPORATE BRACKET'S ENDURANCE TEST

At-risk sponsor renewals test whether a competitor can retain and grow an account, not just open one. Judges reward sellers who reframe an ROI doubt as a co-created measurement plan and who introduce activation to make a passive sponsorship perform (Yu & Tan, 2017; Fransen et al., 2013).

The retention mindset: anticipate, demonstrate value, propose a better future, maps directly onto the win-back of Scenario 1 and the flex-plan relationship of Scenario 6. Customer orientation, not pressure, is what makes a renewal renew again (Nguyen et al., 2022).

- Cross-reference: the booster-renewal warmth of Scenario 7 uses the same identification-and-loyalty logic (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012).

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 9: RENEWING AN AT-RISK SPONSOR

Division: Corporate Partnerships **Reinforces:** Chapters 10 and 11

The Situation

A three-year in-venue signage sponsor (a local auto dealer group) is hesitant to renew, saying they 'can't tell if it's working.' Your task is to retain the account by demonstrating value and proposing a measurement-backed, activated renewal that proves ROI.

Your Objectives

- Reframe a measurement gap as a co-created success plan.
- Introduce activation to make a passive sponsorship perform.
- Use evidence to demonstrate and project value.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Build a renewal value report outlining what the sponsor received and a proposed measurement framework for next year. Reference frameworks that assess sponsorship effectiveness from customer, partner, and social perspectives (Yu & Tan, 2017).

VERBAL — Role-play a 6–7 minute renewal meeting. Acknowledge the ROI concern, present the measurement plan, and upsell an activation (a dealership-branded fan zone) to move beyond passive signage (Fransen et al., 2013).

EMAIL — Draft a renewal email summarizing past value and proposing the measurement-backed package, with a CTA to review the plan together. Under 160 words.

VIDEO — Record a 90-second video recapping the partnership's wins and previewing the activation concept. Deliver confidently; assessed on clarity and professionalism.

Coaching Note. *Passive sponsorships feel unmeasurable; activation and a shared measurement plan convert doubt into renewal. Brand experiences amplify sponsorship impact beyond signage (Fransen et al., 2013).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Retention is a skill you rehearse on existing relationships. These drills build the anticipatory, evidence-driven habits that keep accounts.

- **Spot the churn signal.** Given a CRM profile (declining attendance, no recent contact), name the single proactive outreach you would make this week. CRM-driven anticipation measurably improves retention (Simanjuntak et al., 2020).
- **Reframe the doubt.** Practice turning 'I can't tell if it's working' into a co-created measurement plan in two sentences, without defensiveness (Yu & Tan, 2017).
- **Activate the passive.** Take a static signage deal and propose one experiential activation that would make it perform and become measurable (Fransen et al., 2013).

Score on the Discovery, Objection Handling, and Closing rows. The loyalty logic here connects straight to the sponsorship acquisition work in Chapter 11.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is retention generally more economical and strategic than constant new acquisition?
2. How do satisfaction, team identification, and revisit intention interconnect to drive loyalty (Lee & Kang, 2015; Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012)?
3. How does customer relationship management enable anticipatory service and reduce churn (Kamakura et al., 2005; Simanjuntak et al., 2020)?
4. Why does activation convert a passive, at-risk sponsorship into a renewable one (Fransen et al., 2013)?
5. What relationship-marketing practices most deepen long-term fan loyalty (Theysohn et al., 2009; Tsiotsou, 2013)?

6. Reflect on Scenario 9: what is the single most persuasive piece of past-value evidence you would lead the renewal with?

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Chapter 11 — Sponsorship Sales in Sport

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Explain how sponsorship creates mutually beneficial value for brands and sports organizations.
- Describe how brand fit and authentic alignment drive sponsorship effectiveness and renewal.
- Conduct targeted prospect research and lead outreach with the buyer's goals, not your inventory.
- Use brand experience and activation to amplify sponsorship impact beyond exposure.
- Apply relationship-marketing and social-media tools to corporate prospecting and engagement.
- Compete by researching a cold corporate prospect and securing a discovery meeting toward an entry partnership.

Introduction

Sponsorship sales connect brands with sports properties in relationships designed to benefit both parties, the brand gains exposure, association, and engagement, while the organization gains revenue and enhanced fan experiences. Sponsorship can build a partner's brand equity, though its effect depends on the sponsor's existing brand knowledge, meaning the seller must understand where a prospect starts to project where a partnership can take them (Donlan, 2013). Sponsorship

is therefore a consultative, strategic sale, distinct from the more transactional rhythm of ticket sales.

This chapter frames sponsorship as a fit-and-value discipline rather than an inventory-clearance exercise. Corporate buyers respond to alignment, not asset lists, so the seller's central task is to research the prospect, lead with their business goals, and propose an authentic partnership that fits (Donlan, 2013; Fransen et al., 2013). The chapter culminates in cold outreach to a regional bank, the corporate bracket's classic test of research-driven prospecting and goals-first selling.

How Sponsorship Creates Mutual Value

At its best, sponsorship is a value exchange in which each party advances its own objectives through the other. The brand reaches a desirable, engaged audience in a trusted emotional context; the property monetizes its assets and enriches the fan experience. Sponsorship's capacity to build brand equity is well documented, but that capacity is conditional, it depends on the sponsor's level of brand knowledge and on how well the association fits (Donlan, 2013). Research on the effectiveness of sport sponsorship consistently finds that the value created hinges on relevance and integration rather than mere visibility (Yu & Tan, 2017; Kot & Kucharski, 2013).

The seller's role is to explicitly architect that mutual value. This means understanding both what the brand wants: awareness, image transfer, community goodwill, lead generation, and what the property can authentically deliver, then designing the overlap. Because effectiveness depends on fit, a smaller, well-aligned partnership often outperforms a larger, generic one, and demonstrating this alignment is what separates a consultative sponsorship seller from an order-taker (Donlan, 2013). Clearly articulated mutual value is the foundation of every durable sponsorship.

Brand Fit, Authenticity, and Effectiveness

Fit is the single most important variable in sponsorship success. When a sponsor's values and target demographics align with the property's audience, the partnership performs and renews; when they do not, even heavy spending underdelivers (Donlan, 2013). Brand experience deepens this effect: sponsorships that create a genuine, experiential connection with fans generate far more impact than passive logo placement (Fransen et al., 2013). Effectiveness research across contexts reinforces that authentic, well-integrated sponsorships produce stronger awareness and image outcomes (Yu & Tan, 2017; Kot & Kucharski, 2013).

Authenticity is what makes a fit believable to fans. A financial-literacy night sponsored by a bank, a wellness activation backed by a healthcare system, and a youth-clinic series funded by a family brand read as natural because the brand's purpose and the activation's content align. The consultative seller proposes partnerships whose authenticity fans can feel, because perceived authenticity is what converts exposure into goodwill and goodwill into the brand outcomes the sponsor is paying for (Fransen et al., 2013). Selling fit and authenticity, rather than impressions, is the modern sponsorship craft.

Prospecting: Research First, Inventory Last

Cold sponsorship outreach succeeds or fails on research. Identifying prospects whose values and demographics align with the property is the precondition for an effective partnership (Donlan, 2013), so the disciplined seller invests in understanding a prospect's expansion goals, target customers, and brand priorities before the first contact. This research-first posture also reflects the broader performance evidence: the high-performing seller operates as a knowledge broker whose preparation and customer understanding drive results (Verbeke et al., 2011). Outreach that leads with the prospect's goals, rather than the property's inventory, signals exactly this competence.

Modern prospecting is increasingly digital and relationship-driven. Social media gives sellers conceptual and practical tools to meet relationship-marketing goals and to engage corporate prospects authentically (Williams & Chinn, 2010), and top performers integrate social channels into outbound prospecting to identify and warm leads before formal outreach (Warren, 2016). The cold email or call, then, is rarely truly cold: it is the visible tip of research and digital engagement that lets the seller reference the prospect's specific situation and propose a fitting first step (Donlan, 2013).

From First Meeting to Entry Partnership

The goal of cold outreach is not to close a sponsorship in one message but to earn a discovery meeting and shape an entry-level partnership. The discovery conversation should lead with business-goal questions, what the prospect wants from the market, before floating any concept, so that the eventual proposal is built on the prospect's stated objectives rather than the seller's assumptions (Donlan, 2013; Franke & Park, 2006). An authentic entry partnership, such as in-venue signage paired with a community activation, gives a first-time sponsor a low-risk, well-fitting way to begin a relationship that can grow.

Entry partnerships are strategic precisely because sponsorship value compounds over time. A well-served first-year sponsor, shown clear value and offered activation, becomes a renewing and expanding partner, which is why this chapter connects directly to the retention work of Chapter 10 and the negotiation work of Chapter 12 (Fransen et al., 2013). The competitor who can research a prospect, lead with their goals, and propose an authentic entry partnership holds the core skill of the entire Corporate Partnerships bracket: turning a cold name into a warm, growing relationship.

Valuation and Packaging: Pricing Sponsorship Assets

Selling sponsorship requires answering a question that intimidates many newcomers: what is this asset actually worth? Sponsorship valuation is not arbitrary; it stems from the brand value the asset can build for the partner. Sponsorship can build a partner's brand equity, though the effect depends on the sponsor's existing brand knowledge and the fit between the brand and the property (Donlan, 2013). A sound valuation, therefore, rests on evidence, audience reach, demographic alignment, awareness, and image-transfer potential rather than on a rate card pulled from the air. Effectiveness research consistently finds that the value created tracks relevance and integration, not raw exposure (Yu & Tan, 2017; Kot & Kucharski, 2013).

Packaging is the art of assembling assets into a whole worth more than the sum of its parts. Rather than selling a lone signage placement, the skilled seller bundles signage, activation, digital content, and community elements so each maps to a distinct partner goal, with experiential activation amplifying impact well beyond passive logo placement (Fransen et al., 2013). Good packaging also creates negotiating flexibility: a multi-asset package gives the seller room to adjust scope and term in response to pushback without simply cutting price. The consultative seller designs the package around the prospect's researched goals, leading with fit rather than inventory (Verbeke et al., 2011).

Communicating and defending value is the final competency. Modern prospecting increasingly begins with social and relationship marketing channels that enable a seller to engage with and research a prospect before formal outreach (Williams & Chinn, 2010; Warren, 2016), so the eventual valuation conversation is grounded in genuine knowledge of the partner's situation. When the seller can articulate why an asset is worth its price in the partner's own terms of awareness, audience, and activation, and adjust the package rather than the price under pressure, they protect value while advancing the deal (Franke & Park, 2006). This valuation-and-

packaging discipline underpins the cold-outreach scenario in this chapter and the naming-rights negotiation that follows.

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 8: COLD OUTREACH TO A REGIONAL BANK

Division: Corporate Partnerships **Reinforces:** Chapters 11 and 4

The Situation

A regional bank is expanding into your market and wants brand visibility with families and local businesses. They have never sponsored a sports property. Your task is to research the prospect, secure a discovery meeting, and begin shaping an entry-level partnership (in-venue signage plus a community financial-literacy night).

Your Objectives

- Conduct targeted prospect research before first contact.
- Lead outreach with the prospect's business goals, not your inventory.
- Propose an authentic, well-fitting entry partnership.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Prepare a one-page prospect research brief: the bank's expansion goals, target demographics, and three partnership angles that fit. Note that identifying sponsors whose values and demographics align improves partnership success (Donlan, 2013).

VERBAL — Role-play a 6-minute discovery meeting (Presentation Pro, corporate division). Ask business-goal questions first, then float the financial-literacy-night concept as an authentic brand fit (Fransen et al., 2013).

EMAIL — Write a cold outreach email requesting a 20-minute discovery call. Reference the bank's market expansion specifically, offer a relevant insight, and propose two meeting times. Under 150 words, one CTA.

VIDEO — Record a 60-second personalized video pitch introducing yourself and one tailored partnership idea for the bank. Apply Speed Sell standards: a research-informed hook, creative fit, and a clear CTA.

Coaching Note. *Corporate buyers respond to fit, not inventory lists. Brand-fit and authentic alignment drive sponsorship effectiveness and renewal (Donlan, 2013).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Sponsorship selling is research and fit, rehearsed. These drills build the goals-first prospecting instinct the corporate bracket demands.

- **Research before you reach.** Build a one-page brief on a real local business and name three authentic partnership angles before writing a word of outreach. Fit is the top driver of sponsorship success (Donlan, 2013).
- **Lead with their goals.** Write a cold email opening that references the prospect's specific business goal in the first sentence — never your inventory (Verbeke et al., 2011).
- **Propose authentic activation.** For one prospect, design a single activation whose content authentically matches the brand's purpose (Fransen et al., 2013).

Score on the Discovery and Value Communication rows. The fit-and-value skills here set up the high-stakes negotiation of Chapter 12.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does sponsorship create mutually beneficial value for both brands and sports organizations (Donlan, 2013)?
2. Why are brand fit and authenticity stronger predictors of sponsorship success than spending or visibility (Donlan, 2013; Fransen et al., 2013)?
3. Why should cold outreach lead with the prospect's business goals rather than the property's inventory (Verbeke et al., 2011)?
4. How do brand experience and activation amplify sponsorship impact beyond exposure (Fransen et al., 2013)?
5. How do social media and relationship-marketing tools strengthen corporate prospecting (Williams & Chinn, 2010; Warren, 2016)?
6. Reflect on Scenario 8: what single researched insight about the bank would most effectively open your outreach?

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Chapter 12 — Overcoming Objections in Sport Sales

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter and completing its practice, you will be able to:

- Reframe objections as information and as opportunities to build trust rather than as obstacles.
- Apply a structured listen-acknowledge-respond-advance method to handle objections.
- Distinguish ethical, transparent objection handling from high-pressure tactics.
- Explain how first-offer framing and structured alternatives shape a negotiation.
- Protect value by responding to price pressure with options rather than premature discounts.
- Compete by advancing and negotiating a high-stakes naming-rights deal without conceding value.

Introduction

Objections are not the end of a sale; they are the moment when selling truly begins. An objection signals engagement, as the buyer weighs the decision and reveals what stands between them and yes. Handling objections is one of the presentation competencies most reliably linked to sales performance (Johlke, 2006), and the skill is fundamentally communicative: it depends on listening to understand the real concern before responding (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). The competitor who welcomes objections as information, rather than fearing them as rejection, holds a decisive psychological and practical advantage.

This chapter treats objection handling and negotiation as a unified, trust-preserving discipline. Effective handling means acknowledging the concern, addressing it transparently, and moving toward a solution without resorting to high-pressure tactics that erode trust (Anand et al., 2022). In high-stakes negotiation, the same principles apply: justify value with evidence and protect it with structured alternatives rather than making premature concessions (Maaravi et al., 2011). The chapter culminates in a naming-rights negotiation with a sophisticated buyer, the corporate bracket's ultimate test of value protection under pressure.

Objections as Information and Opportunity

The reframe at the heart of this chapter is simple but powerful: an objection is a request for more information or reassurance, not a refusal. A fan who says a ticket is too expensive may be questioning value, comparing alternatives, or seeking permission to spend; a sponsor who hesitates may need clearer evidence of return. Because listening is the antecedent that uncovers the genuine concern, the first move in handling any objection is to listen actively and empathetically rather than to rebut (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). Only a correctly diagnosed objection can be effectively answered.

Treated as opportunity, an objection becomes a trust-building moment. Transparent, honest responses to concerns strengthen the customer's confidence in the seller, and pricing fairness objections in particular convert into trust when met with open explanation rather than defensiveness (Greer & Zoroya, 2025). The customer-oriented seller, who prioritizes the buyer's genuine interest, handles objections in a way that deepens the relationship even when the immediate answer is a qualified one (Nguyen et al., 2022). Objections, handled well, leave the buyer more confident than before they raised them.

A Structured Method for Handling Objections

Skilled objection handling follows a repeatable structure: listen fully, acknowledge the concern as legitimate, respond with relevant evidence or an alternative, and advance toward the next step. Listening ensures the response addresses the real issue (Drollinger & Comer, 2013); acknowledgment validates the buyer and lowers defensiveness; an evidence-based or alternative-based response answers the concern substantively; and a clear advance keeps the conversation moving toward resolution. This sequence is itself a trainable presentation competency, and like all such competencies it improves with experience and quality practice (Johlke, 2006).

Adaptiveness governs how the structure is applied. The same objection, 'it costs too much,' calls for different responses depending on whether the buyer questions value, budget, or timing, and the adaptive seller reads which it is and responds accordingly (Franke & Park, 2006). Crucially, ethical handling rules out manipulation: high-pressure closing tactics may win a transaction but damage trust and invite the regret that drives churn and bad word-of-mouth (Anand et al., 2022). The structured method works because it is honest, it answers the buyer's real concern rather than steamrolling it.

Negotiation: Framing, Value, and Structured Alternatives

High-stakes negotiation is objection handling at scale, and its central discipline is protecting value. Sophisticated buyers negotiate hard on price and term, and the seller's instinct to concede quickly is precisely what destroys value, because premature discounting signals that the original price was inflated. Research on negotiation as persuasion shows that the framing of a first offer shapes the counteroffer and the eventual settlement, so a well-anchored, well-justified opening position is a strategic asset rather than a mere starting number (Maaravi et al., 2011). The seller who frames value confidently sets the terms of the entire negotiation.

When pushback comes, the skilled negotiator offers structured alternatives rather than price cuts. Adjusting term length, activation scope, or payment structure preserves the headline value while giving the buyer meaningful flexibility. This menu-of-options approach is the practical alternative to caving on price (Maaravi et al., 2011; Franke & Park, 2006). Justifying the asset's valuation with brand-building evidence that shows the awareness and image transfer a premium asset delivers gives the seller the substantive ground to hold value (Donlan, 2013). Structured options, anchored in evidence, move a deal forward without eroding what makes it worth doing.

Protecting Value Without Damaging the Relationship

The art of advanced negotiation is to protect value while strengthening, not straining, the relationship. This is where ethics and effectiveness converge most sharply: a deal extracted through pressure or deception sours the partnership and forfeits the renewals and referrals that make corporate relationships profitable over time (Anand et al., 2022). The customer-oriented negotiator treats the counterpart as a long-term partner, seeking a structure both sides can defend internally because a sponsor who feels respected in the negotiation becomes the renewing, expanding partner that Chapter 10 describes (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Persuasion in service of a fair, well-structured agreement is the through-line that connects this final chapter to the whole book. Honest, evidence-based communication moves the buyer through the decision-making process while preserving trust (Jacob et al., 2024), structured alternatives protect value without resorting to discounting (Maaravi et al., 2011), and customer orientation keeps the relationship intact even during the hardest negotiation (Nguyen et al., 2022). The competitor who masters this convergence holding value through evidence and structure while keeping the buyer's trust is ready not only to win the naming-rights negotiation but to win the championship.

Anticipating Objections: Preparation as the Best Defense

The most skilled objection handlers rarely look like they are handling objections at all, because they have anticipated and pre-empted most concerns before they arise. Preparation is the quiet foundation beneath every graceful response. Since handling objections is one of the presentation competencies most reliably tied to performance, and since such competencies are built through experience and quality training rather than improvisation (Johlke, 2006), the disciplined seller studies the predictable objections for each scenario and rehearses responses until they are automatic. Anticipation converts a stressful surprise into a familiar, well-practiced moment.

Anticipation begins with deep discovery, because most objections are simply needs or doubts that surfaced late. Active, empathetic listening early in a conversation often reveals the concern budget, timing, fairness, measurability before it hardens into a stated objection, allowing the seller to address it preemptively within the recommendation itself (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). When a fan's fairness concern about pricing is met with transparent explanation before they have to complain, the objection dissolves into trust (Greer & Zoroya, 2025); when a sponsor's ROI doubt is answered with a measurement plan built into the proposal, the renewal objection never fully forms. Prepared sellers design their pitch around the objections they know are coming.

Preparation also governs the highest-stakes negotiations. Anticipating a sophisticated buyer's price and term pushback lets the seller arrive with a justified valuation and a menu of structured alternatives rather than being forced into reactive concessions, and because the framing of a first offer shapes the entire negotiation, that preparation begins before the first number is spoken (Maaravi et al., 2011). Throughout, the prepared seller holds to customer orientation and honest communication, knowing that pressure tactics win a transaction but lose the relationship (Anand et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022). The competitor who internalizes this, who walks into every role-play having already war-gamed the likely objections, transforms objection handling from anxious

defense into confident, prepared advance, which is exactly what the naming-rights negotiation in this chapter, and the championship itself, will reward.

WORK IT OUT • SCENARIO 10: NAMING-RIGHTS CONVERSATION WITH A TECH FIRM

Division: Corporate Partnerships **Reinforces:** Chapters 12 and 11

The Situation

A fast-growing technology company has expressed interest in a high-visibility asset — potentially a practice-facility or premium-club naming opportunity. They are sophisticated buyers who will negotiate hard on price and term length. Your task is to advance the deal, justify the valuation, and navigate the negotiation without conceding value prematurely.

Your Objectives

- Justify a premium asset's valuation with brand-building evidence.
- Navigate a sophisticated negotiation while protecting value.
- Structure term and activation to align both parties' goals.

Compete in Four Channels

WRITTEN — Prepare a valuation rationale memo for the naming asset, linking it to brand awareness and image transfer for an established brand. Reference that sponsorship can build higher-order brand equity for established brands (Donlan, 2013).

VERBAL — Role-play a 7-minute negotiation. Present the asset, justify value, and respond to aggressive price and term pushback with structured alternatives rather than immediate concessions, noting how framing a first offer shapes the counter (Maaravi et al., 2011).

EMAIL — Write a post-meeting email confirming interest, restating the value rationale, and proposing next steps with a term-sheet review date. Under 170 words.

VIDEO — Record a 75-second executive-style video summarizing the naming opportunity's strategic value. Deliver with gravitas and concision; assessed on professional, non-scripted delivery.

Coaching Note. *In negotiation, premature discounting signals weak value. Justify with brand-equity evidence and let structured options, not price cuts, move the deal (Maaravi et al., 2011).*

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

Objection handling and negotiation are the capstone skills. Drill them until holding value feels as natural as conceding once did.

- **Diagnose before you answer.** For the objection 'it costs too much,' practice asking one question that reveals whether it is a value, budget, or timing concern before responding (Drollinger & Comer, 2013).
- **Trade, don't cut.** When pushed on price, respond with a structured alternative (term, activation, payment) instead of a discount. Premature cuts signal weak value (Maaravi et al., 2011).
- **Justify with evidence.** Defend a premium asset's price using one concrete brand-equity benefit awareness or image transfer, rather than enthusiasm (Donlan, 2013).

Score on the Objection Handling and Closing rows. Master this, run the full mock-round loop in the Championship Toolkit, and you are ready to compete.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why should an objection be reframed as information and opportunity rather than as rejection (Drollinger & Comer, 2013)?
2. Walk through the listen-acknowledge-respond-advance method with a sport sales example (Johlke, 2006).
3. How does ethical objection handling differ from high-pressure tactics, and why does the difference matter long-term (Anand et al., 2022)?
4. How does the framing of a first offer shape a negotiation (Maaravi et al., 2011)?
5. Why are structured alternatives superior to price concessions when protecting value (Donlan, 2013)?
6. Reflect on Scenario 10: what is the single strongest brand-equity argument you would use to justify the naming-rights valuation?

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Part II — The Championship Toolkit

Part I built the knowledge and the woven practice. Part II is your competition-ready reference: a Competitor Field Guide, two mock case packets, fillable practice and score sheets, an instructor's guide, a scenario index, and the master reference list. Use it to drill, to run mock rounds, and to walk into the National Collegiate Sports Sales Championship prepared to win.

Competitor Field Guide

Your playbook for the National Collegiate Sports Sales Championship: discovery, objection handling, the Speed Sell, email and video, and game-week prep. *Every role-play, ticket, or corporate follows the same arc, and judges can see when a competitor skips a stage. Memorize the flow so your attention stays on the buyer.*

THE SALES CONVERSATION ARC

Stage	Goal	What Strong Competitors Do
1. Open	Build rapport, set the agenda	Warm greeting, confirm time, preview the conversation.
2. Discover	Uncover the real need	Ask open questions; listen more than you talk (Jacob et al., 2024).
3. Recommend	Match product to need	Present the option that fits, not the priciest (Franke & Park, 2006).
4. Handle Objections	Protect value & trust	Acknowledge, reframe, offer options, never pressure (Anand et al., 2022).
5. Close	Secure a next step	Ask for the commitment with a clear, specific call to action.
6. Confirm	Lock the follow-through	Restate the agreement and the next action and date.

COACH'S RULE OF THUMB

Spend the first third of any role-play in discovery. You cannot recommend well what you have not diagnosed. Customer orientation focusing on the buyer's real need rather than the fast sale is the single trait most consistently linked to sales performance (Franke & Park, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2022).

DISCOVERY QUESTION BANK

Discovery is where competitions are won. Open questions surface motives you can sell to; closed questions confirm details. Prepare five to seven you can deploy naturally. These are field-tested, grouped by division.

Ticket Sales — Individual / Family Buyer

- What made you look into tickets right now — what's the occasion or goal?
- Who would you most often bring with you to games?
- When you've been to a game before, what made it memorable — the social side, the competition, the atmosphere?
- How does your schedule usually look — are fixed dates easy, or is flexibility important?
- If we could design the perfect game-day experience for you, what would be in it?

Ticket Sales — Group Buyer

- What's the purpose of bringing your group together — reward, fundraiser, community, celebration?
- How many people are you hoping to bring, and what's the range you can work with?
- Is there a recognition moment that would make this special (scoreboard, on-field, PA announcement)?

Corporate Partnerships

- What are your top business goals this year — awareness, foot traffic, hiring, community reputation?
- Who is the audience you most want to reach, and where are you struggling to reach them today?
- Have you partnered with a sports property before? What worked and what didn't?
- How will your leadership judge whether this partnership succeeded — what does a win look like to them?
- Beyond a logo on a sign, how would you like fans to experience your brand?

WHY THIS WORKS

Aligning the offer to the prospect's stated goals and audience is what drives sponsorship effectiveness — fit matters more than inventory (Donlan, 2013). Buyers also respond to participatory brand experiences, so questions about how fans should experience the brand open the door to activation upsells (Fransen et al., 2013).

OBJECTION-HANDLING PLAYBOOK

Objections are buying signals, not stop signs. Use the same four-step move every time: Acknowledge, Ask, Reframe, Advance, and never apply pressure, which closes one sale and loses the relationship (Anand et al., 2022).

The A-A-R-A Move. Acknowledge the concern sincerely; ask a question to understand what's really behind it; reframe it around value, experience, or transparency; advance with a specific next step or alternative.

Objection	Reframe You Can Use
"It's too expensive."	Shift from price to per-game value and experience; offer a smaller plan as a bridge rather than discounting (Franke & Park, 2006).
"The pricing isn't fair — why does this game cost more?"	Explain demand-based pricing plainly and transparently; transparency builds trust and can still grow revenue (Greer & Zoroya, 2025; Şahin & Erol, 2017).
"We tried season tickets and couldn't use them."	Differentiate flexibility; position a flex plan and perks as switching value (Simanjuntak et al., 2020).
"I can't tell if our sponsorship is working."	Co-create a measurement plan and add an activation to make it perform (Yu & Tan, 2017; Fransen et al., 2013).
"The team is losing — why renew?"	Reconnect to mission and identity; revenue funds athletes, scholarships, and facilities (Merkle et al., 2020).
"Let me think about it."	Ask what specifically they'd like to weigh, then offer a low-friction next step with a date.

THE SPEED SELL FORMULA

The Speed Sell is a 60-second elevator pitch selling YOU as an entry-level hire for the host team, scored on content and on delivery. Build it on this five-beat structure and rehearse until it is smooth but never robotic.

Beat	Seconds	Say This
1. Identify	0–10	Name, major, graduation month (December, May, or August).
2. Research Hook	10–25	Show you know the team or company — a recent move, value, or initiative.
3. Fit	25–40	The new-hire traits you bring: coachable, competitive, customer-oriented.
4. Creative Link	40–52	Tie your experience to their need in a memorable, specific way.
5. Call to Action	52–60	Ask for the concrete next step (interview, booth visit, connection).

Delivery standards judges score: professional and natural (a flowing discussion, not a recited script); confident posture, neat professional dress, steady eye contact, minimal fidgeting; adequate volume, clear words, a tempo neither rushed nor slow; and eliminated filler words (“uh,” “um,” “like,” “you know,” “actually”).

FILLER-WORD DRILL

Record yourself delivering the pitch. Count every filler word. Re-record until you reach zero across three consecutive takes. Replace the urge to fill silence with a deliberate pause — pauses read as confidence.

EMAIL & VOICEMAIL TEMPLATES

Written outreach is judged on clarity, professionalism, and a single clear call to action. Keep emails under about 150 words and personalize every bracketed field — generic outreach is the fastest way to get ignored (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022).

TEMPLATE 1 — COLD OUTREACH (CORPORATE)

Subject: [Their goal] + [Team] — a quick idea

Hi [Name], Congratulations on [specific, recent company news]. As [Team] heads into [season/initiative], I had one idea for reaching [their target audience] that I think fits [Company] well. Could we grab 20 minutes this week? I'm open [day/time] or [day/time]. Either way, go [Team]! — [Your name] • [Title] • [Phone]

TEMPLATE 2 — WARM RE-ENGAGEMENT (TICKET WIN-BACK)

Subject: We saved a spot for you, [Name]

Hi [Name], It was great seeing you cheer us on for [# years]. I know [reason for lapse] made last season tricky — totally understand. With your schedule in mind, I'd love to show you our [flex plan] so you only commit to the games you can make. Want me to hold two seats for [specific game]? — [Your name]

TEMPLATE 3 — POST-PITCH FOLLOW-UP (SPEED SELL / INTERVIEW)

Subject: Thank you — [Your name], [School]

Hi [Name], Thank you for the conversation today. Your point about [something they said] stuck with me. I'd welcome the chance to interview for an inside-sales role and show how my [relevant experience] would contribute. Are you available for a short call [day/time]? — [Your name] • [Phone] • [LinkedIn]

Voicemail (20 seconds): “Hi [Name], this is [Your name] with [Team]. I'm calling because [one-line reason tied to them]. I'll follow up by email, but you can reach me at [number]. Looking forward to connecting — go [Team]!”

VIDEO & MAN VS MACHINE

Virtual rounds and video submissions assess communication using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) analysis, which weighs clarity, tone, and professionalism (Inks et al., 2020). The camera rewards the same fundamentals as live delivery, plus a few technical basics.

Setup checklist: camera at eye level, look at the lens; light in front of you, avoid backlighting; quiet room, test audio, silence notifications; neutral background, professional dress head-to-toe.

Language that scores well: positive, warm, customer-focused tone — say what you can do, not what you can't (Okolo & Mmamel, 2022); clear structure, one idea per sentence, signpost (“First... / The reason... / So my ask is...”); concrete and specific over vague; low filler, measured pace, confident close.

TWO-TAKE METHOD

Take 1: deliver it cold and watch it back with the rubric in hand. Take 2: fix the top two issues only. Submitting your second focused take beats fifteen anxious re-records — and trains you to perform under the one-shot pressure of Man vs Machine.

GAME-WEEK PREP PLAN

Use this countdown in the final week before the championship. The goal is calm, rehearsed readiness across all four channels.

When	Do This
7 days out	Read the official study-guide case(s) closely; build your product fact sheet and pricing options.
5 days out	Write your discovery question list and A-A-R-A objection responses; draft the three email templates.
4 days out	Draft and memorize your Speed Sell to the five-beat formula; record take 1.
3 days out	Run two full role-plays with a peer playing the buyer; get feedback on discovery and closing.
2 days out	Re-record Speed Sell to zero filler words; do a mock Man vs Machine response sprint.
1 day out	Light review only; prep professional dress; test video setup; sleep.
Game day	Arrive early, review your fact sheet once, breathe, and compete. Lead with discovery.

INTEGRITY REMINDER

Compete with verified facts and honest claims. Integrity is a competitive advantage: ethical selling builds the trust that wins repeat business and referrals, and accurate reporting protects you and the property (DeTienne et al., 2022; Castleberry, 2014).

Mock Case Packets

Two self-contained practice cases that mirror the study guides used in real competition. Read the whole packet, build your product knowledge, then run a role-play in which a peer or coach plays one of the personas. *All teams, people, prices, and statistics are fictional and created for practice only, they are not the official NCSSC cases, which Baylor's S3E Center releases to registered competitors each season.*

CASE 1 — TICKET SALES: RIVERBEND RAPIDS

Organization: Riverbend Rapids (fictional Class AA baseball). **Textbook links:** Ch. 1, 2, 4, 7, 10.

The Riverbend Rapids are a Class AA club in the mid-size market of Riverbend (metro population ~310,000), entering their eighth season in a 6,200-seat ballpark renovated two years ago with a new club level and family zone. Attendance averages 3,900 per game (63% of capacity). Leadership wants to grow season-equivalent tickets and group outings while improving renewal rates. You are an inside sales representative: run discovery, recommend the right product, handle objections, and secure the next step.

Product & Pricing Sheet — know these cold.

Product	Price	Key Features
Full Season (66 games)	\$880 / seat	Best per-game value (\$13.33); priority playoff access; reserved parking; 10% team-store discount.
Half Season (33 games)	\$495 / seat	Choose a fixed weekday or weekend half; \$15.00 per game; team-store discount.
Flex Plan (choose 12 games)	\$216 (12 credits)	Use credits any game; ideal for unpredictable schedules; \$18.00 per game.
Group Outing (20+)	From \$11 / ticket	Tiered pricing; optional picnic area, scoreboard message, first-pitch or on-field parade.
Club Level Seat (per game)	\$32 / game	In-seat service, padded seats, climate-controlled lounge access, complimentary popcorn.
Single-Game (general)	\$9–\$26 (dynamic)	Demand-based pricing by opponent, day, and timing.

Key facts & selling points: marquee games (July 3 Fireworks Night, Labor Day rivalry vs. the Capital City Crawfish) historically sell out; promotions include Bark in the Park, Kids Run the Bases (Sundays), and three bobblehead nights; the full-season renewal rate last year was 71% against an 80% league benchmark; the new family zone (berm + games) is popular with first-timers; reserved parking is the most-cited perk among full-season holders; dynamic pricing, introduced two seasons ago, has drawn some fairness concerns from longtime fans.

Buyer personas (the buyer reads the hidden motivation privately; the competitor sees only the profile):

Persona	Profile (visible)	Competitor Wins If...
A — Lapsed Full-Season Holder	Held full-season seats 5 years; didn't renew after a job change lengthened the commute; still follows online.	You discover the commute issue and offer flexibility plus parking, rather than re-quoting the full plan.
B — First-Time Family Buyer	Parents of two kids (8, 11) who attended one game on a Groupon and loved the family zone.	You surface the kid-experience motive and present the Flex Plan with Sunday Kids Run the Bases games.
C — Group Buyer (Youth League)	Director of a youth league with ~180 families wanting an end-of-season celebration.	You sell the recognition experience (on-field parade) and a mid-tier group package, not just the cheapest seats.
D — Dynamic-Pricing Skeptic	Loyal single-game buyer upset that the rivalry game costs more than a midweek game.	You explain demand-based pricing transparently, validate the concern, and offer value-game alternatives.

CASE 2 — CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS: SUMMIT CITY SURGE

Organization: Summit City Surge (fictional professional women's basketball). **Textbook links:** Ch. 3, 9, 11, 12.

The Summit City Surge play in Summit City (metro population ~1.4 million), entering their fourth season in a 9,000-seat downtown arena. The club draws a young, family-heavy, digitally engaged audience and has strong local TV and social media reach. Leadership wants to grow corporate partnership revenue and retain at-risk sponsors with measurable, activated deals. You are a partnership sales representative: research the fit, propose authentic assets, handle objections, and advance the deal.

Product & Pricing Sheet — know these cold.

Product	Price	Key Features
In-Venue Signage	From \$18,000/yr	Courtside LED rotations, concourse static signage; impression estimates available.
Presenting Partner (Theme Nights)	From \$35,000/yr	Title of a recurring theme night (e.g., Community Heroes Night) with PA, video board, social.
Brand Activation / Fan Zone	From \$45,000/yr	Branded interactive concourse experience with staff, giveaways, and data capture.
Digital & Social Package	From \$25,000/yr	Sponsored content, highlight-reel presenting, dedicated social posts to the team's audience.
Youth Clinic Series (Community)	From \$30,000/yr	Co-branded skills clinics; strong fit for community-minded brands; earned-media potential.
Premium Hospitality (Suite)	From \$60,000/yr	Season suite for client entertainment and employee rewards; catering included.

Key facts & selling points: the audience skews 60% female with a large family and youth segment and high social engagement per post; the club runs a measurement framework covering impressions, activation participation, and brand-lift surveys; Community Heroes Night and the Youth Clinic Series generate consistent positive local media. Pair this packet with the corporate buyer cards to rehearse cold outreach, multi-asset design, at-risk renewals, and naming-rights negotiation.

Practice & Score Sheets

Use the Prep Sheet to plan each scenario across all four channels before you practice; then have a peer or coach use the Judge Score Card to rate your performance from 1 (developing) to 5 (championship-ready). Track scores over repeated attempts to see progress. Aim to raise every criterion to a 4 or 5 before competition.

THE UNIVERSAL SCORING RUBRIC

Criterion	What Championship-Level Looks Like
Discovery & Listening	Asks open questions and uncovers the real need before pitching (Jacob et al., 2024).
Customer Orientation	Recommends what fits the buyer, not the priciest option (Franke & Park, 2006).
Value Communication	Frames benefits and experience, not just price (DeTienne et al., 2022).
Objection Handling	Reframes objections calmly without high-pressure tactics (Anand et al., 2022).
Transparency & Ethics	Honest, accurate claims that build trust (Greer & Zoroya, 2025).
Delivery	Confident, flowing, professional; minimal filler words (Speed Sell rubric).
Call to Action	Ends with a clear, specific next step (Speed Sell rubric).

SCENARIO PREP SHEET (REUSABLE)

Scenario # / Name: _____ **Division:** _____

My 3 discovery questions (*open-ended; uncover the real need*):

- 1. _____ 2.
- _____ 3.
- _____

My recommendation & value proposition (*what fits the buyer, framed by value not price*):

Likely objection & my A-A-R-A response (*acknowledge, ask, reframe, advance*):

My call to action (*one specific next step*):

Channel draft reminders: WRITTEN (account plan / proposal / memo); EMAIL (under ~150 words, one CTA); VERBAL & VIDEO delivery (pace, eye contact, zero filler, confident close).

JUDGE / PEER SCORE CARD

Mark one rating per row. 1 = developing, 5 = championship-ready.

Criterion	1	2	3	4	5
Discovery & Listening					
Customer Orientation					
Value Communication					
Objection Handling					
Transparency & Ethics					
Delivery					
Call to Action					

One strength: _____

One focus for next round:

SPEED SELL BUILDER

Draft each beat, then time the whole pitch to 60 seconds and rehearse to zero filler words.

1. **Identify (0–10s):** name, major, graduation month —

2. **Research Hook (10–25s):** what you know about the team/company —

3. **Fit (25–40s):** your new-hire traits —

4. **Creative Link (40–52s):** tie your experience to their need —

5. **Call to Action (52–60s):** the concrete next step you ask for —

Instructor's Guide

This program connects a set of materials that move a student from foundational knowledge to competition-ready performance. The guide below offers a complete materials map, a semester sequence, a mock-round loop, a feedback structure, and assessment approaches.

THE COMPLETE MATERIALS SET

Material	Purpose	Best Used For
This Read-and-Workbook	Core concepts, evidence, and woven practice	Reading + applied drills in one flow
Chapter Practice Blocks	Work It Out + Train Like a Champion	Homework, channel drills, discussion
Competitor Field Guide	Quick-reference playbook	Just-in-time prep, technique reference
Mock Case Packets (2)	Realistic, self-contained cases	Full mock role-play rounds
Practice & Score Sheets	Planning + 1–5 judging	Prep and scoring of every round

A SEMESTER SEQUENCE

This 12-week arc moves from knowledge to performance. Compress or expand to fit your calendar; the order matters more than the exact weeks.

Weeks	Focus	Anchored Chapters / Tools
1–2	Foundations: what sport sales is, revenue, relationships, ethics	Chapters 1–4
3–4	Effective practice, communication, ticketing	Chapters 5–7; Speed Sell + Man vs Machine drills
5–6	Service, retention, strategy, sponsorship, objections	Chapters 8–12
7	Knowledge check + competition format	Field Guide intro; scenario index
8	Speed Sell + video skills	Ch. 5–6 Work It Out; Speed Sell Builder
9	First mock rounds (ticket)	Mock Case 1; ticket buyer personas; Score Cards
10	First mock rounds (corporate)	Mock Case 2; corporate personas; Score Cards
11	Man vs Machine + objection sprints	Ch. 6 & 12 Work It Out; objection playbook
12	Full simulation + game-week prep	All materials; Field Guide game-week plan

RUNNING A MOCK ROUND

Run rounds in groups of three — a competitor, a buyer, and a judge — who rotate roles. The 20-minute loop: set up (2 min) as the competitor reviews the product sheet, the buyer takes a hidden persona, and the judge readies a Score Card; role-play (7 min) through open, discover, recommend, handle objections, and close; score (3 min) on all seven criteria with one strength and one focus; debrief (5 min) on what discovery surfaced, whether the recommendation fit, and how objections went; rotate (3 min) by swapping roles or personas and running again. Repetition against varied buyer types builds adaptive selling, which is consistently linked to performance, and immediate criterion-based feedback turns each rep into deliberate practice (Franke & Park, 2006).

COACHING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Feedback drives improvement only when it is specific, balanced, and tied to changeable behavior. Name a strength at a specific moment; pick one highest-leverage focus rather than a list; make it behavioral (“pause after asking, let them answer”); then have the student re-run the same 60 seconds with the fix while it's fresh.

If You See...	Coaching Cue
Pitching before discovering	“Ask two more questions before you recommend anything.”
Discounting at first objection	“Reframe the value first; offer a smaller option, not a lower price.” (Franke & Park, 2006)
Defensive on pricing questions	“Validate the concern, then explain transparently.” (Greer & Zoroya, 2025)
Filler words / rushed delivery	“Replace ‘um’ with a pause; slow your open by 10%.”
No clear next step	“End every round by asking for one specific commitment.”
Over-promising to win	“Keep claims accurate — integrity builds trust and repeat business.” (DeTienne et al., 2022)

ASSESSMENT & TRACKING

Use the Score Cards to track growth: keep each student's cards in a folder and chart per-criterion scores across rounds; grade the written and email channel drafts for clarity, value framing, and a clear call to action; use a knowledge check as a low-stakes gate before mock rounds; record video submissions and grade them against the Speed Sell delivery rubric; and set a class goal that every student reaches a 4+ on all seven criteria before the competition. If interest exceeds available slots, select competitors through head-to-head mock rounds judged on the Score Card — this mirrors the bracket, rewards demonstrated skill over confidence, and gives every student valuable reps. Throughout, reinforce that integrity is a competitive advantage: ethical, transparent selling builds the trust that wins repeat business and referrals, and accurate claims protect both the student and the property (DeTienne et al., 2022; Castleberry, 2014).

Scenario Index

All 15 competition scenarios, the bracket each belongs to, and the chapter where its full Work It Out is woven into the read-and-workbook.

#	Scenario	Division	Woven In
1	The Lapsed Season Ticket Holder	Ticket Sales	Chapter 2
2	The First-Time Single-Game Buyer	Ticket Sales	Chapter 1
3	The Group Sales Lead — Youth Sports	Ticket Sales	Cross-ref Ch. 6
4	Premium Seating Upsell	Ticket Sales	Chapter 8
5	Dynamic Pricing Objection	Ticket Sales	Chapter 7
6	Flex Plan for the Busy Family	Ticket Sales	Chapter 4
7	Collegiate Athletics Renewal — Booster	Ticket Sales	Cross-ref Ch. 10
8	Cold Outreach to a Regional Bank	Corporate	Chapter 11
9	Renewing an At-Risk Sponsor	Corporate	Chapter 10
10	Naming-Rights Conversation	Corporate	Chapter 12

#	Scenario	Division	Woven In
11	Multi-Asset Package for Healthcare	Corporate	Chapter 9
12	Activation Rescue	Corporate	Cross-ref Ch. 9
13	Ethical Pressure — Inflated Audience	Both (Ethics)	Chapter 3
14	The Speed Sell — Selling Yourself	Both (Career)	Chapter 5
15	Man vs Machine — Inbound Sprint	Both (Comms)	Chapter 6

Master Reference List

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