PLAYBOOK · 05 STEPS

The 5-Step Process *that shows which buyers close before you chase them.*

A go-to-market playbook for seed-stage B2B SaaS founders running a small, founder-led sales team who are spending pipeline on buyer types that *look right on paper* but stall, ghost, or die in committee.

AUDIENCE Seed-stage founder-led sales

FORMAT Founder + GTM playbook

USE WHEN Pre-Series A, < $1M ARR

TIME TO RUN ~90 minutes

VOL. 02 · ICP SERIES
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PLAY/02

INTRODUCTION PROLOGUE · THE PROBLEM

WHAT THIS PLAYBOOK SOLVES

At under $1M ARR, your deal sample is too small to reveal real ICP patterns on its own.

One or two enterprise outliers distort your entire read on what is working. Most founders respond by doubling down on the persona who signed the last deal, without knowing whether **that person was the exception or the rule,** or whether the person who blocked the other three deals was someone they never even spoke to.

CONTINUED · STEP 1 OF 5 — THE COMMITTEE

Map the *full committee.*

Your ICP is not the person who bought. It is the pattern across everyone who had a vote.

STEP · 01

Map every person who touched a deal, *before you write the ICP.*

For every closed-won and closed-lost deal in your CRM, identify every person who touched the decision. Not just the champion who took your call. Add the person who signed, the person who blocked, and anyone who went quiet after initial interest. Your ICP is the pattern across everyone who had a vote, not the person who finally said yes.

COMMON PITFALL

Founders build ICP around the champion who was easiest to reach, then route all outbound to that role. The real blocker, often a CFO or Head of IT, kills deals in rooms the rep was never in.

WHEN DONE RIGHT

Founders who map the full committee before writing the ICP routinely discover that **a large share of their lost deals trace back to a stakeholder the rep never spoke to.**

CONTINUED · STEP 2 OF 5 — THE PROFILE

Metrics, mandate, *graveyard.*

Profile each buyer type against the three factors that actually frame the decision.

STEP · 02

Document three things for each buyer type: *metrics, mandate, graveyard.*

For each buyer role you encounter, VP of Sales, CFO, Head of RevOps, and so on, document three things. What metric they are personally measured on. What organizational mandate they were hired to deliver. What vendor or initiative in this category failed them before. These three factors determine how a decision is framed internally, not the feature list you present.

COMMON PITFALL

Skipping the graveyard question is the most expensive research gap at the seed stage. A buyer who lost political capital on a failed implementation two years ago does not need a better pitch. They need a different conversation about risk.

WHEN DONE RIGHT

Sales teams that enter calls knowing a buyer's prior vendor failures see **fewer late-stage deal collapses,** because the risk conversation has already happened before the demo.

Score for *velocity.*

A buyer who signs a $40K deal in six weeks is worth more to a seed-stage team than one who signs $120K in eight months.

STEP · 03

Score each buyer type on decision velocity, *not just deal size.*

Build a simple scoring grid across your buyer profiles. How long did it take from first meeting to verbal yes. How many stakeholders had to agree. How many deals with this buyer type are still open past 90 days. A buyer who signs a $40K deal in six weeks is worth more to a seed-stage team burning $150K per month than a buyer who could sign $120K but takes eight months and two procurement reviews to get there.

COMMON PITFALL

Prioritizing the highest ACV buyer type before you have proof your cycle length and team size can support it burns runway faster than a string of smaller, faster deals that compound into the same ARR number.

WHEN DONE RIGHT

Seed-stage teams that prioritize buyer types by **decision velocity over deal size** shorten their average cycle and reduce the number of deals required to hit Series A milestones.

CONTINUED · STEP 4 OF 5 — PRESSURE TEST

Pressure-test *the profile.*

Before you commit a quarter to a new buyer type, see if the profile predicts last quarter's losses.

STEP · 04

Test the profile against your last three losses, *before you commit a quarter.*

Before you write an outbound sequence targeting a new buyer type, pull a structured decision-making profile for that role. What they own. Who else is in the room. What has burned them in your category. Run this against your last three lost deals with that persona type and check whether the blockers you hit were predictable from the profile. If they were, the pattern is real. If they were not, the profile needs adjusting before you invest a full quarter in the motion.

COMMON PITFALL

Running a 60-day outbound sequence on a new buyer type before stress-testing the profile means you are paying with time and pipeline to learn something you could have surfaced in a single research session.

WHEN DONE RIGHT

Founders who pressure-test buyer profiles against existing closed-lost data before launching a new outbound motion **identify the primary blocker before the first new call is booked.**

Pick two. *Cut the rest.*

Build a repeatable motion around two buyer types. Write down the ones you are not chasing this quarter.

STEP · 05

Pick two buyer types to build the motion around, *and write down the ones you cut.*

Once you have profiles and velocity scores for the buyer types you have touched, choose two to invest in building a repeatable motion: scripts, objection responses, and messaging calibrated to that role's internal justification language. Write down the buyer types you are not pursuing this quarter and why. This decision forces explicit tradeoffs instead of letting your team drift toward whichever buyer type responds first.

COMMON PITFALL

Trying to build a repeatable motion for three or four buyer types at 12 employees means no motion actually becomes repeatable. Reps improvise on every call because there is no version of the script that was built for this specific buyer.

WHEN DONE RIGHT

Teams that narrow to two target buyer profiles before Series A report that **new reps reach call-ready competency in a fraction of the time** compared to teams with undefined ICP boundaries.

THE RESULT

ICP clarity is not a project *you finish.*

The deal you lost last month contains more signal about which buyers to stop chasing than the deal you won.

The profiles sharpen *as you close.*

As you close more deals, the profiles sharpen. What looked like a VP of Sales problem at $400K ARR often resolves into a Head of RevOps problem by $1.2M ARR, once you have enough data to see the pattern. Build the habit of updating your buyer profiles **after every closed-lost debrief,** not just after wins.

The deal you lost last month contains more signal about which buyers to stop chasing than the deal you won. Most founders only debrief the wins, then wonder why the pattern stays hidden.

CONTINUED · A PROFILE IN THE WILD

EXAMPLE PROFILE APPENDIX A · A PROFILE IN THE WILD

Meet *Dana.*

One decision profile, pulled directly from the BIA library. Not a template. Real research on a real healthcare CIO.

DANA

Chief Information Officer *, US regional health system*

INDUSTRY US regional health system, 3–7 hospitals

HEADCOUNT ~8,200 employees, 200–350 IT FTEs

IT BUDGET $50M–$80M annual (2.5–3% of revenue)

STRUCTURE Non-profit mission-driven network

THE METRIC

Epic system availability at 99.99%+, roughly 53 minutes of allowed downtime per year. Zero reportable HIPAA breach notification events. Mean time to detect a network intrusion under 72 hours. These are board-visible numbers, not IT ops metrics.

THE MANDATE

Her CEO is pushing her to accelerate ambient AI adoption, expand the digital front door, and demonstrate ROI from the technology portfolio. Her CISO is presenting quarterly ransomware threat briefings to the Board. Her Epic team is three months behind on the next upgrade cycle.

THE GRAVEYARD

The Change Healthcare attack of February 2024. Cost the parent organization over $872 million. Disrupted claims processing for 100+ million Americans. Every vendor who has told Dana their Epic integration is "straightforward" has, in some variation, been wrong.

WHAT ACTUALLY MOVES DANA

An unmediated phone number for a peer CIO at a comparable health system, not a polished case study. Epic ecosystem depth stated with the named pathway (App Orchard certified, SMART on FHIR, HL7), not "we integrate with Epic." A fully executed BAA, HITRUST CSF certification, and 12-month pen test results delivered before the first security review meeting.

NOW LIVE

See the profile for *your next target buyer.*

Inside the Buyer Intel Accelerator you get a pre-built decision profile for every enterprise buyer you target: **owned metrics, the mandate they were hired to deliver, the vendor that burned them before.** The intelligence the five steps assume you already have.

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80 free credits, no card required. Pressure-test the profile, then commit the quarter.