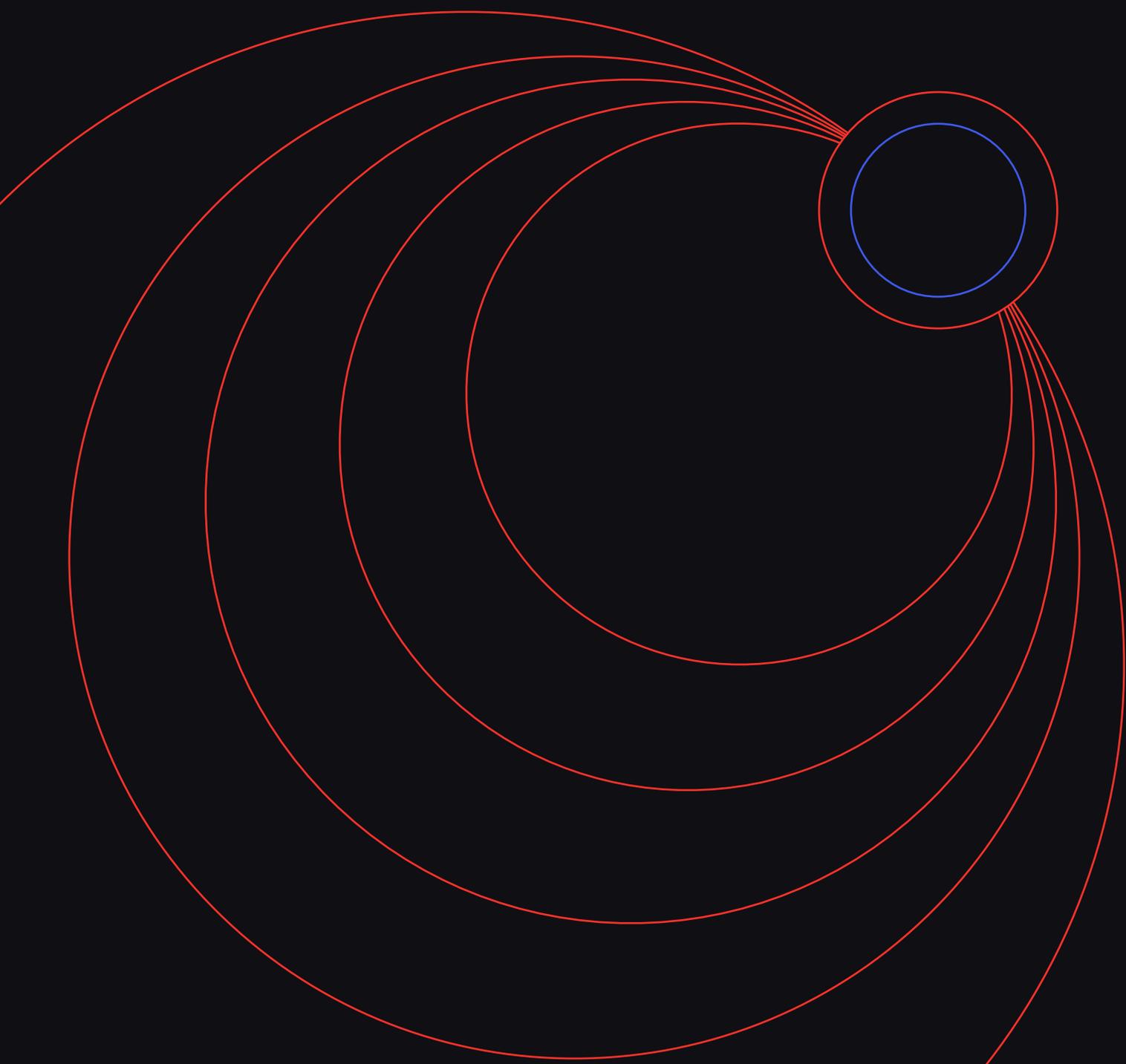
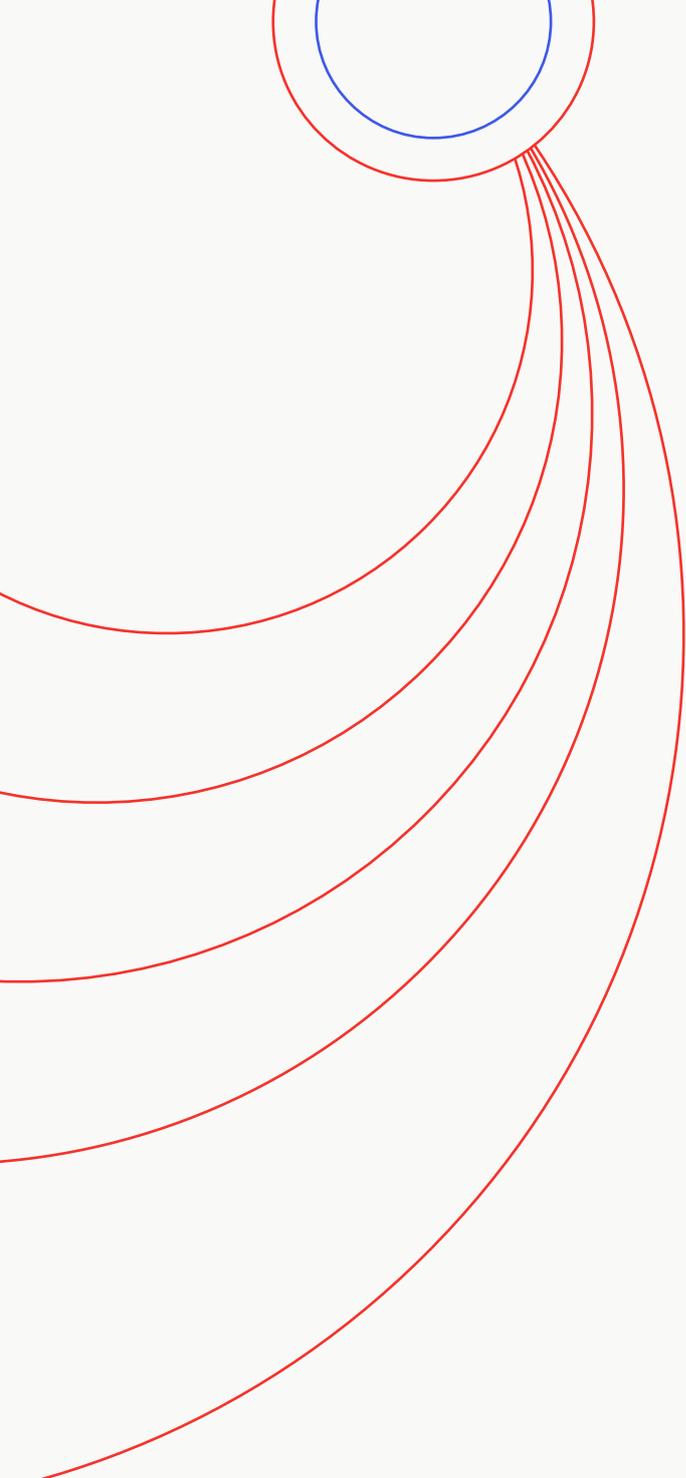


# C-SUITE ENGAGEMENT

How Strategic Sellers Engage  
Executives to Exceed Quotas Every Year





## **STRATEGIC SELLERS**

understand that the key to success in enterprise sales is simple: Don't follow the old rules if you're expecting a different result. Conventional processes naturally lead to conventional results, so if you want an exceptional outcome—like doubling your quota or making President's Club, for example—you need exceptional thinking. In other words, you need to step into uncomfortable territory to get the bigger payoffs.

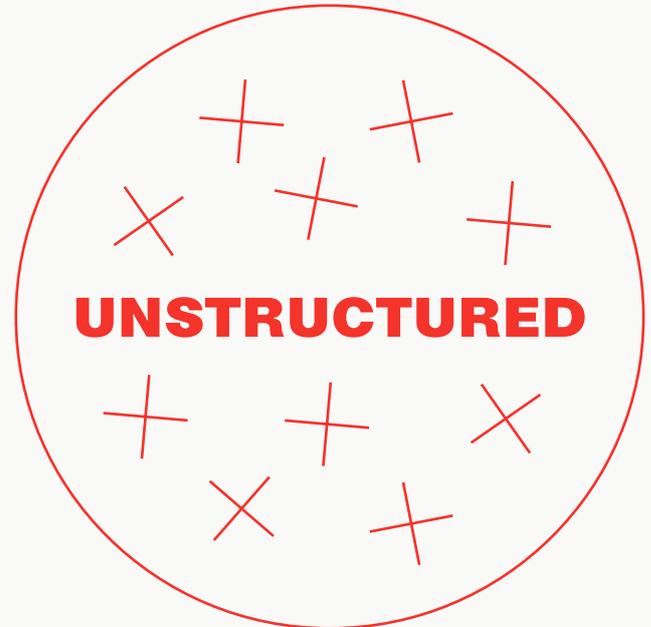
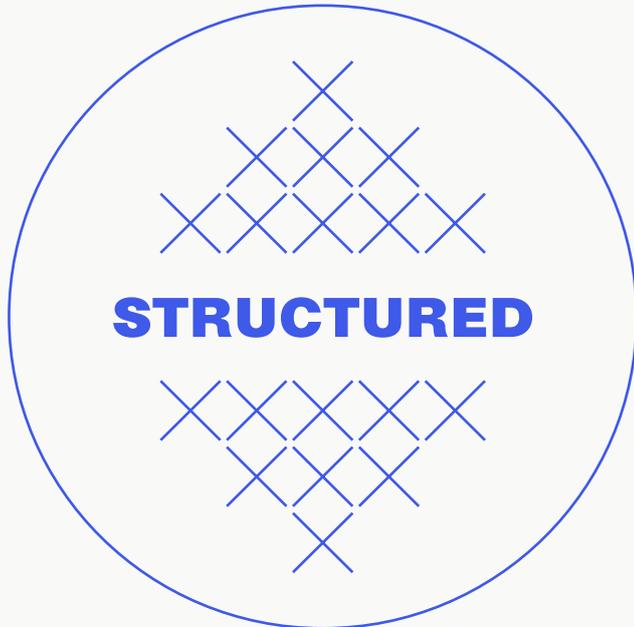
For many of today's most successful salespeople, that uncomfortable territory involves engaging directly with executives. Here, we'll share best practices that explain why executive engagement is necessary, what those executive engagements might look like, and how you can position yourself to make those engagements faster, easier, and more rewarding than ever.

**Continue reading** →

# WHAT'S IN YOUR PIPELINE?

## STRUCTURED VS. UNSTRUCTURED EVALUATIONS

Generally speaking, enterprise B2B sales has two types of prospects within the pipeline:



Both should make up a portion of your pipeline—but in what ratio and why?

In a **structured evaluation**, a prospect company recognizes a direct need for a solution and often solicits proposals directly from vendors. When these deals arrive at the pipeline via general marketing leads, they're typically lower-value deals that require only Director-level engagement to close. When they elevate to require one-on-one calls at the VP level, they can represent moderately higher value. Either way, these deals are worked through conventional sales processes and can therefore be plentiful and easier to close just from sheer volume.

**Unstructured evaluations**, on the other hand, are those deals where a company might greatly benefit from your solution but has not directly recognized the potential for value. That means you don't have an easy in through a conventional process, so you'll have to expend more effort to convert. In other words, they tend to be worthwhile only if they promise a big payback—and the high-dollar, unstructured deals almost always demand that you engage at the CXO level.

# STRATEGIC SALES LEVELS OF MATURITY



**DOLLARS GO UP AS WE GO TO THE RIGHT** →

## UNSTRUCTURED EVALUATIONS PRIME YOUR PIPELINE

Often, sales professionals want to go for the low-hanging fruit, filling the pipeline with a greater number of lower value (structured) deals.

Let's look at why this may not be enough to hit quota:

- According to Hubspot, the average close rate in the software industry is 22%.
- Compare that to your patch. How many companies want to buy your solutions in a structured evaluation today? Conventional experience says it's probably around 1.3x your quota.
- But if we combine those two numbers, you'll only be able to achieve about 29% of your annual quota.

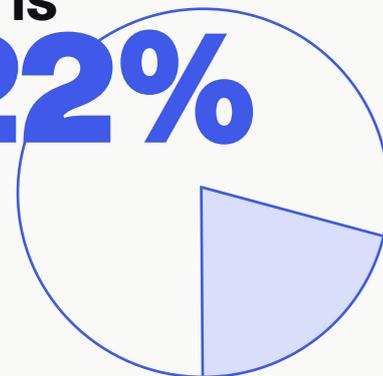
So if you're only going after structured evaluations, how will you consistently make—let alone exceed—your quarterly revenue goals?

Go outside the usual processes to create new, high-value opportunities through unstructured evaluations that require executive engagement. Comfortable? No. Potentially lucrative? Very.

If you add unstructured evaluations into your pipeline mix and you can succeed at executive engagement, the difficulty of converting might be higher, but so are your odds of converting. Because once you've successfully engaged, you already have a strategic relationship with a key stakeholder. With this kind of relationship, deal sizes will be much larger—so it doesn't take as many wins to exceed your quota. Quality over quantity.

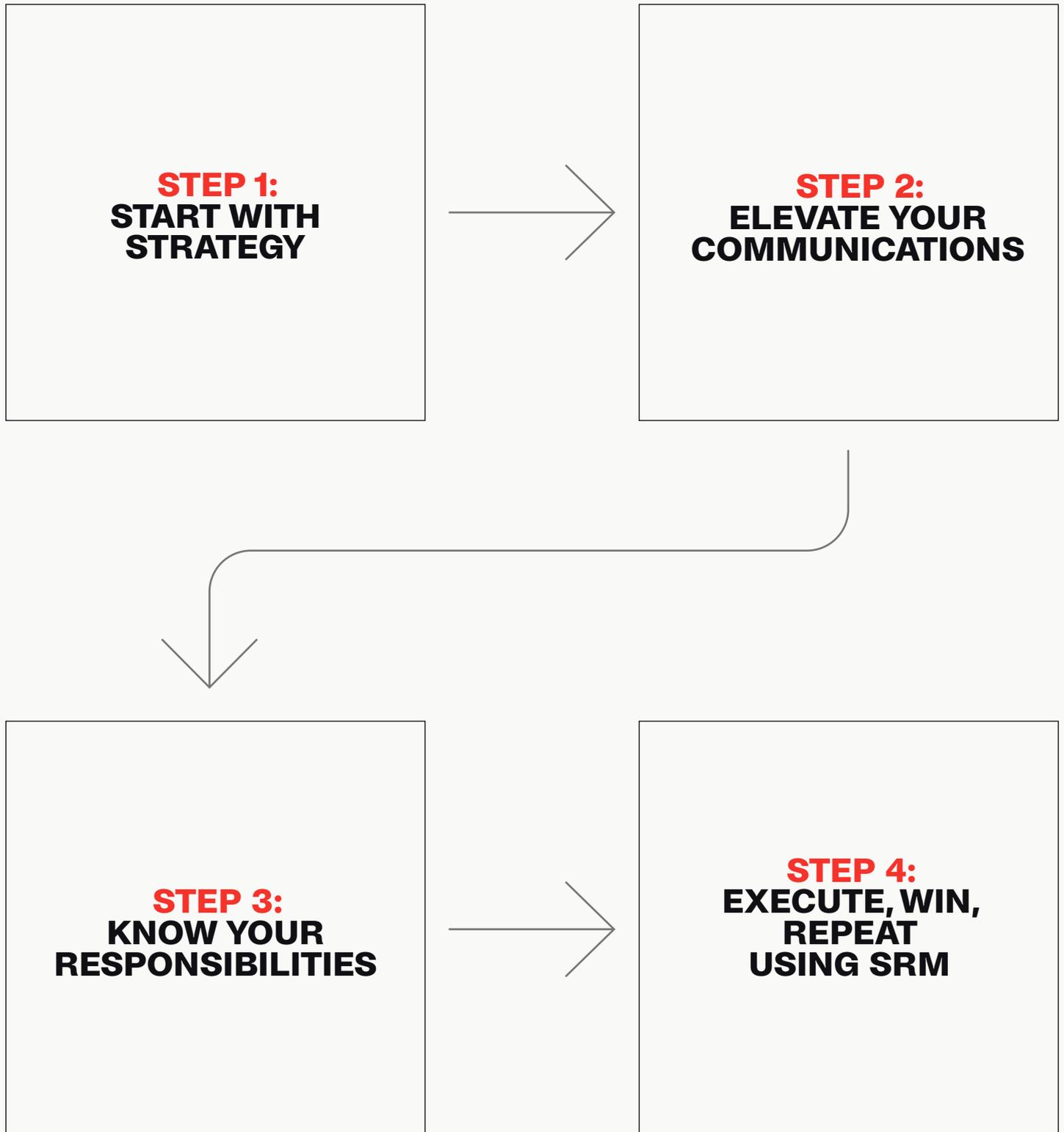
**ACCORDING TO HUBSPOT,  
THE AVERAGE CLOSE  
RATE IN THE SOFTWARE  
INDUSTRY IS**

**22%**



The best thing about this approach? You don't have to rely on anyone else to generate pipeline for you to make your number. You make the case, the contact, and the deal.

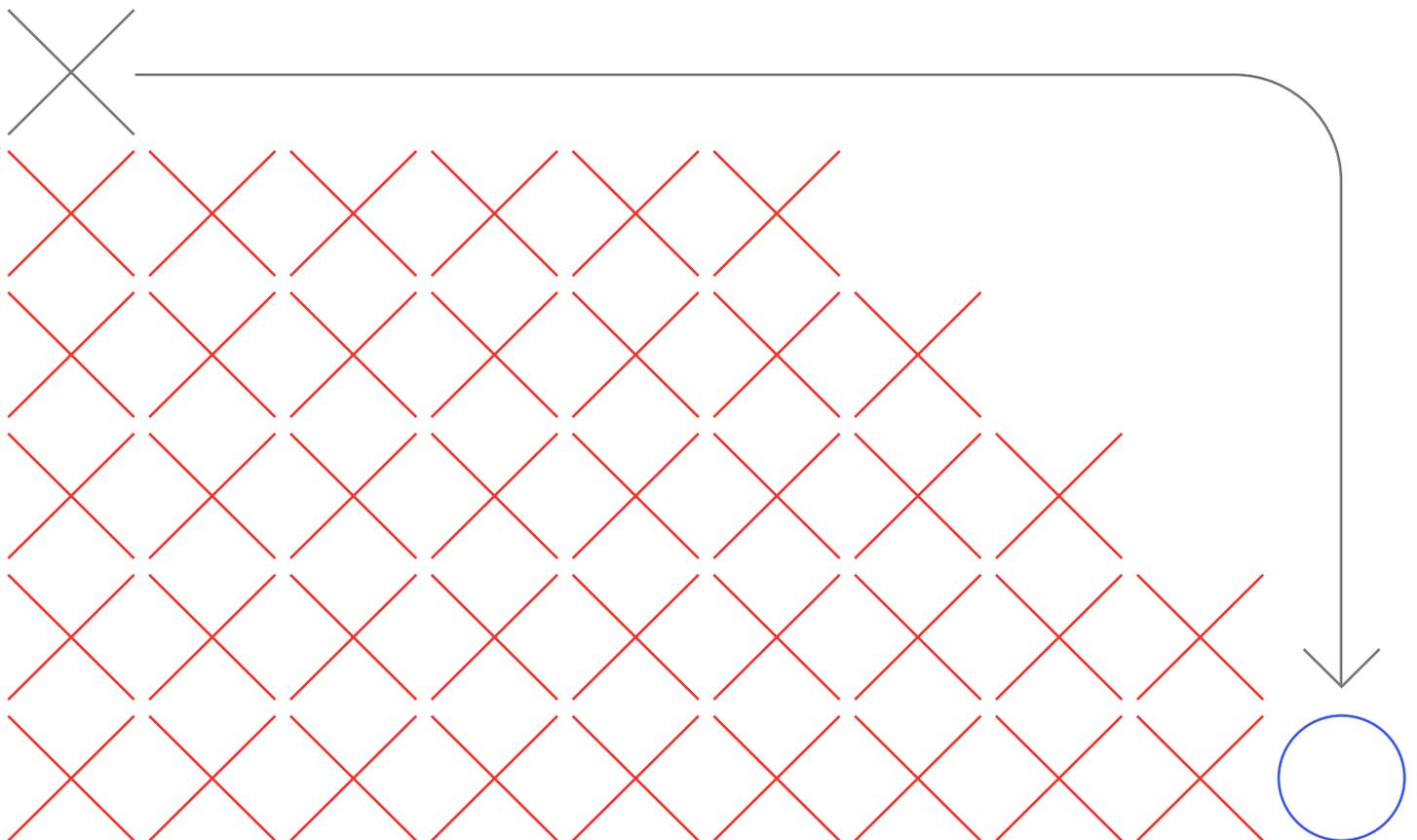
# 4 STEPS TO EXECUTIVE ENGAGEMENT



# START WITH STRATEGY

To kick off an unstructured evaluation and earn that initial meeting with a new executive, start your conversation by providing unique insights from an industry benchmark study, or share how your other customers have gained new competitive advantage through improved efficiency. You're essentially promising to give away free strategy consulting worth \$150K—and that's a hard offer to turn down.

Once the meeting is on the calendar, it's your job to identify the financial pain that will receive sponsorship from a CXO or SVP—one that outlines how they can get started with a few quick wins that pay for the project, as well as a list of customers who have achieved prior success. Do this and you carve out a space for yourself as a strategic partner, setting you apart by adding real value to the highest level of the account.

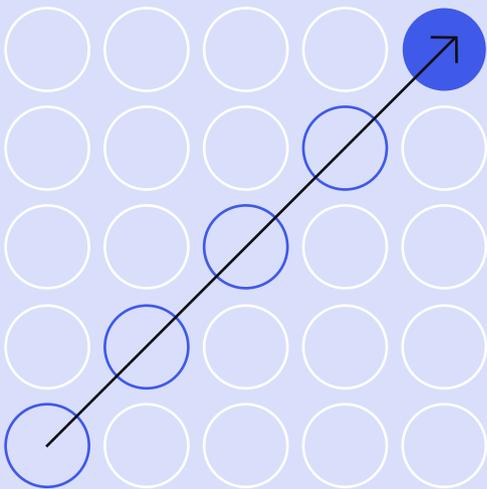


# ELEVATE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

But what does that financial case for change look like? And how do you present it at an initial c-level meeting with an executive you've never met before?

## FIRST,

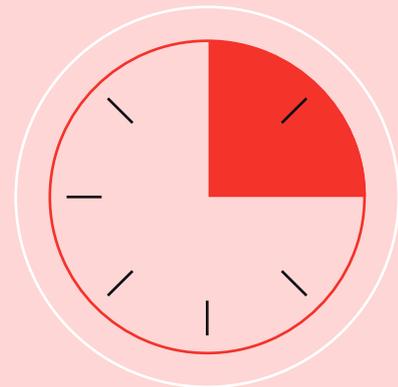
know that executives don't care about your products.



They make decisions based on business outcomes, time to value, the investment required, and the risk profile. Your job is to de-risk the project. You need to present quantifiable metrics—ones that your prospect is having trouble measuring today—that demonstrate your company's proven success with customers in their industry.

## SECOND,

no matter how good you are at building relationships, remember that executives are extremely busy and need you to make the best use of their time.



Again, don't just blast executives with product details. C-levels won't respond to generic, impersonal materials. Executives are better served with impactful, concise information that's targeted specifically around their KPIs and responsibilities—grab their attention in 5 minutes or less.

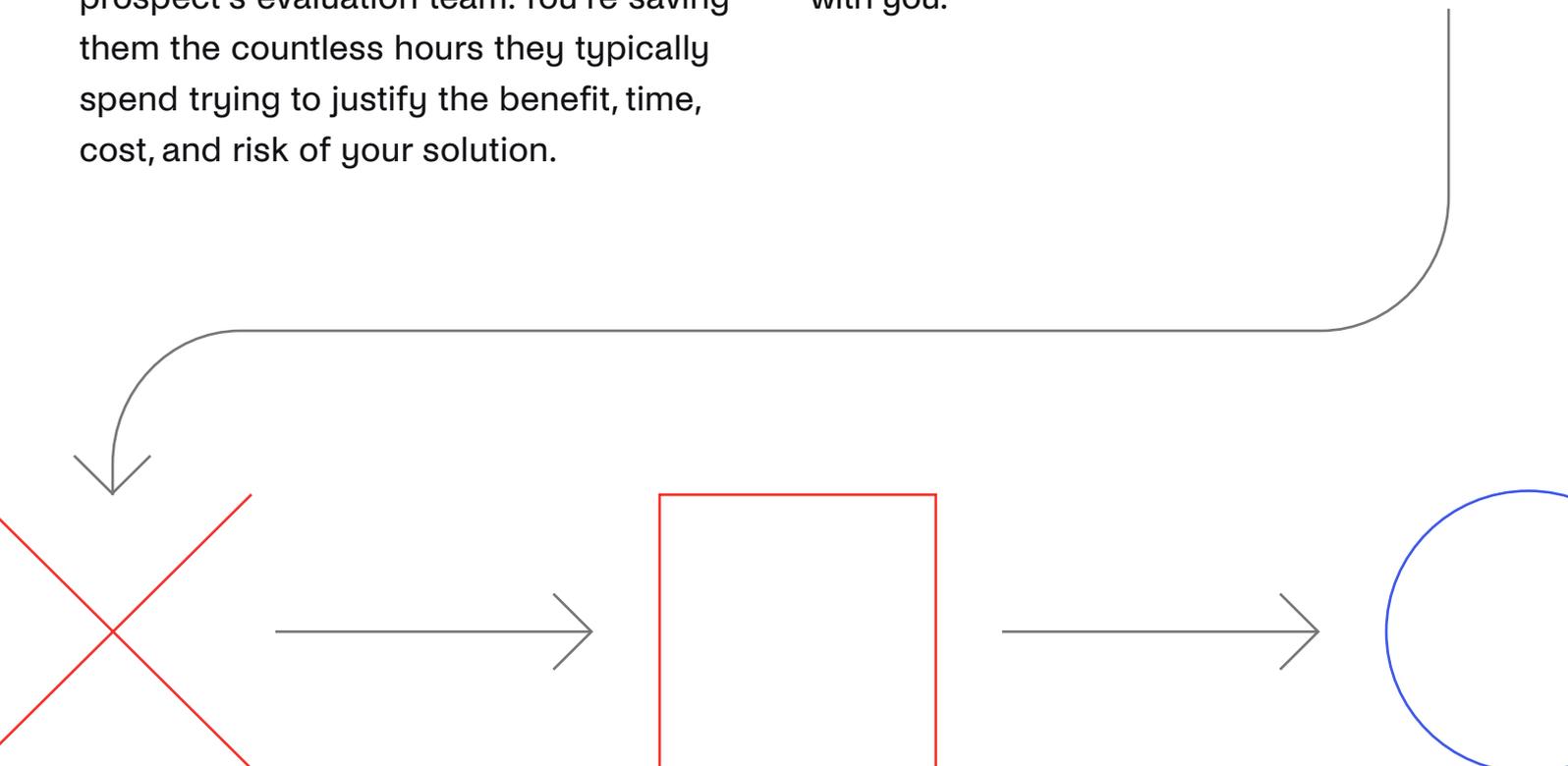
For your initial meeting, then, you'll see optimal success by delivering an **investment strategy**.

While you won't yet have a complete picture from your prospect, you'll show that you're innovative and confident enough to have completed thoughtful research and prepared a point-of-view for the meeting, covering all the critical points required to make a business decision.

This is the kind of document that a c-level executive can take to a weekly leadership meeting to easily address potential objections. Not only can it help gain approval to increase a project's priority level, but the personalized content can actually shorten your sales cycles by two to four months. How? Because you've done the time-consuming legwork for your prospect's evaluation team. You're saving them the countless hours they typically spend trying to justify the benefit, time, cost, and risk of your solution.

## KEEPING EVERYONE INFORMED CAN CLEAR YOUR PATH TO KEY EXECUTIVES

Getting executive meetings shouldn't depend entirely on your lower-level champion to schedule them for you. Take on that legwork yourself, and give these stakeholders about four days' advance briefing on everything you plan to share with the executive team. That way, when they are asked, they have all the details to be able to respond. If the lower levels are too busy to be briefed, you should still move forward with the c-suite meetings. You'll find they will make time to meet with you.



# KNOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

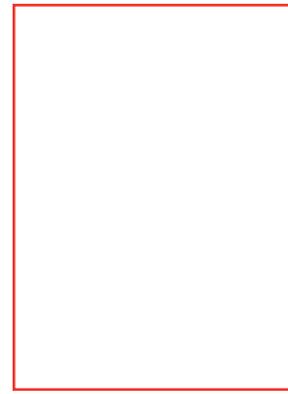
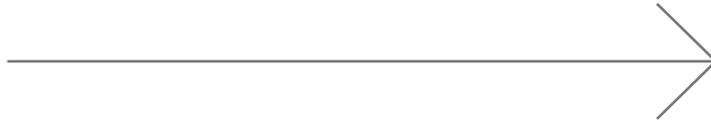
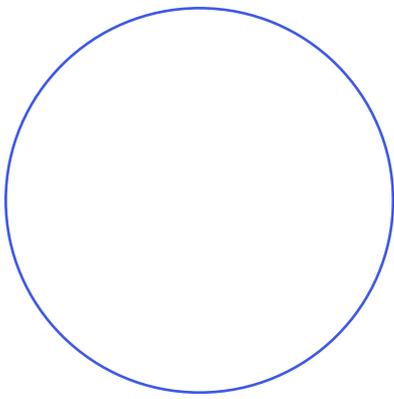
Because success in an unstructured evaluation necessitates executive engagement, one of your most important responsibilities is to always manage two separate sales motions at the same time:

## IN THE FIRST MOTION,

the primary account team engages the prospect's evaluation team, helping them in the assessment of their structured process.

## IN THE SECOND MOTION,

you and your regional manager develop weekly content and email messages that your executive team can use to present a provocative case for change to your prospect's c-suite.



This is a best practice proven by strategic sellers—but the second motion often encounters pushback, and here’s why: It’s not human nature for someone to develop content for another person to deliver. Nevertheless, it’s important to head into that uncomfortable territory consistently. *No one else is going to do it for you.* After you’ve been through two full sales engagements applying both motions, you’ll see the approach works consistently.

Also critical in your list of responsibilities is the management of your extended sales team, which includes a variety of solution consultants across many organizations—including client success, product marketing, professional services, finance, channel management, and business development. This diverse group needs clear direction as to expectations, standards, owners, due dates, status, and anticipated next steps. Send an email twice a week to focus your resources on the multiple tasks at hand and ensure delivery dates are met.



**MARC BENIOFF**  
CEO SALESFORCE.COM



*When I look at the largest transactions... every one was done with the CEO.*



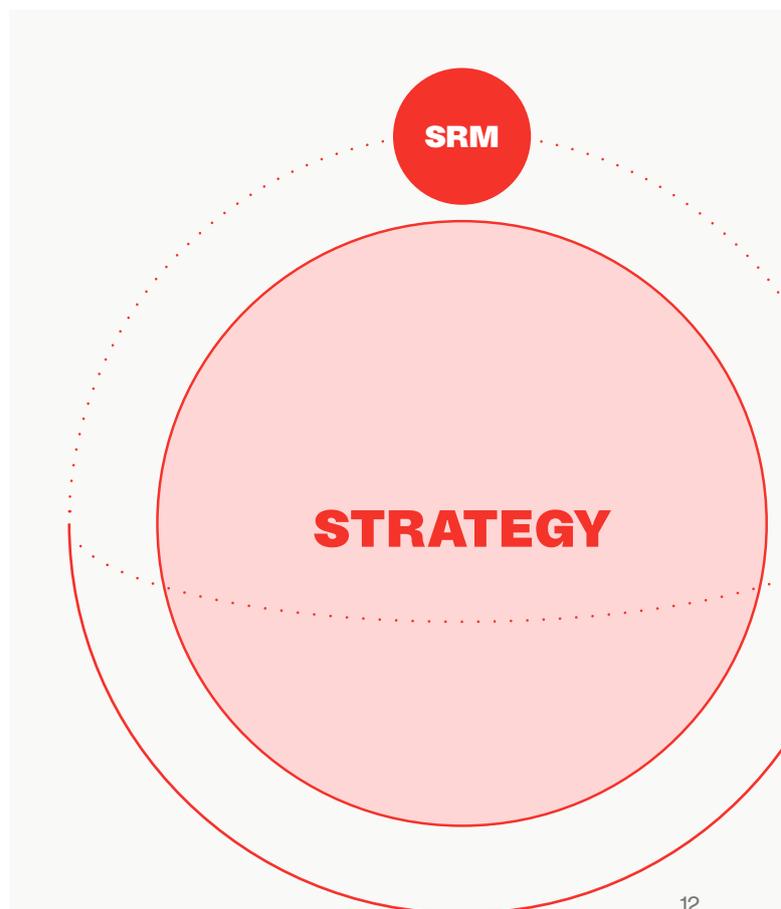
# EXECUTE, WIN, REPEAT USING SRM TECHNOLOGY

As you put together these best practices, you'll find a key requirement for your success is the ability to present a compelling case for change that's based on metrics and a deep knowledge of the prospect's strategic priorities and objectives. Armed with this data, you can not only identify key executives with which to engage, but you can also personalize points-of-view in a matter of minutes to use in outreach and executive meetings.

But while ensuring that you have access to that information is vital to your ability to win deals, it's inefficient to manually assemble this amount of intricate detail for each and every prospect or meeting. To truly step outside the bounds of transactional thinking and into the realm of strategic relationships, you need fast, scalable, repeatable methods for engaging executives.

That's why sales professionals committed to executive selling use a Strategic Relationship Management (SRM) platform.

SRM technology automatically curates insights from copious data and identifies a customer's propensity-to-buy based on management intent and demand signals from key decision-makers. Not only can this type of AI-powered technology accelerate your path to executives, but any personalized deliverable frameworks or strategies you create within an SRM platform can be easily shared and re-used by key stakeholders in future endeavors. This is the currency of strategic sellers who repeatedly reach the c-suite.



# TO-DO LIST FOR EXECUTIVE ENGAGEMENT

<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Provide unique insights from an industry benchmark study</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Offer customer success stories</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Use quantifiable metrics to present an opportunity for financial improvement</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Use high-quality, polished deliverables and executive language</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Guide your account team as they engage the prospect's evaluation team</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Send weekly emails from your executive team to theirs</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Ping your extended GTM team with twice-weekly emails to track resources and progress</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Always have access to relevant data</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Create a scalable, repeatable process</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# CONCLUSION

While most sales professionals enjoy building relationships with their customers because people buy from who they like, familiarity only accounts for about some of the purchasing decision. The rest hinges on industry expertise, particularly when it comes to unstructured evaluations. That's why the goal of building strategic relationships in enterprise accounts is to become a trusted advisor—and that's why executive engagement is so important.

*Remember, you are that industry expert they're looking for.* Through prior customers' successes, you have amassed significant industry expertise and are in a unique position to share best practices and free strategy consulting in every meeting. Over time, the guidance you offer can change the decision criteria at multiple levels in an organization to influence highly successful outcomes.

It's true: No one is ever going to understand an executive's business better than they do. Only you, however, see how the top companies in their industry are leveraging your solutions to create a competitive advantage. You can add value by bringing an outside-in perspective based on industry metrics and competitor data, and recommending improvements based on their real pain and how your solutions have helped others like them succeed. If you've held off on engaging at the c-suite level because it's uncomfortable, you'll need to get past that hesitation if you want to be successful. Uncomfortable conversations are the lifeblood of strategic selling. Get ready to be uncomfortable if you're in enterprise sales—and then get ready to win big. This is the proven process of **generating revenue** in enterprise sales consistently every quarter.



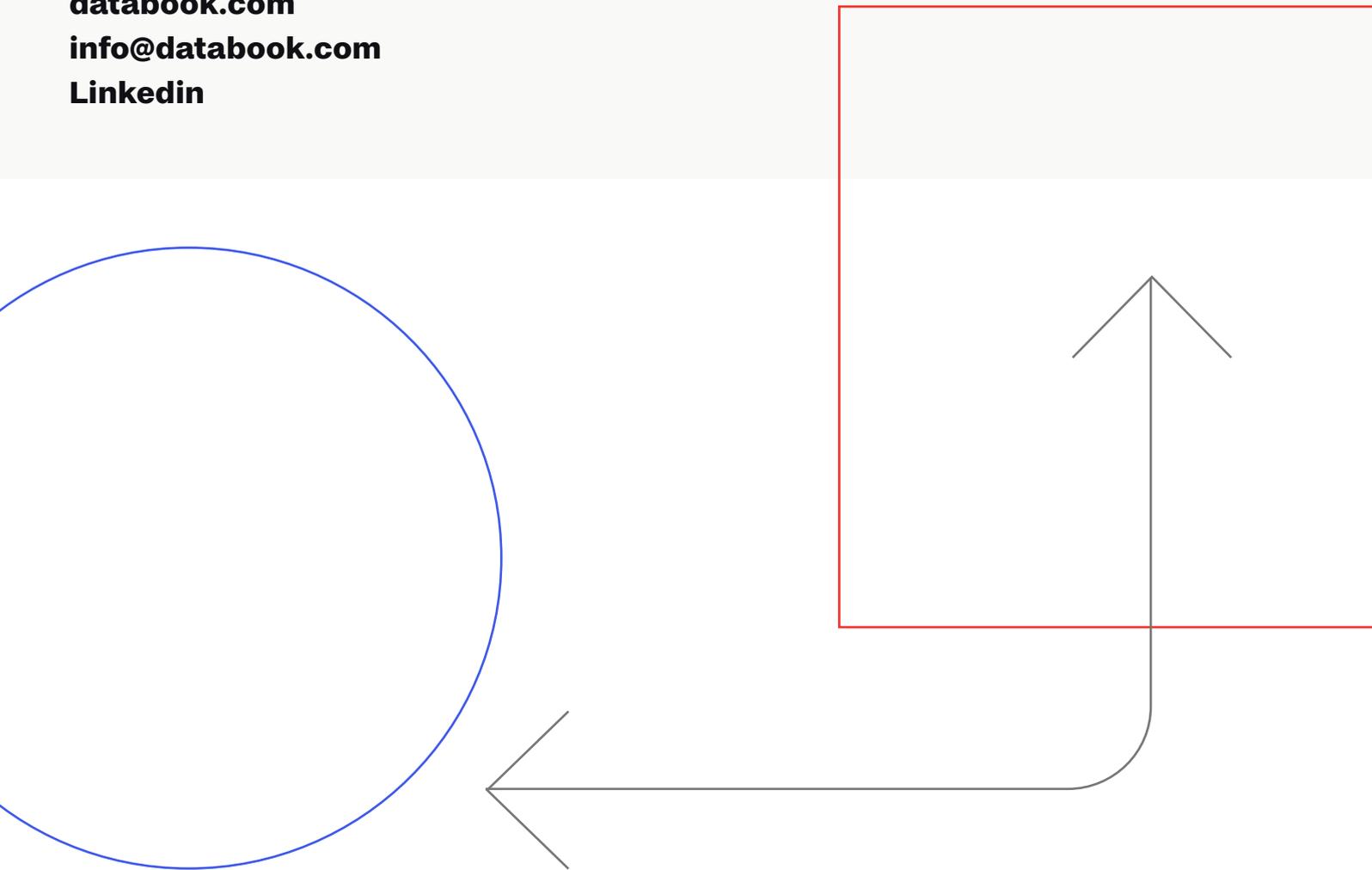
## ABOUT DATABOOK

Databook is the pioneer and leader in Strategic Relationship Management (SRM). The company's award-winning SRM platform leverages advanced AI and NLP to empower the world's largest B2B sales teams to create, manage, and maintain strategic relationships at scale. The platform ingests and interprets billions of financial and market data signals to generate actionable sales strategies that connect the seller's solutions to a buyer's financial pain and urgency. On average, Databook clients achieve 5x more customer meetings, 3x more pipeline, 2.5x larger deals and 1.5x faster cycle time.

**databook.com**

**info@databook.com**

**Linkedin**



**TELL A MORE  
VALUABLE STORY  
WITH DATABOOK**

Request a demo