Selling with a Point of View: The Power of the Business Value Hypothesis

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October 2025

Introduction

Most people believe that the job of a sales person is to uncover pain points and present a solution that solves the customer's problem better than the competition can. Simple, right? Here's the problem — while they find it easy to focus on tactical issues, customers don't always have visibility on their strategic problems (or opportunities), know that the problems can be solved or which ones are worth solving.

Customers are more comfortable solving tactical substitution or stepwise improvement problems — relatively low risk activities that don't always move the needle for the organization. Additionally, most customers act based on subconscious risk evaluation rather a more formal feature-benefit comparison of vendor offerings.

High performing sales people develop a "point of view" or hypothesis on the business and organizational value of solving a particular problem (or addressing a specific opportunity.) More formally, the **Business Value Hypothesis** provides a structured way of expressing *why a customer should act*, grounded in business outcomes and framed with curiosity, empathy, and authenticity. This approach tends to lower perceived risk.

Through the use of the business value hypothesis, the sales person quantifies both the financial and organizational impact on the organization. It also puts them in a position to help the customer through the buying process (which is actually the point of sales.)

What Is a Business Value Hypothesis?

A **Business Value Hypothesis (BVH)** is a testable belief about how our product or service can create measurable value for a specific customer. It's not a pitch deck or a canned ROI slide. It's a living idea—an *educated guess* based on research, pattern recognition, and perspective.

A strong BVH has three parts:

1. **The Problem I See** — the business friction I believe is holding the customer back.
2. **The Impact I Anticipate** — the economic, strategic, or operational consequences of that friction.
3. **The Change I Propose** — the specific shift—enabled by our approach—that will create measurable improvement.

When I come to a customer with a thoughtful BVH, I'm signaling that I've done the homework. I'm not just reacting to an RFP or parroting back pain—I'm bringing a point of view about their world.

Why It Matters

Buyers today are drowning in information. They've read the analyst reports, seen the webinars, and compared pricing spreadsheets. What they *don't* have is a clear sense of which levers to pull inside their organization.

A BVH does three powerful things:

- **Creates clarity,** helping the customer connect the dots between symptoms and systemic causes
- **Builds credibility,** demonstrating that the sales person understands their business model and their strategic goals, milestones, OKRs and KPIs.
- **Reduces risk.** It makes action safer by defining what success looks like and how to measure it.

It's not about knowing *everything*—it's about having a thoughtful point of view *and* the humility to test it.

The Buyer's Dilemma (and Why Perspective Matters)

As Matt Dixon and Tedd McKenna remind us in *The JOLT Effect*, most stalled deals aren't lost to **competitors**; they're lost to **indecision**. Buyers fear making the wrong call—politically,

financially, personally. Our job isn't to bury them in more proof. It's to **make sense** of what they already know and to **project confidence** that moving forward is safer than doing nothing.

A well-constructed BVH is a sense-making tool. When I say, "Here's what we're seeing in your industry — companies like yours are losing gross margin to manual reporting delays, and here's how clients recovered margin by automating the close," I'm giving the buyer a credible path forward, not just more slides.

And through this conversation, the buyer will begin to see that business as usual — manual reporting — is no longer acceptable.

Selling from a Point of View

Selling from a point of view isn't arrogance; it's stewardship. It's the difference between:

- *"Tell me about your challenges."*

  and

- *"According to my research, your challenge is X and it's costing you Y. Is that right?"*

The second statement is a **hypothesis**, inviting collaboration and build confidence. When I lead with a hypothesis, I'm not claiming that I have all the answers; I'm saying, "Here's what I think — let's test it together." That shift changes the conversation from interrogation to co-creation.

The Human Foundation of Great Selling: Curiosity, Empathy, and Authenticity

Most high performing sellers share three traits that have nothing to do with product knowledge or tenure. They're **curious**, **empathetic**, and **authentic**. These turn the BVH from an analytical exercise into a genuine act of partnership.

1) Curiosity: The Fuel for Insight

Why reps must be curious
Curiosity is the cure for autopilot or script selling. It pushes beneath the surface of what the customer says into what's *driving* the situation—trade-offs, pressures, unspoken aspirations. Curiosity turns a call from a transaction into an investigation...and sometimes to co-creation.

How to feed curiosity

- **Read outside your lane.** Industry journals, earnings calls, competitor job posts, customer reviews. Ask: *"Why does this matter to them?"*
- **Practice the Five Whys.** Keep peeling until you hit a root cause you can influence
- **Spot patterns.** Capture recurring root causes across accounts; convert patterns into hypotheses
- **Build a curiosity ritual.** Ten minutes before each call: skim news/LinkedIn, draft one sharp question that only a prepared person could ask

Curiosity yields more than data; it yields **perspective**—and that's what buyers pay for.

It also is the antidote for scripted selling — when you show genuine curiosity, conduct your own research and show up to engage in a wide-ranging customer-centric conversation, the authentic you is on display. Customers reward you handsomely for doing so.

2) Empathy: The Lens of Understanding

The value of empathy
If curiosity lets me *see* the buyer, empathy lets me *feel* what they're experiencing. It's how I connect facts to human reality. Indecision often rides on fear: fear of waste, career risk, or credibility loss. Empathy helps me surface and de-risk those fears so logic can land.

How to develop empathy

- **Listen for emotion.** Note where voices tighten or brighten; mirror back what you heard
- **Replay calls.** Ask: Where did they light up? Where did the energy fall?
- **Shadow their world.** Spend a day with users or frontline managers; you'll gain six months of insight
- **Perspective-taking.** Before meetings, step into the CFO/CMO/COO seat. What would *you* fear? What outcome earns *you* a win?

Empathy doesn't mean agreement—it means accurate understanding. Combined with curiosity, it moves you from problem identification to **problem ownership**.

3) Authenticity: The Trust Multiplier

What it means to be truly authentic
Authenticity is consistent alignment between motive, message, and behavior. I show up as myself, avoid spin, admit what I don't know, and share appropriate vulnerability ("We learned this the hard way with another client…"). That honesty earns access to the *real* story.

How people know you're authentic

- Your motives are visible: you're there to help them make a better decision
- Your tone matches your words: human, not brochure

- You honor commitments: small promises kept compound into trust
- They feel **seen**, not **managed**

Authenticity makes curiosity and empathy credible. Without it, they look like tactics. With it, they land as **trust**.

Together: Curiosity opens the door. Empathy invites the buyer in. Authenticity keeps the conversation real. With all three, a BVH becomes a shared exploration—two teams solving something that matters.

Developing Your Hypothesis

Step 1: Research with intent
Public filings, earnings calls, product updates, customer reviews, LinkedIn moves. Look for macro forces, strategic bets, and dissonance (e.g., growing revenue but flat margins).

Step 2: Define value drivers
Which levers can we influence? Revenue growth, cost/risk reduction, time-to-market, customer experience. Even directional quantification beats vague promises.

Step 3: Draft the hypothesis
One sentence, specific and testable:

"I believe your RevOps team spends excessive time reconciling forecasts, eroding accuracy and executive confidence; we can automate ~80% of that work and restore trust in the pipeline."

Step 4: Test in conversation
Use hypothesis language: "I might be off—here's what I'm seeing. Does this resonate?" Invite correction.

Step 5: Validate and expand
As you learn, tighten the numbers and tie them to the customer's metrics and time horizons. If you're wrong, pivot quickly.

Using the Hypothesis Across the Sales Cycle

- **Discovery:** Focuses the conversation on impact over features
- **Proposal:** Frames deliverables around business outcomes and measures
- **Negotiation:** Anchors price to value, not effort
- **Implementation:** Aligns teams on "what success looks like"
- **Renewal/Expansion:** Provides the baseline for proving value and writing the next hypothesis

Internally, a BVH also aligns product, success, and leadership on why this deal matters.

Avoiding the "Show Up and Throw Up" Trap

Enthusiasm isn't insight. A BVH forces me to connect dots *before* I present. It's an antidote to "information overload masquerading as persuasion." My job isn't to out-inform competitors; it's to **make sense** for the buyer—and sometimes that means saying, "Here's what I'd test first; if the data disproves it, we'll adjust."

The Emotional Layer: Overcoming Buyer Fear with JOLT

- **Judge the indecision.** What's the real blocker—personal risk, solution complexity, or competing priorities?
- **Offer a recommendation.** Be prescriptive. "Given X and Y, I recommend path B"
- **Limit the exploration.** Simplify choices; define what's *good enough* to move
- **Take risk off the table.** Design a low-risk pilot, milestone gates, mutual exit criteria

A credible BVH supports every JOLT step, making action feel safer than stasis.

Example: From Product Pitch to Business Hypothesis

Without a hypothesis

"Our AI improves forecast accuracy by 30%. Here's a demo."

With a hypothesis

"Across similar orgs, managers spend too much time reconciling CRM, spreadsheets, and email—eroding forecast confidence and delaying hiring/investment. If we can free ~15 hours/manager/week and raise forecast confidence, would a 60-day pilot be worth testing?"

One talks tech. The other talks **business confidence**. Buyers buy confidence.

For Individual Sellers

- **Start small.** One BVH per account
- **Lead with it.** Use it to open discovery, not close it
- **Keep a hypothesis journal.** After each call: support/disprove/unknown
- **Borrow patterns.** Compare notes with peers; turn patterns into sharper hypotheses

Your goal isn't perfection; it's to be **directionally insightful** more often than not. That's the bridge from vendor to advisor.

For Sales Leaders and Enablement

- **Operationalize BVH.** Make it the first line of every opportunity plan and deal review
- **Teach financial fluency.** Train reps to speak ROI, payback, EBITDA, risk
- **Coach curiosity.** Inspect questions asked, not just slides shown
- **Codify patterns.** Maintain a shared hypothesis library by industry/use case
- **Close the loop.** Compare initial BVHs to realized outcomes; feed back into enablement

Enablement's job is to turn individual insight into **system capability**.

Common Pitfalls

- **Assumption avalanche.** Falling in love with the first hypothesis. Test before you declare
- **Feature translation syndrome.** Backing into value from features. Start with value, walk forward
- **Premature precision.** Dollar signs too early can backfire. Directional is fine at first
- **Skipping empathy.** Data without emotional relevance rarely moves a deal

A hypothesis without empathy is just a spreadsheet in disguise.

How BVHs Evolve Over Time

- **Discovery:** Hypothesis → questions
- **Proposal:** Questions → quantified impact and success metrics
- **Delivery:** Metrics → verified outcomes
- **Renewal:** Outcomes → next hypothesis and expansion narrative

This is the rhythm of consultative selling: hypothesize, test, validate, refine.

The Inner Game Connection

A BVH is a mindset. It forces me to balance confidence with humility—believe in my perspective enough to offer it, stay curious enough to change it when the data says so, and be authentic enough to admit what I don't know. When I lead with curiosity, empathy, and authenticity, customers start co-creating the value story with me. Selling stops feeling like performance and starts feeling like partnership.

Key Takeaways

- A **Business Value Hypothesis** is a testable belief about how we'll create measurable impact for a specific customer
- It shifts us from "selling products" to **co-creating value**
- **Curiosity** fuels insight, **empathy** connects it to human reality, **authenticity** converts it into trust
- Use the BVH to make sense, de-risk action, and align teams
- Sellers: build, test, and refine one BVH per key account. Rinse and repeat
- Leaders: institutionalize BVH in planning, coaching, and post-mortems
- The goal isn't to be right—it's to help buyers feel **safe** moving forward

Action Steps to Take This Week

- **Before your next call:** Write a one-sentence hypothesis and three test questions
- **During the call:** Ask one question only a prepared person could ask. Listen for the emotional signal, not just the factual answer
- **After the call:** Update your hypothesis journal: What supported it? What disproved it? What's the next test?
- **Team practice:** Run a 20-minute stand-up where everyone shares one hypothesis and one insight they stole from a peer

Practical Template: Build Your Business Value Hypothesis

Observation (what I see):

- *What's happening in their business/industry? What changed recently?*

e.g., "Customer churn up 8% while competitors accelerate feature launches."

Impact (so what):

- *What's the consequence in $$, risk, or strategy?*

e.g., "Retention down 8% → margin erosion; delayed roadmap bets."

Change Hypothesis (what could help):

- *What shift would fix it?*

e.g., "Earlier churn risk signals + proactive CS motions would reduce attrition."

Solution Alignment (how we enable it):

- *Which capabilities map to that shift?*

e.g., "Predictive health scoring, action queues, playbooks integrated to CS workflows."

Measurement (how we'll know):

- *What metric moves by when?*

e.g., "Reduce churn by 3 pts in two quarters; CSAT +10; save 400 hrs/quarter."

Risks & Mitigations (what could derail us):

- *Adoption, data quality, change fatigue.*

e.g., "Pilot with two teams, data readiness checklist, weekly retro."

Pilot Design (low-risk path):

- *Scope, timeline, exit criteria.*

e.g., "60 days, two segments, success = churn-leading indicators accurate within ±10%."

Micro-Checklists for C-E-A

Curiosity (before call)

- Have I read one thing they published this week?
- Can I name one pattern from similar customers?
- Do I have a single sharp question that links the two?

Empathy (during call)

- Where did energy spike/dip?
- What fears might be underneath the words?
- Did I mirror and validate before proposing?

Authenticity (after call)

- Did I promise anything I can't deliver?
- Did I say "I don't know" where appropriate—and follow up fast?
- Would they describe me as helpful, honest, and prepared?

Final Thought

Our job isn't just to persuade—it's to **illuminate**. When we show up with a thoughtful hypothesis, powered by curiosity, guided by empathy, and grounded in authenticity, we make it easier for customers to make decisions they feel good about. Do that consistently, and you won't just close more deals—you'll build relationships that last.