

B2B SALES APHORISMS

Sell Like Jen

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B 2 B S A L E S A P H O R I S M S



by Jen Abel (@JJEN_ABEL)

COLLECTED FROM HER POSTS ON X

Every line in this book is quoted from Jen Abel's public posts on X, written between 2021 and 2026. Her wording, casing and rhythm are kept as she posted them; only obvious typos and spacing have been tidied, and a trailing promotional line was removed from one post.

112 aphorisms in 9 chapters. Each one is dated, and the sources at the back of the book list the original post for every page.

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CHAPTER ONE

Founder-Led Sales



11 aphorisms

“

sales folks

your entire job is to not look like OR act like
sales ...

it's to cos-play the founder

market should feel energy, passion, and trust
through you

SEPTEMBER 26, 2026

“

founder-led sales is THE competitive advantage for a startup in early, early days

founders you are "the product", meaning buying access to you/vision

this is path with the highest odds of it working ...

JANUARY 10, 2026

“

0-1 sales talent does not exist.

In a startup's early days, the Founder is the product.

MARCH 9, 2025

“

when founders suggest that their product isn't ready to sell, they think sales is about selling a product

early-stage enterprise sales is about getting them excited about YOU (the Founder), how you see the world differently, and, most importantly, how you can uniquely solve their specific problem

in early, early days you are 'the product'

NOVEMBER 14, 2024

“

in early-stage startup sales, the market
buys into access to the founder/vision
before they buy into access to
the product

MAY 25, 2025

“

startups: early-adopters almost always
bet on people not products

this is why founder-led sales is so
critical ...

JULY 23, 2024

“

early-stage startups: Founders be prepared to be 'Head of Sales' for min. 24-months.

DECEMBER 30, 2024

“

founder involvement in enterprise sales
is the friggin' magic ...

nuance: make sure it's paired in loop
with their exec sponsor

AUGUST 25, 2026

“

early-stage startup sales is so, so hard because most early adopters start out as 'non-consumers' who are then moved via the founder's vision and energy into 'consumers'

only a founder has the capability to create this cold-start momentum

FEBRUARY 17, 2025

“

this is why the startup world bets on big visionaries ...

you can always bring a process to vision, BUT seldom
can you bring a vision to process

a process is always secondary to the vision

as a salesperson, I know my skillset comes a far second to
the founder's vision

JULY 11, 2024

“

obvious but a continual trap ...

many startups never find product/market fit
because the founder delegates sales to a non-
founder way too early

first ~\$1MM is visionary-led

MARCH 24, 2024

CHAPTER TWO

The Enterprise Game



15 aphorisms

“

the enterprise sales mind f'ck ...

the effort to close \$1MM deal is almost
at parity (maybe easier) than a
\$100k deal

OCTOBER 16, 2026

“

enterprise sales:

call 1: 99% sales, 1%

project management

call 2–35: 1% sales, 99%

project management

JANUARY 13, 2026

“

anyone navigating enterprise sales ...

it's so, so much easier for them to NOT do
the deal

it's never about better

it's always about different

shake their thinking, different

JUNE 25, 2026

“

startups — the entire enterprise game
is expansion

the 10X value is in growing value, not
landing ...

so many folks stall out at \$100K
per year

DECEMBER 13, 2025

“

important reminder and nuanced for
enterprise sales:

execs are far more sensitive to your sales
process than they are to the product
the opposite is true for small business

DECEMBER 15, 2024

“

know the game ...

corporates build for the boss

startups build for the customer

MARCH 16, 2026

“

moving slowly is a sin
in startups
stepping on toes is a sin
in enterprise

NOVEMBER 26, 2024

“

enterprise startups

tier-1 logos are the early adopters

anyone who suggests otherwise has
no clue

MARCH 14, 2026

“

it blows my mind that half the market disagrees with me on this ...

\$10K - \$50K/year deals are NOT enterprise sales

MAY 25, 2026

“

in enterprise sales, a long sales-cycle (in most cases) is self-inflicted

SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

“

startups — getting executives to
become users is the ultimate enterprise
lock-in ...

DECEMBER 26, 2024

“

startups

enterprise executives get 1-at-bat every few years (~3yrs)
to bring in a net-new tool

think about that for a minute

yes, it's hard

BUT, if you deliver on value and continue to do so, it's
so, so hard to displace you ...

this is why it's a race to get in now and run through
walls for them

JANUARY 26, 2026

“

startups: the beauty of enterprise sales
is 3 becomes 30

reference-selling/peer validation is an
insane compounding factor

NOVEMBER 28, 2024

“

smb is not easier than enterprise
maybe the biggest
startup misconception

JUNE 5, 2025

“

if in enterprise sales

welcome to the 3-month stretch
in the pain cave

SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

CHAPTER THREE

Insider Intel & Discovery



14 aphorisms

“

only three things matter in enterprise sales ...

1. is there internal pressure/incentive
2. do you have their cell number
3. have they shared insider intel/gossip

SEPTEMBER 24, 2026

“

enterprise sales is:

20% -- rizz

80% -- reading in-between the lines, collecting
nuanced insider intel, co-authoring, and
improv re: storyline/frame

the biggest mistake is when folks hire
expecting rizz to be 80% of the craft

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026

“

enterprise sales is game of who can
collect the most inside intel

surprisingly most don't OR don't
know how to play this game

AUGUST 15, 2026

“

insider intel wins
enterprise deals

OCTOBER 15, 2026

“

in enterprise sales ...

1. ask uncomfortable questions >> unique insider intel
2. cut to chase >> excited to retell internally
3. co-author >> let me put my fingerprints on it too

APRIL 22, 2026

“

enterprise sales is all about inside baseball

it seldom happens without someone giving
you off-the-record intelligence others don't
have ...

for example, this is why if you're not on text,
that relationship isn't there

FEBRUARY 12, 2026

“

in sales, the quality of their questions
tells you everything
absolutely, everything ...

DECEMBER 29, 2025

“

in sales, i don't know who needs to hear this,
but you never ask the prospect ...

- do you have budget?
- are you the decision maker?

it's your job to pick-up on that
otherwise how f'kin' transactional

JUNE 23, 2026

“

in sales, you get way more intel calling a cell than zoom ...

- informal
- more vulnerable
- you now have ability to text them

if you can, ask to call them directly, it feels different

MAY 17, 2025

“

b2b startups - if you can, it's so much more powerful for your prospect to demo for you how they do X, BEFORE you demo for them

MARCH 21, 2024

“

You can't Customer Discovery your way to a vision.

Customer Discovery is a process to test a startup/
founder's vision.

First comes vision then comes the process.

Customer Discovery in absence of a vision is empty
convo— you'd be relying on market to give you/hand
you a vision

JULY 12, 2024

“

the biggest misunderstanding in startups is
customer conversations

in early days, market/customer discovery is for
testing insight not for creating insight

DECEMBER 28, 2024

“

Startups: If you want the real, raw truth ...

- it's in hallways, NOT meetings
- it's from strangers, NOT friends
- it's in past-tense, NOT future-tense
- it's from customers, NOT investors

JUNE 15, 2023

“

in sales, when a customer educates you
on a new use case with
existing product

so, so, hot 🔥

DECEMBER 2, 2025

CHAPTER FOUR

Story, Frame & Pitch



11 aphorisms

“

in enterprise sales, the more technical/
product-oriented the pitch the faster
they delegate you down the chain of
command ...

SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

“

in enterprise sales storyline and frame
is everything

best storyteller wins ...

OCTOBER 22, 2026

“

enterprise sales is about understanding the existing corporate narrative that's being circulated

this is often “insider intel” that everyone skips over

it's about helping them neatly fit you (frame) into the existing storyline

it's never, ever actually about the product

MARCH 28, 2026

“

in enterprise sales
nothing (I mean nothing)
kills opps faster than
a group demo too soon

JUNE 2, 2026

“

in sales, i refuse to use one-pagers, slides, or
loom videos

three bullets OR we're in product together
with highly contextualized storyline

anything else, too far removed from
actual buyer

yes, this is in enterprise sales

APRIL 15, 2026

“

enterprise startups — sales decks are
waste of everyone's time

plain text email memo + no-brainer,
highly project managed paid pilot

MARCH 27, 2025

“

sales folks

re: product demo here's very under-discussed
implication...

show ONLY the 20% that drives 80% of
the value

if you show too much, there is a high risk they
consider a lot of it unusable AND thus, can't
make sense of price/value

NOVEMBER 5, 2025

“

the problem with most sales folks is you feed them more slides in the hope it aids in the deficit of their storytelling ability

storytelling is what is felt - it's the energy, reading the room, confidence, is the 'vision casting' — it's the art

it's what Founders do the best

sales reps are not founders, but they should be able to cosplay one at highest level

this is why knowing when to bring in the founder is so, so critical too

NOVEMBER 30, 2025

“

enterprise startups

position yourself where they are unable to
make a comparison

Procurement will push their colleagues to use
preferred vendors if you're not completely
differentiated

kill any comparison idea Day 1

MAY 3, 2025

“

there's a hierarchy in selling ...

1. sell the alpha
2. sell the vision
3. sell the problem (base requirement)

sell alpha is what they get celebrated for

it's a complete step-change of edge from where they are today ...

- unlock value beyond customer's team
- access to first-party information/data
- nearly wipe-out a possible liability
- ability to cut an external reliance

NOVEMBER 6, 2025

“

most of value i'm selling right now is
unrealized pain

much easier to get alignment with enterprise
when position as 'alpha or edge' VS 'pain'

iykyk

MAY 17, 2026

CHAPTER FIVE

Pricing & Value



11 aphorisms

“

in enterprise sales: if you're sharing pricing before you really understand how this is getting funded and defended internally, you're doing it all wrong ...

OCTOBER 18, 2026

“

From my startup experience, it's harder to sell low-cost things than high-cost things.

DECEMBER 27, 2023

“

startups — its much harder to get free
users to start paying than to acquire
paid users from the start

never do free pilots

JUNE 16, 2025

“

enterprise sales rule

if the executive sponsor does NOT
need to see the solution

your price/business value is too low
OR perceived to be too low

SEPTEMBER 10, 2026



a few things about pricing, mostly for enterprise startups ...

1. price is the product
2. price dictates who needs to be involved in discussions (this is actually very important)
3. lowering price seldom impacts enterprise demand
4. too high and you can overcomplicate it, lengthening sales cycle AND increasing risk of it being killed
5. land with too low of a price and you can radically stunt growth

DECEMBER 7, 2025

“

enterprise startups ... this is often counterintuitive
the market seldom wants discounts
you're negotiating with yourself OR someone junior
if they feel the value/price is mismatched, they want
more value to close that gap
i.e. 'harderworking' solution ...

SEPTEMBER 5, 2026

“

enterprise sales (account) milestones for startups ...

- Land w/team: \$100K - \$250K
- Expand w/function: \$500k-\$2MM
- Establish w/multi c-suite: \$3MM +

the land is so critical — price too low and you've set a ceiling on revenue AND attention

JANUARY 12, 2026

“

startups -- in most cases, a really high win rate
> 50% is actually NOT a good thing ...

1. price too low
2. not a healthy mix of outbound
3. a signal you're in a small market

NOVEMBER 5, 2025

“

startups: free pilots are not a
strategy nor a GTM

MARCH 15, 2025

“

in enterprise sales, pilots are the very
last stage of sales/buying process — ie
bottom-of-funnel

never, ever middle of the funnel ...

MAY 9, 2026

“

startup founders: length of the sales cycle
seldom has to do with pricing, and mostly has
to do with the complexity/buying maturity of
the organization

never sell a 'cheaper' solution in the enterprise -
negotiating with yourself

JULY 16, 2024

CHAPTER SIX

Running the Buying Process



9 aphorisms

“

there are two critical functions in sales ...

- get them into "imagine" mode
- project manage their buying process like a psychopath

JUNE 7, 2026

“

there are TWO jobs in enterprise sales ...

1. know the problem better than the customer
2. project manage the sh*t out of their buying process

somewhere we got off track and startups put
way too much focus on demos
and competitors

DECEMBER 14, 2023

“

in enterprise sales: while there might be 5 ‘sales stages’, there’s at least 15 critical steps

skip a step and 

yes, corpo is that sensitive to sales process

AUGUST 9, 2026

“

enterprise sales is about simplicity

simplicity means ...

- targeted the right person w/influence
- contained value to a single team/function (land)
- no-brainer, highly differentiated value
- ability to test/pilot to reduce risk
- take on the cost of switching, near zero for them
- pricing structures they are used i.e. NOT variable costs
- directly call/text someone they already know throughout entire relationship

note: this is sell-side's complete responsibility

DECEMBER 31, 2025

“

very counterintuitive

but in enterprise sales

slowing the sale down ... speeds it up
on their side

loaded statement, yes

MARCH 12, 2026

“

enterprise startups

it's much, much better to sell to a single team/unit/owner than it is to capture multi-team

- increase odds dramatically
- navigate dynamics one group
- co-author and make project of ONE

crossing teams decreases the land by ~ 50% ...

there's too many forces that can kill a deal ...

stay contained AND easy to expand if you can deliver obvious value

the expand is where 10X value lives anyway ...

JANUARY 31, 2026

“

almost every single enterprise deal i've closed
required the other side to co-design the sellable

- Why change ...
- Why now ...
- Why us ...

otherwise it's missing all the context, nuance,
and relevance to make it feel high-fit

MARCH 11, 2026

“

enterprise startups win by
turning the buyer into a user

FEBRUARY 22, 2025

“

enterprise startups: creative deal structuring
both excites the customer and accelerates sales/
buying cycle ...

co-author with them and get their exec. finger-
prints

never do it in isolation with hopes it lands -
always needs refinement from their side ...

MAY 21, 2025

CHAPTER SEVEN

Pipeline & Outbound



12 aphorisms

“

almost all early-stage sales pipeline came from
cold outreach AND running through walls --
not from asking folks/investors for intros

the next phase of pipeline comes from
startup's existing customers (i.e. referrals)

this is just my experience ...

MAY 9, 2025

“

almost everything magical in my career
and pipeline came from sending a cold
email/DM ...

it really, really works ...

NOVEMBER 23, 2025

“

in enterprise sales, outbound
almost always has the highest
contract values

JUNE 7, 2026

“

write your cold emails like you would
write a text message

you're welcome ...

MAY 30, 2026

“

a sales team whose role is predicated on being handed inbound leads is not sales-led; it's marketing-led

DECEMBER 24, 2024

“

The more professional your email, the lower the conversion rate.

DECEMBER 29, 2021

“

here's a 'sales take' that you likely haven't seen before ...

enterprise inbound leads are great (obvious) BUT the not so obvious implication is that they are often educated by someone else in market

they inbound because they're in 'buying phase'

BUT someone has pre-shaped their point of view/expectations ...

the biggest leading indicator of someone that's likely been educated by a competitor, is an inbound that is mid-level

it's the tell-tale sign that the search for a solution has been delegated ...

startups, be mindful of this

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

“

startups — sales intros from investors
and friends are often the least qualified
leads ...

the best ones usually don't do it ...

MAY 26, 2025

“

the less time I spend on email;
the higher the response/
reply rate

SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

“

startups: cold outbound really, really works if
you can incorporate relevant, industry-specific
nuance paired with right problem

personalization for personalization
seldom works

FEBRUARY 6, 2025

“

maybe your sales outreach is saying too much, you've left nothing to the imagination ...

the secret ...

FEBRUARY 13, 2025

“

a startup seldom has a
‘closing problem’,
it’s often a qualification problem
said differently, they spent time and
energy on the wrong prospects

JULY 11, 2024

CHAPTER EIGHT

Signals & Red Flags



10 aphorisms

“

startups, here's enterprise decoded ...

1. 'circle back' = dead
2. 'get it done asap' = within 90 days
3. 'send me what I can share internally' = 3 bullets
4. 'this is exciting' = let me play a role in shaping this for us internally
5. 'send me your paper' = i will send you mine back
6. 'how much time is needed' = 30min OR less
7. 'I will bring my boss' = I expect a match in seniority
8. 'no questions from my side' = I have no idea what just happened
9. 'this price seems fair' = this falls below what I had budgeted
10. 'give me time' = stop following up

OCTOBER 20, 2026

“

in enterprise sales

the more excitement they show on first
call; the more a red flag

real, real opportunities play it cool

SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

“

the yucks for an enterprise exec; often leads to ghosting ...

- sub \$100K price tag
- skipping steps in sales process
- \$MM price tag and no stage gates
- saying 'yes' to all their requests
- highly technical pitch
- sellers role not at parity with buy-side

OCTOBER 25, 2026

“

in enterprise sales, a deal is only qualified if you are texting and able to call without calendar event ...

JUNE 10, 2026

“

in enterprise market, here's where you will waste a ton of time ...

- asking for a case study
- brings 3+ folks to any call
- communicates beyond 1 level
- “I’ve said this for years ...”
- keeps their camera off
- next step is 2+ weeks out
- won’t give you their cell
- not comfortable sharing inside gossip

MAY 13, 2026

“

in enterprise sales, anyone asking for a case study is a distraction and unqualified ...

MARCH 22, 2026

“

startups — enterprise deals get
closed via text

JUNE 5, 2025

“

how is this not more obvious?

- no one clicks the link
- no one looks at looms
- no one hits “see more”
- no one looks at case studies
- no one looks at your attachments

unless, it's co-authored ...

MAY 16, 2026

“

startups: anyone that asks for ‘sales collateral’ as a next step

negative signal

JANUARY 16, 2026

“

"yo, check this out"

- is the language of PMF
whether B2C or Enterprise

MAY 27, 2025

CHAPTER NINE

The Craft



19 aphorisms

“

re: enterprise sales

still till this day, i say to myself

stop overthinking, shorten it, and
hit send

SEPTEMBER 18, 2026

“

in sales ...

over-preparing wins

(scenario planning)

over-thinking kills (stacking ideas)

OCTOBER 23, 2026

“

sales is actually really, really fun
it's a lot more creative and
entrepreneurial than anyone gives
credit to

MARCH 11, 2025

“

sales folks:

- shorten your meetings
- shorten your emails
- shorten your pitch

everyone is so long-winded

AUGUST 25, 2025

“

Never join a startup where the sales team leads the product roadmap.

DECEMBER 16, 2023

“

in sales, speed to reply is a sign
of respect to buy-side

DECEMBER 28, 2025

“

the best sales folks I know never got trained in sales OR started their career there — just sorta figured it out AND actively avoided following playbook sales advice

MARCH 26, 2025

“

folks way, way overcomplicate sales
they default to this unauthentic mode over trying to
cosplay a salesperson
over small talk, over question, over write, over pitch, etc.
it's literally the opposite
this is why founders are so naturally good at sales,
passion is what leads

JULY 26, 2026

“

enterprise sales is creativity, precision,
and friendship

it's seldom taught

JUNE 26, 2025

“

sales is

>> turning a no into a yes

>> turning a non-consumer into a consumer

>> altering someone's perspective/view

the other stuff is catching what marketing/brand
is producing

creating sales is far more entrepreneurial than we give
credit to

SEPTEMBER 13, 2025

“

the fastest way to get ahead

learn sales

NOVEMBER 6, 2024

“

the more you think about the
text or email, the more sales-y it
becomes ...

APRIL 20, 2026

“

non-sales talent make the best
sales talent

APRIL 25, 2026

“

sales is 1:1, there's no scaling it

it's an art, a craft, something to
be admired

any sales that's scaled is mostly just slop

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025

“

in enterprise sales

it really only works if you are super confident
in both product and value

you can have a much harder sparring
conversation with exec.

sometimes you just need to just say the quiet
truth out-loud

JANUARY 16, 2026

“

sales folks: every course, playbook, bootcamp,
95% of my tweets, etc. is exhausted

the only thing that matters is finding the
weird, obscure way that works ... until
it doesn't

chase the unknown, obscure path ...

this is what AI can't replace ...

FEBRUARY 7, 2025

“

i am never not stressed about sales pipeline
continually neurotic about every deal,
every touchpoint
nothing is guaranteed
stay crazy and obsessed

FEBRUARY 8, 2026

“

sales is a beautiful, beautiful thing
people have problems and want solutions
just make sure you're selling something you
actually believe in, that's 90% of it ...
the market can truly feel it too

DECEMBER 6, 2024

“

bring the art back to sales

AUGUST 28, 2025

Sources

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36	only three things matter in enterprise sales ... 1. is... x.com/jjen_abel/status/2103097657803555022	2026-09-24	939
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