

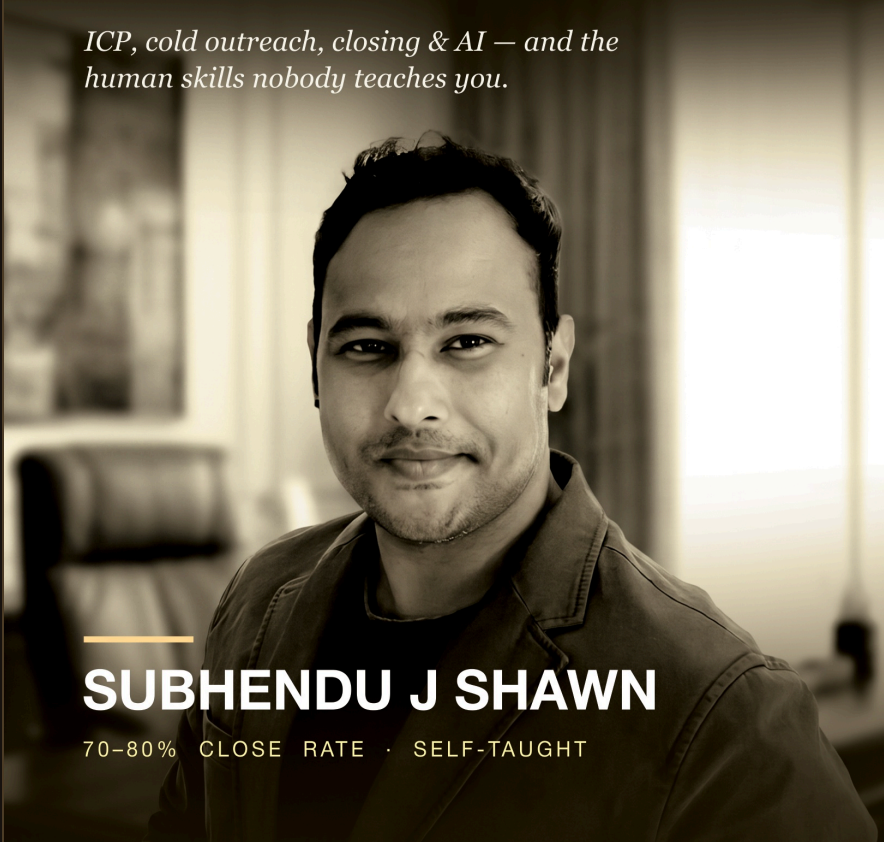
A B2B SALES PLAYBOOK
THE FIRST FIVE YEARS



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SELLING IS JUST A CONVERSATION

*ICP, cold outreach, closing & AI — and the
human skills nobody teaches you.*

A portrait of Subhendu J Shawn, a man with dark hair and a slight beard, wearing a dark jacket over a black shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred office interior with a window and some furniture.

SUBHENDU J SHAWN

70-80% CLOSE RATE · SELF-TAUGHT

FREE CHAPTER · COMING SOON

Selling Is Hard. And That's Okay.

Is sales really your cup of tea? Here's the honest answer nobody gives you.

This is going to be the toughest fun since I graduated from college.

That is what I said to myself on the first day of my sales career. Not out loud. Quietly, standing outside a stranger's door in Delhi, holding a Radisson hotel membership brochure, wearing the best shirt I owned.

I was terrified. I had no script. No training. No idea what I was doing. I had a target, a product I barely understood, and the next five seconds.

I knocked. The door opened. A man looked at me the way every prospect looks at every salesperson — with that immediate, instinctive question: should I trust this person, or close the door?

I didn't pitch him. I didn't perform. I just talked to him. Honestly. I answered his questions. I admitted what I didn't know. I had a conversation.

He bought.

Not because I was good at sales. Because I was human. And that one moment — standing in that corridor with a pounding heart and an honest face — taught me more about selling than any training programme ever could.

"Toughest fun." Both words matter. Drop either one and you're lying to yourself about what this career actually is.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SALES NOBODY SAYS OUT LOUD

Selling is hard.

I don't mean hard like a difficult exam. I mean hard like walking into a room where nobody invited you, trying to earn the trust of someone who has seventeen other things to do today, and doing it again — and again — and again — even after twenty rejections in a row.

That is the reality. And almost nobody tells you this before you start.

They tell you about the commissions. The incentive trips. The leaderboards. They don't tell you about the prospect who abuses you over the phone because you called at the wrong time with the wrong product. They don't tell you about the fumbled call where you go blank, the prospect asks you a simple question, and you have no answer — and they hang up.

They don't tell you that some weeks you will question everything. Not just your skills. Your identity. Whether you are even built for this.

I know that feeling. I lived inside it.

But here is what I also know — the same weeks that broke my brain cells, built my best skills. Because in sales, hard and fun are not opposites. They are the same thing wearing different clothes on different days.

THE FEAR IS NORMAL. AND IT IS USEFUL.

Every sales rep reading this book is carrying some version of the same fear. Let me name it so you don't have to:

- Am I cut out for this?
- What if I can't hit my numbers?
- What if I say the wrong thing on a call?
- What if I'm just not a natural salesperson?

These are not signs that sales is wrong for you. They are signs that you are paying attention.

The rep who walks into their first week with zero fear is not confident. They are uninformed. Fear in the early days of a sales career means you understand the stakes. And understanding the stakes means you are already ahead of most people who start.

The question is not whether you feel fear. The question is what you do with it.

I picked up the phone anyway. I knocked on the door anyway. I sent the cold email with a typo in it, then sent a follow-up correcting the typo, and somehow that second email got a reply. Every broken brain cell moment was a lesson wearing a disguise.

"Every sales call — good or bad, won or lost — is a training session. Walk in expecting to learn something new every single time."

SALES IS A SKILL. NOT A TALENT.

This is the most important thing in this entire chapter.

Most people believe that great salespeople are born. They picture someone loud, charismatic, naturally persuasive — and they think: that's just not who I am.

They are wrong. And I am the proof.

I started selling hotel membership cards door to door. I moved to call centres. I did B2C collections. I went back to customer service. I spent years in roles that had nothing to do with B2B — and I figured everything out completely alone. No mentor. No playbook. No one who sat with me and said: here is how this works.

Everything I know came from self-learning. Books. Podcasts. YouTube videos watched at midnight. And most importantly — treating every single call as a classroom. Win or lose. Good conversation or terrible one. Each one taught me something.

The rep who approaches sales as a learnable skill — who goes into every call thinking "what will I figure out today?" — will outperform the "natural" every single time. Because naturals stop learning. Learners never do.

After fifteen years of doing this, here is what I know for certain about sales ability:

The 5 Things That Actually Make a Great Salesperson

- 1 Curiosity** — Asking better questions than anyone else in the room. This is learnable.
- 2 Emotional intelligence** — Reading how someone feels, not just what they say. This is learnable.
- 3 Preparation** — Knowing your prospect better than they expect. This is learnable.
- 4 Consistency** — Showing up with the same energy on call 40 as on call 1. This is learnable.
- 5 Resilience** — Getting rejected and coming back without shrinking. This is learnable.

Notice what is not on that list. Loudness. Aggression. Natural charm. A certain type of personality.

Everything that makes someone great at sales is a skill. And every skill in this book can be learned by anyone — from anywhere, at any stage.

SALES IS HOW YOU TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FINANCIAL LIFE

Let's talk about money. Directly. Without dressing it up in purpose or passion language.

Sales is the highest-paying skill you can build without a professional degree. A great salesperson earns more than most engineers, most lawyers, most MBAs — not eventually, but within five years of genuinely mastering the craft.

More importantly — a great salesperson is never truly without options. In any economy. In any job market. In any crisis. If you can sell, you can always find a way to generate income, build something, or help a business grow. Companies stop hiring for many roles when money gets tight. They never stop hiring for salespeople who can actually close.

This is what I mean when I say: become the CEO of your own sales career. Not an employee waiting to be managed. Not a rep hoping for a better territory. A self-directed, self-learning, financially independent professional who owns their number — and their life.

That is what this book is building toward. Not a better quota attainment. A career that gives you freedom.

AI PROMPT Use this with Claude, ChatGPT, or any AI assistant

"I am a new B2B sales rep at a [type of company – e.g. SaaS startup / IT services firm / logistics company]. I have been in the role for [X months]. I am feeling [describe how you feel – nervous / overwhelmed / unsure where to start]. Help me understand: what are the 3 most important things I should focus on learning in my first 90 days to build a strong foundation in B2B sales? Give me practical, specific actions – not generic advice."

What the AI will give you:

A personalised 90-day learning roadmap built around your exact company type, your experience level, and the specific skills that will move your numbers fastest. Use this as your starting plan on day one.

STORY

Priya's First Week

Priya was 23. Commerce graduate. Eight months of looking for a job that felt like it was going somewhere. When the SaaS startup in Bengaluru called her back for the SDR role, she said yes before they finished the sentence.

Day one. She arrived early. The office was a single floor above a café in Koramangala. Her manager, Rohan, showed her a desk, opened a Google Sheet with two hundred company names, and said: “Your target is fifteen meetings a month. Tools are on your laptop. Any questions?”

Priya had a hundred questions. She asked none of them.

She spent the next three days reading. Product documentation. Competitor pages. G2 reviews. Case studies. She told herself she was preparing. She was not preparing. She was hiding. Because as long as she was reading, she didn't have to pick up the phone.

On day four, Rohan walked past her desk at 11am. “How many calls today?”

“I'm still researching.”

He pulled up a chair. “Priya. You will never feel ready. The phone is your classroom. Everything else is just delay.” He stood up and walked away.

She stared at the screen for four minutes. Then she dialled the first number on the list.

It rang. Someone picked up. And Priya's mind went completely blank.

She had rehearsed her opening line forty times. In that moment, it was gone. "Hello — um — hi, I'm calling from—" The person on the other end said "not interested" before she could finish her company name. The line went dead.

She sat back. Her face was hot. She looked around the office to see if anyone had noticed. Nobody was watching.

She dialled again. This time she got through her opening line. The person asked what the software did. She answered. They asked about pricing. She didn't know the pricing off the top of her head — she had read it three days ago and now it was gone. She said she would send a follow-up email. They said fine. They never replied to the email.

By the end of day four she had made nine calls. No meetings booked. Two people had been rude. Three had hung up mid-sentence. Two had said "send me an email" — which she knew, even then, meant no.

She sat in her car in the basement parking for twenty minutes before driving home. She didn't cry. She just sat there, engine off, phone face down on the passenger seat, staring at the steering wheel.

She thought: I am not good at this. I should not have taken this job. Maybe sales is just not for me.

She drove home. She had dinner. She opened her laptop.

And she wrote down — in a notes app, just for herself — everything she had noticed on those nine calls. Which job titles had picked up. Which opening line had kept someone on the phone for more than ten seconds. What the two rude people had in common. Why the second call had gone slightly better than the first.

She did not know it then. But that notes app — that simple, private, honest record of what she was learning — was the beginning of her system.

By week three she was making twenty-five calls a day without dreading it. By week six she had booked her first meeting — a real one, where the person actually showed up. By month three she was hitting eleven meetings. Not fifteen yet. But eleven. And she knew exactly what she needed to work on to get to fifteen.

The Priya who sat in that car on day four — convinced she was not built for this — was not wrong about what she felt. She was wrong about what it meant.

The hardest day of your career is not a sign that you should quit. It is your first training session. And unlike every training programme your company will ever give you — this one is real.

YOUR 24-HOUR ACTION

Open a notebook — physical or digital, your choice. Write today's date at the top.

Under it, write your honest answer to this question: "Right now, what do I believe is the biggest thing standing between me and being good at sales?"

Don't edit it. Don't make it sound professional. Just write the truth.

This page becomes your baseline. Every chapter in this book addresses something on that list. By the time you finish, you will read this page again — and it will feel like it was written by a different person.

That person is who you are about to become.

THAT WAS CHAPTER 1 OF 21

The rest of the conversation is coming soon.

ICP, research, cold email, cold calls, LinkedIn, discovery, objections, closing, follow-up and AI.

The B2B sales playbook for your first five years.

You're on the list, so you'll hear first when the book launches.

Until then, follow along on LinkedIn for a new lesson every week.

Follow Shawn J on LinkedIn

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