

REVENUEOS FIELD BRIEF · OCTOBER 2026

Are you here to buy a car?

Why the sellers who say no early are the ones who close,
and how to decide who earns your time.

366%

Top performers are 366% more likely to close
an opportunity out at the discovery stage.
The publisher reads it as early
disqualification.

Ebsta & Pavilion, B2B Sales Benchmarks 2024. 4.2 million
opportunities, 530 companies.

A NOTE BEFORE THE NUMBERS

Time is the only thing a seller has to invest in pipeline. The best sellers I've worked with are strict about who earns it, and the research we've brought together in this brief suggests that strictness is one of the clearest marks of a top performer.

The story that summed it up for me happened over dinner in Casablanca a few years ago. My host was Monsieur Laraki, President of the Toyota and Lexus dealerships for all of Morocco. He told me about a saleswoman in one of his Casablanca showrooms who was outselling the next best person on the floor two to one. He'd been curious enough to go and watch her himself.

When a customer walked in, she asked one question.

"Are you here to buy a car?"

If they were browsing, or wanted a brochure, she handed them to a colleague, politely and straight away.

I said that sounded like a poor first experience for the customer. He agreed. Then he explained why it worked. She never spent an hour on someone with no budget and no intent, so that every hour she had went to the buyers who were ready. The closed deals kept landing with her.

What I didn't fully get until Monsieur Laraki spelled it out for me was that she didn't turn the browsers away. She routed them. That's the idea at the centre of these pages: be strict about who earns your selling time, and hand nurture to the people built for it so your hours go to the buyers who are ready.

What follows is the research evidence, a simple model for deciding who earns your time, and what I'd ask a sales leader to change. If any of it resonates, or you disagree and see it differently, I'm always happy to talk and learn more.



Richard McGuinness

Founder, The RevenueOS

Who earns your time

Top performers protect their hours by disqualifying early. In the largest benchmark available, looking at 4.2 million opportunities across 530 companies, top sellers were 366% more likely to close an opportunity out at the discovery stage. An independent academic study shows the mechanism: ending going-nowhere sales conversations sooner and reinvesting the time lifted expected sales by up to 37%.

Good disqualification is routing. Sellers measured on closed-won should be strict about who earns their selling time, and hand nurture and brand building to the teams that own them, with a clear trigger for re-engagement.

It can be overdone. Most real buying committees are messy, and difficulty alone is no reason to walk away. The test is whether the buyer is making progress towards a decision.

An hour spent on a buyer who was never going to buy is an hour taken from one who was.

WHY IT HAPPENS

The system pays for “maybe”

A seller's hours are finite and cannot be delegated. Every discovery call, demo, proposal and deal review draws on them. Yet most commercial systems reward volume: pipeline coverage targets, activity dashboards, and a culture that celebrates only closed-won.

In that environment “maybe” costs nothing to keep and “no” looks like failure. Sellers holding on to weak deals are responding sensibly to the incentives in front of them. The fix starts with the system.

HEADLINE EVIDENCE

What the data says

Benchmark and academic figures lead. Vendor-summary figures are flagged as directional.

Metric	Figure	Source and note
Top performers more likely to close an opportunity at discovery	366%	Ebsta & Pavilion 2024, p.13. 4.2m opportunities, 530 companies. Measures closing out, not winning; Ebsta attributes it to early disqualification.
Top performers more likely to disqualify non-ICP deals early	24%	Ebsta & Pavilion 2025. 655k opportunities, 387 companies. Relative comparison.
Low performers' deals more likely to slip at a late stage	217%	Ebsta & Pavilion 2025. Same dataset.
Less time spent on failed calls using a "when to quit" model, nearly all sales kept	54%	Manzoor, Ascarza & Netzer 2025 (Cornell, HBS, Columbia). 11,627 outbound calls, European telecoms cross-sell. Independent.
Expected sales uplift from reinvesting that time	Up to 37%	Same study. Modelled; assumes ample lead supply; high-volume setting.
Win rate, well vs poorly qualified deals DIRECTIONAL	50% vs 8%	Ebsta press release, Aug 2025. Qualification not defined; same dataset as 2025 benchmark.
B2B buying teams showing unhealthy conflict	74%	Gartner, May 2025. 632 buyers surveyed Aug to Sep 2024.
Consensus groups more likely to report a high-quality deal	2.5x	Gartner, May 2025. Buyer-rated, correlation only.
Buyer contacts on deals that close vs those that don't	2x	Gong, April 2025. 1.8m new-business deals closed in 2024.

Win rate by qualification quality **DIRECTIONAL**



Source: Ebsta, 4 August 2025. Publisher summary; full methodology not public.

Three situations, three actions

Every open opportunity sits in one of three situations. Each has a different right action and only one of them deserves the majority of a seller's hours.

01

Poor fit

You can't solve the problem economically, or they can't buy.

Exit cleanly, and say why.

02

Right customer, no buying process

Fits the profile. No project, budget or deadline.

Route to nurture with a re-engagement trigger. Keep out of the forecast.

03

Credible buyer, real obstacles

A decision is being made, and it's messy.

Invest. Help them reach consensus. Test progress at every stage.

Don't mistake difficult for disqualified

Situation three is where disqualification gets overdone. Gartner found that 74% of B2B buying teams show unhealthy conflict during the decision, and that groups which reach consensus are 2.5 times more likely to report a high-quality deal. Gong's analysis of 1.8 million deals closed in 2024 found that deals which closed had twice as many buyer contacts as those that didn't.

Difficult buying is often what real buying looks like. A tangled committee is a reason to investigate and gives sellers an opportunity to help them untangle it. The question to keep asking is whether the buyer is making progress, and what new evidence earns the next hour of your time.

She didn't reject the browsers. She routed them.

The three situations are RevenueOS operating distinctions drawn from the evidence and built from our OS Operators' experience.

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Five habits for sales leaders

Ask the earning question at every stage

What new buyer evidence justifies the next investment of time? Qualification continues well past the first meeting.

Route with a note

A handback to marketing names why, and what would bring the buyer back. Without that, it is a bounce.

Make the exit as cheap as the maybe

Part of why weak deals linger is admin. Closing one out properly means updating the opportunity, writing the handback note, telling marketing and setting a date to look again. An AI agent working inside your CRM can do all of it in the time it takes to say “route it”: pass the lead to nurture with its reason code, update the stage, schedule the re-engagement check and notify the team that owns it. The seller makes the call. The agent does the paperwork, quickly and cleanly.

Recognise a well-made exit

If closed-won is the only outcome anyone celebrates, people keep deals alive to avoid the other conversation.

Measure what disqualification protects

- Selling hours spent on eventual losses
- Time to identify a poor-fit deal
- Late-stage slippage and close-date changes
- Revenue or gross profit per seller

Never set the number of rejected opportunities as a target.

THE TRAP: WIN-RATE INFLATION

20 / 100

20% win rate

20 / 50

40% win rate, after removing 50 weak deals

Same 20 sales. Disqualification has to show up in absolute output. Track revenue per seller alongside conversion, and keep funnel definitions consistent.

Start here

Disqualification is one of the sharpest disciplines a sales team can build, and one of the least supported by the systems around it. The systems are also the easiest part to change, and AI now takes most of the friction out of routing. Start here:

- 01 Agree your team's version of "are you here to buy a car?" Write it down.
- 02 Define the three situations for your market, with the evidence that places a deal in each.
- 03 Build the handback to marketing: a reason code, a re-engagement trigger, and an agent that carries it out in seconds.
- 04 Change what gets recognised. Add well-made exits to the pipeline review.
- 05 Swap one volume metric for hours spent on eventual losses.

What the evidence does not show

- **Causation.** The benchmarks are observational. Territory, lead source and experience may explain part of the gap.
- **That rejecting more always raises revenue.** The academic gain depends on a ready supply of similar prospects.
- **That difficult buyers are poor-fit buyers.** Gartner and Gong point the other way.
- **That top sellers carry smaller pipelines.** Ebsta's commentary suggests they manage more opportunities, not fewer.

A note on sources. The largest datasets come from Ebsta and Pavilion. Sample sizes are large, but full methodology is not public and the reports share an evidence base, so they are not counted as independent confirmations. The 50% vs 8% figure comes from a publisher summary and is treated as directional. The academic study is independent but set in high-volume telecoms selling. Figures circulating on slides alongside this research (250% more ROI per hour; 7 relationships vs 1.5; 50% of time on accounts producing 20% of revenue) could not be traced to a primary source and are excluded.

Sources. Ebsta & Pavilion, *B2B Sales Benchmarks 2024*. Ebsta & Pavilion, *GTM Benchmarks 2025* (March 2025). Ebsta, Sales Qualification Report release (4 August 2025). Ebsta, *How Top Performers Use Qualification to Drive Both Focus and Scale* (24 July 2025). Manzoor, Ascarza & Netzer, *Learning When to Quit in Sales Conversations*, arXiv:2511.01181 (3 November 2025). Gartner press release (7 May 2025). Gong, *Data shows top reps don't just sell, they orchestrate (with AI)* (28 April 2025).