

Three Whys Forecasting

Forecast what the buyer is doing — not what your reps are doing.

Source: Sales Assembly Revenue Manager Lab
Module 2: Process for Forecasting Accuracy



THE PROBLEM

Every problem in sales today existed 100 years ago — except one. There's almost no record of leaders struggling with forecasting before the 1980s. What changed? CRMs. They replaced AIDA (*Attention, Interest, Desire, Action* — the 1898 buyer-behavior model) with seller-centric stages: *qualify, demo, propose, negotiate, close*. Today every dashboard tracks what the seller is doing, not what the buyer is doing. Forecasts are inaccurate by design.

THE FRAMEWORK: LAYER BUYER BEHAVIOR OVER YOUR EXISTING STAGES

Don't blow up your CRM. Layer the **Three Whys** on top of it. Every buyer goes through these three questions in order. Track *what they're doing* at each one — not what your rep last sent them.

STAGE	WHAT THE BUYER IS DOING	WHAT THE SELLER SHOULD DO	CLOSE %
WHY CHANGE	Engaged · curious · expressing issues · requesting references	Teach · ask · qualify (TEMPT)	10–25%
WHY YOU	Mutual learning · putting you on the calendar · transparency about fit	Collaborate · tailored pros & cons	30–50%
WHY NOW	Selected · engaged in process · paperwork · contracts in motion	Support process · remove friction	60–90%*

**The Why Now ceiling is ~90%, never 100%. Even a signed contract on a CFO's desk can fall through.*

HOW TO APPLY IT

- 1 Change the question in every pipeline review.** Stop asking “*did you send the proposal?*” Start asking “*what is the buyer doing? If I called them right now, what would they say?*” Reps will start hunting for the answer in real life.
- 2 Kill the word “commit.”** Reps can't commit to something they don't control. It creates a petri dish for lies — overpromise, underdeliver, hold dead deals too long. Use **math, not gut**: calculate forecast = (deal \$) × (historic stage close %). One leader hit a \$6M target within \$12K using this.
- 3 Set time limits per stage.** A deal sitting in *Why Change* for three weeks isn't progressing — it's stalling. Add a days-in-stage range to every stage. When deals exceed it, ask: *is the buyer still engaged?*
- 4 Choose accuracy over volume.** 4× pipeline coverage usually means 4× of garbage. Reward reps for fully-qualified 2× pipelines that close 50%, not bloated 4× lists that close 25%. Volume hides bad coaching.

THE IDEA THAT STICKS

“When you stop measuring what your seller is doing and start measuring what the buyer is doing, your forecast accuracy goes up, your relationships go up, and your customers turn into advocates. Forecasting takes care of itself.”