

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE SALES

Course code	<i>MNG280</i>
Compulsory in the programmes	<i>Entrepreneurship and Innovation</i>
Level of studies	<i>Undergraduate</i>
Number of credits	<i>3 ECTS (24 contact hours + 3 consultation hours, 53 individual work hours)</i>
Course coordinator (title and name)	<i>Erik Ackner</i>
Prerequisites	<i>None</i>
Language of instruction	<i>English</i>

THE AIM OF THE COURSE:

This course equips undergraduate entrepreneurship students with the practical sales, business development, and negotiation skills they need to win their first customers and build repeatable revenue. Moving beyond theory, students engage with the frameworks and field-tested techniques of world-class sales practitioners, from structured discovery and consultative selling to FBI-grade negotiation tactics.

Students will practice the full startup sales cycle: identifying ideal customers, crafting a compelling sales story, conducting discovery calls, handling objections, negotiating deals, and building a repeatable sales playbook. The course bridges academic frameworks (Ury's principled negotiation, Dixon's Challenger methodology, Voss's tactical empathy) with the hustle-driven, founder-led sales mindset championed by Steli Efti and Mike Weinberg.

MAPPING OF COURSE LEVEL LEARNING OUTCOMES (OBJECTIVES) WITH DEGREE LEVEL LEARNING OBJECTIVES (See Annex), ASSESMENT AND TEACHING METHODS

#	Course level learning outcomes (objectives)	Degree level learning objectives (Number of LO)	Assessment methods	Teaching methods
CLO1	Develop a structured sales playbook for a product or business idea, applying frameworks from Weinberg, Dixon, and Efti	BLO 1.1. BLO 1.2	Group Project + Final Presentation	Final presentation, group task, and individual reflection
CLO2	Apply consultative and Challenger selling methodology to uncover real customer needs and build a value-based sales process	BLO 1.1.	Role-Play Exercises + Reflection	Final presentation, group task, and individual reflection
CLO3	Use proven negotiation techniques (Voss's Tactical Empathy, Ury's BATNA, principled negotiation) to handle objections and close deals	BLO 1.1	Negotiation Simulations	Final presentation, group task, and individual reflection
CLO4	Qualify prospects effectively using an Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) and structured discovery questions	BLO 3.1 BLO 3.2	Discovery Call Exercise	Final presentation, group task, and individual reflection
CLO5	Craft and deliver a compelling sales story that links customer pain points, value proposition, and closing criteria	BLO 4.1	Group Pitch to "Investors"	Final presentation, group task, and individual reflection

CLO6	Design a first-customer acquisition strategy appropriate for an early-stage startup or entrepreneurial venture	BLO 4.2	Group Project	Final presentation, group task, and individual reflection
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ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

The ISM University of Management and Economics Code of Ethics, including cheating and plagiarism are fully applicable and will be strictly enforced in the course. Academic dishonesty, and cheating can and will lead to a report to the ISM Committee of Ethics. With regard to remote learning, ISM remind students that they are expected to adhere and maintain the same academic honesty and integrity that they would in a classroom setting.

COURSE OUTLINE

Topic	In-class hours	Readings
Setting the stage. Why every entrepreneur must sell. The psychology of sales and overcoming the fear of rejection. Introduction to the modern sales cycle and the difference between selling a product and solving a problem. Students map their own sales assumptions and identify their first potential customer segment.	4	Steli Efti, "From 0 to 1,000 Customers & Beyond" (free, Close.com), Chapters 1–3 Weinberg, New Sales Simplified, Chapters 1–3 (overview of why new sales fails) Close.com Sales Strategy Template, review the S.M.A.R.T. goals and ICP sections
Building a prospecting engine. How to choose who to target (and who to turn away). Crafting a compelling sales story that leads with customer pain, not product features. Introduction to the Challenger methodology: Teaching, Tailoring, Taking Control.	4	Weinberg, New Sales Simplified, Chapters 4–7 (sales story, target selection, prospecting) Dixon & Adamson, The Challenger Sale, Chapters 1–4 (the five profiles; why Challengers win) Efti, "How to Qualify Prospects & Leads" (Close.com blog)
The consultative sales conversation. How to run a discovery call that uncovers real needs. SPIN Selling questions (Situation, Problem, Implication, Need-payoff). Qualifying with purpose. Voss's calibrated questions in a sales context: using "How" and "What" to gather intelligence.	4	Dixon & Adamson, The Challenger Sale, Chapters 5–7 (commercial teaching; tailoring; taking control) Voss, Never Split the Difference, Chapters 1–4 (active listening, mirroring, labeling, calibrated questions) Efti, "How to Run a Demo That Sells" (Close.com blog)
Exercise Day: The negotiation session. Overcoming the fear of saying and hearing "No." Ury's five breakthrough steps for difficult negotiations. Voss's Tactical Empathy and Accusation Audit in a B2B sales context. How to handle pricing conversations. The Ackerman model. When and how to close. Knowing your BATNA and the prospect's BATNA.	4	Ury, Getting Past No, entire book (approx. 150 pages — core text for this session) Voss, Never Split the Difference, Chapters 5–9 (Accusation Audit, Ackerman model, Black Swans) Close.com, Sales Strategy Template: Negotiate and Finalize the Deal sections
Putting it all together. Moving from individual sales conversations to a repeatable system. Building your minimum viable sales documentation (script, email templates, objection doc). Introduction to CRM and pipeline management. Time-blocking and prospecting discipline. Group projects present their draft sales strategy for peer feedback. Preparation for the final examination session.	4	Weinberg, New Sales Simplified, Chapters 9–12 (time management, personal business plan, executing) Efti, "The Ultimate Startup Sales Guide" (Close.com blog)
Course Evaluation Each group runs an imitated customer meeting (lecturer + guests). For this, they must brief the lecturer in advance with their solution, customer profile. The lecturer (plus guests) will then assume the role of the customer.	3	TBA

Each team must demonstrate: (1) validated ICP and value proposition, (2) sales story and objection handling, (3) negotiation plan with BATNA. Afterwards, each team member must submit self-written reflection (500 words) submitted digitally by end of day.		
Feedback and Recap session Summarizing learnings, students will share experience and reflect on themselves. Recap on all learned frameworks. AMA mentoring session to provide guidance for future projects and entrepreneurial journey	1	TBA
	Total 24 hours	
CONSULTATIONS	3	
FINAL EXAM	2	

FINAL GRADE COMPOSITION

Type of assignment	%
<i>Group Components 60%</i>	
Final Presentation	60
<i>Individual Components 40 %</i>	
Individual Reflection (500 words), Submitted Dec 14. Synthesizes key personal insights from the course with specific action implications for the student's own entrepreneurial path.	20
In-Class Participation & Exercises (Active engagement in role-plays, workshops, and discussions. Quality of contributions, not just presence. Includes daily preparation.)	20
Total:	100

DESCRIPTION AND GRADING CRITERIA OF EACH ASSIGNMENT

(Provide short descriptions and grading criteria of each assignment)

1. **The in-class contribution** will count for 20% of the final grade. It may include participation in discussions on the topic of the lecture, participation in group and individual problem-solving tasks. **Students are expected to BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS VARIOUS QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC.**
2. **The group project** will count for 60% of the final grade. It will be based on an imitated customer sales meeting, including pre-meeting briefing documentation.
3. **The Individual Reflection** will count for 20% and is the link between both the in-class learnings and the group project. It helps each individual to both look back and ahead for their personal development and projects.

Re-taking. Students groups have the right to re-take the Final Presentation. It will account for **60%** of the final grade. **The individual assignments cannot be resubmitted at a later time**

USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Generative AI is already part of professional sales practice in prospecting, account research, outreach, call preparation and CRM work and students are expected to become competent users of these tools and equally competent at judging where their output is generic, inaccurate or tone-deaf. The guiding rule is simple: AI may support your preparation, but it may not replace your judgement, and it cannot sell for you. Students remain fully responsible for everything they submit, write or say, including any factual error, fabricated reference, invented statistic or unexamined assumption produced by an AI tool.

Preparing the customer meeting: briefing documentation and sales materials (60%)

In preparing the group project, the use of generative AI is permitted and encouraged. Teams may use AI tools:

- to research the customer, the industry, the market and comparable solutions, and to structure what they find;
- to develop the ideal customer profile, qualification criteria and target selection, and to challenge the team's own choices;
- to draft discovery and calibrated question sets, the sales story, the value proposition and objection-handling material;
- to prepare the pre-meeting briefing documentation, email templates and supporting sales documentation;
- to rehearse by asking an AI tool to play a difficult customer, raise objections or stress-test the team's pitch before the real meeting;
- to improve the quality of written and spoken English.

What must remain the team's own work is the reasoning the project is assessed on: the choice of customer and the logic of qualifying them, the pain the solution addresses and the evidence for it, the structure of the sales story, the negotiation strategy and its BATNA, and everything said and decided in the meeting itself. Teams should be able to explain why they took the approach they did and why they set aside the alternatives including those an AI tool proposed.

The customer meeting itself

The imitated customer meeting is live and unaided. No form of real-time AI assistance may be used during it, no prompting through a second device, screen, earpiece or chat window, and no AI tool listening to the conversation and suggesting responses. The meeting assesses each student's own listening, judgement and composure under pressure, which is precisely what cannot be delegated. Recording, transcription or AI notetaking tools may not be used during the meeting without the prior consent of the lecturer and any guests taking part.

Honest representation

This course teaches persuasion, and that makes accuracy a professional obligation rather than a formality. AI tools must not be used to fabricate customer references, testimonials, case studies, logos, credentials or performance figures, and no AI-generated material may be presented as a real customer's words or a real organisation's endorsement. Claims about market size, competitors, pricing or the product must be verifiable, and AI tools invent such details readily and convincingly. Where students contact real companies during the course, any message sent in their name must be accurate about who they are and what they are asking, and they remain personally responsible for its content. The methods this course teaches principled negotiation, tactical empathy, consultative selling all depend on a trust that a single fabricated claim destroys.

Individual Reflection (20%)

The Individual Reflection must be written by the student without the use of AI tools. It asks what the student personally took from the course and what it means for their own entrepreneurial path material an AI tool has no access to. Five hundred words of fluent, general reflection is worth considerably less here than a rough, specific and honest one, and will be assessed accordingly. A reflection that is evidently not the student's own will not be accepted and will be handled under the ISM Code of Ethics.

In-class participation, role-plays and exercises (20%)

Participation is assessed on the quality of contribution and on daily preparation. Students are expected to read the assigned material themselves; an AI summary of Ury, Voss, Dixon or Weinberg read in place of the text will not support the quality of contribution this component rewards, and it shows in a role-play. Role-plays, negotiation simulations and discovery exercises are live and unaided; in other in-class tasks, AI tools may be used only where the task description or the lecturer states that they may.

Confidentiality

Students must not enter personal or confidential data into generative AI tools. This includes the personal data of guests taking part in the meetings, information shared in confidence by a real company or prospect, and any recording or transcript of a role-play or customer meeting. Where research material about a real person or organisation is processed with an AI tool, it must be anonymised first.

Declaration of AI use

The pre-meeting briefing documentation must include a short declaration of AI use, stating which tools were used, for what purposes, what the team did to verify or correct the output, and where the output was rejected and why. The declaration is not graded on how much or how little AI was used, and honest declaration is never penalised. Undeclared, misrepresented or prohibited use of AI tools is a breach of academic integrity and will be handled under the ISM Code of Ethics.

Verification and defence

The lecturer may ask any team or individual student to explain the reasoning, sources, claims or decisions behind their work in class, in the meeting debrief or in a short discussion and all team members should be prepared to answer. Being unable to explain or defend submitted work, including work produced with the help of AI, will be reflected in the grade and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty and reported to the ISM Committee of Ethics.

Any use of AI tools beyond the purposes described above must be agreed with the course instructor in advance. Students who are uncertain whether a particular use is acceptable should ask before submitting.

REQUIRED READINGS

This course draws on the work of leading sales practitioners and negotiation experts. Students are expected to engage with these frameworks throughout the course:

Category	Author(s)	Book(s)	Frameworks, Learnings
Negotiation Foundations	William Ury (1993)	Getting Past No; Getting to Yes	Principled negotiation, BATNA (Best Alternative to Negotiated Agreement), overcoming resistance without force, the five breakthrough steps: Go to the Balcony, Step to Their Side, Reframe, Build a Golden Bridge, Use Power to Educate
	Chris Voss (2016)	Never Split the Difference	Tactical Empathy, mirroring, labeling emotions, calibrated questions ("How" and "What"), Accusation Audit, the power of "No" as a starting point, the Ackerman model for price negotiation
Consultative & Challenger Selling	Matthew Dixon & Brent Adamson (2011)	The Challenger Sale	Five sales rep profiles; why Challengers outperform Relationship Builders; the Teach-Tailor-Take Control framework; Commercial Teaching; leading with insight rather than discovery questions alone
	Mike Weinberg (2012)	New Sales Simplified	The New Sales Driver (Target–Weapons–Execute); crafting a compelling sales story and power statement; proactive prospecting; time-blocking; the discipline of outbound
Startup & Founder Sales	Steli Efti	Several Books (available for free on close.com)	Founder-led sales; ideal customer profile vs. non-ideal customer profile; lead qualification; follow-up discipline; selling before the product is perfect; customer success starting at signup; demo best practices
	Neil Rackham (1998)	SPIN Selling	Situation, Problem, Implication, Need-payoff questions



Additional Frameworks	Close.com	The Sales Strategy Template	S.M.A.R.T. goals; ICP; minimum viable sales documentation; pipeline and CRM basics
	Eric Ries	Lean Startup	Lean Startup / Customer Validation

ADDITIONAL READINGS

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DEGREE LEVEL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning objectives for the Bachelor of Business Management

Programmes:

*International Business and Communication,
Business Management and Marketing,
Finance,
Industrial Technology Management,
Entrepreneurship and Innovation*

Learning Goals	Learning Objectives
Students will be critical thinkers	BLO1.1. Students will be able to understand core concepts and methods in the business disciplines
	BLO1.2. Students will be able to conduct a contextual analysis to identify a problem associated with their discipline, to generate managerial options and propose viable solutions
Students will be socially responsible in their related discipline	BLO2.1. Students will be knowledgeable about ethics and social responsibility
Students will be technology agile	BLO3.1. Students will demonstrate proficiency in common business software packages
	BLO3.2. Students will be able to make decisions using appropriate IT tools
Students will be effective communicators	BLO4.1. Students will be able to communicate reasonably in different settings according to target audience tasks and situations
	BLO4.2. Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively through an oral presentation
	BLO4.3. Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively in a written paper

Learning objectives for the Bachelor of Social Science

Programmes:

*Economics and Data Analytics,
Economics and Politics*

Learning Goals	Learning Objectives
Students will be critical thinkers	ELO1.1. Students will be able to understand core concepts and methods in the key economics disciplines
	ELO1.2. Students will be able to identify underlying assumptions and logical consistency of causal statements
Students will have skills to employ economic thought for the common good	ELO2.1. Students will have a keen sense of ethical criteria for practical problem-solving
Students will be technology agile	ELO3.1. Students will demonstrate proficiency in common business software packages
	ELO3.2. Students will be able to make decisions using appropriate IT tools
Students will be effective communicators	ELO4.1. Students will be able to communicate reasonably in different settings according to target audience tasks and situations
	ELO4.2. Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively through an oral presentation
	ELO4.3. Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively in a written paper