

When the Product Becomes a Commodity

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When the Product Becomes a Commodity

One-Line Definition Seller lets the platform get treated like a replaceable tool instead of a critical revenue rescue platform.

About This Trap When the Product Becomes a Commodity is the Parent Trap - it gives birth to most of the others. If you fall in here, you're already downstream from the real problem. And once you're behind the eight ball, it's nearly impossible to get back in front. Sellers get caught in the Commodity Trap for one core reason: they confuse interest with impact. It shows up when a rep starts answering questions about what their product does and/or how much it costs with detailed, enthusiastic answers - all before understanding what's broken. If you're great at talking about what your product does and how much it costs, you've failed to differentiate, anchor to a business problem, and create urgency. When the Product Becomes a Commodity epitomizes a Direction-Momentum-Control problem (especially the Control part). When you let the buyer set the agenda with feature-first curiosity or budget questions, they own the frame, and if they own the frame, you've got one hell of an uphill climb. This is the gravity well of sales. You think you're doing fine - after all, you're selling, which sellers are supposed to do, right? Wrong. You're digging a hole, and the deeper it gets, the more you shift towards being viewed as a vendor, not a partner - and once you're framed that way, they'll never see you as anything else. Don't let price become the story. In a price story with no context, the lowest one wins.

Consequences of Not Identifying and Preventing Include:

- Getting ghosted by prospects.
- Losing to direct competitors.
- Discounting as a closing tactic.
- No Decision.

Areas in Your Sales Process Most Vulnerable to This Trap:

- Demos.
- Proposals.
- Business justification. When the Product Becomes a Commodity - Case Study A call with the VP of Sales at a mid-market SaaS company. The prospect heard about the platform on a podcast and engaged. After some small talk, she laid the foundation to see whether I would fall in:

Prospect: “This is neat! It looks similar to some of the AI tools I’ve been seeing - you know, other AI training platforms - but we’re looking for ways to streamline onboarding.” Note: She’s curious, but she’s already comparing the platform with “AI Training” vendors. Streamlining onboarding is an issue she’s looking to solve, but the pain doesn’t feel acute; there’s a missing urgency.

Inflection Point: Commoditization occurs frequently; people are more comfortable discussing money and features than pain. When a prospect sees your product as interchangeable, it risks becoming exactly that unless the seller takes control of the frame. If they don’t, they fall into the Commodity Trap, where price and features are at the forefront, and you’ve gone from a solution to an option.

Talk Tracks - Examples of Poor vs. Average vs. High-Level Selling

POOR: What Leads Sellers Right into the Trap

Prospect: “This seems a lot like other AI training tools we’ve scoped out.”

Seller: “Yeah, they’re in our space. We do offer mobile access, multi-lingual role play, and some great simulation features, too.”

Prospect: “Sounds cool. We’ll do our due diligence and get back to you.”

Seller: “Great! Looking forward to it, and happy to help however I can.”

Why It Fails:

- Seller doesn’t challenge the category assumptions.
- There’s no discussion of business outcomes - only tech features.
- the platform becomes a “cool” item on a list where it doesn’t belong.

MID-LEVEL - Better But Still Inside the Trap

Prospect: “This seems a lot like other AI training tools we’ve scoped out.” Seller: “I hear that. A lot of platforms talk about practice, though; we focus more on delivering it in a mobile-first way.”

Prospect: “That’s good to hear, but candidly, we’ve heard similar things before.”

Seller: “Fair enough. Well, to show instead of tell, I’ll send over some comparison charts and ROI calculations for your team to review.”

Why It’s Average:

- Seller tries to insert a value proposition.
- Seller doesn’t get prospect out of “tool comparison” mode.
- There’s still no emotional urgency or tethering to an acute revenue problem.
- There’s no differentiation.

HIGH-LEVEL - What’s Worked for Us and Why

Prospect: “This seems a lot like other AI training tools we’ve scoped out.”

Seller: “At first glance, I can see why. AI is everywhere right now, and if the platform were just another AI tool, I’d tell you to keep evaluating. However, it’s apples and oranges; we’re a revenue performance partner that happens to utilize AI Role-Play. Our clients don’t choose us because of our features; they work with us to protect their pipeline.”

Prospect: “Protect their pipeline?”

Seller: “Exactly. Pure tools have limitations; the platform is adaptive. We prepare reps by simulating those live pressure moments. Our software meets reps where they are, determines what’s causing them to underperform, and directly addresses what’s killing your forecast. Comparable clients have seen material improvements in conversion and closed deals. The point is not the feature list; it is the business result.”

Prospect: “So, you’re less of a training tool and more of a dynamic sales performance engine?”

Seller: “Well put! Tools improve knowledge; we improve conversion. That’s why executives like yourself love the demonstrably short payback period. Convenience is great, but this is about profit, and that’s what we excel - we help solve revenue problems and generate higher ROIs.” Why It Wins:

- Nips the “tool comparison” in the bud.
- Tethers the offer to revenue problems - not just training needs.

- Brings in clear numbers as proof: Payback, IRR, etc.
- Makes waiting feel pricier than browsing.

Prevention Strategies:

- Resist answering “how” until you have an answer to “why.”
- When they ask feature questions, ask what’s prompting the interest in that.
- Don’t confuse curiosity with readiness.
- Set clear agendas up front: “Let’s focus on where reps are getting stuck first, and then I’ll show how the platform addresses that.”
- Flip their curiosity about your features into your curiosity about their pain.
- Reframe “Cost” as “Cost of Inaction” - using their metrics.
- Redirect features into outcomes: “Why does that matter to your team right now?”
- Anchor to current state vs. desired state before talking about the product.
- Confirm stakes: “What happens if nothing changes in the next sixty days?”

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