

AI-Powered Discovery Through Connection

Week 6

Ask with empathy.

Connect with clarity.

Convert with trust.



Cherilynn Castleman
Harvard Instructor
Managing Partner & Executive Coach, CGI

Prompt Like a Pro: Week 1

The GIFT Framework



Goal

What do you want AI to create or solve? Be specific about the outcome you're aiming for.



Intent/Audience

Who's the message for and what do they care about? Understanding your buyer is key.



Format

What output do you want? Email, script, summary, or presentation—clarity drives results.



Tone

What voice or style? Choose confident, casual, consultative, or whatever fits your audience.

Triangulate Your AI Prompts

Include 3 things for smarter, more accurate insights that resonate with your buyers:

01	02	03
Industry	Company	Person
What's happening in their market? Consider trends, disruptions, and competitor moves that shape their world.	What's driving their business? Dive into strategy, goals, and recent announcements that reveal priorities.	What matters most to your buyer? Understand their role, priorities, and LinkedIn insights for personalization.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Too Broad	Missing Buyer Context	Wrong Tone	One-and-Done
Vague prompts yield vague results. Get specific.	Without context, AI can't personalize effectively.	Mismatched tone kills credibility instantly.	Great prompts require iteration and refinement.

The AI Mindset Shift: Week 2

Reframe: From Threat to Sidekick

Shield → Sidekick

AI amplifies human strengths like empathy, creativity, relationships, and innovation. It's not here to replace you—it's here to enhance what makes you irreplaceable.

What's one strength you bring to selling that AI could never replace?

Refocus: Cut the Noise, Spot the Signal

Signal vs. Noise

Stop chasing every shiny new tool. Instead, focus on workflows that truly matter: research, outreach, and reporting. AI works best when it solves real problems, not imaginary ones.

Where do you lose the most time? 1 = research, 2 = writing, 3 = reporting

Rebuild: Integrate Into Your Rhythm

AI Fluency = Habits, Not Hacks

Building AI fluency isn't about mastering complex techniques overnight. It's about creating simple, sustainable habits that fit naturally into your weekly rhythm.

Suggest a simple weekly rhythm for a sales rep: when should AI support you most?

Which day do you most need AI's help—Monday prep, midweek outreach, or Friday reporting?

Turning AI Knowledge Into Sales Leadership: Week 3

Your Flashlight Moment



Curiosity Is the New KPI

Every time you choose curiosity over comfort, you're leading AI-first. The best leaders don't have all the answers—they ask better questions and stay open to learning.



Experimentation Beats Expertise

You don't need to be an AI expert to succeed. You just need to try something new, learn from it, and iterate. Small experiments compound into big breakthroughs.

What's one small AI experiment you've tried or want to try?



Leadership Is Modeling Curiosity

Your team watches what you do, not just what you say. When you share experiments—successes and failures—you create a culture where everyone feels safe to innovate.

Try this week: Share one AI experiment with your team and invite them to try it too.

GRITS™ in the Age of AI: Week 4

Because Technology Doesn't Build Trust, People Do

AI can automate tasks and surface insights, but it can't replace the human qualities that build lasting relationships. GRITS™ is your competitive advantage in a tech-driven world.

Grace

How you show up when things go sideways.
Grace under pressure builds credibility and trust.

Self-Awareness

Builds trust faster than any tool. Knowing your strengths and blind spots makes you a better partner to your buyers.



Reflection

Turns experience into wisdom. Reflection helps you learn from every interaction and grow stronger.

Identity

Your voice matters more than ever.
Authenticity cuts through the noise and connects with buyers on a human level.

Tenacity

The fuel behind transformation. Persistence and resilience separate those who adapt from those who get left behind.

Social Proof in the AI Era: Week 5

Turn Trust Into Traction

Use AI to spotlight credibility, amplify buyer voices, and build confidence at scale. Social proof isn't just nice to have—it's the currency of modern selling.

Know Buyer Pain

Are you truly understanding what your buyer is struggling with, or are you guessing? Personalization without empathy is just noise. AI can help you identify patterns, but it's your job to name the pain and make it real.

"What pain point keeps your buyers up at night?"

Curate Credibility

Social proof is a mosaic of trust signals—case studies, testimonials, awards, and third-party validation. Each piece adds to the picture of why buyers should believe in you.

"What's one proof point you wish more buyers saw?"

Amplify Buyer Voices

A buyer's words build trust faster than yours ever will. Their stories, in their language, carry authenticity that no marketing copy can replicate.

"What's one buyer quote that still gives you goosebumps?"

Build Trust Through Rhythm

Credibility compounds when shared consistently. Make social proof a regular part of your outreach, presentations, and follow-ups—not just a one-time effort.

"What's one proof story you could share this week?"

AI-Powered Discovery Through Connection

Week 6

Ask with empathy. Connect with clarity. Convert with trust.

The Brain Behind the Buy

The best discovery calls don't start with a pitch.
They start with a pause and a question that makes someone feel truly seen, heard, and understood.

01	02	03
Connection Is Chemistry	Ask with the 4 F's	Build High-Quality Connections (HQCs)
When buyers feel safe and valued, their brain releases powerful chemicals: Oxytocin (trust & bonding), Dopamine (motivation & reward), and Serotonin (confidence & calm). These neurochemicals create the foundation for meaningful business relationships.	Use the 4 F's Framework to move from transaction to trust: First (invite origin stories), Finest (celebrate pride), Failure (normalize growth), and Future (explore vision). These questions unlock deeper conversations.	HQCs are brief but powerful moments of psychological safety, mutual respect, and shared energy. They include respectful engagement, task enabling, and playful presence—all elements that create lasting bonds.

❏ Pro Tip: AI can help you ask sharper questions and prepare better. But trust is built in the pause after the question—in the listening, the presence, and the genuine care you bring to the conversation.

AI-Powered Discovery Through Connection

Week 6



Ask with empathy.

Connect with
clarity.

Convert with trust.

"What's the most meaningful business relationship you've built? What made it work?"



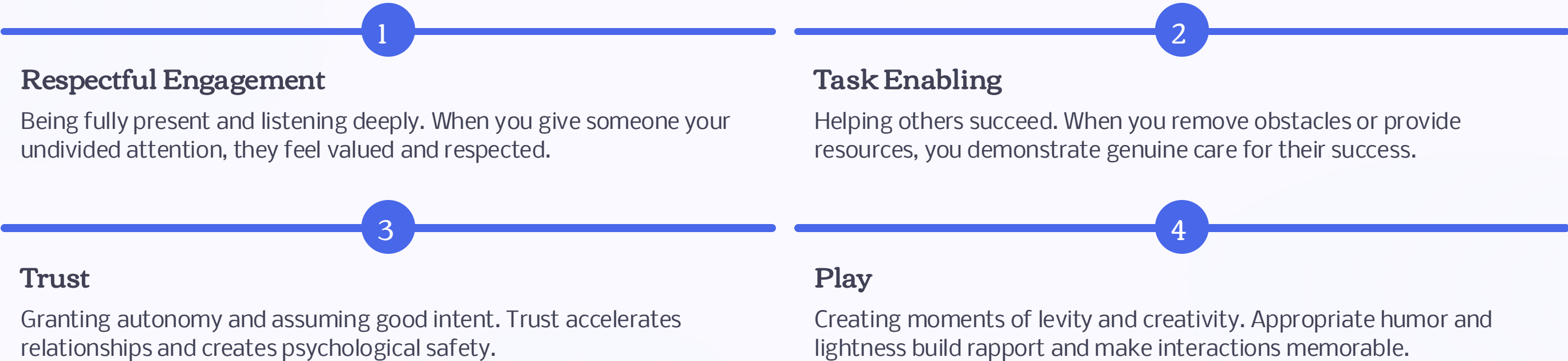
High-Quality Connections (HQCs)

Dr. Jane Dutton's Research

What Are HQCs?

High-Quality Connections are brief, positive interactions that foster **energy, trust, and genuine connection**. They're not about lengthy conversations—they're about meaningful moments that create lasting impact.

The Four Pathways to Building HQCs



Sales Application

High-trust relationships drive **customer loyalty, collaboration, and deal velocity**. Research shows that salespeople who build HQCs consistently outperform transactional sellers who focus solely on closing deals.



Neuroscience of Trust

Impact on Sales



Oxytocin: The Trust Hormone

Released when people feel heard and valued. Oxytocin creates feelings of bonding and connection that make buyers more receptive to your message.



Dopamine: The Reward System

High-value conversations trigger the brain's reward system, deepening engagement and making buyers want to continue the relationship.



Serotonin: The Calm Chemical

Helps buyers stay open and grounded during conversations. When serotonin levels are healthy, decision-making becomes clearer and less stressful.



Key Insight: Trust-based selling is a competitive advantage because it aligns with how the brain naturally builds relationships. When you understand the neuroscience, you can create conditions where trust flourishes.

Neuroscience of Trust - Fear

Amygdala Responses in B2B Sales

Press too hard and you trigger resistance. Slow down, connect, and trust opens.

Understanding the Amygdala & **Fear** Response

The amygdala is your buyer's internal alarm system. When buyers don't trust a salesperson, their amygdala activates, triggering one of four survival responses. Psychological safety is the key to lowering resistance and opening dialogue.



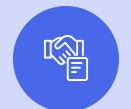
Fight

Push back, debate, defend their position aggressively. The buyer becomes combative or challenges everything you say.



Flight

Withdraw, cancel meetings, ghost you entirely. The buyer disappears without explanation or stops responding to outreach.



Fawn

Agree but without real commitment, appease to avoid conflict. The buyer seems agreeable but never moves forward.



Freeze

Stalled decision-making, uncertainty, delay. The buyer gets stuck in analysis paralysis and can't move forward.

Asking High-Value Questions in the Era of AI

AI Can Answer Questions, But It Can't Ask the Right Ones

The best B2B sellers will be those who can ask the questions AI can't—ones that build trust, uncover deeper needs, and create long-term value. While AI excels at processing information and providing answers, it lacks the emotional intelligence, contextual awareness, and genuine curiosity that drive meaningful discovery conversations.

What AI Can Do

- Surface data and insights quickly
- Identify patterns across accounts
- Generate standard questions
- Summarize information efficiently
- Provide research and context

What Only Humans Can Do

- Read emotional cues and body language
- Ask follow-up questions that matter
- Create psychological safety
- Adapt in real-time to what's unsaid
- Build genuine trust through presence

Your competitive advantage isn't just knowing more—it's asking better questions that help buyers think differently about their challenges and possibilities.

Trust Is the Foundation

Trust is a Science

High-Quality Connections, neuroscience principles, and high-value questions aren't soft skills—they're scientifically proven drivers of sales success. When you understand the mechanics of trust, you can build it systematically.

AI Won't Replace Relationships

Buyers choose **people they trust**, not just solutions they need. In a world of increasing automation, your ability to connect authentically becomes more valuable, not less. Technology amplifies reach, but humans build trust.

Challenge to You

This week, identify one relationship where you can apply the 4 F's Framework. Ask one question you've never asked before. Notice how the conversation shifts when you lead with genuine curiosity instead of a sales agenda.



The Discovery Interview

4 Discovery Questions to Ask Your Customer

Conducting successful discovery interviews is critical to success in sales. The right questions don't just gather information—they build relationships and uncover opportunities that drive real value.



Discovery Interview - 4Fs

Ask Powerful Questions to Better Understand Your Client's Needs

Make Strong Client Connections



First

Invite origin stories that reveal what drives your buyer



Finest

Celebrate pride and discover what matters most



Failure

Normalize growth and create space for honest conversation



Future

Explore vision and unlock aspirational thinking

The 4 F's Framework

Move from Transaction to Trust



First: Invite Origin Stories

Ask about beginnings, pivotal moments, and what led them to where they are today. Origin stories reveal values, motivations, and the deeper "why" behind decisions.



Finest: Celebrate Pride

Discover what they're most proud of—accomplishments, innovations, or team wins. When people share their finest moments, they reveal what success means to them.



Failure: Normalize Growth

Create space to discuss challenges, setbacks, and lessons learned. Vulnerability builds trust faster than perfection ever will, and it opens doors to authentic partnership.



Future: Explore Vision

Ask about aspirations, goals, and what success looks like down the road. Future-focused questions help buyers articulate needs they may not have fully expressed yet.

Examples: Putting the 4 F's Into Practice

Here are specific question examples you can use in your next discovery conversation. Notice how each question creates space for deeper dialogue and genuine connection.

First

| "What's a moment in your work you'll always remember?"

This question invites storytelling and reveals what's personally meaningful to your buyer—not just what's professionally important.

Finest

| "What's something you wish more people understood about your role?"

This question shows respect and curiosity about their unique challenges. It positions you as someone who genuinely wants to understand their world.

Failure

| "What's one thing you wish you could do better?"

By normalizing imperfection, you create psychological safety. This question often uncovers the real pain points that generic discovery questions miss.

Future

| "If it were this time next year, what would success look like?"

This forward-looking question helps buyers articulate their vision and creates a natural opening to discuss how you might help them get there.

Remember: The power isn't just in asking these questions—it's in how you listen to the answers and follow up with genuine curiosity.