

OPERATOR PLAYBOOK · 25 PAGES

The 60-Second Seller Call.

A wholesaler's scoring rubric for the only metric that matters — what comes out of your mouth on a seller call. Built from thousands of AI-graded conversations inside iSpeedToClose.

WRITTEN FOR WHOLESALERS · AI-GRADED · FREE

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HOW TO READ THIS

Each pillar has a scoring rubric, two real transcript snippets — one A-grade, one D-grade — and a 'next-best line' you can steal verbatim. The last chapter ties everything into a 30-day self-coaching cadence.

Why most seller calls fail in the first 90 seconds.

Across the 12,000+ seller calls graded by our AI Call Coach, one pattern shows up so consistently it's almost embarrassing: **74% of calls that end without a follow-up appointment were already lost inside the first 90 seconds.** Not at the price negotiation. Not when the seller balks at the inspection clause. Inside ninety seconds of saying hello.

The reason is structural. New wholesalers open a call the way a salesperson opens a call — with a pitch. Sellers can smell a pitch through a phone in under ten seconds and the wall goes up. From that point forward, the rest of the call is the wholesaler trying to demolish a wall they themselves built.

THE 90-SECOND PRINCIPLE

Your only job in the first 90 seconds is to make the seller comfortable enough to keep talking. Not to qualify them. Not to anchor a number. Not to pitch your service. Just keep them on the phone long enough that they start volunteering the information you actually need.

What scoring shows us

When we break down the rubric by call outcome — i.e., did this call produce a signed assignment within 30 days — the variance lives almost entirely in two scoring dimensions: **Rapport** in the first quarter of the call, and **Discovery** in the second quarter. Objection-handling and Close scores barely move the needle by comparison. If the first half of the call is strong, the second half almost always sorts itself out.

Two openings, same lead

Same property, same seller, two different wholesalers. Both got the phone picked up. One got a 30-minute call and a signed contract three days later. The other got a polite hang-up at 0:48.

OPENING A — D-grade (the pitch trap)

00:04 · YOU · **MISS**

Hi, is this Marcus? Great, I'm calling because I buy houses for cash in the Tampa area and I saw your listing on Marketplace...

00:18 · SELLER

Yeah, look, I'm not interested in selling for less than asking, alright?

00:24 · YOU · **MISS**

I totally get it, but we could close in seven days, no agent fees, no repairs—

00:42 · SELLER

I said I'm not interested. Have a good day.

OPENING B — A-grade (the curiosity gambit)

00:04 · YOU

Hi Marcus? Hey, this is Daniel — I saw your house listed and wanted to ask you about it before I drove over. Got a minute?

00:18 · SELLER

Yeah sure, what do you want to know?

00:22 · YOU · **PIVOT**

Honestly the listing was light on detail — tell me about the house. What made you decide to sell it now versus a year ago?

00:35 · SELLER · **BUY-SIGNAL**

Well, it was my mom's place and she passed in November. My brother and I are out of state...

Opening A scored 21/100 on Rapport and the AI flagged a 'pitched-too-early' objection within 20 seconds. Opening B scored 89/100 — and the seller volunteered the magic word (probate-adjacent motivation) inside the first 45 seconds without being asked.

How we grade a seller call.

Every call run through the Coach is scored on four dimensions — each 0 to 100, weighted, then rolled up into a single composite. Here's the rubric in one page so you can self-grade your next call:

95	Rapport — first 25% of call · 30% weight
88	Discovery — questions 1-3 reveal motivation · 35% weight
76	Objection — how you handled the first 'no' · 20% weight
81	Close — the next-step ask · 15% weight

WHY THE WEIGHTING?

Discovery and Rapport are the only two dimensions that strongly predict a closed deal in the data. Objection-handling matters but is downstream; Close is structural and easy to fix. Spend your practice time on the first two — that's where the leverage is.

Reading your composite score

A composite of **85+** is uncommon — these are the calls that almost always produce a follow-up appointment, even when the numbers don't pencil. A composite of **60-84** is the median professional wholesaler — calls in this range close when the deal math is favorable. A composite below **60** means the call itself was the bottleneck, regardless of the underlying deal.

The point of self-grading isn't to chase a perfect score — it's to identify which pillar is consistently dragging your composite down. Most wholesalers have one specific weak pillar. Fix that one, and the composite jumps 15 points overnight.

TRY IT IN ISPEEDTOCLOSE

Every call you place through the in-browser dialer is auto-recorded, transcribed by Whisper, and graded by Claude within 60 seconds of hangup. Your dashboard shows your weakest pillar over your last 25 calls so you know exactly what to drill.

Scoring the first 30 seconds.

Rapport is the easiest pillar to grade because it's behavioral — either you do the things that build it or you don't. The Coach looks for three specific behaviors in the first quarter of the call, scored independently and averaged.

The 3 rapport behaviors we score

- 1. Name and pace match (0-30 pts).** Did you say the seller's name within the first two turns? Did your speaking pace match theirs within ten seconds? Mirroring isn't a hack — it's the cheapest possible signal that you're listening.
- 2. Permission to continue (0-35 pts).** Did you ask if they had a minute, or did you launch into your script? The phrase '*Got a minute?*' raises Rapport scores by 22 points on average — and seller hang-up rate drops 40%.
- 3. Open-ended first question (0-35 pts).** Was your first question something the seller couldn't answer in one word? Yes/no openers are the #1 reason calls die — they signal 'I'm reading from a script' and the seller checks out.

The four phrases that kill rapport instantly

These phrases score below 20/100 on Rapport in our data. Strike them from your vocabulary on seller calls:

✗ "I'm an investor and I'm interested in your property."

Reads as transactional. The seller's defenses go up immediately.

✗ "What's the lowest you'd take?"

Anchors the conversation in price before motivation. Skip it.

✗ "I can pay all cash and close in 7 days."

Pitch before discovery — you don't even know if they CAN sell yet.

✗ "As-is, no repairs, no fees."

These are features. Sellers don't care about features until they trust you.

The four phrases that build rapport fastest

✓ "Got a minute? Wanted to ask you a couple of things."

Permission + curiosity. Raises rapport scores by 22 points.

✓ "Tell me a little about the house."

Open question, low stakes. Sellers love telling stories about their property.

✓ "What's been the hardest part of owning it?"

Surfaces motivation without asking 'why are you selling?' which feels invasive.

✓ "That sounds rough — I'm sorry you're dealing with that."

Empathy. The single highest-correlation phrase with a follow-up appointment.

The 60-second rapport drill

Three calls per day for two weeks. Pick three random expired listings from Zillow. Call each one with one goal — stay on the phone for 60 seconds without pitching anything. That's it. No anchor, no offer, no feature list.

Grade yourself on the three behaviors above. After 30 calls you'll feel the shift — sellers will start *asking you* what you do, instead of you having to tell them. That inversion is when rapport actually clicks.

PULL QUOTE

"The seller doesn't decide whether to sell to you in the close. They decide in the first 90 seconds. The rest of the call is just them either looking for an excuse to say yes — or looking for an excuse to hang up."

— Operator interview, Phoenix wholesaler, 47 closes

The only three questions that matter.

Discovery is the highest-weighted pillar in the rubric (35%) for one reason: it's the only one that actually determines whether the deal can be done. Everything else is execution. If you don't surface motivation, the cleanest rapport in the world won't save you.

We grade Discovery on whether you got the seller to answer three specific questions — in any order, in any phrasing. Get all three answered, your score is 100. Miss one, you lose 33 points. Miss two, the deal is almost certainly dead.

The three questions

Q1 — The 'why now' question. What changed in your life that's making you sell *now* versus a year ago? This is the motivation question. If they can't answer it, the deal isn't real.

Q2 — The 'consequence' question. If you didn't sell in the next 30 days, what would that mean for you? This is the pain question. The bigger the consequence, the bigger your discount.

Q3 — The 'number' question. Have you thought about what you'd need to walk away with — net to you, in your pocket, after everything? This is the price anchor question. Always last, never first.

A-grade discovery in 4 turns

01:14 · YOU · PIVOT

So tell me — what changed that made you decide to sell now?

01:22 · SELLER

My wife's been after me to retire. We've got a place in Florida we want to move to but we can't tie up the cash.

01:38 · YOU

Got it. So if it took, say, six months to sell — would that change the Florida plan?

01:46 · SELLER · BUY-SIGNAL

Honestly, yeah. We were supposed to be down there by spring.

02:01 · YOU

Makes sense. And just so I'm not wasting your time — what would you need to net out of this, after everything, to make Florida work?

02:14 · SELLER · BUY-SIGNAL

Around 140. Maybe 135 if it closed fast.

Three turns. All three discovery questions answered. Motivation: spring deadline. Consequence: delayed retirement. Net number: \$135-140K. The Coach scored this call at 96/100 on Discovery. The wholesaler closed the deal nine days later at \$128K assigned for a \$9,400 fee.

Three patterns that always score below 50

1. Asking for the number first. When the wholesaler opens with 'what are you asking?' the seller's anchor is whatever they saw the Zestimate at — and you've trained them to defend a high number. Always Q1 → Q2 → Q3. Never reverse.

2. Treating Q1 as a yes/no. 'Are you motivated to sell?' is a closed question with one socially-acceptable answer ('yes'). It tells you nothing. Always phrase Q1 as a story: 'What changed?'

3. Skipping Q2. The consequence question is the only leverage a wholesaler has. Without it, every offer feels like a lowball. *With* it, your discount has a story.

STEAL THIS PHRASE

When you sense the seller about to derail Q2 with a 'we'll just keep it', say: *"Totally fair. I'm just trying to figure out if my offer is actually useful to you — or if I'm wasting both our time."* That single sentence raises Discovery completion by 31% in our data.

Name it before they say it.

Objection-handling is where most coaching content is dead wrong. The conventional advice — 'overcome the objection' — produces calls that score in the bottom quartile of the rubric. The data is overwhelming: the wholesalers who close more deals don't *handle* objections. They *preempt* them.

Across 8,200 graded objection turns, calls that **named the seller's objection before the seller did** closed at 2.7x the rate of calls that waited to react.

The big four wholesale objections

Almost every objection on a wholesale call is one of four. Memorize them. Then preempt the one you sense coming.

O1 — 'Your number is too low.' They want more money. The preempt: anchor low with a story before they anchor high with a Zestimate.

O2 — 'Why would I sell to you and not an agent?' They want validation of the channel. The preempt: explain the trade you're offering — speed and certainty for a discount.

O3 — 'How do I know you're legit?' They want trust. The preempt: volunteer your last three references before they ask.

O4 — 'I'll think about it and call you back.' The polite no. The preempt: set a real next step before you ever propose a number.

Preempt scripts (steal verbatim)

These are the highest-scoring preempt phrases in our data. Drop them *before* the seller raises the objection — they score 30-40 points higher than reactive handling.

PREEMPT O1 — THE LOW NUMBER

"Look — my number is going to feel light. It has to be, because I'm buying speed and certainty, not the retail price. If that's not what you're optimizing for, I'd rather tell you that now than waste an hour of your time. Want me to keep going?"

PREEMPT O2 — WHY NOT AN AGENT

"An agent will get you more money — usually \$15-20K more. They'll also take 5 months, charge you 6%, and ask for repairs that you don't want to do. If you don't need the extra \$20K right now, an agent is the right call. If you do — I'm fast and I close."

PREEMPT O3 — LEGITIMACY

"Before we keep going — I'll send you the three sellers I closed with last quarter so you can call them yourself. I'd rather you do that than just take my word for it."

Killing 'I'll think about it'

This is the most common objection and the most fatal — it's a polite no dressed up as a maybe. Calls that end in 'let me think about it' close at less than 9% in our data.

The fix is preventative. **Before you ever propose a number, lock in the next step.** Say:

THE NEXT-STEP PREEMPT

"Before I throw a number at you — let's agree on what happens after. If the number works for you, I send a one-page agreement over email tonight and we close at title in 14 days. If it doesn't work, you tell me the smallest number that does. Fair?"

This converts the conversation from 'price discussion' to 'process discussion' — and 'I'll think about it' has nowhere to land.

Calls that include this preempt before the offer score 27 points higher on the Objection pillar and close at 23% within 30 days, vs. 9% for calls that don't.

The soft-anchor offer that converts.

The Close pillar is the lowest-weighted in our rubric (15%) — not because closing doesn't matter, but because if you nailed the first three pillars, the close almost happens by itself. Sellers who feel heard, who answered all three discovery questions, who didn't have their objections triggered — those sellers are mostly already sold by the time you ask.

The soft-anchor formula

The highest-scoring closing pattern in our data is what we call the **soft anchor**: you give a wide range first, gauge the reaction, *then* name a specific number. The trick is that the range establishes where the conversation is going to land — without you committing to a specific number that the seller can immediately reject.

SOFT-ANCHOR SCRIPT

"Based on what you've told me, this is probably going to come in somewhere between [low] and [low+15K]. I want to take 24 hours to run the comps and walk through with my contractor — does it make sense to talk again tomorrow at the same time?"

Notice what this does: anchors low, buys you 24 hours, and locks in the next call — all without ever stating a firm price.

Three close patterns ranked by conversion

1. The next-meeting close (highest conversion). Don't close on price — close on the next conversation. 'Can we talk again Friday at 10?' Conversion rate: **34%** in 30 days.

2. The soft-anchor close. Range + 24-hour pause. Conversion rate: **27%**.

3. The direct close. 'I can pay you \$X today, yes or no?' Conversion rate: **11%**. The data is unambiguous — direct closing on the first call is a coin flip at best and a hang-up at worst.

The direct close works in two situations only: when you're the third wholesaler the seller has talked to this week, or when the seller has explicitly named a number that already works for you. Otherwise, *a/ways* default to next-meeting.

Three tells the AI catches that you probably miss.

The Coach scores Discovery on more than just whether the three questions got answered — it also flags **motivation signals** in the seller's answers. These are linguistic patterns that strongly correlate with a closed deal. Most wholesalers don't catch them in real-time. Here are the top three.

Tell 1 — the time word

Any specific time reference inside the first three minutes — 'by spring', 'before tax season', 'in the next 60 days', 'before the school year' — is a high-correlation buy signal. Sellers with no time pressure don't drop time words. When you hear one, immediately echo it back: *'Got it — so spring is the real deadline?'* That confirmation alone tends to harden the seller's commitment by another 30%.

Tell 2 — the third party

Mentions of a spouse, sibling, lawyer, or accountant in the first five minutes is the second-strongest motivation signal. The seller is telling you who's pressuring them. The right move: ask *'Is [third party] involved in the decision, or are you handling this?'* If they're involved, you need them on the next call. If not, you've just simplified your close.

Tell 3 — the financial verb

Any verb that implies a financial obligation — 'pay off', 'cover', 'settle', 'catch up on' — is a leverage point. The Coach flags these in transcripts and recommends a follow-up question: *'What does that look like — what are you trying to pay off?'* If they answer specifically (e.g. 'about \$22K in back taxes'), you now have the floor of your offer — and a story for why the discount makes sense.

COACHING EXERCISE

Pull your last three call recordings. Listen for these three tells — time word, third party, financial verb. Count how many you caught in real-time and how many you missed. Most wholesalers catch <30% on the first try.

Anatomy of a 94/100 call.

This is an annotated transcript of a real call (names changed). Composite score: 94/100. Closed in 11 days at \$14,200 assignment fee. Notice the wholesaler hits all four pillars almost mechanically — and never once pitches a feature before the seller asks.

00:04 · YOU

Hey Theresa? This is Sam. Quick question before I drove out there — got a minute?

00:13 · SELLER

Yeah, sure.

00:17 · YOU · PIVOT

Awesome. Tell me about the house — what's the story?

00:24 · SELLER · BUY-SIGNAL

It was my dad's. He passed in October and I'm out in San Diego — it's just sitting empty.

00:42 · YOU

Sorry to hear that. What's been the hardest part of dealing with it from a distance?

00:51 · SELLER · BUY-SIGNAL

Honestly, taxes. There's an unpaid bill from 2024 that the city keeps sending me letters about.

01:08 · YOU

Got it. And if it took, say, six months to sell — what happens with the taxes?

01:15 · SELLER

I'd have to keep covering them, and my brother and I want to split this and move on.

01:32 · YOU

Makes sense. Just so we're not wasting time — what would you need to net out, after taxes get paid, to feel good about it?

01:48 · SELLER

Probably \$60 each. So \$120 total after the back taxes.

02:04 · YOU

Alright. I want to do this right — let me pull comps and run by my contractor, and I'll come back tomorrow with a number that probably lands between \$115 and \$130. Can we hop on at 10am?

02:21 · SELLER

That works.

Why this call scored 94/100

98

Rapport — Got permission. Named her. Open Q. Empathy.

96

Discovery — All 3 questions in under 2 minutes.

88

Objection — Preempted lowball with the soft anchor.

92

Close — Next-meeting close + 24-hour pause.

Total time: 2 minutes 21 seconds. The wholesaler never said the words 'investor', 'cash buyer', or 'as-is'. The seller volunteered motivation twice. The close was the smallest possible commitment — a follow-up call. That's it.

THE TAKEAWAY

Great seller calls feel boring to the wholesaler — almost like nothing happened. That's because all the heavy lifting was done by the seller, voluntarily, in response to good questions. Your job isn't to convince. Your job is to ask, listen, and book the next call.

Anatomy of a 38/100 call (and how to recover).

This call killed itself in 90 seconds. Notice the wholesaler is doing everything 'right' according to old-school sales training — and getting destroyed by the rubric.

00:03 · YOU · **MISS**

Hi, this is Daniel calling about the property on Maple — am I speaking with the owner?

00:11 · SELLER

Yeah, this is Marcus.

00:13 · YOU · **MISS**

Great, Marcus, I'm a real estate investor and I'd love to make you a cash offer on the property. We can close in 7 days, no agent fees, no repairs needed.

00:31 · SELLER

What kind of number are we talking?

00:34 · YOU · **MISS**

Well, depending on condition, probably in the \$130-140 range.

00:42 · SELLER

That's way too low. Zillow has it at \$185.

00:47 · YOU · **MISS**

I understand, but Zillow isn't always accurate, and there's no closing costs—

00:58 · SELLER

I'll think about it and call you back.

What scored low

22	Rapport — Pitched in turn 2. No permission. No empathy.
18	Discovery — Zero open questions. Anchored on price first.
52	Objection — Reacted instead of preempting.
60	Close — Lost the close to 'I'll think about it'.

The recovery move

When you catch yourself in a D-grade call mid-flight, there's exactly one move that flips the trajectory: **stop, name what's happening, and restart.** Verbatim:

THE RESET SCRIPT

"Marcus, hold on — I jumped into a number way too fast. Let me back up. Before I throw any price at you, tell me about the house. What made you put it on the market in the first place?"

Calls that included a reset script after a bad opening recovered to a 60+ composite in 41% of cases. Without the reset, recovery rate is under 5%.

Self-coaching cadence that moves the needle.

Theory is cheap. The wholesalers who actually improve their seller calls follow a tight, weekly self-coaching cadence. Here's the one we recommend to every new operator inside iSpeedToClose:

Week 1 — Rapport only

Make 15 calls. **Do not pitch.** Goal: 60 seconds on the phone, three rapport behaviors hit (name, permission, open Q). Self-grade each call. Pull the recording, listen back at 1.5x.

Week 2 — Discovery

Make 15 more calls. Now your goal is to get all three discovery questions answered before you ever mention a number. If you can't get Q2 (consequence) answered, the call doesn't count.

Week 3 — Preempting objections

Pick one preempt script per call and drill it. By the end of the week you should have rehearsed all four big objections at least five times each.

Week 4 — Closing

Default every close to next-meeting. No direct closes. Track your conversion to a follow-up appointment as your only metric. By end of month one you should be at 40%+.

ONE MORE THING

Stop self-grading. Let the AI do it.

Self-coaching works, but it has one hard limit: you grade yourself on the behaviors you already know about. The blind spots stay blind.

Every call you place through the iSpeedToClose in-browser dialer is auto-recorded, transcribed by Whisper, and graded by Claude across the exact rubric in this playbook — within 60 seconds of hangup. You get a score, the seller's true objection, a 'next best line' to use on the follow-up, and a searchable transcript with every motivation tell tagged.

TRY THE AI CALL COACH — FREE FOR 14 DAYS

Sign up, drop into a fully-loaded Demo Workspace, and place your first AI-graded call before the end of today.

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