

Li Costi

The Proven Formula for Coaching Sales Teams to Success

WITH GUI COSTIN

The Sales Podcast

Hello, my friend, and welcome to the 686th episode of The Sales Podcast. I'm Wes Schaeffer, the business fixture, your host today. We've got Gui Costin, a cool dude, a little bit older than me, built a thriving business in the financial space, helping folks with leads, with getting good data.

But he shares his secret to success in his company culture, how he intentionally built a fun place to work, and how he has grown that. You hear this all the time, people are our greatest asset. Well, this guy is living it.

He's walking the talk. So if you are interested in growing a team, if you're interested in growing your sales, you want to know how somebody has done it for many, many years successfully and is still growing, then this episode is for you.

You're listening to The Sales Podcast, home of the new ABCs of selling, where we help you sell more faster at higher margins, with less stress predictably while having fun doing it. My name is Wes Schaeffer. I've been in commission sales since 1997 and a coach since 2006.

I've helped over 9,500 salespeople and entrepreneurs level up their sales and marketing. My mission is simple, to show you how to easily hit your numbers so you can serve more people and get paid handsomely for your efforts. So if you are ready to hear some of the best advice you can possibly get from someone who has done it and seen it done thousands of times across dozens of industries in up and down economies spanning four decades, well then stick around.

Let's do this. Gui. Gui?

I say it right, Gui Costin.

Yeah, Gui Costin.

I had to look you up on YouTube. I hate getting people's names wrong and I'm like dyslexic with names. I don't know.

Founder and CEO of Dakota all the way from Pennsylvania, man. Welcome to Sales Podcast. How the heck are you?

Good to me, man. Thanks for having me on.

Dude, I like your studio, I like your setup.

Thank you.

This is not your first rodeo, huh?

No, we've been doing this for a quarter of a while and I think this is our third year in the studio.

So nice. So we'll get into your books, your company you've built. But seeing your setup and what not, how are you leveraging video, podcast, things like that in your business?

Because I mean, this isn't your main business, right? I mean, you're in the financial services world, you built up a couple of companies, big teams. Why invest in packages like this to put yourself out into the world?

So, number one, it's been the biggest grand slam on the planet. And actually, our second business was born out of a failed platform that we did, and we had 14 customers. And since we have a fundraising business, naturally it's a sales business, we have unbelievable weekly sales meetings.

So in 2018, in the summer, we invited all the 14 paying customers of that original platform to join our weekly sales call. They were fundraisers, we're fundraisers, but we choreographed it. We brought on a CIO and interviewed them.

We covered a city, Boston. Hey, if you're going to Boston, these are all the people you want to meet with. We covered a key account like JP Morgan Private Bank.

Hey, if you want to call on JP Morgan, these are the platforms of how you access them. Well, it turned out that people loved just being on our sales call. And it got to a point where we kept doing it week after week after week like a show, just like your podcast, 11 o'clock every Friday.

And they started then asking for the name, phone number, email addresses of all the people that we mentioned. We said, that's our proprietary database. We can't do that.

Then about a couple of weeks later, I realized that we had to commercialize our database and provide other investment firms access. And so now we have 1150 investment firms and about 5,000 fundraisers that use our data to set up meetings with potential investors. And to answer your question about the content, so the content was born, right?

The content was actually, the product was born out of the content. And what we've realized is if you create content that adds value to your customers, just keep creating more and more and more of it. I would say the biggest advice I can give anybody is take the three worst letters in business, ROI, and flush down the toilet.

Because you can't measure ROI until you start producing video. And all I can tell you is, the more we produce a video that adds value to our customers' lives, the more engaged they've been with us.

Interesting. I like that idea. Because people do get so hung up on these elaborate business plans.

I remember, I don't know, 15 years ago. I wasn't too long into this. And there was a local guy from the Small Business Administration.

Nice guy, meant well, really involved in the Chambers. And, you know, he invited me to some meeting. And you get these nice grandpas.

And which now kind of hits home that I'm a grandpa. But I mean better, okay? And they offer their time for free.

And, you know, they want you to write this elaborate business plan, do all this work. I'm like, bro, go sell something. Then make your business plan.

Can this idea even float? So much like analysis by paralysis or paralysis by analysis. But you mentioned something in passing.

This came from a failed platform. Tell me about that.

Yep. So we, I always believe that if you're going to start a business, it's a lot easier like we've done. It's just provide us, you know, provide a better version of a service that's being provided today.

And if you look at our platform, it was an idea. We wanted to be able to create a content platform where people could log in, find information on investments. I wrote a book about it, Millennials Are Not Aliens, because Millennials like to do 70% of the research before talking to a salesperson.

And that idea fell flat on its face. And what we realized is there were a bunch of other databases out there in the marketplace, none of which were complete or accurate or anything like that. And we had pondered this idea for a number of years.

And then we realized once we invited everybody to our sales call, that they really valued right every. So if you think about it, our business is super simple. Every single database in the world, from a sales perspective, is somewhat out of date, if not ridiculously out of date, meaning their CRM, whether it's Salesforce or what have you.

And so salespeople go in, they can't find what we're looking for, they get frustrated and they leave and everyone wonders why no one adopts the CRM. Well, it's because of stale data. So all we really do is keep over 1100 investment firms, CRMs up to date on a daily basis.

I had my mom work for me for a couple of years and she hasn't worked for me in over a decade. Yesterday, I got an email to my mom.

I just forward all the emails, right? Of all the people used to work for me, I get all their emails. And I still, I mean, people 10, 12 years haven't worked for me.

I'm still unsubscribing from lists they had joined. So yeah, databases are a little bit out of date. But our government's not.

The voting roles are perfect. So we won't discuss that. Maybe we will, I digress.

Keep me on track. What's your guy's name? Can he like keep me on track?

Jamie.

Jamie. Jamie, zap me. I'm going to put an air pot in.

Zap me, get me on track. So Millennials Are Not Aliens. So what were you saying?

They do 70 percent of their research before they speak to someone?

Online. Do 70 percent of the research online. I will say, because a lot of people want to know about Millennials versus Gen Z versus Baby Boomers versus Xers like me and probably you.

What I will tell you is, every generation, which was a theme of my book, every generation are all shades of gray, of entitlement, laziness, hardworking, inspired. They're all the same. Every generation, they're all human, they're all the same.

But every generation looks at the generation coming up as entitled. As I said to someone when I was doing a speech, he goes, the millennial generation is the most entitled generation. I said, sir, what generation are you?

He goes, I'm a baby boomer. I said, well, what's the nickname for the baby boomers? He goes, baby boomer.

I said, no, it's not. It's called the me generation. He goes, that means the millennials are the me me generation.

I was like, come on, guy. At the end of the day, we have a lot of Gen Z'ers that work here, and are extremely hardworking, extremely accomplished. They don't need a foosball table or ping pong or yoga or any of that stuff.

They're just very hardworking. We take great care of them and it's been an awesome experience working with the millennials and Gen Z's.

Yeah, it's just human nature. You want to pass the buck. You know, I always say, you know, one good excuse, you can ride that pony for the rest of your life.

You know, but success takes daily effort. You know, you got to get up and get after it. You know, we were talking before, you know, recording, and I was just in the hospital.

I could say, I'm going to rest all week. It's like, I got crap to do. You know, I feel fine.

Let's get after it. And so, oh, it's the White House, it's the governor, it's the mayor, it's the bad roads, it's the my education. Whatever, dude, just save it.

So, well, somebody asked me yesterday, so what's the best piece of business advice you've ever received? And I have a great mentor named Dick Williams, most nonsense, no nonsense guy that I've ever met. And he has a lot of great little quips, if you will.

My favorite on that topic that you just said is results, not reasons, right? And if you just think about it, there's a reason for everything, right? While you can't do something, there's always a reason.

Now, you can find a reason not to do anything, always, right? But we're always looking for just results. And let's not waste a lot of time talking about the reasons.

Let's talk about the results.

So walk me through your transition from, I assume, were you like a run-of-the-mill kind of stockbroker doing your thing and branched out on your own? Or how did you go from bag carrying, quota carrying, sales rep into owner?

Well, I definitely moved to an owner, but I never stopped carrying the bag. So part of my journey and my story is that first 17 years of my career, from 89 to 2006, I had 14 different W2s. So 14 different jobs, meaning I changed jobs every 12 to 18 months.

And they were all great jobs, all awesome jobs, working for greater.

I'm taking notes over here. So 14 jobs from 89 to when?

2006. And they're all great jobs, all really well-regarded firms, whether they're boutiques or not, mostly in the investment business, some in real estate. I was always in a sales role.

From 97 on, I've been in a fundraising sales role, so working for investment firms, raising funds for them. And that was my journey. And then going from that, we really just went and created a business in 2006, where instead of being a W2 employee of an investment firm, I would be a hired contractor.

So 1099. And we would work for them on a third party basis. And that's what happened in 2006.

So still carrying the bag, always did carry the bag, but just had our own firm and could sign up a variety of different firms to raise capital for. And it really became sort of a necessity. But I think what's interesting, Wes, when I look back, and we have a lot of great companies in Philadelphia, whether it's in our industry, Vanguard being the number one \$9 trillion under management, and there's their names on sides of buildings.

And I kind of always had a vision that maybe I would own a company where we could have our name on the side of a building. But more importantly, where we could have young college graduates join our company and build a career. And we could slot them in day one with mentorship and focused and growth and teach them how to do the job that we've hired them to do.

But stay, right? Stay so they can learn. Not like me, where I was bouncing around every 12 to 18 months.

That was unfortunately, or fortunately, everyone will look at it, probably definitely has a point to it all. But I didn't want people to have to go through sort of the pain and the anguish that I went through. But I put myself through it.

So it's not like I was torturing myself. But it would have been a lot easier if you kind of get slotted in day one with great mentors, a great product, a great firm that treats you great. And you can stay for a long time.

Were you unique in changing roles so often or was that the nature of the industry?

No, no, I was crazy, unique. I mean, I was always starting, stopping, going to try to do a start up on my own, failing, back, getting a W-2, then seeing a better opportunity 12 months later to another firm that did something similar. I always had good success, but I just always bounced around.

And one of the problems with bouncing around in sales is it's like pumping the water out of the ground. You pump, you pump, you pump, you get to 80 percent. If you don't get to 100, it never flows.

And then I would always have to go back to zero, which is a loser's game. Yeah.

Yeah. You and I are a lot alike. I'm pretty stubborn.

I had a few gigs. My first job out of the Air Force, I was a stockbroker. So I knew that world a little bit.

But kudos for sticking with it and figuring it out. You keep saying we. Did you have a partner in this that helped you?

Yeah. I originally had a partner when we started in 06. That lasted about three years and didn't see eye to eye.

And I'm a pretty independent guy. So I have a lot of partners, technical partners here at the company. But nobody just from a pure decision-making standpoint.

And I just know myself too well. And I'm very collaborative, I'm willing to listen. Jamie is here.

These guys all know as we create all these different shows, and they're so spectacular at what they do. It has to be a collaboration and I have to be a good listener. But at the same time, it's just easier if one person can make a final decision to move on.

Whereas partners and all that stuff and fighting and this, you end up fighting about stuff that really, the font, stuff like that, it's just, it doesn't mean nothing.

Makes the load go bigger.

Right? I mean, it's like, we need to focus on things that really matter. And so it was one leader, a benevolent dictator, if you will, I think is a really good way to go.

And I am very benevolent in that regard.

We need whole creators and leaders. We must make a symbiotic relationship, come one with our energy. But I'll let you just sit with that.

Okay, and that's my own recommendation. Yeah, that's cool. I mean, it's true.

And people, so many people are afraid to make a decision. You know, they don't, they want to blur the lines. They want, although I didn't say that.

It's like pull the trigger, ride the bullet, right? I mean, the buck stops with you, that's rare.

Yeah, I was given a gift in 2005, where I met a guy named Alan Breed from Edgewood Management who's today 18 years later, our longest standing partner and has made my career, has made everything, I wouldn't exist if it weren't for him and his mentorship, his guidance, his leadership. It's not so much that he sat me down on a daily basis and put his arm around me. It's just the way that he conducted himself.

I decided, I looked at that, I'm like, man, that's the kind of guy I want to be, that's the leader that I want to be. I'll never forget, he's really a funny guy and brilliant, and so funny, and so loyal, and just he's got every aspect of life figured out. You know what I mean?

He's that kind of a human being. One of his partners made a comment, and someone had to make a decision. Alan made the decision.

He looks at his 25-year partner, and in a fun little way, he goes, hey, hey, look at me. He goes, see that over there? That's why I sit in the corner office.

That's why I sit in the corner office. You're right. I mean, you're right.

I mean, I get it, but I'm not afraid to make decisions and trust me, I fail and I listen and I learn and we grow. We have a massive, I have an open door policy, 77 employees, wide open door. Come in and talk to me at any time.

Anything you need, I'm here to remove ops to go clear the deck, so everyone can be successful and be the best version of themselves. Everybody knows that. Just asking for what you want.

I'm going to help you get what you want.

Yeah, that's awesome. And I've seen different styles of leadership. There's a marketing guy, direct marketing guy.

You heard of Dan Kennedy? You run across this stuff?

Yeah, of course I know Dan. Yeah, yeah.

Okay. He was always big, saying, oh, be hard to find. You know, go off-site.

Let them figure it out on their own. Don't have an open door policy. You don't want these got-a-minutes.

Let them make decisions on their own. I mean, I see value in both. You know, how do you manage that open door policy and not create...

You can't create a culture of people that won't make a decision until they get that minute with you, right? So how do you balance that?

Well, I don't get enough of that. So we had to create so-called... We transformed our monthly off-sites to W-days.

What's working? What's not working? Each division, marketing comes in, sales comes in, technology comes in, product comes in, HR, customer success.

They all come in during the course of one day, once a month, 45 minutes, and they just sit down with no presentation. And I simply ask, what's working and what's not working? And I've begged our sales team for the past five years.

I said, I need more prima donnas. So I have the exact opposite problem that Dan Kennedy has. I like more feedback.

I want to hear what's not working and why. One guy told me that he's working Saturday mornings to get his call notes into the database and not hanging out with his family. I'm like, sob.

No, no, no, no, no. We're solving that right now. And we used AI to solve it, right?

We record the call, AI summarizes it, goes into Salesforce, takes one to two minutes, so we can do it right after the call. Nice. The point being is that we actually create a very structured environment to hear from

everybody what's working, what's not working so we can be helpful, meaning as an executive team and we can solve problems, right?

Yeah. That makes sense. I want to hear it in your own words because it's like, I think if you set the right tone, say, look, come to me with honest feedback.

Don't come to me whining. As long as you have that right balance, they know when they need you and you know if they come to you, they really do need you. It's something that does need to get addressed and then get back at it.

Yeah. I think the thing that I really get now, but I'm 57 years old, so it's taken obviously a long time. When you establish what you stand for, your core principles and they're in your own language, like one of our core principles is we grow apples and we sell them to apple buyers.

We don't try to convince orange buyers to buy apples. Once you establish your core principles and we have 14 of them, what ends up happening is everybody looks at it and say, oh, this is how we conduct ourselves here. This is how we do things.

We have a super hard charging culture, but we do it with kindness and we treat everybody kindly. Not nice, but kindly. And so we have an amazing work environment because no one's dropping one-liners, guilt trips, weird.

There's no adjuda, there's no closed door meetings, there's no politics. We're all just focused on being kind to each other and getting our job done and serving our customer and being a great teammate and just having a great attitude. It's funny, 77 people, I don't really...

One guy looked at me and goes, oh, you must have a lot of HR issues. I'm like, no, not one. Our CFO, yeah, maybe three years ago, when we were building the business, we didn't quite have this down, the whole thing.

But yeah, now it's very smooth. Everyone knows what's expected. We've got great structure and we don't have any HR issues.

There's no bad actors, none of that. Then when it ends up happening, Wes says, come to work's a blast. It's super fun.

You're with people you love, you're working on an interaction project, you're doing cool stuff, you're serving people, which is I think the ultimate gift. If you can be in a place where you can serve, to me that's the ultimate.

So you say we treat everyone kind but not nice?

And nice means you won't give feedback because you want to be nice.

Right.

Right. And I stole that distinction from another CEO that I was at some conference in Dublin a couple of years ago on a SaaS thing. And he said that because I always said kind.

And then he goes, yeah, but I never distinguished nice. And you realize if you're nice, then you might not, you know, sometimes you do have to have a conversation with people. It's like, hey, just want to talk to you.

How are things going? Right. And I think you might need to be thinking a little bit more in this way, not publicly, right, privately.

Like another thing, like we don't do annual reviews and I never will. Right. We never do 360s.

We did that one time. That was probably the worst experience I've ever had in business, is doing the 360 review. It was so gross.

It was so, yeah, it was so bad. It was so, thank God the one guy recovered, because he's still a dear friend of mine. But people say that you're better off just having an honest conversation if you really like what you're looking at.

And why wait a year? I think everybody's being reviewed every day, right?

Yeah.

Why would you wait?

Yeah.

Just have a conversation. We don't have to have very many tough conversations. We really don't.

Everyone kind of knows what's expected of them and they get their job done because they want to be part of the team.

It reminds me at the Air Force Academy, we had, they called Sammies, Saturday morning inspection. And even as a freshman, like when you're

just getting grilled, like I had that dialed in. But as a senior, there would be my fellow classmates that would sleep on the floor.

They would stay in on a Friday night and then sleep on the floor. They don't want to mess up the bed. I'm like, it takes you that long to get ready for a Sammy?

Like if you, if you just keep things moderately clean and straight through the week, it's like after four years, you can't get ready for an inspection. You can't make your bed after four years, you know, in under five minutes. Like what is going on?

Well, like just, I just stayed on top of things, you know, it's just tick, tick, tick, no, no big deal. But I mean, people let, they let things get out of control and then, and they need the HR. Why are people crazy?

Yes. Now, listen, I just said thank goodness because earlier in the growth of the business for 18 years, you know, the earlier days, there was a lot of that, not hiring properly. One thing that we've had great success on is hiring from our network.

Now, you know, Jamie and the video team, we've just had the most extraordinary studio team. They were all subject matter experts that couldn't come from the network because they were subject matter experts in video and video production and management, motion graphics, et cetera. But a lot of our people have come from the network and we've had incredible success from our network.

A friend here, the whole thing, and everyone's so professional across the board. It's just funny because when you surround people with A

players, everyone either steps up to be an A or they say, hey, look, this is not the place for me. I say, this is what we did two years ago.

We had a mass exodus two years ago. Over a course of eight months, maybe 10 to 12 people left, but they just weren't right for the culture. They weren't bad people.

They just weren't right for the culture. Then once everything got right sized, we've had extremely low turnover, no HR issues, and everyone's totally focused on doing their jobs, serving our customer, and then have it a blast, and just laughing and having fun together every day. It doesn't have to be very judgery.

It can be a blast work.

Yeah, it should be. That's cool. You mentioned early on, let me scroll up here, about, it's kind of like Apple, what it reminded me of, like you're saying, of course, the notes.

It was like, just iterate. You don't have to create something brand new, take something that's not done great and just make it better.

A hundred percent. You're right, that's exactly what Apple has done. If you study them, listen, I fell into it.

We created a service business to start. People are already raising money, we just did it on a third-party basis, nothing new. Then we did a database business.

There were seven other databases out there that had cold leads. They were all stale, inaccurate, hard to use. We just produced something that was better and then dramatically better.

Just keeping it accurate and up-to-date and complete. We didn't invent plastic. We simply created something that was better.

I think if you really look, you want to be an entrepreneur, I think people mistake what entrepreneurship really is. It's not taking a mortgage out in your house. That's the books that are written by that.

But that's the small, that's like one-tenth of one percent of one percent. Can you get somebody to send you money for a service you provide? That's an entrepreneur.

If you can do that, if people can send you money for a service you provide, and then you keep doing and you keep doing, you iterate and you grow near that to me, because a lot of these people, you can't believe in their prime earning years, they're taking these crazy risks and they're earning no money, and then it doesn't work out. It's like every entrepreneur, number one, revenue, number two, revenue, number three, revenue, and then eventually cash flow. That's what makes the world work, but you read so many popular stories about mortgaging this or taking this risk, and everyone wants to be the next Steve Jobs and everything.

Steve Jobs is a great knockoff artist. He was one of the greatest of all time, most valuable company in the world. They didn't invent any of that stuff.

They simply created a better version of what existed, and they have what I do believe is one of the great genes of all time, and that's design. I just believe, I don't care who you are, people love to be in nice environments. They like to work with nice things.

Yeah, so true. Yeah, that's cool. I think so many people, they do romanticize things like they want to be like the next Tesla, whatever, Steve Jobs.

Like bro, just go make some money. You know, like you said, sir, find a need and fill it. Rinse, wash and repeat.

You know, iterate from there. But people come to me with these crazy ideas that I'm thinking, they think I'm going to pour gasoline on it. I'm like, yeah, I'm going to pour gasoline on it and burn 90% of them to the ground.

It's focused on these 10%. I didn't think I'd hear that from you. Well, that's why I make the big bucks.

One of the great lines, and I realized this is our first platform after two years and a lot of money spent, we had created a solution that was searching for a problem, and that's most ideas. Yeah. Right?

It's like it's a solution searching for a problem. And really, if you think about it, if you really want to have a great thinking exercise in the morning with a cup of coffee quietly, simply think about, just process, what's the most acute problems in the world that are being solved today? Okay?

Then you think biotech, health care. Well, yeah, they're serving, they're saving lives, they're creating drugs to keep people alive and cure cancer and cure different diseases and what have you. So the valuations of those businesses because they're solving one of the most acute problems.

And you start or NVIDIA, right? It's a huge problem, processing power, all the stuff we're doing great, where they keep creating trips. They're solving a major league problem for businesses, right?

So they can, so people can create what they want to create. So think about what problem are you and is it a nice to have or a must have, right? Is it a drug or is it a vitamin, right?

You really want to be in the drug level, not the vitamin level, right? Because that's vitamins are nice to have. You don't always see the impact.

But you know what, if you're really sick and you need a Z-pack, you're not going to vitamin C, you're going to the Z-pack, right? I was thinking about that, like the more cute the problem and the more you can be the one person that solves that particular problem with your unique capability, now you're zeroing in on a real business idea, right? But it's probably already being done to some way, shape or form already.

You're just doing a much, much better job at it.

Yeah. Someone will listen to this though and they'll say, who am I to create a database, a SaaS? I can't code.

I work from home. I don't have a college degree, a bunch of excuses, but they'll say them. You know, how do you kick them in the ass?

All right. So we're going to start at 8 a.m. At 5 o'clock, unfortunately, if you don't come up with a concrete written plan, okay, for how are you going to do exactly what you just said with all the circumstances, and you have an internet connection, and you're going to be shot in the head at 5 o'clock, if you don't come up with a plan, and there's a guy sitting out there. All you have to do is study on the internet and figure out, I have no coding experience, what can I do?

I want to create a SaaS platform. There's every answer. In fact, you could probably type in a ChatGPT, and we always say, what's the best way to create a conference?

What's the best way to host a conference? There's one way to host a conference. Pick the venue and send the deposit, sign the contract.

You're throwing the conference. You put a deadline. Deadlines win.

In the same way, that's a deadline. There's basically nothing within reason that if you really wanted to get it done, that you couldn't get it done right now, and you and I could spend the next 10 minutes, 60 minutes and say, okay, look, we want to create a database. What do we need to do?

Well, Salesforce is sitting there. You can program on top of Salesforce. All the data that we collect is basically via Google, government websites, all publicly available information, and you just have to go figure out how to collect it.

We have a term, one of our core principles at Dakota is turn your brain off. You said paralysis by analysis earlier, same thing. Most people just overthink and get frozen, and then another one we have is throw your hat over the wall.

Sometimes you just have to throw your hat over the wall. Why? Because you're scared to climb the wall, but you got to go get your hat.

Now you got to climb the wall to go get your hat kind of thing. Obviously, you know that, but sometimes people forget what that actually means.

I was thinking, all right, I'll tell you this after the recording, but screw it. It's like a guy, he's standing at the urinal, and he reaches into his pocket as he shouldn't, and he pulls a card out, and he drops a dollar bill in there. Guy next to him looks over, and he sees him reach, open up his wallet and throw a \$20 bill in there, and the guy's like, what the hell are you doing?

He says, well, I'm not going in there after just a \$1 bill.

Listen, necessity is the mother of invention. I spent a lot of money on a failed platform, and I didn't want to lose all that money. So it was just like we had to figure it out.

I don't want to use any curse words on the show, but one of my son who's now just graduated from college, and he has a friend group and they have it, figure it the blank out, figure it the F out. It's an acronym that they have amongst the nine of them. Basically, whatever problem they're faced with, their group thing, their little friend group was figure it the F out.

I love that because it's like just figure it out, whatever it is. I look at Dakota and I look today and I look at 77 people and they all have that attitude. Let's just figure it out.

Whatever the problem is, you have so many resources within the company with all these people, that's where we have another Dakotatism, walk the eight feet. That's the distance between two offices. Just start asking, tap into the collective knowledge of our group.

So much knowledge. Let's just ask another principle.

So you mentioned a couple of times, this failed platform that you were able to convert. So someone listening to this may say, well, see, well, you had the money. You did it wrong.

You failed, but you had the money. So you were able to stay the course and figure it out. You know, or would you say, well, no, I threw my hat over the fence.

I made the deposit and you know, you know what I'm saying? Because some will say, I'm just, I'm trying to eliminate excuses, right? So if you had to do it over again, would you do anything different or was that path forward?

And then the adjustment just part of the process and anybody can and should take that risk?

No, I think I would have gone back to kind of what I was saying about solution, problem, problem, solution. I would have spent a lot more time

thinking through the most acute problem. We have fundraising experience, right?

So we're the customer. What is our biggest problem? Well, it's leads.

We need more leads of people that can invest in our strategies. What if you could supply leads then to other fundraisers, right? Figure out, I think it's much more about thinking like, what is the real problem you're solving for?

I think that's where people fall down. They think of an idea, but it's like, what is the problem and how acute is the problem? Then going and creating a solution around that and seeing how other people are doing it, right?

Because obviously, I mean, give me a break, Wes, how many true new ideas are there truly out there? Everything is in, for instance, if you look at all the SaaS businesses today, I think 99 out of 100 were all software businesses at a different company, Siebel Systems, then there were Salesforce, right? Siebel was on-premise.

You know, SaaS is in the cloud. You know, there you are. So, my point is, is that even all the SaaS businesses today are just better versions of the prior solution, the prior software solution.

And I think there's, and if you focus on providing a service and getting paid for that service, doing it better than someone else does it, because listen, I'll tell you one other thing, Wes, when people come up with excuses or reasons why they can't do something, most businesses aren't that responsive. So just try to get a free demo, a free trial, get someone to pick up the phone, answer your question. If you have a philosophy

and a core principle of responsiveness, and you just use that as your core principle, no matter what, when I provide this service, I'm going to be as responsive as I possibly can be.

We try to have a five-minute response time to a question. Right there, if somebody is listening to this, you've won. You're going to win.

Because people love, right?

Just, it really is that simple. I tell people, sticking with Apple, I pay more money for this stuff than I have since 2004, because I want to call and reach a human in America to help me. That's it, quickly.

You know, and God bless everyone else. I have people in other countries that work for me. But when I'm spending money and I need my stuff to work, I need vast interest, I will pay for that.

You know, I'm helping a guy right now grow his business. And I'm making calls for him to perfect the script, help him with his funnel, his cadences, and we're calling offices. And literally, nobody answers their phone.

You have to go through a directory and listen to all the prompts. And then eventually, you get someone. And it's like, and we're calling physicians.

You know, and I get it, they're busy, and health care's blah, blah, blah. But this is true for most companies. I'm like, why is it so expensive to have a human answer the phone?

There's got to be an ROI there that somebody's missing. You know, so it kind of ties to the responsiveness. But I mean, be responsive to the initial call.

Don't make, your call is very important to us. Please stand by, as our menu has changed. My call is not important to you, if that's how you answer the phone.

I'm sorry. Maybe that's going to be my business. I'm going to have humans answer phones.

I mean, it's that frustrating to me. Like, everybody's just a number now. And if you could make somebody just feel human, you'll probably get all their business.

If you, I know credit cards are used, but if you used American Express or Capital One, if you use Capital One and you call, they almost pick up on the first ring. And it's somebody sitting in McLean, Virginia, that sounds like they went to the Universities of Virginia. I mean, that's pretty impressive.

And they're right there like, yep, okay, here's your card. Yep. Okay, you lost that one.

Meaning that, so my experience with those two businesses, Capital One gets on the phone with a human way faster than Amex does. Amex is pretty good at it, though. Capital One, I've never seen anything like it.

And it's a big difference. You know, somebody asked me, because you made me think of something about responsiveness, and you're just kind of going through that. And I love London, and I love Europe, and I love

the people, I love the Italians, I love the Spaniards, I love the English, they're all just awesome.

Right. It's such a blast to go over there. It's kind of the last five years is really at 57 years old when I spent a little time.

The reason I say this is because somebody asked me like, well, what's your current thought of this, that? What's your current thinking? I said, God bless America.

Just be happy you live in America. They're like, well, why do you say that? It's kind of messed up.

I'm like, yeah. Just go travel and see what it's like to start a business in Italy. See what it's like to start a business in Spain or the UK, the regulation, the challenges, the whole thing.

Just thank your lucky stars that you live in America. By the way, the responsiveness just in terms of that is that they're just more laid back. Now, we all want a vacation like that because they live an amazing life and they're relaxed and have a glass of wine at lunch and they don't have all the preservatives in their food, and they all look great and they're healthy and the whole thing.

But ask them what it's like to try to start a business in their country. We're very lucky here.

They do look great. It's also because they smoke two packs of cigarette a day so they don't snack as much.

Well said.

God bless them. They're living their best lives. Oh my gosh.

Well, this is awesome, man. We're coming up on time. I'll respect your time.

Your website is dakota.com. I mean, that's a unique business. For our listeners, salespeople, entrepreneurs, should they buy your book?

What should people do? Where do you want them to go?

If you're in the investment business and you raise capital for a living, definitely sign up for a free trial and or demo of Dakota Marketplace. If you're a fundraiser, it's a game changer. If you're not, then it wouldn't be relevant to you, but absolutely go and review the book, Millennials Are Not Aliens, I'm Coming Out the Dakota Way, which is our sales book.

So it shows our four core principles of investment sales, which I believe is a total game changer. There hasn't been one out there. I've done many, many episodes on The Rainmaker, which is a Dakota Way sales training program.

And you can learn a ton at dakotad.com about who we are and what we do.

Okay. And they told you I get like the first edition signed copy of The Dakota Way, right?

All right.

Because otherwise, I'll go back and listen to his name. You said 2005, you met the guy, best guy ever, blah, blah, blah. I'm sitting in this interview and I'm going to tell him, if he gets like some fruitcake for Christmas every year, that you're undercut, he needs to expect better presence.

All right. Don't make me do that. I'll do it.

We locked the manuscript this Friday at 3 o'clock, so it's finally done. Pop the cork.

All right.

Cool.

I know that's a process, man. Well, cool, man. Gui Costin, thanks for coming on.

Thanks for being an open book. Congratulations on the book, and it's been great chatting with you.

Hey, Wes, thanks, man. It's been so great to get to meet you. Thanks for having me on.

A true honor. Thank you.

Have a good one, man.

You too, brother. Thanks.

Check out his video, this video interview, because he's got a killer studio. I am jealous. You know, I may have to go get an office now, get a whole big studio.

Maybe. But the guy's a pro, like we were talking about at the beginning, you know, he's building a team, build a fun place to work with, no drama, create valuable content that leads to business growth. If you are in the inner circle, if you're in the 12 weeks to peak, you know I'm driving you to create good content.

It helps you stand out, but helps you clarify your thinking. It makes you a better salesperson, okay? Even if nobody reads it, it makes you better.

I love his approach that failure can be a stepping stone to success. Amen. You can't climb a smooth mountain.

I wrote that a long time ago. I need to go find that post and update it. You need the cracks, the plateaus, even the valleys.

It's a time to maybe readjust, reevaluate, catch your breath, get out of the elements. Just keep going, okay? I love it.

Results should be prioritized over excuses. So a lot of good nuggets in there. I told you it was a good dude to listen to.

So thanks for listening. All right. If you need some help, I mean, Gui doesn't really do that.

If you need help in the financial world, call them up. But if you need business help, mentorship, coaching, hit me up. It's what I do.