

Money and the Map

The Investment Step and the Decision-Making Process

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Where this session sits

Sessions 1 through 4 built the front end. Today we qualify what you found.

01

**Mindset and
Why Outbound**

02

**The Prospecting
Opener**

03

**Bonding, DISC and
the Up-Front
Contract**

04

**The Expert
Advantage
and Finding Pain**

05

**Investment and
the Decision
Process**

Sessions 6 and 7 build on today. Nothing you present in Session 6 matters if the qualification you do today is thin.

What you will walk out with

-
- 01** **A money conversation that does not lead with savings** You will be able to open the investment conversation without reaching for a discount, and know why the savings pitch costs G&A deals.
-
- 02** **A way to handle the under-invested prospect** Language for the prospect whose current spend is low because the problem was never solved, not because they lack money.
-
- 03** **Six categories of decision intelligence** Players, process, criteria, timeline, competition and success blockers, asked in your own words, not a script from 1985.
-
- 04** **A map of who really decides in a PEO deal** Including the incumbent broker, who is rarely in your meeting and frequently in the decision.

The one step that cannot move

Sandler is not a rigid, linear script. You move in and out of pain, players and timing all through a call. There is one exception.

Everything else is fluid

- You can ask a pain question on a cold call
- You can learn who else is involved in minute four
- You can surface a renewal date before you ever meet

Money comes after pain. Always.

Without the context of pain, five dollars looks like too much money. If G&A is not the cheapest option on the page, and you have not developed the problem, its reasons and its impact, the funding conversation falls apart every time.

Our contract for the next 90 minutes

We model what we teach. Here is the agenda, the time and the outcome.

PURPOSE

Convert the Sandler Investment Step and Decision Step into the G&A sale.

AGENDA

Part 1: willingness and ability to invest. Part 2: the decision-making process. Four breakouts and live language work.

YOUR ROLE

Cameras on, real prospects in mind, verbatim language written down. Not concepts. Actual words.

OUTCOME

You leave with a money script and a decision question set you can use on Monday.

Fair enough?

01

PART ONE

Willingness and Ability to Invest

- The savings trap

- The under-invested prospect

- Building the true current spend

- The investment conversation formula

What would you pay for one of these?

Write a number down for each. Do not overthink it. We will compare across the room.

A bottle of wine

Somebody in this room said nine dollars and somebody said sixty. Same grapes, same bottle, same evening.

A new TV

Same screen on the same wall. The spread across this group will be three or four times over.

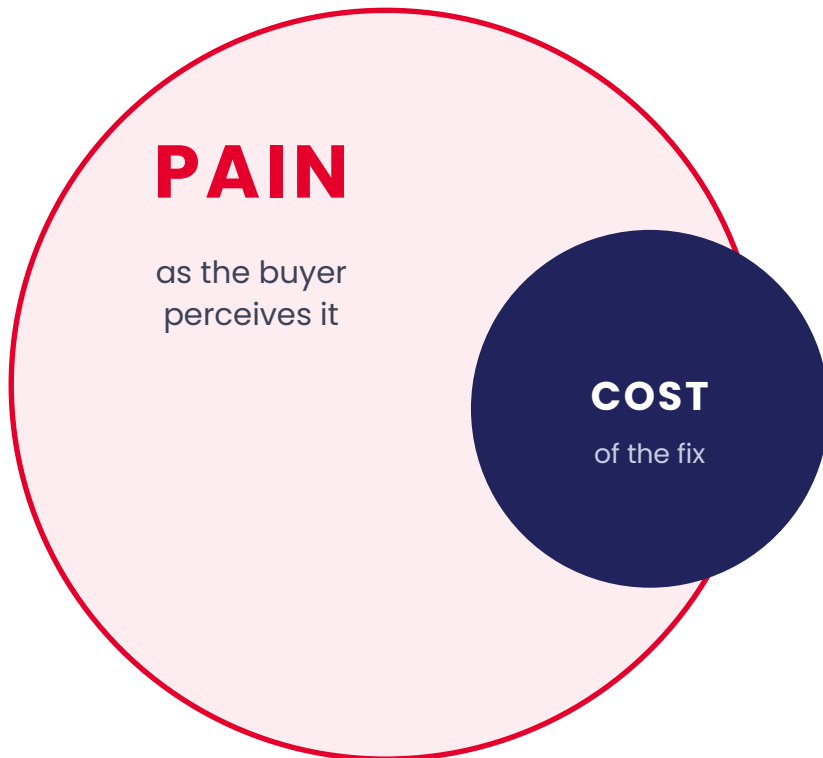
A new couch

You will sit on it every night for ten years, and the number you just wrote down still varies wildly.

Nobody in this room is wrong. The number moves with what it means to you. Your prospects do exactly this with HR, benefits and risk.

Investment tolerance

A buyer will invest up to their perceived cost of the pain. Not a dollar more.



If you shrink the circle, you shrink the budget

- A thin pain conversation produces a small circle, and a small circle produces a prospect who says the fee is too high
- In a PEO sale the circle is built from compliance exposure, HR hours, turnover, claims history and the owner's own time, not from benefits premium alone
- When you hear "that is more than we want to spend," your first suspicion should be your own pain work, not their wallet

The savings pitch

Leading with "we will save you money" is the most comfortable thing a BA can say, and the most expensive.

1

You lead with savings

The offer is now a number on a page.



2

They forward it to their broker

You just handed your competitor the assignment.



3

The broker sharpens the pencil

Renewal gets re-marketed, a point or two comes off.



4

The problem never gets solved

You lose on a line item that was never the reason to buy.

Savings is a byproduct of solving the problem. It is not the reason a company leaves its broker and its payroll provider on the same day.

Where does the savings reflex show up?

BREAKOUT

6

MINUTES

Be honest. We are looking for the moment in your own call where you reach for price because it feels safe.

01

At what point in your calls do you find yourself reaching for the savings angle?

02

What is the prospect usually doing or saying right before you reach for it?

03

What happened the last time you led with savings? Where did the deal end up?

04

What could you have said instead that would have kept the conversation on the problem?

Come back with one specific moment each. We will collect them and build replacement language on the next slide.

Stop saying this. Start saying this.

AVOID

We can probably save you money on your benefits.

USE

Before we talk about what this costs, I want to understand what the current setup is costing you in places that never show up on an invoice. Can we look at that first?

AVOID

Let me put together a proposal and show you the savings.

USE

I am not going to put a number in front of you until we both agree on what we are actually solving. Otherwise you will just hand it to your broker and nothing changes.

AVOID

We are usually competitive on price.

USE

Honestly, we are sometimes not the cheapest line item in year one. Companies work with us when the thing they are buying is not a line item.

Write these in your own voice in the workbook. Borrowed words come out stiff on a live call.

Cost versus investment



It is irrelevant how much something costs. What is relevant is how much the buyer will invest to solve their problem, and what the return on that investment is.

SANDLER SELLING SYSTEM

The under-invested prospect

Their spend is low because the problem was never solved, not because they have no money.

A BA hears a small current number and assumes a small budget. That is the wrong read. A company running HR out of the controller's inbox, with a plan chosen purely on price and no handbook, is not telling you what it will spend. It is telling you what it has been getting away with.

The read

Low current spend is evidence of the pain, not a ceiling on the budget.

Your job is to help them see the gap between what they have been spending and what the problem has been costing.

Six tells of an under-invested company

You will hear most of these inside the first two calls. Write them down when you do.

HR lives in someone else's job

The controller, the office manager or the owner's spouse handles onboarding, claims and terminations between other duties.

No handbook, or one from 2016

Policies were pulled off the internet, never reviewed by counsel and never updated for the states they now hire in.

The plan was picked on price alone

High deductible, thin network, and a waiver rate that tells you employees are opting out rather than enrolling.

Compliance is do-it-yourself

I-9s in a drawer, handshake classifications for contractors, ACA reporting handled by whoever had time in January.

A payroll-only vendor

They bought check processing and were told that was HR. Nobody is on the hook for anything beyond the tax filing.

No performance or onboarding process

New hires learn by watching. Problem employees stay for years because nobody documented anything.

What under-investment has been costing them

None of this appears on an invoice, which is exactly why they have never counted it.

● Compliance exposure

Wage and hour, I-9 practice, contractor classification, state registrations in every state they now hire in.

● ACA reporting risk

Filing obligations handled late, incorrectly, or by someone with no background in it.

● Owner and controller hours

Time on payroll corrections, enrollment questions and employee issues, taken from the work they were hired to do.

● Claims and employment practices

A single wrongful termination or harassment claim, defended without counsel or coverage in place.

● Turnover

Recruiting, lost productivity and the ramp time on every replacement hire in a benefits-thin package.

● Unemployment and workers comp

Claims never contested, experience ratings drifting up, no return-to-work process in place.

You are not building a proposal here. You are building the circle from slide 8 so the number that comes later has somewhere to land.

Two prospects, one question

"What are you spending on this today?" gets you two completely different situations. Handle them differently.

The over-spender

Real budget in place, poor return on it

- They already spend real money across a payroll vendor, a broker, an HRIS and outside counsel
- Your work is consolidation and return, not more spend
- Danger: this is where the savings reflex is most tempting and most fatal

"You are already spending this. The question is whether you are getting what you are paying for."

The under-investor

Almost no spend, and no protection

- Current outlay is small and the exposure is large, and they have never connected the two
- Your work is helping them see the gap without making them feel foolish
- Danger: reading their small number as their ceiling and disqualifying a good opportunity

"You have been carrying this yourself. What has that actually cost you, in the places it does not get invoiced?"

What they think they spend, and what they really spend

Almost no prospect can answer this on their own. Building it with them is a service, and it is also your money step.

What they will tell you

- Payroll processing fee
- Health premium contribution
- That is usually the whole list



What you help them find

- Broker commission built into the premium
- Workers comp premium, deposit and audit true-up
- HRIS, applicant tracking and time systems
- ACA reporting vendor and year-end filing
- Employment counsel, retained or hourly
- Internal HR and payroll hours, at a loaded rate
- Unbudgeted claims, fines and settlements

Now the comparison is honest, and "we will save you money" is replaced by a number the two of you built together.

Why this conversation gets awkward

Sandler splits the blockers into two categories. You almost certainly have one of them.

TECHNICAL

Not knowing what to ask, or when

- You have no language for the funding question so you skip it
- You do not know how PEO pricing is structured well enough to discuss it out loud
- You wait for the proposal to raise money, which is far too late

CONCEPTUAL

Your own head trash about money

- The money messages you grew up with. Abundance, scarcity, or that it is rude to discuss
- You feel intrusive asking, so you soften it until the question disappears
- You get paid to be a professional. Your buyer is not compensated for working with you

Technical problems are fixed with practice. Conceptual problems are fixed by noticing them.

Getting a straight answer about money

BREAKOUT

5

MINUTES

Two blockers each. One technical, one conceptual. Be specific to the PEO conversation, not to selling in general.

01

What makes it hard to get a PEO prospect to be open about what they will invest?

02

Which of your blockers are technical, and which are yours to own?

03

What does the prospect stand to lose by telling you the truth about money? Answer from their side of the desk.

04

What would have to be true earlier in the call for them to answer you honestly?

Facilitator will collect and sort responses into the two columns from the previous slide.

The Investment Step is not a quote

It is not

A proposal, a rate, a spreadsheet or a benefits comparison

It is

A preliminary conversation about what solving this will take, held to find out whether the two of you should keep talking.

Why this matters in a PEO deal

- Real numbers require a census, claims history and underwriting. You cannot quote on the spot and you should stop trying
- What you can do is establish whether the range required to fix this is even in their world
- If it is not, you have saved yourself six weeks of underwriting work and a bad forecast
- If it is, you have earned the right to ask for the data

The investment conversation formula

Three steps, in this order, every time.

01

Summarize and validate the pain

Go back to what they told you and quantify what you can. Then ask whether anything was missed. You are re-inflating the circle before you put a number next to it.

"Let me make sure I have this right. You have three states, no handbook, and you and your controller are spending most of Fridays on payroll questions. Is that fair, and is there anything we did not cover?"

02

Verify whether funding exists

Not what the budget is. Whether there is one, where it would come from, and who controls it. Many prospects genuinely do not know, and saying so out loud is useful to both of you.

"Have you given any thought to what solving this would need to be worth? And if you did move forward, do you know where the funds would come from?"

03

Quantify the investments

All three of them. Money, resources and effort. In a PEO deal the last two are where deals quietly die, and nobody talks about them until implementation.

"Beyond the dollars, this takes some of your time and your team's. Can we talk about what that looks like so there are no surprises?"

Three investments a PEO buyer has to make

You will lose more deals at implementation than at pricing. These get discussed now, not later.

1

Money

The administrative fee, benefits premium, workers comp and any first-year timing effects. Whether it is quoted per employee per month or as a share of payroll, they need to understand which lever moves it.

2

Resources

Census and claims data, payroll history, current plan documents, comp and title cleanup, and someone internally who owns the handoff. Most of this sits with the person who is already underwater.

3

Effort

Open enrollment communication, employee questions about doctors and networks, manager training on new processes, and the political work of explaining to the team why this is changing.

There is no excuse for losing a deal in week ten because nobody told them how much of their own time this would take.

Four ways to open the funding question

Pick two. Make them yours. The workbook has room to write them in your own words.

OPEN-ENDED

"Have you given any thought to what it would be worth to have this handled? I ask because some companies have a number in mind and some are working it out as they go."

Signals that you do not assume they have a budget, which makes it safe to admit they do not.

THIRD-PARTY STORY

"When we work with companies around your size making this move, they have usually set something aside for it. Is that where you are, or is this still exploratory?"

Gives them a reference point and permission to be in either category.

BRACKETING

"Companies your size land between X and Y per employee per month on the administrative side, before benefits. Is that in the neighborhood, or way off?"

Use G&A approved ranges only. Never invent a bracket.

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM

"If you did move on this, would the money come out of the benefits line, the HR line, or would it need to be a new conversation with your partner?"

Tells you about funding and about the decision structure at the same time.

"Our renewal came in at 14 percent"

Know exactly what that sentence means before you respond to it. Most people do not.

It is a rate action, not total spend

Fourteen percent describes the increase to rates. It is not what their overall benefits spend will do, because enrollment, plan design and contributions all move too.

It is usually the first pass

That number is typically the carrier's opening position, delivered before the broker has negotiated and before any plan design changes were modeled.

The number they act on comes later

By the time they buy down the plan or shift contributions, the figure they live with often looks very different from the one they just quoted you.

Ask this every single time: "Was that the first pass, or after your broker pushed back?"

Two moves for a stalled money conversation

NEGATIVE REVERSE

Go looking for the truth

"I am almost sensing that you and your partner would not seriously consider putting the time, the money or the energy into fixing this. Be frank with me. Am I right about that?"

Delivered flat and without sarcasm. You genuinely want a real answer, and either answer is useful to you.

THE MONKEY'S PAW

Offer something smaller

When the full investment is genuinely out of reach, or the prospect is risk-averse and wants to start small.

- A compliance and exposure review before any pricing work
- Building the true current spend with them as a standalone exercise
- A timeline conversation anchored to next year's renewal instead of this one
- Staying in touch with a defined reason and a defined date

One caution: if you have not confirmed you are with a decision maker, you do not owe anyone a bracket or a price range.

Score yourself after every call

No live role play today. This replaces it, and it is better practice because it happens on real calls.

1 Twelve lines, one page

Every habit we just worked on, from developing pain before money to asking whether the renewal was the first pass.

2 Four columns, four calls

Score yourself after each of your next four prospecting calls. Yes, no, or partly. Nobody sees it but you.

3 Look down the column, not across

One call debrief tells you nothing. Four in a row tells you which line is always a no. That line is your development plan.

4 Bring it to Session 6

We open with the pattern you found, not the calls that went well.

Workbook page 14. It is fillable, so you can type into it on your laptop between calls.

SELF-CHECK

After the call: score yourself

Use this after each of your next four prospecting calls. One column per call. Mark yes, no, or partly, and be honest. The pattern matters more than any single call.

SELF-CHECK	CALL 1	CALL 2	CALL 3	CALL 4
Did I develop the pain before I raised money?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I keep savings out of my opening?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I ask what they are spending on this today?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I help them count what is not on the invoice?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I test whether low spend was under-investment rather than no budget?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I verify that funding exists without demanding a budget number?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I name resources and effort, not just dollars?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I ask whether the renewal was the first pass or after broker pushback?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I ask whose opinion they will seek out?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I ask about the incumbent broker relationship?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I go looking for a success blocker nobody had mentioned?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did I leave with a specific next step and a date on it?	☐	☐	☐	☐

The pattern I see across these calls. Which line keeps coming up as a no?

The one thing I will change on the next call, written as the sentence I will say:

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02

PART TWO

The Decision-Making Process

- Six components of decision intelligence
- The cast in a PEO deal
- The renewal calendar
- Qualify, or let it go

Decision is the capstone of qualification

To be clear about the word: we are talking about how the buyer decides, not about you closing. We are still in discovery.

A prospect is qualified when all three are true

- 1 You have found pain you believe G&A can relieve
- 2 You have found funding that will cover what solving it takes
- 3 You understand a decision process you are willing to participate in

Two out of three is not qualified

Pain and money with no decision map is the profile of every deal that dies in the last two weeks. Somebody appears who was never in your meetings, asks one question, and the effective date slides a year.

There should be no presentation until this step is done.

DISCUSSION

Stood up at the altar

Everyone in this room will lose a deal this year to a person they never met.

Months of work. A champion who loves you. Data collected, proposal built, enrollment materials ready. Then the owner's CPA asks one question on a Thursday, or the broker of record calls in a favor, and it is over.

ASK YOURSELF

- In the last 120 days, how much time did you spend with someone who could not say yes?
- How often do you lose to no decision rather than to a competitor?
- If you cut that number in half, what does that do to your year?

Write the number down.

Two worth memorizing



A decision not to make a decision is still a decision.

No decision is the outcome you lose to most often. It is not neutral and it is not a maybe. It is a loss with a friendlier tone of voice.



When you think you understand the buyer's decision process, you are usually several questions away from actually understanding it.

The first answer you get is the org chart version. The real process has a broker, a spouse, a CPA, a board or a bank in it somewhere.

One more, from the field: only decision makers can help other people make decisions.

BREAKOUT THREE

Why is the decision so hard to see?

BREAKOUT

5

MINUTES

Specific to the PEO sale. Not selling in general. We want the blockers you actually run into with small and mid-size companies.

01

What makes it hard to get total clarity on who decides at a 40 to 100 person company?

02

Where do you most often get blocked from reaching the person who can actually sign?

03

Which player surprises you most often, late in the process?

04

What have you tried that worked? Be specific about the words you used.

This is the area our clients ask for help with more than any other. Give it real time in the debrief.

Six components of decision intelligence

You will not get all six in one call. You do need all six before you present.

01

Players

Who is involved, who influences, who signs, and who can quietly kill it

02

Process

The actual steps this company goes through for a decision this size

03

Criteria

What they will measure the options against, and who set those criteria

04

Timeline

The renewal date, the effective date, and everything that has to happen between now and then

05

Competition

Other PEOs, the incumbent broker's counteroffer, hiring an HR person, and doing nothing

06

Success blockers

The trap doors. The things that derail this that nobody has mentioned yet

Success blockers is the one almost every salesperson skips, and the one that ends deals.

The cast in a PEO decision

A PEO touches payroll, benefits, compliance and risk. That means it touches everyone. One point of contact is never the whole picture.

- **Owner or CEO** Signs it. Cares about risk coming off their desk and getting their time back.
- **CFO or Controller** Runs the numbers and often owns the comparison. Wants predictability, not just a lower number.
- **HR leader or office manager** Lives with it daily. May also be wondering what this means for their job.
- **The incumbent broker** Rarely in your meeting. Frequently in the decision. Has a relationship and revenue at stake.
- **The CPA or outside accountant** Trusted, informal, and capable of ending it with one skeptical comment.
- **Board, partner or PE sponsor** Approval thresholds and contract terms. Often invisible until the agreement goes out.
- **Employees** Not decision makers, but their reaction to network and plan changes is a real constraint on the buyer.

The broker who is not in the room

Ask about the broker early, on purpose, and without an edge in your voice.

The incumbent broker has a relationship, a history and revenue tied to this account. When a PEO conversation gets serious, they usually find out, and they usually respond. That is not a reason to avoid the subject. It is a reason to surface it while you still have time to work with it.

Questions worth asking out loud

"How long have you been with your current broker, and how would you describe that relationship?" *"When you look at something like this, is that a conversation you would have with them, or one you would have first and tell them about later?"*

WHAT YOU LEARN

- Whether the broker is a trusted advisor or a renewal delivery service
- Whether your champion has the standing to make a change the broker will not like
- How the counteroffer is likely to arrive, and when
- Whether the relationship is personal, which changes everything about your timeline

The HR leader's unasked question

Nobody says this out loud in a meeting, so you have to make room for it.

"So what happens to my job?"

If the HR person believes a PEO replaces them, they will not sabotage you openly. They will simply be slow, and slow kills deals with an effective date attached.

The same logic applies everywhere

Every person in the cast has a version of this question. Find the one your champion is not saying out loud, and you will stop being surprised in week ten.

How to handle it

- Get them in the room early rather than routing around them
- Develop their pain specifically. The Friday afternoons, the compliance questions they cannot answer, the calls they take at home
- Be honest about what changes in their day and what does not
- Ask directly: "If this moved forward, how would it change your role, and how do you feel about that?"

What actually has to happen after "we are interested"

Most prospects have no idea. Walking them through it makes you the expert and exposes the real timeline.

01

Data collection

Census, payroll history,
current plan
documents, workers
comp loss runs

02

Underwriting

Carrier and risk review.
This takes real time and
is not something you
can compress by asking
nicely

03

Proposal and benefits comparison

Where the honest
apples-to-apples
conversation from Part
One pays off

04

Agreement and legal review

The service agreement
goes to their counsel, or
to a partner nobody
mentioned earlier

05

Implementation and enrollment

Employee
communication,
enrollment, manager
onboarding and first
payroll

Step four is where deals stall without warning. Ask who reviews agreements long before you send one.

Work backwards from the effective date

In this business the calendar is not a preference. Renewal dates and clean quarter starts drive everything.

Start here

The effective date they want, which is usually tied to their renewal or a clean quarter start



**Implementation
and enrollment**



**Signed
agreement**



Legal review



**Proposal
delivered**



**Underwriting
complete**



Data in hand

Confirm current G&A implementation windows with your manager before you commit to any date in front of a prospect. Then ask the buyer: "Working back from the first of the year, here is what has to happen. Does that timeline still work on your end?"