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**What's the
biggest pain point
in your sales cycle
right now?**

**Stoic Selling:
The Philosopher's Guide
to Closing Business Like
a Sales Legend**

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Intro:

From Greek Geek to Sales Legend

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For most of us, when we encounter the words “philosophy” or “stoic” we usually have one of two reactions. Either we steer clear from the subject altogether or we associate it with a bunch of confusing stuff that old dudes argued about in ancient Greece.

But, as it turns out, philosophical Stoicism actually has a lot to do with being a badass salesperson. In a nutshell, Stoicism developed as a way to view the world where everything that happens is irrational and outside of human control.

Sounds a lot like our everyday sales world, right?

While the ancient [philosophy](#) posited that all of us humans are powerless to control our environment, the one thing we can enact change on is how we approach our circumstances dealing with the environment as it is. They believed that we could do this most effectively by pursuing self-improvement through four traits they called virtues.

Wisdom

Navigating complex situations in a logical, informed, and calm manner.

Justice

Treating others around you with fairness even when they're wrong.

Temperance

Exercising self-restraint and moderation in all aspects of your life.

Courage

Facing extraordinary and everyday challenges with clarity and integrity.

These virtues traveled through centuries of human civilization and inspired some of mankind's greatest influencers, such as Marcus Aurelius, Viktor Frankl, and Nelson Mandela (just to name a few legends).

And when we place the virtues into a modern-day sales job description and call them 'preferred requirements' the virtues start to make a lot more sense within our professional context. With just a little bit of learning and a lot of hard work, this guide can take you from a Greek geek to a sales legend by following the same path.



Sales Virtue #1:

Wisdom

Sales Virtue #1: Wisdom

Observe the forces outside of your control, then label them.

The Stoic philosophers believed that happiness and virtue stemmed from the ability to focus solely on the things under one's control.

“Some things are within our control, and some things are not. It is only after you have faced up to this fundamental rule and learned to distinguish between what you can and can't control that inner tranquility and outer effectiveness become possible.” - Epictetus

This idea of ignoring what you can't control seems obvious, but it is often taken for granted, especially in sales. How many of us have wasted time agonizing over whether or not a prospect was going to email us back within a certain time frame? It's not uncommon for people to lose a half hour mindlessly hitting refresh on their email, hoping that their contact will deliver some good news.

The problem is that so many things can derail a sale that are outside of your control.

Reasons outside of your control	Reasons within your control
Your champion left the company.	Your clever prospecting email that references a recent article they wrote on LinkedIn.
Your prospect pivoted into a new area of business.	Your drive to multi-thread a sales & not give up when one door closes on you.
Your contact happened to receive your email when they were in a bad mood; it set off a negative cascade that ended the relationship.	Your ability to stay silent during a call & actively listen to your prospect's pain points.

The Stoics would question the use of worrying about these kinds of outcomes. As Marcus Aurelius said, “You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.”

While sales can be stressful, the beauty of it is that there is always something you can do that will strengthen your chances of your next deal going through. There's another drip campaign you can set up, another list you can build, another relationship you can strengthen.

There are also steps you can take to mitigate the impact of the above-mentioned problems. For example, you can start building multiple relationships within your target accounts early on to avoid being single-threaded.

See also: [8 Mistakes that Stop You from Closing the Sale](#) →



**Sales Virtue #2:
Temperance**

Sales Virtue #2: Temperance

Strive for a grind/party balance, success will follow.

Andrew Wilkinson, founder of MetaLab gives advice that could have come straight from the Stoics.

“You don’t have to make yourself miserable to be successful. It’s natural to look back and reminisce on the long nights and manic moments of genius, but success isn’t about working hard, it’s about working smart.”

Sales teams, specifically, are often hyper-focused on outcomes, metrics, KPIs, etc. — it’s ingrained in what executives want and essential to see if the company is heading in the right direction. It makes sense, though, since folks want to see a return on their investment. But a fixation on metrics and outcomes disregards the fact that we are people running these companies (not machines).

The Stoics would remind sales leaders and sales reps on the value of establishing both powerful processes AND healthy support systems. In other words, aim for equal parts grinding and equal parts partying.

Quarterly or monthly quotas are the holy grail, but that doesn’t mean small wins don’t count. Celebrating small victories doesn’t need to be elaborate either. Call out these wins during all-hands meetings. Bring in donuts unexpectedly to reward the team for working hard, even if sales are flat. Start a #celebrations channel in slack and use it to highlight even the tiniest victory.

Morale increases, and with it productivity, when the team feels that their day-to-day efforts are noticed and appreciated. Strive to work hard and play hard with all this sales stuff temperance breeds longterm success.

Action	Celebration
Did an SDR make their first cold call?	Pat them on the back, ask them how it went.
Did an AE make a small up-sell to a notoriously difficult customer?	Give them a public shout-out in a Slack channel.
Did an account manager send a thoughtful gift to a customer that prevented a likely churn?	Acknowledge their actions and give them props.



Sales Virtue #3:

Justice

Sales Virtue #3: Justice

See the opportunity in every wrongdoing

The Stoics insisted that the easy path is much worse than the one filled with mistakes. Without errors, there are no real learning opportunities. According to Ryan Holiday,

“The path of least resistance is a terrible teacher.”

Whether your problem is dealing with an invading army or an angry customer, the principle is the same. In sales, mistakes are inevitable. No one will ever make it through a year without doing something wrong. It’s how you treat them, and the insights you gain along the way, that will define your team’s ability to bounce back strong together.

Treat everyone fairly, mistakes and all

Unfortunately, there are sales leaders who react to a setback by catastrophizing. This is when a small problem is blown out of proportion. For instance, one bungled call by an SDR leads to a long, angry meeting full of accusations and misplaced blame. This is NOT what the Stoics would stand for, and it won’t make salespeople more successful.

Instead, these leaders should be carefully and compassionately digging into what went wrong on in that call so that they can extract every bit of relevant knowledge from their mistakes. This same idea of analysis instead of outrage can be applied across everything that happens on your team.

- **When someone loses a deal, write down why.** Every [CRM](#) has an area such as “reason for deal loss,” but not enough people use it. By amassing reasons for losses you can start to identify patterns, which help you stave off problems before they arise.
- **After a bad call, review the recording.** A service like Chorus, Gong, or [SalesLoft](#) can automatically record your sales calls. When a rep has something go awry, review the call and offer constructive feedback.
- **If your team misses its quota, don’t blame or make excuses.** Take ownership of it and come prepared with a plan to change things up and succeed in the following quarter.

When you learn why something is wrong, you can now take the proper steps to learn from it and avoid it from happening again. Treat everyone fairly, mistakes and all. Do this and you’ll be sales legend in no time.



Sales Virtue #4:

Courage

Sales Virtue #4: Courage

Prepare yourself to fail (a lot)

The Stoics were fans of what we now call negative visualization, which is the process of imagining a calamitous situation to get a sense of how it will affect us and to learn how to cope with it. They felt that these exercises were best performed while living in a period that was free of strife.

“It is in times of security that the spirit should be preparing itself to deal with difficult times.” — Seneca

It’s counterintuitive to force yourself to confront negative outcomes when things are going well. But that’s precisely why the Stoics thought it was so important. They accepted that they didn’t live in a fantasy world where the good times never ended. Droughts, wars, and sickness were always possibilities in their minds. Therefore, the rational thing to do was to prepare for the worst.

Similarly, in sales, a dicey customer situation is apt to rise out of nowhere. If you’ve prepared yourself for every possible negative situation and given your team the resources it needs to succeed, everyone will have the best chance of executing under pressure.

Train for every scenario to be calm and confident when it happens

Sales is like anything else — practice makes perfect. Train your team to tackle tricky situations with poise.

3 Strategies For Building Courage in Sales.

Invest heavily in one-on-one

practice. Do mock demos and calls until you are satisfied that junior reps won’t crack under pressure and know your product inside and out. Have senior leaders play the role of difficult prospects so that the experience is as challenging as possible for the rep.

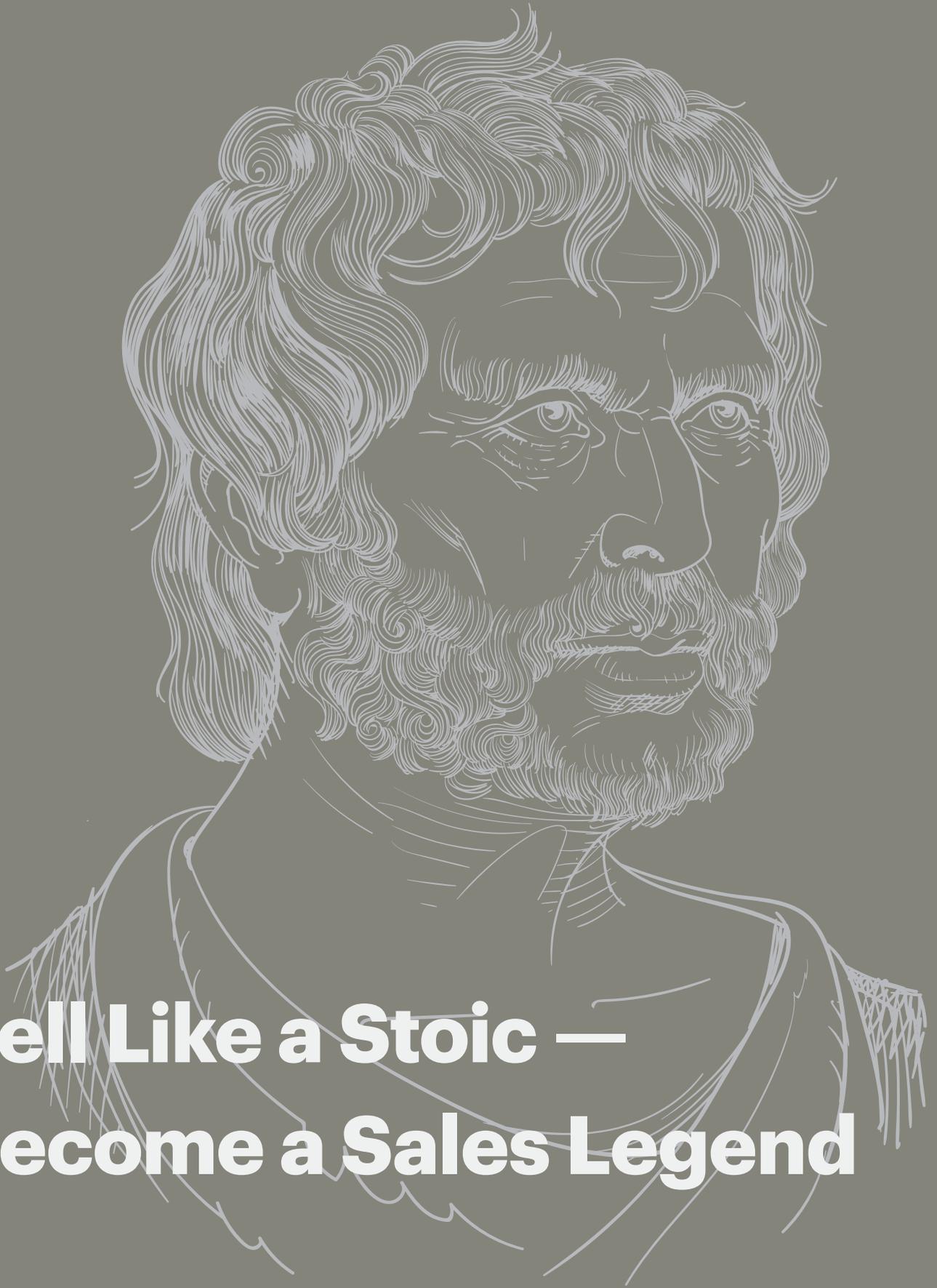
Learn to overcome objections.

Prospects are going to throw up roadblocks. Your team needs to be prepared to overcome common objections. For example, if someone says the price of your service is too high, they can offer a strategic discount based on how valuable the account is and how likely it is to close.

See also — 14 Ways to Speed Up a Slow Sales Cycle →

Arm your team with stories.

Nothing can smooth out a treacherous call quite like some high-quality social proof, showing that you’ve helped out a customer similar to the prospect. Try providing a series of stories that link up with your most common sales scenarios.



**Sell Like a Stoic —
Become a Sales Legend**

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A career in sales is not for the weak-willed.

It's usually hard, sometimes tedious, and occasionally heartbreaking. It takes the resolve of a Stoic to weather the ups and downs and stay focused on the journey when times are tough. But by preparing for and embracing the tough times, you're more likely than not to come out successful on the other side. And when you do, the success will feel all the sweeter.

"The greater the difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it."

- Epictetus

Embracing Stoic principles will not magically make you a legend, but they will help instill the values that build incredibly powerful habits that turn into success slowly over time.

Sell Like a Stoic With PandaDoc

Try it free for 14 days at signup.pandadoc.com.

Request a demo with a product specialist at pandadoc.com/demo.