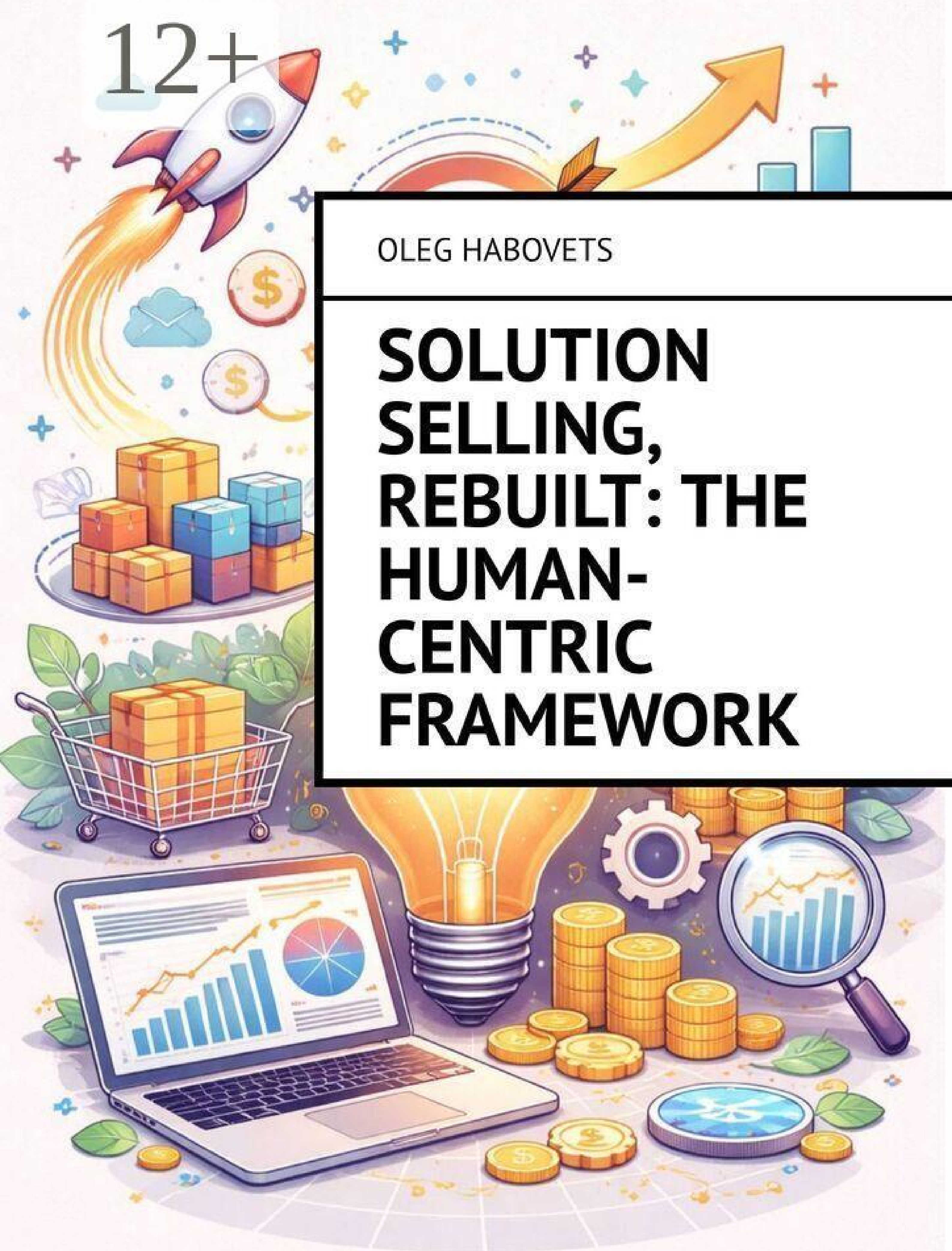

12+

OLEG HABOVETS

SOLUTION SELLING, REBUILT: THE HUMAN-CENTRIC FRAMEWORK

Oleg Habovets

Solution Selling, Rebuilt: The Human-Centric Framework

«Издательские решения»

Habovets O.

Solution Selling, Rebuilt: The Human-Centric Framework / O. Habovets — «Издательские решения»,

Solution Selling, Rebuilt: The Human-Centric Framework rethinks classic solution selling for modern B2B. This book shows how complex deals are really won: by shaping client thinking, uncovering real business problems, and leading strategic conversations. Focused on human behavior, decision dynamics, and high-stakes negotiations, it's for professionals who sell complex solutions and want influence, not scripts.

Содержание

Solution Selling, Rebuilt: The Human-Centric Framework

Oleg Habovets

ISBN 978-5-0068-9780-9
Created with Ridero smart publishing system

Introduction

Why Complex Sales Break Where Everything Seems Logical

If complex sales really worked the way they're usually described, this book wouldn't exist. It would be enough to give a good presentation, write a clear proposal, list the benefits, neatly explain how you're better than the competition, and the deal would close. Logical? In theory, yes. In practice, almost never.

I've seen the same scenario too many times. Smart people, strong products, experienced teams. Everything is set up correctly: the funnel, meetings, demos, calculations, approvals. The client nods, asks the "right" questions, thanks you for the presentation, and says the sacred phrase: "We need to think it over." And then — silence, delays, a sudden "we chose someone else," or the classic "it's not a priority right now." And the most unpleasant part is the feeling that you did everything right, but the result slipped away again.

The problem is that in complex sales, logic almost always fails. Not because clients are stupid or salespeople aren't trying hard enough. But because the very mindset we're taught to sell with doesn't work where the decision is expensive, the risk is high, and the consequences of a mistake can haunt you for years.

Complex decisions aren't bought the same way simple products are. They aren't chosen based on "like it or not" or "cheaper or more expensive." In such deals, the client rarely understands what they actually need, even more rarely can articulate it clearly, and almost never is ready to honestly admit why they even considered buying. So, trying to "sell beautifully" here often does more harm than good.

Presentations in complex sales almost always come too late. Proposals answer questions too early that the client hasn't even asked yet. And "unique features" sound convincing only to the salesperson who's long been in love with them. The client, at that moment, is thinking about something else entirely. About risks. About how this will affect their career. About what will happen if they change nothing. And about who will be blamed if the solution doesn't work.

There's another unpleasant truth that's hard to accept. Most often, clients don't know what they want. Not because they're incompetent. But because in complex systems, the root causes of problems are rarely on the surface. A person comes to a salesperson with a formulation that seems reasonable and safe to them. "We need to automate." "We need a new contractor." "We need a better system." These aren't requests. These are protective constructs. Ways to avoid delving into where it gets uncomfortable.

And this is where the key mistake of most salespeople happens. They take these words at face value and start adapting to them. Proposing solutions, calculating budgets, arguing over price, proving advantages. At that moment, the sale is already starting to fall apart, just not immediately. Because they're discussing not what's actually driving the client to buy.

A complex sale differs from a regular one not by the size of the check or the length of the sales cycle. It differs in that the purchase happens not at the moment the contract is approved, but long before that — in the client's mind. And if a clear picture of "why are we even doing this" hasn't formed in that mind, no arguments, discounts, or beautiful slides will replace it.

Over the years, I've come to a simple but not always convenient thought for the ego. In complex sales, the seller shouldn't be a persuader. They are not an advocate for their product or a performer with a well-rehearsed speech. Their task is completely different. They are a navigator. A person who helps the client sort out their own situation, see what was previously ignored, and travel the path from vague unease to a conscious decision.

A navigator doesn't push forward or drag by the hand. They set the direction, show landmarks, and honestly say where the route is dangerous. Sometimes this means walking away from a deal. Sometimes — slowing down when you want to speed up. And sometimes — asking a question that's uncomfortable to ask, but without which everything else loses meaning.

This book isn't about selling more beautifully. And it's not about closing more deals at any cost. It's about how to think in complex sales so that deals stop being a lottery. So that conversations with clients stop feeling like walking through a minefield. And so that you, at any moment, understand what's really happening, rather than comforting yourself with the illusion that "well, everything seemed to go okay."

If you're waiting for tricks, phrases, and universal scripts — it might get uncomfortable from here on. But if it's important for you to learn to think like a professional who manages complex deals, not just hopes for luck — we're on the same side. And it's about to get truly interesting.

Chapter 1. Why the Client Almost Always Buys Something Other Than What They Say

One of the most persistent illusions in sales is the belief in a rational buyer. Almost everyone believes it: junior managers, experienced sellers, even executives. The essence of this illusion is simple and very convenient. The client supposedly understands what they want, can articulate it, and acts logically: compares options, weighs pros and cons, chooses the best offer. If the deal didn't happen — it means the seller didn't explain the value well or offered the wrong price.

Sounds nice. And it almost always has nothing to do with reality.

In complex sales, the rational buyer is a rare exception, not the rule. A person can be a professional in their field, manage large teams, make serious decisions, yet be completely irrational when purchasing a complex solution. Not because they're stupid or incompetent. But because not only money is at stake. Reputation, career, influence, responsibility, and the fear of being wrong are on the line.

When a client comes with a request formulation, it's almost never the true reason for buying. It's merely a safe version of reality they're comfortable presenting to the outside world. The request is a facade. There's always something behind it: internal pressure, accumulated problems, past negative experience, management expectations, or a simple desire "for people to get off their back."

I've seen many times how sellers genuinely rejoiced at a clear request. "We need a system." "We're looking for a contractor." "We need to automate a process." It seems like a gift from fate. Everything is clear, you can prepare a proposal right away. And that's precisely the moment the deal starts going off track. Because the seller takes the client's words as truth and stops thinking.

The request almost always describes not the problem, but its symptom. It's like going to a doctor and saying: "I have a headache, give me a pill." You can give a pill, and the pain will go away for a while. Or you can ask questions and find out the problem isn't in the head at all. In sales, the pill is more often chosen. It's quick, familiar, seemingly professional. And almost always useless in the long run.

The hardest deals are those where the seller believed the client too literally. They heard the request, agreed with the formulation, started proposing solutions, adapting the product, calculating cost, discussing timelines. Everything looked logical and sequential. But somewhere along the way, the meaning disappeared. The client started losing interest, conversations became formal, decisions were postponed. And in the end, the deal either died or turned into endless haggling where the only remaining argument was price.

At such moments, sellers usually say: "The client doesn't know what they want themselves." And that's true. But the problem isn't with the client. The problem is that the seller expected the impossible from them. The client isn't obligated to be able to articulate their true reason for buying. That's not their job. That's the seller's job.

In complex sales, the client rarely comes for a product. They come for change. For relief from risk. For a way to stop living in a situation that irritates, frightens, or limits them. The product is just a tool. Sometimes a good one, sometimes not. But it's almost never the goal.

When a seller starts the conversation with the product, they're offering a tool to a person who hasn't yet understood why they need to change anything. It's like offering a bridge where the client hasn't yet realized they're standing before a river. In response, they either politely nod, start discussing the bridge's characteristics, or ask if it can be cheaper. But they never make the decision to cross.

The real reason for buying almost always lies deeper than the request. Sometimes it's the fear of being left holding the bag. Sometimes — pressure from above. Sometimes — a feeling that the system is about to break. Sometimes — a desire to solidify the status quo and stop "putting out fires." These things are rarely voiced directly, especially in early meetings. And if the seller doesn't know how to draw them out, they remain on the surface, where it's not professionals who win, but chance and price dumping.

There's one rule I consider fundamental for complex sales. The client doesn't come for a product. Even if they say they came for it. They come for a solution to their situation, as they actually feel it, not as they describe it. And until the seller starts working with that real situation, everything else is just an imitation of activity.

This thought seems obvious, but it's precisely what breaks the habitual sales model. Because it requires stopping being a request executor and starting to be an investigator. Stopping rejoicing at clear specs and starting to wonder where they came from. Stopping proving the product's value and starting to figure out what value the client is actually looking for right now.

In the following chapters, we'll talk a lot about how to do this in practice. What questions to ask. How not to scare the client off. How not to turn the conversation into an interrogation or therapy session. But here it's important to establish the basic point of support. If you believe every word the client says and build the sale around their formulations, you're almost guaranteed to lose in complex deals. Not immediately. But systematically.

Complex sales don't start where the client voiced a request. They start where the seller stopped blindly believing them and started thinking.

Chapter 2. The Client's Real Problem: Why It's Almost Never Talked About

There's one thing that still surprises me, despite my experience and the number of negotiations. Clients are ready to discuss products, timelines, budgets, and technical details for hours, but they avoid talking about the real reason they even considered buying with all their might. And the more expensive and complex the decision, the stronger this avoidance.

From the outside, it looks strange. You'd think if a person has a problem, it's logical to voice it and look for a solution. But in reality, it works differently. The real problem is almost always inconvenient. It touches on responsibility, past mistakes, weak points in the system, or specific people. Talking about it out loud means admitting something went wrong. And admission is a risk.

So, the client comes not with a problem, but with a formulation. A careful, neutral, safe one. One that can be shown to management, colleagues, contractors. A formulation that's not embarrassing and won't get them punished. That's usually what's heard in the first meeting, and that's what sellers most often take for the truth.

But there's a chasm between the formulation and the real reason for buying.

The real problem rarely sounds like "we need a system" or "we're looking for a contractor." Most often, it looks like chronic tension. Like a feeling that the current situation can't hold on anymore. That any failure can lead to consequences. That people are overworked, processes are held together by manual control, and responsibility is blurred. But all this is hard to package into one neat request, so the client chooses a simplified version.

It's important to understand: the client isn't lying. They sincerely say what they can afford to say at this stage. Their formulation is the tip of the iceberg. And if the seller works only with that, they see only a small part of the picture.

There's another reason why real problems are rarely voiced directly. In complex organizations, a problem almost never belongs to one person. It's distributed among departments, roles, management levels. One feels pressure, another — fatigue, a third — fear for metrics, a fourth — risk to reputation. As a result, no one can say: "Here's our problem." It's much easier to say: "We need to improve the process."

And here again, a trap for the seller arises. The more experienced the client, the more convincing their version of reality sounds. They speak confidently, use the right words, cite numbers. The seller gets the feeling they're dealing with someone who knows exactly what they want. And the temptation arises not to dig deeper. Not to ask extra questions. Not to go where you might face resistance.

At that moment, the seller makes the most common mistake — confusing the client's competence with awareness. The client can be very smart, experienced, and influential, but still not fully understand why the situation became problematic right now. Or why it became problematic at all. They feel discomfort but haven't yet sorted it out.

If the seller accepts the current formulation as the final truth, they essentially agree to play by someone else's rules without understanding why the game even started. They start proposing solutions that might be perfect from a logic standpoint but absolutely fail to connect with the client on the level of real motives.

Such deals often look alive externally. There are meetings, correspondence, discussions. The client is engaged but without internal tension. They don't rush, don't push deadlines, don't defend the project within the company. Because inside themselves, there's still no clarity about why all this is needed. And without that clear "why," a complex purchase simply doesn't launch.

The real problem almost always manifests itself indirectly. In slips of the tongue. In pauses. In irritation over minor things. In contradictions between words and actions. The client might say the project is important but not find time for the next meeting. Might claim the budget exists but constantly postpone discussing it. Might talk about strategic value but avoid talking to those who really make decisions.

This isn't sabotage. It's a signal. A signal that, on a deeper level, the issue isn't resolved yet. And until the seller learns to see and read these signals, they'll keep running into a wall, not understanding why logic isn't working.

At this point, the seller has a choice. Either continue playing the convenient game — discussing the product, timelines, and price, hoping the client will "come around." Or take on a more complex role — start carefully, step by step, helping the client figure out what's really happening. Without imposing conclusions. Without breaking down their defenses. But also without avoiding difficult questions.

This is where the real work in complex sales begins. Not with the solution. Not with the presentation. But with an attempt to get to the real reason the client is in this conversation at all.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.