MN Consulting

A GUIDE FOR SOFTWARE FOUNDERS AND SALES LEADERS

Selling software into mining, metals and battery supply chains

The founder's pipeline playbook: six steps from first interest to a deal your team can run.



TRACEABILITY / AUTOMATION / SALES AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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START HERE

One interested person is not a deal.

In enterprise accounts, the most common mistake is thinking one interested person is enough to turn into a large, scalable contract. It rarely is. Miners, refiners and OEMs have lines of influence, and your deal has to travel through them.

This guide is for founders and sales leaders of software companies selling into mining, metals, battery and supply-chain enterprises.

BY THE END YOU WILL HAVE

1. A go or no-go decision on each lead
2. A named business owner
3. An account map
4. Your value in the customer's units
5. A pilot plan with the scale-up written in
6. A playbook your team can run without you

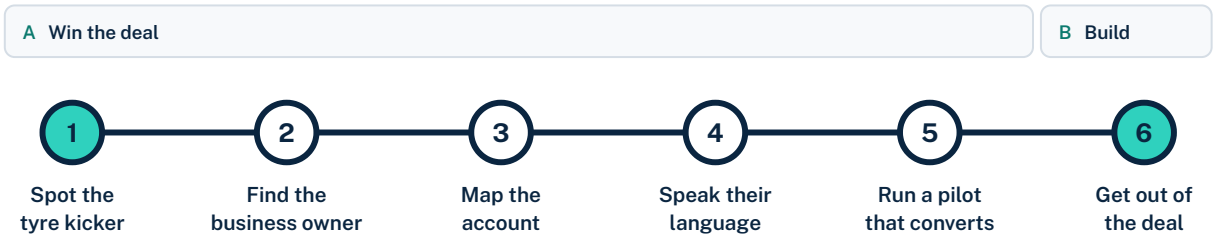
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Work through the steps in order. Each step is one page or so: a goal, what to do, the output you should have, and how to know you are done.

Use Steps 1 to 5 on every live enterprise opportunity. Use Step 6 once, before you hire or onboard reps.

Each step names the template that holds its output. The templates are at the back, and the full definitions are in the Appendix.

THE ROADMAP



PHASE A: WIN THE DEAL

01 Spot the tyre kicker



Decide early whether a lead is a real buyer or only interest.

In markets like traceability you get lots of interest from "tyre kickers". These are people with budget to trial new things. They are not thinking about the lines of influence in their organisation needed to make it a scale-up project.

A common example: an innovation or IT team with spare budget runs a pilot to see what tech is out there. But they are not the business owner who owns the problem.

DO THIS

1. Ask who owns the problem, and who would hold the budget for a scale-up.
2. Check whether your outcomes are on anyone's balanced scorecard. That is the clearest sign of a real buyer.
3. Score the lead using Template A: go, keep warm or stop.

OUTPUT

A scored lead qualification.

Template A

DONE WHEN

- [ ] You can name the business owner, or you have a plan to reach them.

COMMON TRAP

Treating one interested person as a deal, and ignoring the complexities of large organisations.

02 Find the business owner



> **Find the people who are incentivised to make your software work.**

Find the people who are incentivised to embed your solution. IT and innovation can still be involved. But work the account to find the business owners who are incentivised to make it work.

DO THIS

1. Write down your ICP's day in the life: who you are actually solving a problem for, their challenges, and exactly how your platform solves them.
2. Take any door in. Your first intro and demo can come through IT, innovation, sales or procurement.
3. On those calls, ask who else should be involved, to learn who holds the problem and the budget.
4. Name your ICP and explain how your outcomes tie into their balanced scorecard, whichever angle you came in from.

OUTPUT

A named business owner, and a line on how your outcomes affect their scorecard.

Template B

DONE WHEN

- [ ] The business owner is named, and you have a route to put your product in front of them.

COMMON TRAP

Only speaking with the initial people you got an introduction with. The discussions need to go broader in line with the size and complexity of the organisation.

03 Map the account and multi-thread



> **Involve everyone who can stop the deal, early enough to manage.**

Going straight to the ICP does not remove the need to multi-thread. IT security and procurement will be involved anyway to run their checks on your company and your product.

Build them in early, or hit roadblocks later. If you only talk to the ICP, even one with budget, you risk commercial pushback from IT or procurement late in the process.

DO THIS

1. Name five roles: the business owner, your entry champion, IT security, procurement and a senior sponsor (possibly the buyer's boss).
2. Engage IT security and procurement early, so they can run their checks on your company and product.
3. Agree a next step with each person on the map.
4. Apply the forecast rule: do not forecast a close this quarter unless IT security and procurement are named and involved.

> **Be honest about your forecast.** A sale you are forecasting to close this quarter is already highly at risk if those people were not involved early. You want them raising flags early enough to manage, not at the end when you are chasing contract signature.

OUTPUT

An account map.

Template B

DONE WHEN

- [ ] All five roles are named.
- [ ] IT security and procurement are engaged, with flags raised early.

COMMON TRAP

Not engaging procurement or purchasing, or IT security, early enough, and scrambling at the end to align them and address all their questions to get their sign-off.

CHECKPOINT 1

Before you forecast a close

Covers Steps 1 to 3. Do not move on until you can tick every box.

Account map

- [ ] Business owner (your ICP): named. We know their day in the life and challenges, and that our outcomes are (or could be) on their balanced scorecard.
- [ ] Entry champion: named, whichever door we came in through (IT, innovation, sales, procurement). We have asked them who else should be involved.
- [ ] IT security: identified and engaged early to run their checks on our company and product.
- [ ] Procurement: identified and engaged early, so commercial pushback does not surface late.
- [ ] Senior sponsor: identified (possibly the buyer's boss), for when an agreement needs formalising.
- [ ] We have checked we are not relying on one interested person, or a team with spare budget that does not own the problem.
- [ ] Anything forecast to close this quarter has IT security and procurement already involved, with flags raised early.

04 Speak their language

Describe your value in the numbers the customer already manages.

Bring the industry's language to the customer, so they feel you are talking to them. Otherwise a lot of this advice comes across as generic.

Miners talk to each other and to their customers in terms like recovery rates and contained metal. They get paid on contained or payable metal. They manage their cost base and products in cost per tonne. If you cannot follow that conversation, you cannot show where your software fits in it.

DO THIS

1. Find out whether your buyer sells or buys concentrate or refined metal. They are different products, with different customers, contracts and data.
2. Pick the unit your software moves: recovery, throughput, cost per tonne, payable metal or penalties (see the table below).
3. Complete the value statement in Template C.
4. Rewrite your deck and script in those terms, not generic "efficiency".
5. If your value touches logistics, quality at loading or shipment data, find the Incoterm on the buyer's contracts first.

Head grade	Ore control, dilution and blending change revenue.
Throughput	Lost plant hours are lost tonnes. Show value as tonnes processed, not "uptime".
Recovery rate	A small gain means more metal to sell from the same tonnes and grade.
Contained and payable metal	The miner is paid on payable metal. Quality, penalties and buyer data requirements link straight to what they get paid.
Cost per tonne	Say savings per tonne, on the same basis the site uses: mined, moved or milled.
C1 cash cost and AISC	Headline cost-curve numbers that senior sponsors and investors watch.

Illustrative numbers only. 1,000,000 tonnes of ore at 1% copper contains 10,000 tonnes of copper. At 90% recovery, 9,000 tonnes ends up in concentrate. One percentage point more recovery on the same ore is another 100 tonnes of copper, before payability and TC/RCs.

OUTPUT

A one-sentence value statement in the customer's units.

Template C

DONE WHEN

- [ ] You can say your value in one sentence, in the customer's units.
- [ ] Every rep can explain contained metal versus payable metal, and what TC/RCs are.

COMMON TRAP

Generic "efficiency" claims. Full definitions are in the Appendix.

05 Run a pilot that converts



> **Design the pilot so it leads to a scale-up, not a stall.**

Especially with enterprise customers, avoid free pilots if you can. They have the funding to pay, even if it is cheap. Free usually means they do not value it. There is no commercial risk and no one has signed off money, so no one is incentivised to make it work. There may be strategic reasons to give a pilot away. Treat that as a last resort.

DO THIS

1. Make the pilot paid, even if it is cheap (there needs to be some skin in the game).
2. Define the key success criteria, then make sure they are met.
3. Write the scale-up into the pilot plan: the next steps and timelines, and which facilities, teams or functions come next.
4. Run a parallel commercial track for the scale-up discussions.
5. Work through procurement, IT and due diligence questions during the pilot, not after it.

OUTPUT

A pilot plan with success criteria and the scale-up written in.

Template D

DONE WHEN

- [ ] Someone on the client side has signed off money and is incentivised to make it work.
- [ ] Success criteria and scale-up timelines are agreed and written down.

COMMON TRAP

A free pilot. No one is incentivised to make it work.

CHECKPOINT 2

Before you agree a pilot

Covers Steps 4 and 5. Do not move on until you can tick every box.

Language check

- [ ] We know which product our buyer sells or buys: concentrate or refined metal.
- [ ] We can state our value in their units: cost per tonne, recovery, throughput or payable metal.
- [ ] We know whether our value shows up in C1 cash cost or AISC.
- [ ] Our deck and script use the customer's terms, not generic "efficiency".
- [ ] Every rep can explain contained metal versus payable metal, and what TC/RCs are.
- [ ] We know the Incoterm on our buyer's sales or offtake contracts, and what it means for our value.

The pilot

- [ ] The pilot is paid, even if it is cheap. If it is free, there is a clear strategic reason and it is a last resort.
- [ ] Someone on the client side has signed off money and is incentivised to make it work.
- [ ] Key success criteria are defined and agreed.
- [ ] Next steps to scale up are agreed: specific facilities, teams or functions.
- [ ] Scale-up timelines are agreed.
- [ ] Both are written into the pilot project plan.
- [ ] A parallel commercial track for scale-up discussions is running.
- [ ] Procurement, IT and due diligence questions are being worked through during the pilot, not after it.

PHASE B: BUILD THE MACHINE

06 Get yourself out of the deal



Turn what is in your head into a process your team can run.

If you have hired a sales team, you should already have a clearly identified ICP, a sales script, a unique value proposition and clear objection handling. You have been the one facing those discussions before the team existed.

Write all of it down. That gives the team a repeatable process that does not need the founder as the bottleneck.

DO THIS

1. Write the documents listed in Template E, including a visual of the sales motion (people, systems and processes).
2. Set clear guardrails so reps can hunt, find deals and qualify them on their own.
3. Bring the founder in only when a question comes up that has not come up before and the rep cannot answer it, or when the rep needs your authority to meet a senior person (the buyer's boss or the senior sponsor) to formalise an agreement.
4. If neither is true, the rep runs the deal.

OUTPUT

The sales playbook documents.

Template E

DONE WHEN

- [ ] A new rep could run a qualified deal using the documents, without you.

COMMON TRAP

Staying in every deal. The founder becomes the bottleneck as they cannot delegate, or have not set up a repeatable system for a salesperson or team to run with.

CHECKPOINT 3

Before you hire or onboard reps

Covers Step 6. Do not move on until you can tick every box.

Sales playbook documents

- [ ] ICP: who we solve a problem for, their day in the life, their challenges, and how we solve them.
- [ ] How our outcomes tie into the ICP's balanced scorecard.
- [ ] Sales script.
- [ ] Unique value proposition.
- [ ] Objection handling, based on the discussions the founder has already had.
- [ ] A glossary of the customer's terms and units, so reps speak the miner's language.
- [ ] Guardrails for reps to hunt, find deals and qualify without the founder.
- [ ] A visual of the sales motion, including people, systems and processes, to provide clarity on how things work in practice.

When to pull the founder in

- [ ] A question has come up that has not come up before, and the rep cannot answer it.
- [ ] The rep needs the founder's authority to meet a senior person (the buyer's boss or the senior sponsor) to formalise an agreement.
- [ ] If neither is true, the rep runs the deal.

TEMPLATES

Fill these in as you go

Template A Lead qualification

Step 1. Answer each question, then score the lead: go, keep warm or stop.

Question	Answer	Go / warm / stop
Who owns the problem?		
Whose balanced scorecard has our outcome on it?		
Who would hold the budget beyond the pilot?		
Who else must approve (IT security, procurement)?		
Is a pilot being run on spare budget by IT or innovation?		

Template B Account map

Steps 2 and 3. Name a person for each role and what they care about.

ICP: who we are solving a problem for, their day in the life and their challenges

Role	Name	What they care about	How our outcomes affect them	Engaged?
Business owner (ICP)				
Entry champion				
IT security				
Procurement				
Senior sponsor				

Template C Value in their units

Step 4. Complete the blanks, then say it out loud in one sentence.

Our buyer sells or buys: concentrate or refined metal?

Our software moves: recovery, throughput, cost per tonne, payable metal or penalties?

By how much, on how many tonnes a year?

In the customer's terms, that is worth (tonnes of metal, or cost per tonne):

Our one-sentence value statement:

Template D Pilot plan

Step 5. Agree each item with the client before the pilot starts.

Item	Detail
Key success criteria	
Client sponsor who signed off money	
Fee	
Scale-up: facilities, teams or functions that come next	
Scale-up timeline	
Commercial track owner	
Procurement, IT and due diligence tasks and dates	

Template E Sales playbook documents

Step 6. Track what is written down and where it lives.

Document	Written?	Owner	Where it lives
ICP and day in the life			
How our outcomes tie into the ICP's scorecard			
Sales script			
Unique value proposition			
Objection handling			
Glossary of the customer's terms and units			
Guardrails for reps			
Visual of the sales motion (people, systems and processes)			

APPENDIX

Key terms in full

The terms used in this guide, with what each one means and why it matters to your pitch.

Head grade

WHAT IT IS

The concentration of the target metal in the ore fed to the processing plant, for example % copper or grams per tonne of gold.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

Grade sets how much metal each tonne carries. Anything that affects grade (ore control, dilution, blending) affects revenue.

Throughput

WHAT IT IS

The tonnes of ore the plant processes over a period, for example tonnes per hour or per year.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

If the plant is the bottleneck, lost hours are lost tonnes. Show value as tonnes processed, not "uptime".

Recovery rate

WHAT IT IS

The percentage of the metal in the plant feed that ends up in the product (concentrate or metal). The rest is lost, mostly to tailings.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

On the same tonnes and grade, a small recovery gain means more metal to sell.

Contained metal

WHAT IT IS

The quantity of metal inside a given amount of ore, concentrate or product. Roughly tonnes multiplied by grade.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

It is how production, stockpiles and shipments are talked about. It is the starting point for what the miner gets paid on.

Payable metal (payability and TC/RCs)

WHAT IT IS

The share of contained metal the buyer actually pays for, set by the payability terms in the sales contract. For concentrate, the smelter or refiner also deducts treatment charges and refining charges (TC/RCs), and can apply penalties for impurities.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

The miner's revenue is payable metal, not contained metal. Anything that improves product quality, reduces penalties or supports the data the buyer asks for links straight to what they get paid.

Concentrate versus refined metal

WHAT IT IS

Concentrate is the upgraded mineral product from a mine's processing plant. Refined metal is the high-purity product from a smelter or refinery, for example copper cathode.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

They are different products, with different customers, contracts, specifications and data. Know which one your buyer sells or buys.

Cost per tonne (mined, moved or milled)

WHAT IT IS

The unit cost of the operation, expressed per tonne of ore mined, per tonne of material moved (ore and waste) or per tonne processed through the plant (milled). It is how sites manage their cost base and budgets.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

If your software saves cost, say so per tonne, using the same basis the site uses.

C1 cash cost

WHAT IT IS

The direct cash cost of producing a unit of payable metal (mining, processing, site costs, and usually TC/RCs and freight), typically net of by-product credits. Usually quoted per pound or per tonne of payable metal. Exact definitions vary by company.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

It is a headline number for where an operation sits on the industry cost curve. Know whether your value moves it.

AISC (all-in sustaining cost)

WHAT IT IS

A broader cost measure that adds sustaining capital, corporate overheads and other costs to cash costs. Most common in gold, and also used for other metals.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

Compared with the metal price, it is a common way to judge an operation's margin. Senior sponsors and investors watch it.

Offtake agreement

WHAT IT IS

A contract for a buyer (for example a smelter, refiner, trader or OEM) to buy part of a mine's future production over a set period. It sets quantity, quality specifications, pricing and payability.

WHY IT MATTERS TO YOUR PITCH

Offtake contracts can set the quality, data and reporting requirements a producer has to meet. If your software helps meet them, that is revenue protection, not a nice-to-have.

Incoterms: who pays and who carries the risk

EXW (Ex Works)	The seller makes the goods available at its own premises. The buyer carries all costs and risk from there, including loading and export clearance.
FCA (Free Carrier)	The seller delivers the goods, cleared for export, to the carrier or other person the buyer nominates at a named place. Risk passes on that delivery.
FOB (Free On Board)	The seller delivers the goods on board the buyer's nominated vessel at the named port of shipment. Risk passes once the goods are on board. The buyer pays freight and insurance from there.
CFR (Cost and Freight)	The seller pays freight to the named port of destination, but risk still passes once the goods are on board at the port of shipment.
CIF (Cost, Insurance and Freight)	As CFR, and the seller also buys insurance cover for the buyer's risk during the voyage. Risk still passes at loading.
DAP (Delivered at Place)	The seller carries cost and risk until the goods arrive at the named destination, ready for unloading. The buyer handles import clearance and duties.
DDP (Delivered Duty Paid)	The seller carries all costs and risk to the named destination, including import clearance and duties.

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TALK TO US

Is your pipeline ready for an enterprise buyer?

If you are selling software into mining, metals, battery or supply-chain enterprises and want help with sales and business development, we are happy to talk it through. Find MN Consulting at mnconsulting.io.

Book a 30-minute call

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