



Why This Co-founder Took Back Sales - and Grew Revenue by 40%

Sales Talk for CEOs Webinar Summary – May 9, 2025

Featuring Russ Macumber, Co-founder & CEO of Impressive US

Hosted by Alice Heiman, this episode dives into how Russ Macumber sparked a 40% lift in monthly recurring revenue by reclaiming the sales function himself after repeated hiring misfires.

Having led national sales teams in Australia, Russ joined Impressive as the first sales hire and later expanded the agency into the U.S. He candidly shares how going back to founder-led sales helped reset the GTM engine after startup-stage growing pains, including six failed rep hires and an overreliance on flawed inbound tactics.

Russ now runs a lean, EOS-driven agency out of Austin with strong SEO, a disciplined partner/referral program, and a growing book of U.S. clients. He's doubled down on speaking, content, and cold outreach, and he's using AI as a sales enablement coach, not just a copy assistant.

The strategy? 🛠️ Build operational infrastructure first, *sell like hell* second, and only scale hiring once your systems and calendar are dialed in.

The unlock? 🧠 Personalized referrals, verticalized SEO, high-EQ outbound, and an ops partner you trust with the business.

Want to watch the replay yourself? Here's the [link](#).

Key Takeaways:



Founder-Led Sales Strategy

- Returning to founder-led sales isn't a step back- it's a strategic move when growth stalls or hires underperform.
- Russ McCumber grew MRR by 40% after taking back sales personally.
- Founder selling is most effective when paired with *strong operational support*.



Sales Hiring Lessons

- Hiring sales reps one at a time is risky. Russ had 6 failed hires.
- In previous roles, he hired in pods of three to hedge bets; not feasible in startups.
- *Use fractional reps or shared-rep models as a bridge until you can afford pod-style hiring (or whatever you deem to be the best model for your startup).*



Operational Support and Infrastructure

- *Invest in an integrator or ops lead early-* Russ's operations manager owns the day-to-day under the EOS model.
- Training and promoting a junior into this role created bandwidth for founder-selling.
- *Documented SOPs and accountability structures are key to sustained growth.*



Pipeline Generation and Go-to-Market Mix

- Referrals became the #1 pipeline driver after Russ formalized a partner/referrer strategy.
- *Structured monthly outreach and account mapping* helped referrals outperform even inbound.
- SEO works best when focused on high-intent vertical+problem keywords (e.g., 'Shopify SEO agency').



Outbound and Cold Sales Strategy

- Cold outbound (LinkedIn/email) supplements other efforts, especially for enterprise leads.
- Speaking engagements and LinkedIn activity build credibility and fuel warm outreach.
- *Sales math and tracking close rates by source is essential for optimization.*



Using AI for Sales Enablement

- AI should be used for pre-call research, objection handling, and sales coaching, not just content generation.
- Treat AI like a super-powered executive assistant to stress test your messaging and prep.
- Teams that use AI for enablement will outperform those who don't.