[00:00:00] Speaker A: Welcome to the CTOX podcast. This is the place to be if you're a technology leader navigating the fractional CTO landscape. I'm Marisa Brassfield, joined by Lior Weinstein, the visionary behind ctox.

[00:00:13] Speaker B: Here we cut through the noise to deliver actionable insights for CTOs at every stage, whether you're looking at your first five figure client or actively building systems to scale.

[00:00:22] Speaker A: That's right. You'll learn principles, not just tactics, to transform your technical expertise into a thriving fractional practice. Let's dig in. Welcome back to another episode of the CTOX podcast. Today, Lior and I will be discussing practical sales tactics. Most sales advice is all mindset, but this isn't. If you're a fractional CTO who's tired of hearing, we'll think about it or we'll let you know. This episode will give you real tactical ways to close the deal.

Hello, Lior.

[00:00:54] Speaker B: Hello Marisa. Thank you for having me. Great seeing you.

[00:00:57] Speaker A: I miss being in the studio in person with you. But you know, our respective studios will have to do for today.

So we're going to focus most of this episode on tactics. But we can't drop into tactics without discussing nuance. So I'd love to start out here. How do you kick off a conversation with a CEO who has expressed interest in working together and how do you use those first few minutes especially to build rapport and either accelerate or deepen trust?

[00:01:27] Speaker B: Depends on the context.

In many cases, you know, if I meet them in person somehow, so in like an, maybe an entrepreneur group or a conference, an event, dinner or something like that, usually the conversation kind of starts with, you know, them asking me for my name.

Then usually it's like, where is that from? Because it's a unique name. So that, that's useful also to just kind of spark a conversation.

And they asked me what I do and then I, I try to give a very high level, you know, intro. So if I, if technology is my context when I'm speaking to them, because I also deal with marketing and sales is I say I'm a fractional CTO for companies, usually 20 to $100 million in revenue and I help them grow, you know, with technology on a part time basis as opposed to full time basis. If, if they kind of skew on, what's the word? Fractional, something like that. And, but then I quickly try to turn around back to them and as soon as I can because I know that's too high level and it's hard for people to understand what it is if it's new.

So I try to push for discovery as soon as I can.

Now, in our sales process, we teach this conversation we call the what and why conversation. I kind of, you know, for ctos will say this is a recursive function. You're going to ask what, you're going to ask why, and you're going to alternate and oscillate between the two until you basically learn enough about them so you can contextualize your pitch.

So I do that on a micro, so I think like a pocket kind of conversation. So I literally ask them, what do you do? And most people do one thing, I don't do one thing. So that's always like a, you know, problematic conversation.

And. But they usually start saying, oh, I'm a CEO of, you know, a company that does custom inflatables or a steel manufacturing company or an IT company, whatever it is. I'm like, cool, what's in the other company? And again, it's a what, what, what?

And then I start asking stuff like how long have you been running this company? Or how, how big are you gu in sales and revenue, whatever it is? So I try to get as much frame about the company as possible. So the name, the industry, what they do, how big they are in employees and in revenue, if I can. So I try to push for that as much as I can. And then I start asking, do you have technology? Do you use, you know, do you have a cto? Something like that. Now in most cases, by the time they, you know, know, share some stuff about them, I can already contextualize it to something. So I'm trying to build rapport as soon as possible. And the way to build rapport is you want to give them a sense of familiarity.

So maybe they give me the name of the company or the industry. And because I know a lot of companies and I know a lot of industries, then I usually manage to say, oh, you're like so? And so if I manage to do that accurately, then it builds instant rapport because now they think I get it, which I do like in most cases. Or it actually helps me because I said something like that and they're like, well, no, we're actually different in this way. I'm like, great. So it becomes a clarifying question as opposed to just a trust building question.

So as soon as I get a sense of what it is, I try to give them value as soon as possible. So I'm like asking for stuff if they're a consumer company and do you have an app, and they're like, oh no, we've always wanted one. Or yes, but it sucks. Or yes, it's great, whatever that is. If I ask if they have technology, ask them how big is the technology team, if they have a cto, how long has it been there? Or she been there.

And I try to get a sense of what's their disposition on technology. Is it exciting, is it frustrating, is it challenging? Do they find it expensive, do they find it slow?

And, and usually within a few minutes of conversation I managed to do that and then I can start talking about what would I do now, what I don't do, or rather the way I give them a sense of what I do is not by words, it's not just saying, well, you know, as a cto, it's really just like a full time cto. But the reality is companies like you don't need someone like me full time. Because if you only have enter X amount of employees in technology, right? 5, 10, 30, that's really the constraint of the business. Meaning it's not ideas. We can think about a lot of ideas very quickly, especially now in the AI space.

Even without me, any business can think about a lot of ideas. But the actual constraint for production, for making things real and making things valuable are the people that do the work.

And for someone like me, it just makes no sense to just sit around and wait for 30 people to do their job. Certainly sit around and wait for five people to do their job.

So there's a financial benefit.

You can tap into somebody with 20 plus years of experience and all of my lessons and none of my scars and be able to guide them to where they need to actually be productive to get the business results. Now the business results I usually get from that discovery because I asked them, how big are you? And like how big how what? How much are you growing? Are you trying to sell the company?

Yes or not. And then usually somewhere in the conversation I already know, is this a legacy company? I've been around for 60 years and this is like fourth generation.

Was this a startup? You know, he started, they started five years ago.

So I once I'm able to talk about some of the value that I can give, I always contextualize it back, you know, to where they are, to the size, to the growth, to the pains. If they said he's frustrated or slow or maybe they had a hack or you know, whatever that is. If they tell me they work with government, I'm like, oh, compliance must be very challenging, right? This, it's A blanket statement that's true by nearly anything you do in any kind of government. That's a thing, that's a pain.

So we cover those things. What I really try to do is give them advice that I think is going to be actionable within our interaction, even if it's a three, five minute interaction.

Maybe I tell him about a tool he should check out or a company he should check out.

Maybe it's like hey, if your dev team gone through AI power training 90 the answer is no. I'm like you should totally do it. You know it cost five, ten grand. I can send you an email if somebody can do it, for example. So just give them something new to think about and if I really have time, I'm probably going to ideate something, I'm probably going to give them an idea for a feature, a capability, a change, an area of the business. He's probably should be de risking and not thinking about it.

So I try to build rapport by giving value. Not just by give, not just buy, but I also do that by giving them a sense of I understand what is business is about and I've seen it before.

Like I can mention other companies or other projects or whatever it is and this is the benefit of working with people like me, not necessarily me, that the real constraint is productivity and not leadership. So there's no reason to hire someone like me full time. And maybe that's the same also for his cfo, cmo, CRO. So somewhat of a long winded answer, but that's usually what, what ends up in, in that first and everything I just said can really happen in like three to five minutes. Certainly if you have 30 to 60 minutes a lot can happen. You can probably get a meeting and close the deal, but you don't need that much time to learn about a company and establish quick rapport by giving the value and giving them something insightful that they've never thought about.

[00:09:05] Speaker A: Oh yeah. So yeah, we are talking about just a few minutes here, but inside of those few minutes, through the active listening, through the reframing, through the, the nature of the questions you're asking, you're learning a ton about their business and you're also demonstrating knowledge and awareness of their business, the challenges that they're solving uniquely inside of their industry and the stage and size of their business.

And because I know you, you're also, your antennae are also looking for some other things and some filters to make sure that they are in your buy box. I'd love to know we're Going to go into objections, handling and the other parts of the sales call. But even in these first three to five minutes, what are some of the things that you're looking for or listening for that would let you know, okay, there's something interesting here, or this is an interesting relationship worth developing. What are the things that you listen for?

[00:10:02] Speaker B: So first of all, I'm certainly looking for disqualifiers.

So that, that's very much like attitude, perspective, stuff like that. You know, I have a, I have a very adamant no rule, but it's just no, it's also like no vision.

You know, if I'm talking to someone, it's like, yeah, you know, my business, like 5 million, 10 million. And I just want to keep it that way. You know, been like that forever. I'm like, great, that's amazing for them, I love that for them. Absolutely not my vibe.

Because I want to be next to growth. I want to be next to growth. Mindset. Put aside the financial piece like this issue up with companies sometimes. I just met some guy, he has a company that's 180 million revenue, multi generation, and they like their, you know, 5, 10 growth a year.

You know, you see it from his attitude, you see it from how he's thinking, great, this is just not going to work out. It doesn't mean that I can't provide a lot of value. It doesn't mean that I absolutely cannot take the account. I can probably take the account if I just ask for it, but it's not where I want to grow as a person and it's not the kind of relationship I want to have on a weekly basis.

So, so I'm looking for mindset cues, you know, are they, are they kind, are they talking about frustrations that everybody has? Frustrations are talking about it in a negative, nasty way, you know, like, oh, those idiots, those, they screwed me over, you know, like those kind of words. I'm like, yeah, we don't need this attitude.

It doesn't mean that they're not incompetent. Right? That could very well be the case. And it could certainly be the case that they're not the right fit.

But we don't need to use, you know, bad language. So I'm looking for disqualifiers on attitude on mindset, Also on framing for finance. You know, sometimes we say in the program, we've seen $10,000 a month retainer assigned with million dollar a year revenue companies, and we've seen companies that have 150 million revenue negotiate our CTOs down to the bare bone, right? So it's really, it's not a lot of people think, oh, it's revenue, that means they can't afford me. I'm like, no. Affordability is a CEO mindset more than anything.

It's an entrepreneur mindset more than anything because entrepreneurs find a way and CEOs find a way.

So I'm looking for all those cues to make sure that I would like to work with them, put aside if I can, if they need it, you know, if it's interesting, like all these are like secondary things because I'm curious. So the interest part is I'll probably find something interesting to do.

So that's a big one. The second one is I'm looking for like obvious inefficiencies that I know I'm going to have. Low hanging fruit, like I'm really trying to win in the first 30, 60, 90 days. Like have a big win.

Have a big win so much that they're like they think they made the best decision, you know, of the year and that first month or quarter already feels like I give them value for the year's worth of retainer.

So I'm looking for that. I'm looking like for the details that they're sharing and their state and how they're probably managing with which has downstream implications. I'll give you an example.

One of my newer clients, when I started working, before I started working with them, asked them, what are you using now? They've been running for a while, a few years and they have technology, they have their own systems and a little development team and the whole thing. I asked them what they use for like ticketing and tasks and it was nothing.

Like no Jira, no ClickUp, no asana, no nothing. I'm like, that's amazing. Because the fact that they've done everything they did without any of these tools means that once you introduce proper tools and processes, velocity is like guaranteed to increase. So this is an example of a process. Low hanging fruit, same company, like consumer never had a mobile app.

A mobile app alone is a big deal for a consumer company. So I'm looking for these kind of low hanging fruit signals.

And for me in particular, all of my deals at this point in my fractional CTO career have to have upside in them. So I'm trying to gauge and make sure that the impact that I can deliver and be a part of, like be associated with is big enough. So when I ask for an upside, like a 7, 8 figure upside over a few years, then it Makes sense. You know, if I'm working with a company that's you know, 15 million in revenue and let's say they're growing at 10, but they have an opportunity to grow by 20 or 30 and it's going to take a few years and everything is very sluggish and it's a slow industry, slow everything. I'm like, ah, it's probably just a retainer client. I need to decide if I want or not versus if I work with a company that has a lot of raw potential that they've never had, a person that can kind of leverage all those materials and create new things, then I'm, then it's basically a guarantee for me I can come up with an upside model. So I'm looking for mindset, I'm looking for low hanging fruit. I'm looking for upside like meaning the conditions of the company. Upside is relevant if the company never wants to sell again, multi generational company doesn't mean to sell well, probably not a lot of upside if it's a, I have another client that's, that owns the company, doesn't really want to sell, opens maybe to do it. But he's okay with aggressive distributions. I'm like, great. So you know, we adjust for that, you know, all those things.

But if he wasn't, then it wasn't been inclined because I can't have upside even though I can have my retainer.

So I'm looking for all of those.

And once it's a green light, I basically try to make the conversation into some kind of a follow up. And that follow up usually entails me digging in a little bit more.

And I try to provide value at any given point in time. Like once I learn about the company, I find myself, you know, texting links to the CEO that I find and giving them random ideas and voice notes, just, you know, just giving, giving before we even get to the actual proposal stage.

[00:15:57] Speaker A: Ah, that's great. And it's important to know, you know, a lot of most of your clients come from trusted relationships and we also coach CTOs through this process. And a big misconception that fractional CTOs who are new to selling have about the sales process is that it's like a salary negotiation. And in a job interview cycle, what's something that fractional CTOs miss about frame control? As you've just described it.

[00:16:28] Speaker B: The job context is very relevant because usually when you sell fractional CTO services, it's not driven by a resume on both sides, meaning they're not looking for A resume and you don't need to use one.

And because you're mostly selling to a CEO that's normally non technical, meaning they are not a CTO themselves, then the resume also doesn't mean much because they can't underwrite it. They can't understand that the fact that. Let's say you were director of a team in AW in Amazon, you're probably managing 50 to 100 people. You're probably managing more people than the CEO is managing the company as a whole, you know, but it looks like a director on the resume, so it means nothing because they don't know what it means. It does just have no context to any of these things. And let's say you did something super impressive, you know, improved latency from 200 milliseconds to 10, which is wild depending on the system you work in, means nothing to the CEO. Like it's in zero context, right? They can't. And zero context in the industry and zero context to them as a company. So the resume is not a valuable tool.

So use other things.

When people come to program, we work with them on presence.

And presence is mainly how you show up.

So it's how you show up on LinkedIn, how you show up on email, how you show up on a website, how you show up with your proposals, right? And so when you get Google before and after, there's a sense of kind of superficial trust. And then you need to develop the deeper trust with conversations and actual interactions.

And niche positioning is a big deal, Right? So that's why we recommend like if you can focus on a niche until you have reputation instead of a fractional CTO for so and so. So if you like, on my LinkedIn, for example, I see a fractional CTO for 20 to $100 million revenue. Companies with big missions. I'm industry agnostic at this point because exactly to your point, a lot of my deal flow can come from my network if I choose to, and doesn't mean that it's people I know are my clients, but my clients come from people I know, right? So I borrow their trust in a way and they're recommending me. And also of course, my clients recommend me and so on.

But I, I like multiple industries because of how I work and my upside models and all those things. But we certainly recommend people to focus on one because it streamlines everything.

And part of what it streamlines is exactly that kind of trust. Because if you work, let's say in, you know, level two, level three hospitals, under 200 beds, and you work with three of them. The fourth hospital can hear, I work with three other hospitals just like you. And that's huge. And that, that, that sentence alone would drive more trust with your prospect than 20 years of line item resume.

And certainly the next one is going to be like, call Mary, John and Joseph and ask him about me, right? So referrals, testimonials, social trust, normally on the executive level, and that's true, period. It's not just fractional cto. It's very much of a bona fetus from people one way or another.

Even on big corporate, like if you look at Fortune 100, Fortune 50 companies and look at the C suite and you ask them how they got there, and the answer is most likely going to be like, I was an executive in a company that got acquired and then the acquirer made me, you know, a VP or a C level something, rather than kind of coming up the ladder. And the resume is a coming up the ladder type of strategy.

That's why it's not useful. It's easier to understand with other professions, right? So when you hire, if you hire a construction company, if you manage a construction company and you hire, you know, a project manager here, you're gonna look at the resume like, what other projects have you done? What have you managed? If I'm the homeowner hiring the builder. The home builder, I'm not looking at the resume, right? At best, I'm looking at their portfolio.

[00:20:35] Speaker A: Show me the case studies, show me the transformations. What did you do with yards like mine?

[00:20:42] Speaker B: So it's easier, it's more intuitive to understand this process as a consumer, when you buy stuff like home services, when you call a plumber, is the plumber showing you their resume? No. You look at reviews, right?

You look at how they show up, you look at how they answer the phone, right? You're looking for all these kind of trust signals that are about how they present themselves. That's what we call presence and less about, oh, show me the 200 similar drains you fixed.

So very different. Satisfactional CDL services is more like hiring a plumber from how trust is built rather than how a hire is getting acquired in the company.

[00:21:27] Speaker A: Oh, yeah. So for those listening, I dare you to open up an incognito window or a private browser and Google yourself and your business and really take that fresh perspective. Does the secondary research set an appropriate foundation to position you for a really great first impression? When you do have a conversation with somebody, it's really interesting. That note on social proof, I Love the home services analogy. It's so appropriate.

All right, so we talked about the first few minutes and how critical that is.

And there's the pitch itself, which of course is going to be slightly different for everybody. And we've heard variations on it in previous episodes. But one of the big, big subjects we talk about in the accelerator, in our convert training and in our sales gym sessions is objections handling, which always such an important part of it. And I know when I started to learn sales, handling objections at first felt like, oh no, I need to defend myself, I need to anchor my value. But really this is a gift because you get to understand the questions that your prospect is having and better understand how they think. I'd love to think, hear how you react and respond when a potential client raises objections or hesitates to bring you on as their fractional cto.

[00:22:58] Speaker B: There's a few ways to unpack this. And first of all, you know, we recommend during your kind of pitch and relationship building process, you try to tackle those objections, you know, before they even come up. Or that means the way you present and how you talk. And so you're trying to pacify these things. You always have the big ones, you know, time, money, spouse, partner, you know, Depending if consumer B2B, meaning SP partner, need to ask. Time, I don't have the time. Money, I don't have the money. Those are big three doesn't matter what you buy.

If you're buying groceries, car, yacht, house, services, like, that's just what it is.

And then a lot of it goes down to relevancy.

What I try in my conversations is really make sure that using that what and why conversation that we're talking about a vision that's compelling in a future that's compelling and exciting. Because then their focus is on that, on I want to get there. And because I'm there in the process and we're talking about it and I'm giving them some advice and I'm expanding and ballooning their vision. It's natural for them to see me as part of that bigger, better future.

Right.

So by the time we get to an objection, if it comes, I'm able to tie it back into that. And this is when discovery wasn't done correctly. You end up getting a rejection or the objection, which is going to be normally one of those things, time, money, you know, partner.

And then you have a challenge because you don't know what to tie it into because you really want to tie it into the vision.

Right? Well, you said you wanted to do X Right.

And this is how you do it. So there are some common ones. You know, it's too expensive and really expensive is just a frame of value for investments. That's all. The reality is fractional CTO retainers relative to full time CTOs are a fantastic deal, right? So full time cto with like 20 plus years of experience is going to be a half a million bucks cash expense for the business.

And in a fractional sense, in with some, some industries that could be a quarter of that investment.

And that's when it's an incredible return, right? So it's not an objective, you know, it's not an objective affordability because if they can't afford the cto, they can certainly not afford the technology build, right? So if you think about the CTO as that like steward of the spend, right? That like somebody that knows how to spend, make sure that the spend is valid and accurate and valuable.

You really want to, you know, as a company you really want to spend at least half a million a year, but most of them in that 1, 2, 3 million a year plus and then spending another 150, 200 on making sure that that million dollars or $5 million is spent correctly is no brainer, right? Because if it's misspent, even by 10%, so 10% less efficient or 10% waste, that's 100 grand on a million for every million, that's 100 grand, right? So it's not. So one is framing the ROI and understanding what it is. And I can do that once I figure out how much they spend on technology or what they want to build or if we had that product, what revenue might, you know, be there or what risk might be removed or what it's going to be, you know, what's going to mean for the acquisition of the company.

So once the two expensive coming in, it's really first of all understanding it's a value for investment and understanding it is an investment. And then go back and ask like, hey, what would need to happen for this field to feel like a bargain for it? Because people want bargains right? Now this is also back to the question earlier. I'm listening, I'm with my listening ears, like are they cheap in their mindset, right? If they're cheap, I'm certainly not trying to, to convince them because I don't want to work with you because what's going to happen is I'm going to get the account, I'm going to convince. I'm, you know, been doing sales for a while. I can I can go through that particular rejection, but then I'm going to be in the job and I'm going to ask to hire, you know, two engineers for like 20 grand a month. They're going to be like, no, I can't. So I can't do my job right. So I need to make sure that they're not cheap. And it's really just a value framing thing and then solving the value by tying it back to the vision and, and to the excitement.

There's also, you know, timing. And then I just ask like, what needs to be in place for the timing to be right? You know, like, is something going to happen? Are you okay with staying the way you are in the next six months or the next nine months, next 12 months? So usually I start up. Are you okay with being in the same position 12 months from now? Usually there are no now, like, great. Are you okay with being in same position six months from now? And usually they're no, like, okay, you're okay with being three months from now? And then yes. And I'm like, well, if you want to change by three months, we need to start now.

So I'm compressing and kind of taking those walls down or closer. So they understand that if they want to achieve something relative to their vision and everything costs time. And certainly if they were able to do it, they would have done it already and we wouldn't even get to the point that we're talking about, you know, hiring someone like me.

So I, I really try to, to nail all those things down as a function of vision. So once I understand the vision and then there's a particular rejection, then I just weave it in back to. Well, you want to.

You said that you wanted to get there within that time frame because you have to introduce the time dimension to all these things.

And then I handle. And then, you know, depending on what it is, I handle it. And there's quite a bit of objections we, you know, teach in the accelerator as well.

[00:28:32] Speaker A: Do you know what I love about that frame of our Are you okay if things stay the same in, you know, 12, 12 months, six months, whatever the time frame is. It's a nice no oriented question. We talk a lot about Chris Voss and his wonderful book Never split the difference. Negotiate as if your life depended on it. And the power of no oriented questions. And to paraphrase Chris's work, why are no oriented questions so powerful?

[00:29:06] Speaker B: Because no feel safe.

No feel safe.

And the best ways to phrase questions. So no is the positive, right?

Would you mind if we, you know, if I talk about so and so, no, I don't mind, right? So no is the answer, but the net effect of the conversation or the, or the question is positivity. So no feel safe. And yes is risky. Now if you're talking to a high quickstart, you know, entrepreneur and you kind of, you know, meet those Labradors when you meet them, then just to go for the yeses, right, you don't need to. But most people are not, most people are not in that super high quick start. And even if they are, they probably also have like, you know, like a Colby fact finder or something in that's preventing them from just hitting gas on everything.

So the safer one is just to ask an oriented question because it captures both sides, both personalities. The ones that are very excited and just want to go, go, go and say yes to everything. And the ones that are more hesitant but you want to keep the conversation going. So no feel safe. Yes feels risky.

And most of the time we're going to talk about new ideas, new propositions, new projects.

So the yes is going to trigger that risk.

And it's, you know, if you speak French, that's easier for you because they have the double negative.

But otherwise it's, it's really useful to get like a quiver of questions you can pop up that are no oriented questions.

[00:30:40] Speaker A: So good. And then as it relates to objections and objections, handling what's, what's an example in your client work and your prospecting work where you turned a no or a hesitation into assigned engagement.

[00:30:58] Speaker B: So first of all, you know, if you're trying to really build trust and kind of, I, I, I say on when I talk about sales that it's very much sales for this kind of work. It's more like falling in love.

And that is to say you fall into trust. So with enough relationship, with enough conversation, the trust meter should go up with every conversation, every interaction. So by the time the ask comes in, we should also talk about that. Then it's just a fall into a yes, right? As opposed to like pulling them into a yes or pushing them into a yes. Right. Which more aggressive sales tactics would be more like that, like car sales, you know, more like more, more common to that I would say as far as when those things happen. I just had this happen with a client, like we've been talking since maybe October, November about the concept maybe coming in as a fractional CTO and what I did, what I do with all the prospects because I want to see if I like working with Them, which means talking to them. That's really what's working with them, right? We're not laying, layering bricks together.

Laying bricks together. So I usually offer a few conversations, a few zoo. I'm like, hey, let's just brainstorm. Let me talk to your team, Let me give you some advice, you know, stuff like that. So I did that like two, three meetings. And every meeting was like, wow, thank you so much. Great advice, great perspective. And it still didn't advance. And then what happened was I got an opportunity to speak and they were in the room and after that, like that evening after they heard me speak, they just came and said, you know, I just, just come in as that. That was what sealed the deal. And that was pending, that was hovering for a while until that event happened, that I managed to get their full attention for an hour, plus a room full of other people reacting to it.

That's why I built my trust directly and I built my trust by proxy, which was enough to just say do it. Another one, which was hovering for a while and I realized their risk was, or their fear rather was spend right. Because my retainers are fairly high when I asked them. So I just told me, you know what, not an issue, let's do first 90 days. Not going to cost you anything. But then after 90 days you're going to pay me for six months. So you're going to pay me back for the first three and you're going to prepay for the next three. And if you want to stop by day 89, in fact, by morning of day 90, it's done. You don't owe me anything, right?

So I reduced the risk. I obviously increase risk on my end, but I have high confidence, you know, that I can do it, that I can deliver.

But at that point it's like, listen, I'm. If you think I'm not going to do valuable work, don't worry about it. But if you think I'm doing valuable work, this is what you're going to pay.

And so it's a, it's a win win. And we de risk the relationship with like basically payment terms, right? Which ended up being better than just, you know, getting paid every month because yeah, those first three months are more stressful, but then I'm actually covered, you know, for the next three after.

So those in those two cases, one was just I needed to build more trust and talk was the way to do it after building some meetings with his team.

And the second one was payment terms like understanding, oh, the risk perceived is Related to cash. It's not that they don't have the cash.

They're just not sure it's going to be a good return.

My great. I think it's going to be a great return because I collected the low hanging fruit. I built enough rapport like I already understand I'm going to do a good job or I have enough trust in myself that I'm going to do a good job. And I know they have the money. So it's not like I'm risking it in a way that company too small or they're gonna, you know, pull back on me or something like that. So that wasn't my fear in the engagement, but, but it is a valid fear.

So yeah, in both cases I realized one needed more trust and that was the way to generate it. And the other one needed more confidence on, you know, financials. And I just proposed a different engagement model.

[00:35:09] Speaker A: Beautiful. Little hard now, easy later in practice. I love that.

Now we talk about asking questions, the what and why conversation. And you mentioned a few minutes ago that along the way you'll make recommendations. Have you heard of this business? Have you checked out this tool? How do you balance asking questions with making those recommendations without kind of going over the line into prescribing prematurely?

[00:35:43] Speaker B: I feel, first of all, I feel comfortable prescribing.

So if I give advice, I stand behind my advice.

And if I think something might be premature, then I say, I say statements like, well, I don't know everything about the situation or about the team, but this is something worth looking at.

You know, like based on what you tell me, they're probably not doing X, Y and Z, right? Or you haven't considered A, B and C.

And I think confidence is very important. Like, confidence is, is, is part of the sales process and is also part of the practice.

Trusting your advice and always having the internal caveat and external if you need it.

To the best of my knowledge and with my best intention, this is the advice, right? So I think it's, I think everybody should feel if they can say yes to those statements, right? To the best of my knowledge and to the best of my intention, I, I feel very comfortable giving advice and I don't.

When I had this thing with a client a couple years ago, which was a prospect at the time, and they were sharing some of their difficulties in development and I was kind of flagging it to him. I was saying, well, here's what I'm hearing. So we've been talking over a few months and he was kind of giving Me updates every few months and they haven't made any progress in material progress or not the ones that I want to make.

And every time I hear, yep, yep, they're finishing new features, they're about to launch version one, we have a thousand people using da, da, da. And then three months after I hear the same thing, yep, yep, yep, we're about to launch. This went on and off for a few quarters, like 2, 3, 3, 4 quarters. I told him, listen, I can tell you from experience there's probably an issue and because if you, if you had the right process, you wouldn't have circled around this feature development. And then that number you told me a thousand would have already been like 2000 or 5000 or something like that. Like something would have changed.

So I'm just kind of giving it to you and kind of making sure that you're aware that this is not how it's supposed to be. And that opened, you know, the door and eventually they did become a client and sure enough, I was right.

So I, you know, it, it smelled like smoke and it was a fire in that particular case.

And I think the position though is, hey, based on my experience, X, Y and Z, this is what I see.

And it doesn't matter if you're wrong because at the very least, you're giving them confidence and a way to think about it. And, and you're giving them new glasses to look through on the situation.

And of course, the more experience you have, then the device is probably going to be on point and, and then you're developing opportunities. So I think it is valuable to give advice. I'm not afraid of it. I wouldn't throttle it. I think that's the best way to build trust.

And it is important to caveat it, to not have hubris of kind of saying, I know what's best for you. I'm like, okay, giving the information you were telling me then this is my opinion.

And naturally, if they didn't give you a lot of information, it's, it's with that caveat.

[00:38:56] Speaker A: Yeah. We talk a lot about how sales is a transfer of certainty. It's the certainty that you have in your recommendations, in your advice, and your ability to follow through on the vision that you've co created and the promises you've made.

Let's talk about another powerful tool. We talk about assuming the sale and what does that look like? What is that and what does it look like in practice? And how can a fractional CTO do that without sounding pushy?

[00:39:25] Speaker B: So assuming the sales A tactic that basically means if everything's going well, like they like the proposal, they say yes, yes, yes. Instead of just waiting for them to get back to you and give you the signed agreement or suggest a date, whatever, you just assume it already happened. And what would be the next step? The next step would be a kickoff call, right? And the next step would be sending an invoice to the billing department.

So acting like that. And what acting like that means is let's say you're in a meeting, you're in a pitch meeting, they love it. It's like, great, great, great. And now you finish the meeting and you send an email, follow up. Two days later and nobody's responding. Crickets. Right? What I recommend doing instead of just that follow up, just send a follow up with, how about we do a kickoff on Monday, July 15, right? Just suggest what you would do as if you just got paid. Because if you just got paid, that's exactly what you would do. You would schedule the kickoff call and ask what's the best email to send for the invoice? You know, for the kickoff invoice.

So you're not waiting for them to say yes, they says you're actually just assuming they said yes. And then you're acting and doing all the activities that you would have done if you got a hard yes, like an explicit yes.

[00:40:41] Speaker A: I love doing this with a half day workshop where it's like I'm holding these three dates. Which of them works best? Then they commit to the date, there goes the invoice, and we're off to the races.

As we close today. If you could give one piece of tactical advice for handling objections as a fractional cto, what would it be?

[00:41:02] Speaker B: Tying it into vision for sure.

And again, that means that you should do discovery, even if it's a three minute discovery. And ideally you understand where they want to go and how much do they currently spend and something about their pain.

Objection. Like, you have to assume that they want your service. That's why they're talking to you.

And you have to assume you can be a part of their bigger vision, because that's the context of the conversation, especially with technology, especially in this day and age.

Tied into vision.

With my particular clients, I really fall in love with their missions, which is what make me even choose the projects in the first place. Now, I'm not saying everybody needs to fall in love with their clients and their visions and the whole thing. Certainly not when you're just starting because you've tried to build up the cash Confidence and that stable of clients.

But once that happens, I'm like excited.

I'm like, dude, don't, don't you see that we should do this? That's my mindset. I'm like, I love you. I love the company, I love the mission, I love the customers. I really want to do this. So that's either explicit, I literally either just say that. But even if I don't say, that's what I think. So when a rejection comes up, I look at it as like, how can I reframe this back to the vision and the creation so I get to create the impact as soon as I can. So I think if you're going to come to it with that mindset, you'll be able to ideate the right, the right rejection handling.

And, and with that, the best rejection handling involves them.

So the best kind of questions that you can ask to say, what would make this ideal for you?

Right? What would make this the best timing for you?

What would make this the best result for you? So have them co create the rejection handling and don't just think this is going to be like they're saying a line and now you're saying a line.

It is a dialogue. It's not two monologues.

And if you, if you come at it with that mindset and you try to solve it together and your mindset should be, I want to solve it with you and for you. So let's solve it. If it's money, let's talk about money.

If it's timing, let's talk about timing. But we want to, both of us want to do this third thing called this big vision, you know, for your company.

If you're coming in with that mindset and you're coming with that attitude, I think you can handle pretty much any, any rejection that comes your way. Assuming that like we said earlier, you want to work with the client, you want to work on that project.

[00:43:49] Speaker A: And always be the buyer. Could be a subject of an entirely different episode.

Well, I'm so excited to hear, I always love hearing your reframes and how you build relationships with clients. I think it's a highly high integrity, high trust way to do business and highly collaborative and ultimately that's the world that we're heading into. So I love hearing you break it down and I'm excited to continue chatting with you. You talked about the confidence you have about the low hanging fruit in tackling and really setting up the payment structures so that you've got a full quarter to deliver. And in our next episode, we're going to talk about the process you've built that we teach at CTOX Accelerator to do just that. So I'm looking forward to having that conversation and thank you as always, Lior that wraps up another episode of the CTOX Podcast. We hope today's conversation gave you the tools and inspiration to advance your journey as a fractional cto.

[00:44:51] Speaker B: And don't forget, if you want more in depth support or to connect with our community of fellow fractional CTOs, visit us@ctox.com thanks for tuning in and we'll.

[00:45:00] Speaker A: Catch you next time on the CTOX Podcast.