

The 4A Content Growth Model

A brief outline of the proprietary
framework of B2B content planning
developed and deployed by 1927 Media

Chapter One: The Hidden Cost of Misalignment in B2B Marketing



Why Your Content Isn't Landing Like It Used To

There's a familiar story circulating across B2B marketing teams. A new campaign launches with confidence: objectives set, messaging refined, content deployed across channels. But a few weeks in, results are underwhelming. Engagement rates drop. Sales calls don't convert. Frustration builds, not because the content is bad, but because something deeper is off.

Today's B2B buyer doesn't behave the way many strategies assume. They're self-directed, emotionally driven, and increasingly protective of their time. They skip steps, question narratives, and often decide before vendors even know they're in-market. Yet, much of B2B marketing still operates under an outdated playbook: rational messaging, linear funnels, and internal processes that prioritize consistency over connection.

In this opening chapter, we will explore four foundational fractures driving the misalignment, and why the cost isn't just missed clicks, but missed opportunities for growth.

1. The Emotional Gap in Supposedly Rational Markets

Not all buyers are the same and not all categories invite the same emotional dynamics. In regulated or technical environments, for example, buyers often request long-form specs early in the process. But as one IT procurement lead we spoke with in one of many interviews conducted in the development of this framework explained, "Sometimes it's less about needing the details and more about having something defensible to show the team. It's performative certainty."

That kind of nuance often gets missed.

Across most sectors, the data points to a different pattern. Research from Google and the CEB found that B2B buyers are more emotionally connected to the brands they purchase than B2C buyers- driven by trust, personal value alignment, and career risk mitigation¹. LinkedIn's B2B Institute supports this with findings that show 66% of B2B buyers cite emotional trust factors over product features when shortlisting vendor².

And yet, the dominant tone of B2B messaging remains rational. ROI calculators. Total cost of ownership. Product comparison grids. These aren't irrelevant, but they rarely create the kind of impression that sticks.

As marketing strategist Peter Field notes, "Emotional messaging drives long-term brand equity because it gets encoded into memory. Rational messaging just helps justify a decision already made."³

That doesn't mean marketers should abandon logic. But failing to incorporate emotion- especially early in the journey, means failing to earn attention in the first place.

2. The Funnel Is Comfortable. But It's Fiction.

For decades, the funnel has shaped how marketers plan, build, and measure. But today's buyer journeys rarely follow that order.

Gartner reports that 77% of B2B buyers found their last purchase complex and nonlinear⁴. In the same vein, 6sense research shows that more than 70% of buyers are deep into their decision process before ever speaking with a supplier⁵. In practice, buyers loop. They revisit resources. They consult peers and internal influencers. They may see an analyst report after trying a product demo, or download a whitepaper after signing up for a free trial.

Still, many organizations gate content in sequence, assuming interest leads to nurturing, which leads to conversion. That logic often slows buyers down or sends them elsewhere.

The shift toward buyer enablement is a promising one. Instead of controlling the journey, progressive teams are investing in tools, benchmarks, and diagnostics that help buyers clarify their own path. It's not about leading, it's about empowering.

But for that shift to work, teams must first let go of the comfort the funnel once provided.

3. When Internal Structures Work Against Buyer Clarity

A buyer reads a blog post that positions a solution as innovative and user-first. A week later, they attend a webinar with heavily technical language and a dated slide deck. Then comes a follow-up email, this time pitching price discounts and implementation checklists.

All technically accurate. None aligned and the disconnect

cannot be laid at the feet of sloppy execution, it is in fact, deeply structural.

Marketing and sales often operate on different priorities. Product teams push features. Agencies push campaigns. Field teams rely on old assets. The cumulative result is incoherence at scale.

A SiriusDecisions study found that 58% of B2B content goes unused by sales, often because it doesn't match real buyer conversations⁶. And buyers notice. Inconsistency erodes trust, especially in longer cycles where stakeholders rotate and narratives compound.

Fixing this isn't about centralization alone. It's about defining a unifying narrative that survives handoffs and evolves with the conversation, not against it.

4. Budget Drain: Spending More, Converting Less

How many of you reading this have had a thought similar to: "We're spending more than ever. But it feels like we're talking to fewer people, and converting even fewer." in recent years?

This isn't uncommon. Much of the budget still flows to the narrow slice of buyers who are in-market right now, roughly 3–5% at any given time, according to LinkedIn⁷. Meanwhile, the remaining 95%- the future buyers, get generic brand messaging or nothing at all.

The problem is compounded when that spend targets gated assets or seller-led sequences. TrustRadius reports that 87% of B2B buyers want self-service experiences, yet only 13% of vendors provide them at scale⁸.

And while emotional branding and ungated resources often

drive long-term growth, they're harder to attribute directly. As a result, they get deprioritized in budget reviews, despite outperforming over time.

ROI-driven teams face a tension here: optimize for quarterly performance, or invest in future momentum? The most effective brands do both- building mental availability and tactical accessibility. But that balance requires intention. Without it, even the best content strategies turn into high-cost echo chambers.

What's Actually at Stake

Misalignment in B2B content strategy doesn't show up all at once. It accumulates in small missed moments.

A lead that doesn't click. A stakeholder that doesn't follow up. A sales conversation that feels off-message. A campaign that gets good impressions- but little else.

It's not just inefficient. It's costly.

Because when buyers disengage emotionally, they don't come back.

- When their journey is misunderstood, they stall.
- When messaging clashes, trust erodes.
- And when budgets chase the wrong moments, conversion shrinks.

Fixing this isn't about volume. It's about understanding. A deeper one, of how real buyers move, what they remember, and how to meet them with content that supports, not steers.

In the following chapters of this paper we will map out a framework that is built for that exact purpose.

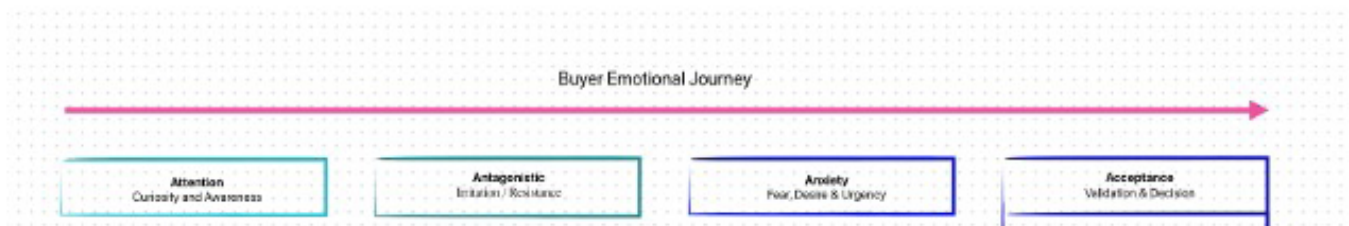
“Marketing and sales often operate on different priorities. Product teams push features. Agencies push campaigns. Field teams rely on old assets. The cumulative result is incoherence at scale”

Chapter Two: The Emotional Buyer's Journey



The Key is Buyer Psychology, Not Sales Logic

EMOTIONAL BUYERS JOURNEY (4A'S)



If you sketch the emotional path a buyer traverses, especially in B2B, you'll rarely see a straightforward line. Instead, the journey curves, dips, and accelerates depending on moments of insight, discomfort, urgency, and reassurance.

We've distilled that emotional complexity into four core phases: Attention, Antagonistic, Anxiety, and Acceptance. This is not a model of control but of attunement.

Unlike traditional frameworks that outline how marketers move buyers, the 4A model reflects how buyers feel and change over time. Its conceptual foundation lies in Edward K. Strong's *The Psychology of Selling and Advertising* (1925), where he moved beyond simple attraction mechanics to explore how resistance, reinforcement, and emotional fatigue shape decision-making.

What Strong intuited then, the need to respond to, not override, buyer psychology, has only become more critical in today's autonomous, content-saturated landscape.

This isn't a tool for converting faster. It's a lens for seeing more clearly how emotional dynamics drive or delay progress,

and how we need to shift the tone of our communication accordingly.

The Four Emotional Phases

The first movement is *Attention* - a moment of curiosity, when something subtle but unresolved catches the buyer's eye. Not because a brand shouts loudly, but because the buyer's context has shifted enough to notice.

What follows is often a backlash: *Antagonistic* resistance.

This is emotional whiplash- skepticism, friction, even low-grade irritation that another vendor has appeared to "solve" a problem the buyer hasn't fully named. At this stage, polished messaging or aggressive sequencing can backfire. Empathy, restraint, and authenticity carry more weight.

If buyers stay engaged, *Anxiety* takes over.

Urgency rises, but so does risk awareness. They fear not just the cost of acting- but the cost of choosing poorly. This is where FOMO collides with fear of regret.

Content in this phase isn't about dramatizing stakes; it's about creating emotional safety, demonstrating that others have walked this path and made informed, confident decisions. Eventually, the pressure gives way to *Acceptance*.

Not as triumph, but as readiness. The buyer isn't being convinced, they're concluding. They're validating that what they now believe lines up with what they're about to do.

Why This Demands a Change in How We Communicate

Recognizing that buyers progress emotionally, not sequentially, reshapes everything from tone to timing. We step back from treating awareness as a trigger for funnel progression.

- We stop assuming that interest leads to engagement, or that engagement signals readiness.
- We acknowledge emotional texture, how messaging is received depends on where the buyer already is.
- And critically, we stop writing to personas and start writing to phases.

This is where the commercial logic begins to resurface. Only 3% to 5% of buyers are actively in-market at any one time¹.

That means 95% of the audience is navigating this emotional terrain long before they engage, and far outside the visibility of sales.

When they do emerge, 80% of the time it's the buyer who initiates the contact². And those who engage with self-guided content, content that matches their emotional pacing, are 147% more likely to purchase than those funneled through traditional, seller-led journeys³.

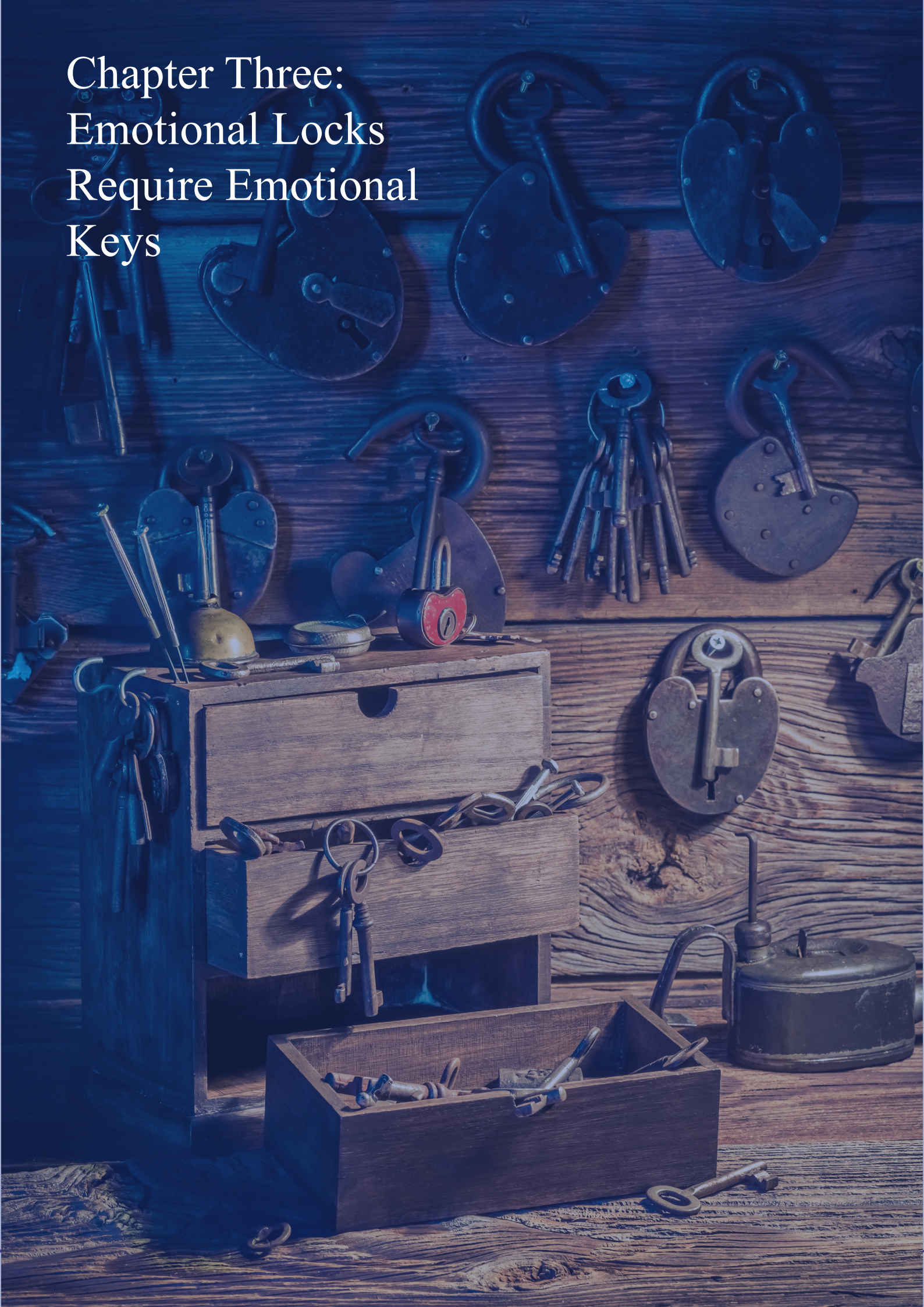
These aren't just statistics. They're signals that the old model, building content for a pipeline stage or persona snapshot, isn't enough.

Instead, we need to build for the emotional terrain. Not to guide each buyer step-by-step, but to ensure that when they arrive, what they find reflects where they are, not where we assumed they'd be.

Content built for emotional stages, not individual personas, becomes more accessible, more human, and ultimately more effective- because it meets the buyer in the only place that truly matters: the moment they're in.

“Recognizing that buyers progress emotionally, not sequentially, reshapes everything from tone to timing”

Chapter Three:
Emotional Locks
Require Emotional
Keys



Persuasive Bias Levers That Reflect the Buyer's Position

PERSUASIVE BIAS LEVERS



The Science of Persuasion:

When it comes to influence, Robert Cialdini's work is foundational. His six principles, *Reciprocity, Scarcity, Authority, Consistency, Liking, and Social Proof*, have long served as a core playbook for persuasion psychology, especially in high-friction decision environments.

But while these levers are powerful, our work adapts them to the emotional pacing of modern B2B buyers. The emotional buyer's journey isn't linear, and neither is persuasion. What resonates in one moment might feel manipulative in another. A principle isn't persuasive unless it matches the buyer's emotional context.

That's why our framework builds upon the original six. However, we've introduced two critical refinements:

- *Relevance Bias* - a synthesis of *Social Proof* and *Similarity Bias* that emphasizes the persuasive power of seeing "people like me" making similar decisions in similar contexts.
- *Relationship Bias* - a fusion of *Reciprocity* and *Liking Bias*, focused on the trust built through human connection, familiarity, and perceived care- especially when engagement feels mutual rather than manufactured.

These two additions help modernize the original principles for B2B marketing environments where autonomy, scepticism, and emotional nuance are defining features of the buyer journey.

Why Biases Matter Within the Emotional Journey

Each phase of the buyer's emotional journey isn't just shaped by how a buyer feels, it's shaped by which forms of persuasion their emotional state allows them to hear.

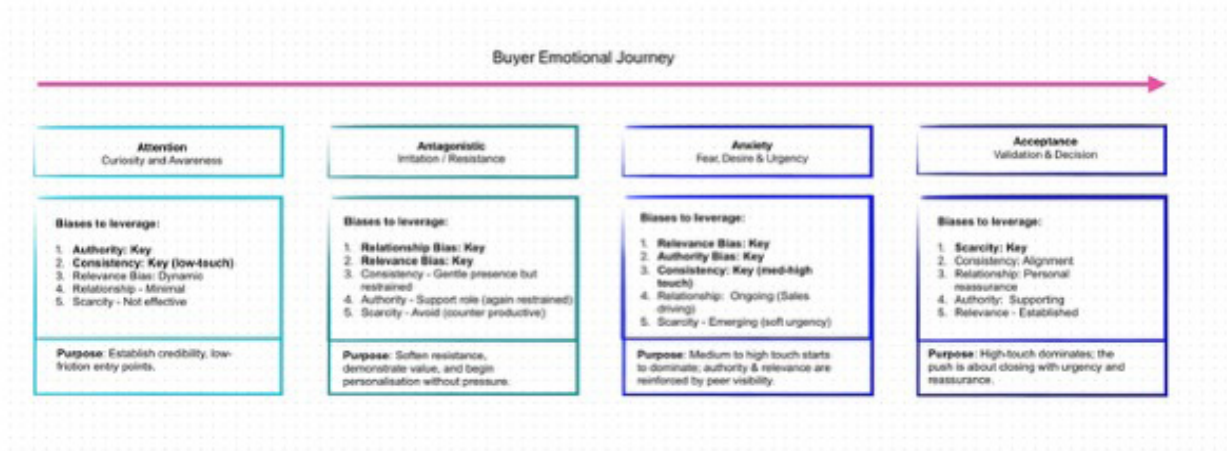
What resonates in one stage may backfire in another. The role of persuasive bias, then, is not to push the buyer forward, but to offer the right kind of emotional credibility for where they already are.

In the *Attention* phase, the buyer is curious but passive. Emotional stakes are low, and so are thresholds for tolerance.

At this stage, *Authority* is critical, proof, credibility, and recognizable expertise offer frictionless entry into a new category or challenge. *Consistency* also plays a supporting role, offering light-touch reinforcement that builds recognition without pressure.

Relevance begins to stir interest, especially when

BIASES TO LEVERAGE AT EACH STAGE



messaging gestures toward familiar industries or peer challenges. But *Relationship* bias is minimal here, there's no emotional investment yet, and *Scarcity* is ineffective, even counterproductive. The buyer isn't ready to feel urgency, and forcing it risks breaking trust.

Once the buyer moves into the *Antagonistic* phase, the tone must shift.

Now, skepticism is active. The buyer is more alert, but also more defensive. This is where *Relevance Bias* becomes pivotal.

Buyers must see themselves in the content, not just in demographics, but in emotional reality: "This is for people like me, in situations like mine." *Relationship Bias* begins to matter too, though still lightly in terms of content (although it will influence other aspects as we will see in the following chapter).

Peer commentary, restrained *social proof*, and human signals ease resistance. *Consistency* continues its work in the background, messaging that stays steady and tone that doesn't fluctuate builds quiet trust. At this point, *Authority* should be present but not dominant, aggressive positioning can deepen resistance. And *Scarcity* should be actively avoided. Pressure here often leads to retreat, not progression.

In the *Anxiety* phase, urgency emerges, but so does risk.

The buyer is leaning in emotionally but also emotionally exposed. *Relevance Bias* and *Authority* now come to the fore, reinforcing that the solution is both credible and appropriate

to their situation. *Consistency* becomes more touch-intensive here: content needs to flow logically across platforms, reinforcing rather than repeating.

Relationship Bias gains real traction - buyers want to see others like them navigating similar decisions. Peer validation, community engagement, and human-centered proof reduce cognitive load.

Scarcity may begin to surface here, but gently. Not as a sales tactic, but as a nudge: soft urgency, not alarm.

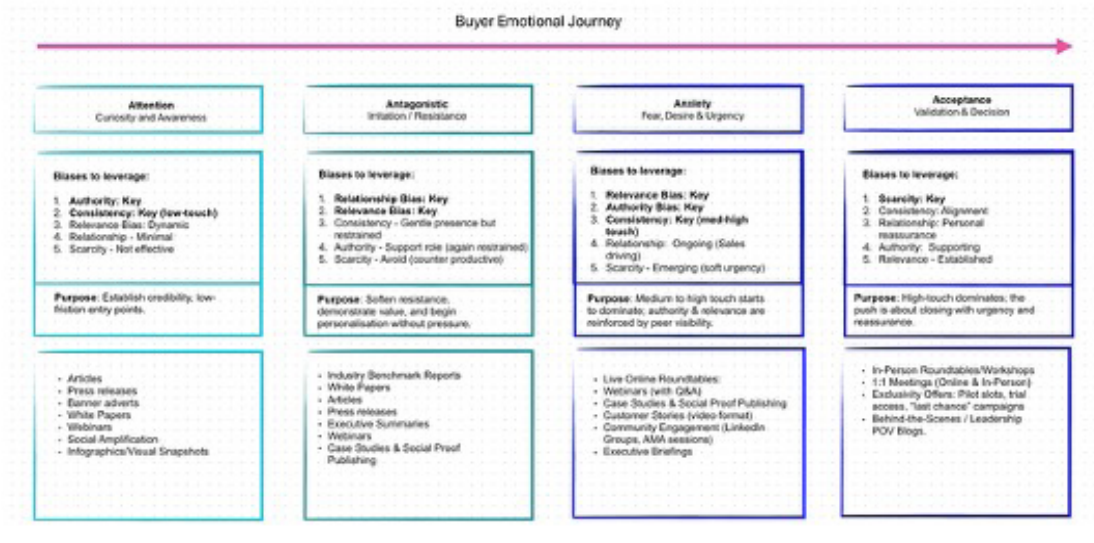
By the time the buyer reaches *Acceptance*, emotional readiness is high, but so is the desire for assurance. *Scarcity* becomes most powerful now: limited slots, final chances, or invitation-only access act as emotional closers.

Consistency should reach alignment, everything the buyer has seen should now cohere. *Authority* remains in a supporting role, confirming that this isn't just a safe decision, it's a smart one. *Relationship Bias* at this stage is intimate, not casual: 1:1 reassurance, bespoke content, or trusted advisor alignment.

And *Relevance* is no longer about resonance - it's about confirmation: this solution matches the buyer's reality, and they know it.

Ultimately, each bias, used with the right intensity and tone at the right time, helps buyers feel safer, seen, and supported at exactly the moment they need it.

OVERLAYING CONTENT BY TYPE



Translating Bias into Format: What Content Works Where

It's not just what you say, it's when, how, and in what form you say it. Once the emotional posture and dominant bias of each stage are understood, content begins to take on a more tactical clarity. *The goal isn't volume, it's resonance.*

In the *Attention* phase, content should be *low-touch* and focused on the pain points your solutions solve more than your solutions. The buyer isn't ready to invest significant time, but they'll start to develop an awareness that what they have been struggling with personally, is in fact a common concern amongst their peers.

This is the place for *articles, press releases, short white papers, and infographics*, surface-level *authority* signals that build familiarity without over-committing the reader. Social amplification, such as LinkedIn sharing or industry endorsements, helps reinforce light-touch consistency.

During *Antagonistic* phase, content must signal restraint.

The buyer is wary of being sold to, so tone and format matter. *Benchmark reports, executive summaries, and moderated webinars*, especially when paired with soft social proof, let the buyer investigate value at their own pace. Content that feels observational rather than persuasive earns trust here. The key is personalization without pressure.

When the buyer enters *Anxiety*, content needs to support decision momentum without introducing new doubts. This is where *case studies, community-driven sessions, video testimonials, and Q&A webinars* thrive.

Buyers want to hear from others who've taken the same leap. Peer authority and social validation reduce perceived risk. Content should be *medium- to high-touch* and feel participatory whenever possible.

Finally, *Acceptance* is where content confirms rather than convinces. *Executive briefings, 1:1 meetings, pilot access offers*, and behind-the-scenes insights all play a role in affirming the buyer's decision.

Content here isn't public, it's private, tailored, and anchored in personal reassurance. *Scarcity* and exclusivity are used carefully to elevate the moment rather than manufacture tension.

The path to persuasion isn't paved in volume or velocity. It's shaped by relevance, emotional timing, and a brand's ability to communicate with nuance. By aligning persuasive bias with emotional state and expression format, you are no longer simply aiming to move buyers forward, you are building belief, trust, and momentum that endures.

Chapter Four: Rethinking Content Delivery



Aligning Sales and Marketing Across the Emotional Journey

APPROPRIATE CONTENT DELIVERY CHANNELS



Sales and Marketing are two sides of the same coin

If there's one operational shift the 4A model demands above all, it's this: content delivery can no longer be the sole domain of marketing.

Traditional B2B models often cast marketing as the sole custodian of content, generating interest, nurturing leads, and only passing prospects to sales once intent is declared. Sales, then, is expected to "close" the deal after marketing has "warmed it up." But this logic belongs to a funnel, not an emotional journey.

The emotional buyer journey doesn't unfold in predictable stages or on neat timelines. A buyer in the *Antagonistic* phase - experiencing resistance, skepticism, or cognitive friction, doesn't need more email campaigns or ad retargeting. They need reassurance, relevance, and the subtle presence of a human voice. That doesn't mean a sales pitch. It means content delivered with intentional restraint, human to human, not brand to inbox.

Content-Led, Sales-Actioned: A New Mode of Engagement

This is the moment where a simple but powerful shift begins: Content-Led, Sales-Actioned.

In this model, content remains the lead actor, but sales becomes the delivery channel far earlier than in conventional go-to-market strategies.

The aim isn't to accelerate the pipeline through force, but to nurture emotional momentum with care. It's counter-intuitive: the more skeptical a buyer becomes, the less marketing they need - and the more they need content to arrive via people they might trust.

Rather than continuing high-volume tactics, retargeting ads, marketing automation, impersonal CTAs, this model calls for a deliberate pull-back. Prospects in resistance need space, not saturation. When sales steps in during this stage, it does so not to close, but to offer. The right content, at the right tone, placed carefully, not pitched, by someone who seems to understand what matters.

That's the difference between another message and a moment of credibility.

Delivery Shifts as Emotional Stakes Rise

As we move into *Anxiety*, the dynamic evolves. Emotionally, the buyer is engaged, but still cautious. Sales-led facilitation of

content experiences becomes the differentiator here. Not just sending a PDF or forwarding a blog, but inviting the prospect into peer conversations, interactive webinars, or curated content series.

This is content as bridge, not bait.

And when we reach *Acceptance*, the emotional weight shifts once again.

The buyer is ready to move, but still wants reassurance.

Now, traditional sales activity kicks in more assertively: offers, proposals, final-stage negotiations. But even here, marketing doesn't disappear. It supports with thought leadership, exclusive content, and behind-the-scenes proof that reinforces the credibility of the offer.

The takeaway is simple, but significant:

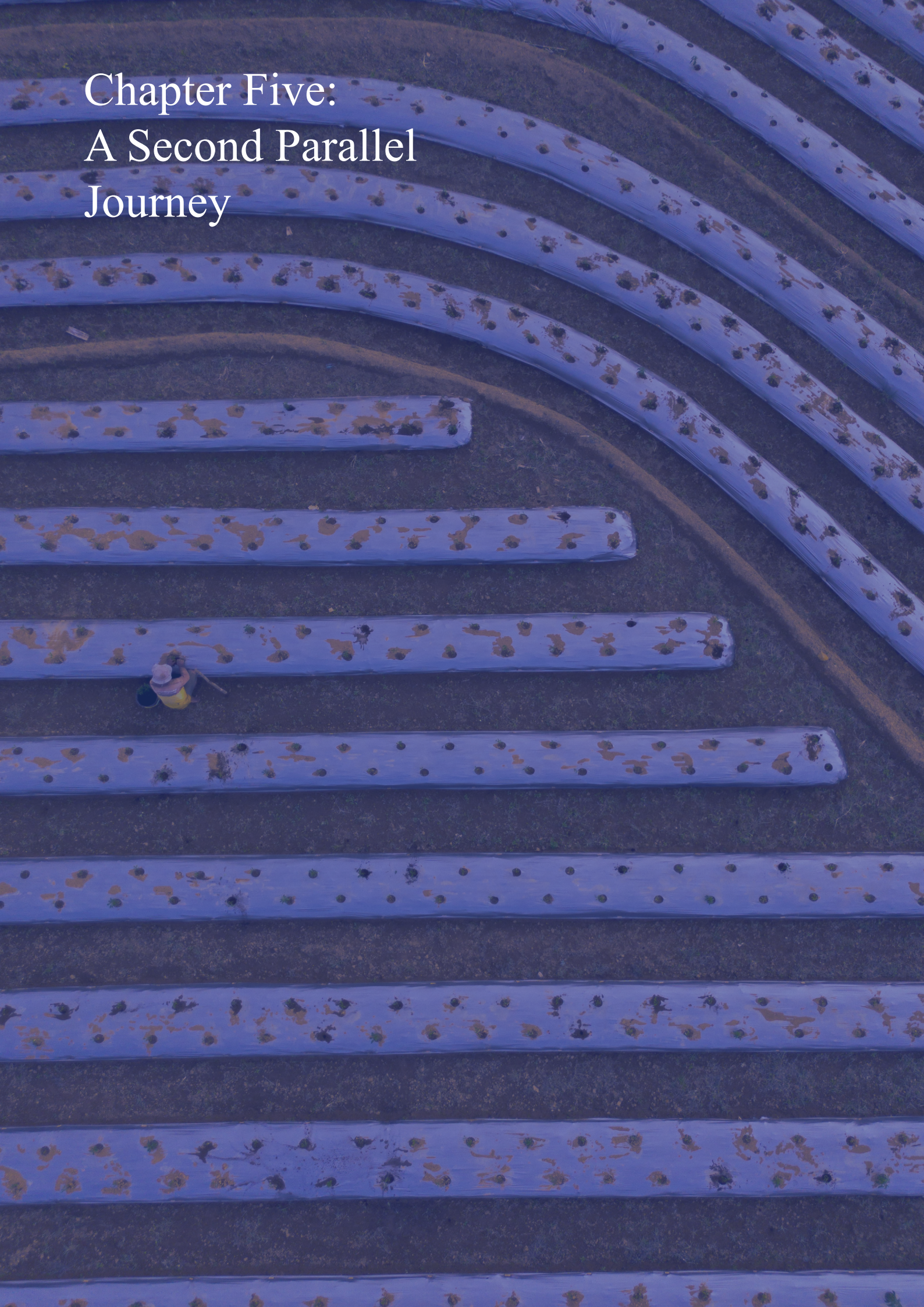
- In *Attention*, marketing leads: broad awareness, low-friction delivery.
- In *Antagonism*, sales enters quietly: content-led, sales-actioned.
- In *Anxiety*, sales continues: experience-led engagement, facilitated via trust.
- In *Acceptance*, sales leads- but marketing supports with precision.

We move from educate, to nurture, to compare, to close- but the emotional rhythm always comes first.

The function delivering the content changes, but the purpose never does: to help the buyer feel safe, understood, and in control of their own pace.

“A buyer in the *Antagonistic* phase - experiencing resistance, skepticism, or cognitive friction, doesn't need more email campaigns or ad retargeting. They need reassurance, relevance, and the subtle presence of a human voice”

Chapter Five: A Second Parallel Journey



Understanding the Awareness Progression

AWARENESS PROGRESSION



From Tension to Clarity: The Awareness Progression

There is a second journey buyers walk, less emotional, more cognitive - but no less significant. And while it often runs in parallel to the emotional buyer journey, its influence is entirely distinct.

We call it the Awareness Progression.

If the emotional journey determines how a buyer feels, the awareness journey determines what they understand, and when. It's the internal process that moves a buyer from vague discomfort to confident decision. But crucially, this process doesn't follow our timelines. It unfolds at the pace of realisation, not messaging.

The awareness journey is structured, but not linear. It moves across four major phases:

- *Awareness*: "I understand I have a problem."
- *Diagnosis*: "I understand what the problem is."
- *Solution Identification*: "I know the type of solutions that will solve my problem."
- *Provider Selection*: "I choose a specific provider for my solution."

This is not a funnel. It's a lens through which buyers make sense of the world. And while many marketers speak about "meeting the buyer where they are," few actually build content or structure campaigns with these specific cognitive shifts in mind.

But understanding this journey gives us the chance to speak to buyers at the right level of recognition- not just the right industry or job title.

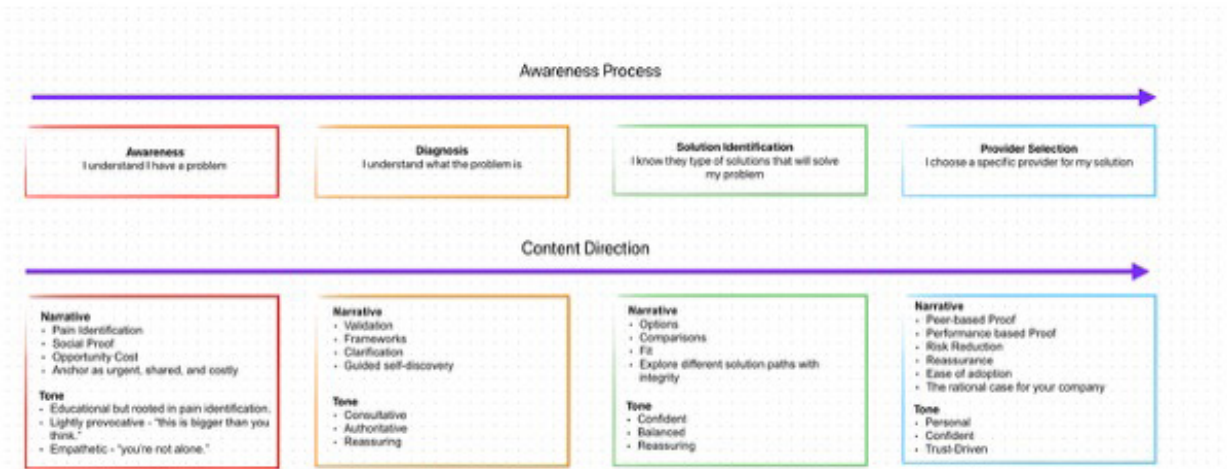
Imagine a senior operations lead at a manufacturing firm. Let's call him Arjun.

For the past six months, Arjun has noticed output is slightly lagging. His team is working overtime. Employee churn is rising. He is aware of the problem, even if he doesn't understand the root cause.

He hasn't yet connect these issues to a specific cause. He's feeling friction, but doesn't have language for it yet. This is where most messaging falls flat, because it tries to offer solutions to someone who hasn't diagnosed the problem.

But the moment Arjun reads a short case study highlighting how inefficient technician scheduling impacts supply chain

MAPPING TONE TO AWARENESS PROGRESSION



delay- it clicks. The pain is validated. Now he knows what's wrong. That movement, from discomfort to clarity, is the *Diagnosis* phase.

From there, he begins to explore what kind of tools or strategies others are using to solve similar issues. Slowly, the shape of a solution emerges.

Eventually, he reaches the point where the emotional groundwork is laid, and *rational confidence becomes critical*. Arjun doesn't want another webinar. He wants numbers. ROI. Risk mitigation. Stakeholder alignment.

But if those metrics arrive too soon, or too late, they're ignored.

That's why this secondary journey matters.

Mapping Narrative and Tone to Awareness Progression

The further we move into this awareness journey, the more the tone, and type of content must evolve. The emotional journey doesn't disappear here. In fact, it sits underneath this entire process. But the expression of content changes to reflect where the buyer is cognitively.

Here's how it maps:

Awareness: Pain Without Definition:

- Narrative: Pain signals, opportunity costs, social proof
- Tone: Empathetic, lightly provocative, educational
- Objective: Spark realization "This is a bigger problem than I thought."

Diagnosis: Validation and Framing

- Narrative: Clarification, frameworks, self-assessment tools
- Tone: Consultative, calm, guiding
- Objective: Help buyers articulate and own the problem.

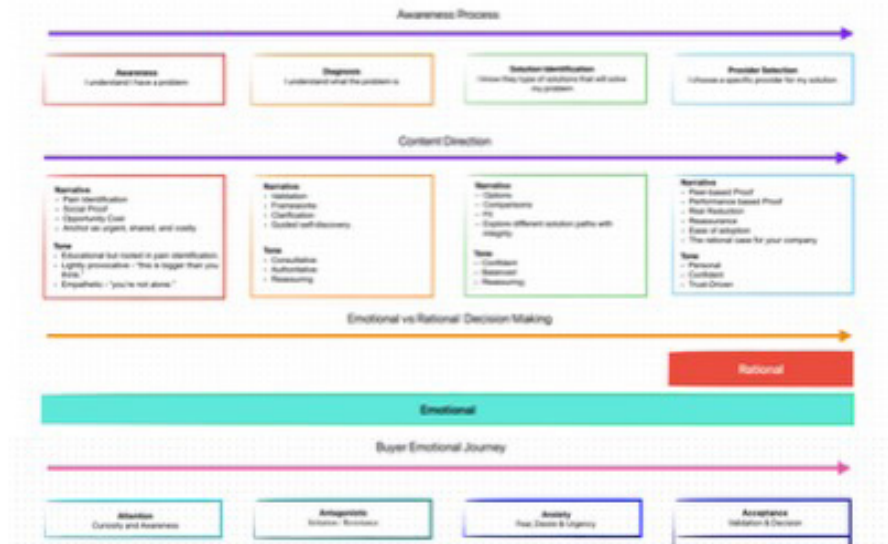
Solution Identification: Fit and Friction Reduction

- Narrative: Options, comparisons, solution mapping
- Tone: Confident, neutral, balanced
- Objective: Empower intelligent self-discovery without pressure.

Provider Selection: Rational Reinforcement

- Narrative: ROI, risk reduction, peer-based proof
- Tone: Personal, trust-driven, performance-focused
- Objective: Provide logical validation and social reassurance to support the emotional decision already made.

EMOTIONAL VS. RATIONAL IN CORRECT CONTEXT



Rational Thinking Arrives Late- But Matters Deeply

It's worth stating clearly: rational content does not drive the majority of the buying journey. It plays a supporting role. A vital one, but only in the final stages.

Think of it this way: by the time a buyer compares providers, the emotional decision is already made. Rational content, TCO models, ROI calculators, implementation plans - is not what tips the scale; it is what justifies the scale being tipped.

That doesn't make it optional.

These rational assets are how buyers:

- Align internally with stakeholders
- Reduce perceived risk
- Secure budget sign-off
- Prevent buyer's remorse
- Justify the decision post-purchase

In this way, rational content doesn't convince buyers to act, it gives them the permission to act with confidence and control.

The Power of Overlay

Understanding the awareness journey alongside the emotional journey is what unlocks full narrative maturity.

It allows us to:

- Layer tone on top of emotional state
- Introduce content formats aligned with cognitive needs
- Match persuasive levers to the right recognition phase

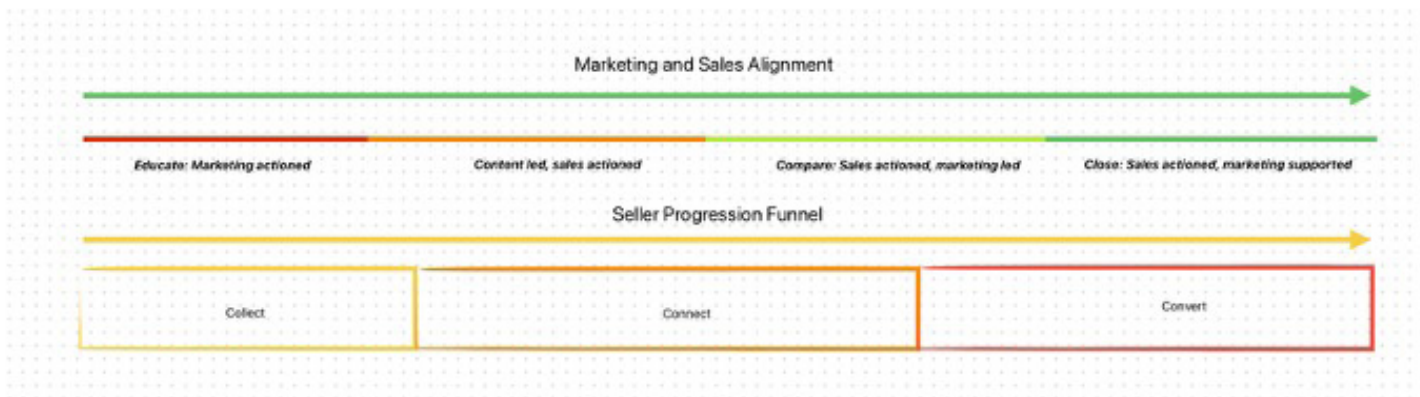
It's what turns content strategy into a precision instrument, rather than a scatter-gun campaign.

Chapter Six: Bridging the Gap Between Framework and Function



Overcoming Status Quo Resistance Friction

SOLUTION: ALIGNMENT OF EXISTING PROCESS



The old enemy of any new model

By this point, we've established a two-layer model, emotional and cognitive, that reveals how modern buyers make decisions.

We've explored how emotional traction precedes rational validation, how tone maps to different phases of recognition, and how content must adapt to both mindset and moment. We now understand something vital: it's not just what we say, but when and how we deliver it.

This dual-journey model creates a content architecture that is more empathetic, more persuasive, and more aligned with how buyers actually behave. But with that understanding comes a new and often underestimated challenge:

Adoption.

Why Brilliant Frameworks Often Fail

No matter how sophisticated or well-intentioned a framework is, if it represents a material shift in strategy, especially one that breaks from conventional funnel-based thinking, it can meet resistance.

Internal teams may hesitate to abandon familiar processes.

Existing sales habits die hard. Marketing calendars may already be locked in quarters ahead.

In these environments, even great frameworks get implemented in fragments, half measures that disrupt workflows but never reach full impact.

And yet, the 4A Model is uniquely built for this challenge. Because rather than requiring sweeping changes, it invites something more subtle: reorientation.

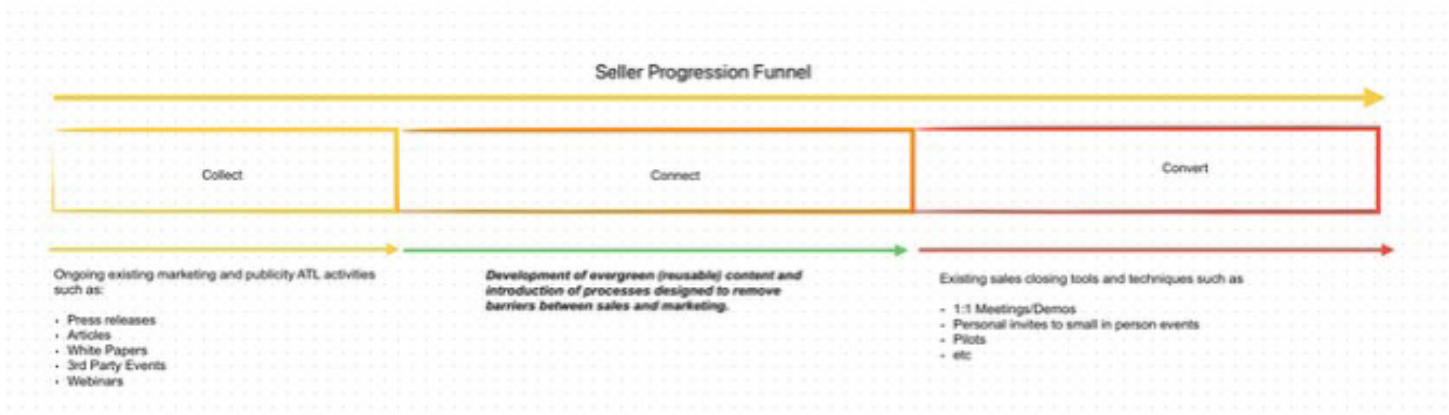
The Internal Funnel vs. The External Journey

To implement this model effectively, we must understand a fundamental distinction:

- The Sales Funnel is an internal construct- designed to track progression, forecast revenue, and structure teams.
- The 4A Model is external- it describes what the buyer is actually experiencing, and what they need from us at each point of their journey.

The goal is not to replace one with the other. It's to overlay them. Think of the funnel as the spine - and the 4A framework as the nervous system that tells you where the pain points are

THE ONLY KEY CHANGE ON THE SELLER SIDE IS IN THE CONVERT SEGMENT



and how to respond.

Mapping the 4A Model to the Seller Progression Funnel

For simplicity, let's use a universal version of the sales funnel: Collect, Connect, Convert.

Now, overlay the 4A Model:

- **Collect:** This is largely aligned with the Attention phase. Existing marketing activities PR, white papers, ATL content, on-demand webinars etc can continue here with only minimal adjustment. The job is to spark curiosity and establish credibility.
- **Connect:** This is where the shift begins. As prospects move into *Antagonistic* and *Anxiety* phases, they don't need pressure, they need subtle, relevant, emotionally attuned content, delivered via sales. The motion here is *Content Led, Sales Actioned*. It is not pitch-led. Sales becomes the enabler of trust, not the executor of urgency. *This is the core innovation of the 4A model.*
- **Convert:** Here we enter *Acceptance*, the rationalisation stage. Existing sales motions can remain intact- 1:1 meetings, demos, pilots- but with a smarter foundation: emotionally aligned groundwork that ensures these activities aren't rushed or mistimed. This is where ROI models, executive-ready decks, and case studies shine not before.

Adoption Doesn't Require Reinvention - Just Refinement

It's easy to misinterpret new frameworks as threats to established systems. But the 4A Model is not a teardown. It's a

layer. One that aligns internal actions with external emotional truth.

And in most cases, the only true operational shift lies in the *Connect* stage.

This is where most sales and marketing handoffs are clumsy. Where intent is unclear. Where leads stall and relevance fades. By focusing content development here, creating evergreen assets, non-coercive nurture flows, and emotionally calibrated messaging, we address the most neglected, high-impact zone of revenue growth.

The Small Change That Unlocks Large Results

The 4A Model doesn't ask you to replace your CRM, overhaul your funnel, or rewrite your sales playbook. It simply offers a new lens - one that helps you meet buyers with the right energy, tone, and format as they guide themselves through their decision-making process.

- It gives marketing a blueprint to create content that earns attention instead of demanding it.
- It gives sales a role that begins earlier, but is rooted in trust, not tactics.
- And it gives leadership a way to scale without resorting to brute force.

That's not disruption for disruption's sake. That's progress by alignment.

Chapter Seven: Final thoughts



Taking 4A From Framework to Field

We hope this paper has given you not just a new lens, but a new language, one that more closely mirrors the emotional and cognitive reality of how modern B2B buyers make decisions.

The 4A Framework was designed with complexity in mind. For organisations navigating long sales cycles, consensus-led buying groups, and high-stakes investment decisions, traditional funnel logic often falls short.

What's needed instead is a more empathetic, flexible, and evidence-based approach, one that respects the buyer's self-guided journey while empowering sales and marketing to meet them with relevance, not repetition.

If you're a B2B organisation operating in a complex market, and you're ready to evolve your content, sales alignment, and buyer engagement strategies, we'd love to talk.

We work with teams to put the 4A Framework into practice: mapping existing processes, aligning content to journey stages, and building the internal capability to scale emotionally intelligent, conversion-primed messaging.

On the following page you will see the full framework laid out. It may seem complex, but each layer is built to integrate with the others, and each layer is built upon decades and in

some cases a century of data and understanding. We haven't reinvented the wheel, we have just paid close attention to what those who have come before us have done and applied it to a holistic framework.

Our *publishing portfolio* is built on our own unique marketing technology platform that is aligned to our proprietary prospect scoring system that helps identify where prospects are on their emotional journey.

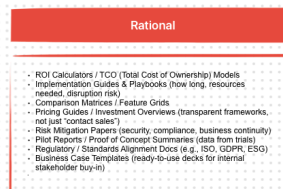
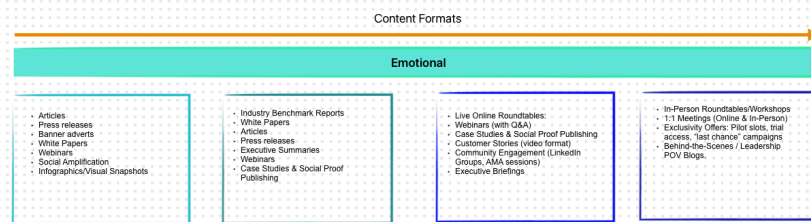
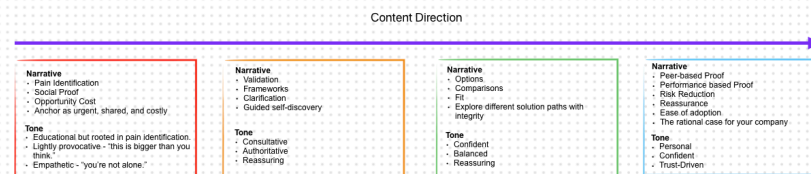
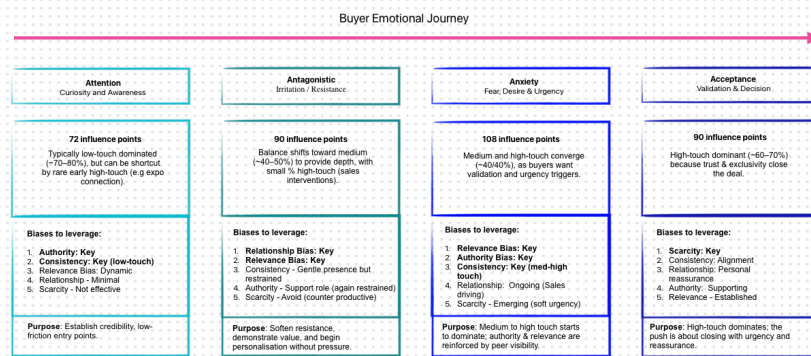
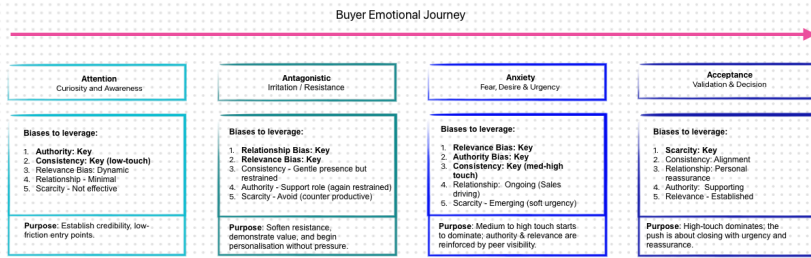
Our *implementation team* work with our clients so the prospect scoring sits within their own CRM systems, wherever possible introducing automation to get as close as possible to deep content-led strategy being dynamically shaped in real-time.

Our *content development team* don't work on campaigns, they work on suites of content, providing our clients with layers of content developed in-line around the tone, narrative and format for each relevant segment, based around your product themes.

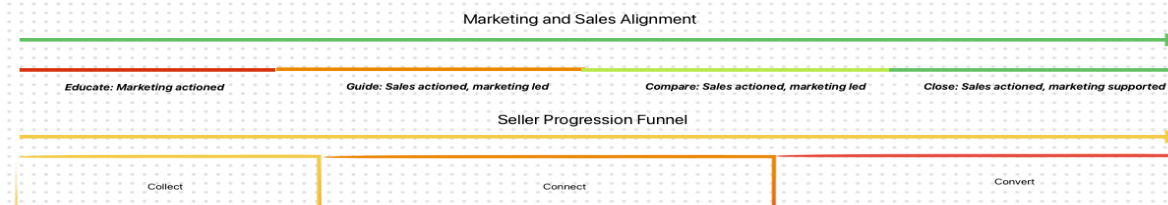
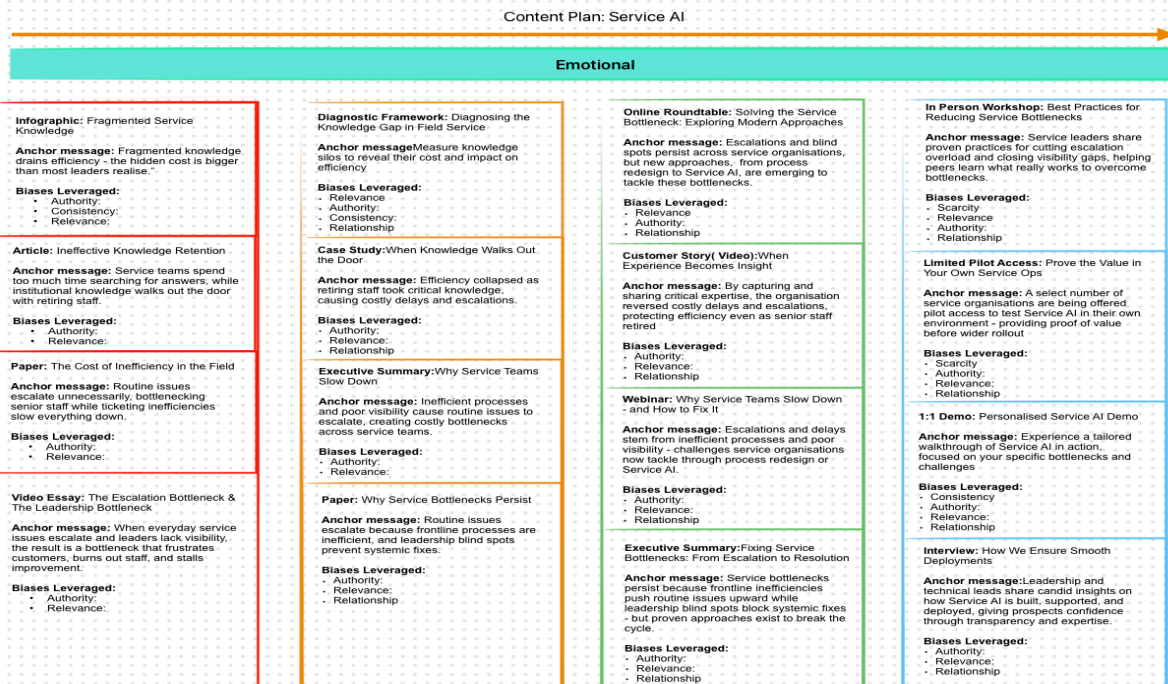
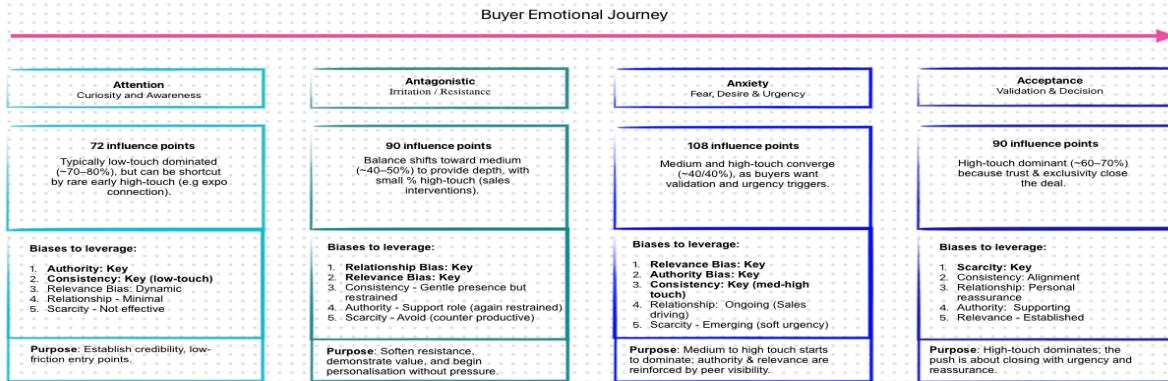
Our clients can work one team or all of them or whatever blend fits with their existing strengths and weaknesses.

If this approach resonates, get in touch and together we can make content work the way buying really happens.

The 4A Model in Full



The 4A Model in Practice



Appendix & Bibliography

End Notes

1. Google/CEB. From Promotion to Emotion: Connecting B2B Customers to Brands. Think With Google. https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/qs/documents/3988/promotion-emotion-b2b_articles_q5pm53H.pdf
2. LinkedIn B2B Institute. The Age of Agility. https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/business/en-us/marketing-solutions/products/pdfs/LinkedIn_Age_of_Agility_Global_Report.pdf
3. Binet, L. & Field, P. The Long and the Short of It. IPA. <https://ipa.co.uk/knowledge/documents/the-long-and-the-short-of-it-presentation>
4. Gartner. The New B2B Buying Journey. <https://www.gartner.com/en/sales/insights/b2b-buying-journey>
5. 6sense. 2023 B2B Buyer Behavior Report. <https://6sense.com/blog/new-buyer-experience-report-3-insights-and-a-warning>
6. SiriusDecisions. The Cost of Content Misdirection. Forrester. <https://go.forrester.com/blogs/breaking-down-marketing-silos>
7. LinkedIn B2B Institute. The 95-5 Rule. <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/b2b-institute/b2b-research/trends/95-5-rule>
8. TrustRadius. The 2024 B2B Buying Disconnect. <https://go.trustradius.com/rs/827-FOI-687/images/TrustRadius-2024-B2B-Buying-Disconnect-Report.pdf>

Bibliography:

- Lewis, E. S. (1898). Financial Advertising. The Ronald Press Company.
- Scott, W. D. (1921). The Psychology of Advertising in Theory and Practice. Small, Maynard & Company.
- Strong, E. K. (1925). The Psychology of Selling and Advertising. McGraw-Hill.
- Rorty, J. (1934). Our Master's Voice: Advertising. The John Day Company.
- Pearson, J., & Turner, G. (1965). The Persuasion Industry. Hutchinson.
- Cheskin, L. (1967). Secrets of Marketing Success. Liveright Publishing.
- Cialdini, R. B. (2006). Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion (Rev. ed.). Harper Business. <https://www.influenceatwork.com>
- Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, Fast and Slow. Penguin Books. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/206763/thinking-fast-and-slow-by-daniel-kahneman>
- Garfield, B., & Levy, D. (2013). Can't Buy Me Like: How Authentic Customer Connections Drive Superior Results. Portfolio.

1927
Media 