

Gi Costi

A Modern Leader's Guide to Sales Success

WITH GUI COSTIN

**The Leadership Habit Podcast
Transcript**

JENN DEWALL: Hi, everyone. It's Jenn DeWall, and in this week's episode of The Leadership Habit Podcast, I sat down with Gui Costin to give you, a modern leader, the guide to sales success. Let me tell you a little bit more about Gui. He is the CEO and founder of Dakota, a company in investment services that has helped his clients raise more than \$40 billion with a B since its launch. But Gui's story, it goes beyond just numbers. He's an innovator who's transforming what it means to build a successful workplace culture in the world of finance. As the author of Millennials Are Not Aliens and The Dakota Way, he brings new perspectives to sales, marketing, and leadership in the investment world. His people-focused approach has led him to build two companies generating \$20 million every year by prioritizing what he believes matters most-- people-- a strategy that has had him featured in Forbes Inc. and appearing I'm Yahoo Finance's Morning Show. Gui has so much knowledge and information to share and, of course, expertise. Today's episode is all about understanding what he's done to create the culture of success at Dakota, but also to give you the information that you need, a modern leader's guide to sales success. I hope you enjoy today's conversation as much as I did. Hello, everyone. I am so excited to talk about today topic. We are going to dive into a modern leader's guide to sales success. Sales have changed. Obviously, the pandemic, our work environments, the attitudes of us as individuals and how we like to do business has changed, and we need to learn some new practices. I'm very, very excited to bring Gui onto the show. Gui, thank you so much for being here on The Leadership Habit. I am excited to dive in. Welcome.

GUI COSTIN: Great. Thanks for having me. Excited to be here.

JENN DEWALL: Well, we're talking about a modern leader's guide to sales success. This is your background, so if you could just tell me a little bit more about who you are, what you do, and who is Dakota.?

GUI COSTIN: So I've always been in a sales role in roughly 35 years at work. In 1997, I got into a sales role working for investment firms. And what that entails is essentially raising capital for their investment funds. And in the world of today, it could be a hedge fund, private equity, private credit, or long only equities, just like your mutual fund in your 401(K) plan. And those are generally managed by investment firms. I've always worked for them. In 2006, we started Dakota, and we're sales organization that works with about six different investment firms and helps them raise capital for their funds. To date, we've raised about \$25 billion. We have a nine-person sales team. And we built a database over the course of 18 years that in 2019 we did something that was kind of unique. We commercialized that database. We turned it into a product so other investment firms could subscribe. Today, that product is called Dakota Marketplace. We have 65 employees. We have over 1,100 investment firms as subscribers and about \$5,000 salespeople. And so we have two businesses, two distinct businesses. At our core, they're both sales businesses, heavy front end sales efforts. So I love being called a sales person, a salesman, a saleswoman, however you want to say it, a lot of pride in that. And I think every business leader, everybody is a sales person. So that's Dakota in a nutshell.

JENN DEWALL: I love that, two organizations. And I have to ask, of course, this is The Leadership Habit, we will be talking about sales, but I know that culture is something that is really important to you. I also that your own personal development and growth is something that's really important to you. And I think I want to highlight that because not a lot of leaders get visibility into someone that's running the company, their

perspective of what they're trying to create. Tell me the culture or what you're trying to create in terms of a place for employees to thrive.

GUI COSTIN: This has been going on for a long time now, 18 years. And even prior to that, I was in different leadership roles in sales, sometimes as a one-person sales person or doing a startup in the early 2000s. And I would say at the end of the day, culture is about how you treat people and acquire-- over time, you realize that it requires a lot of vulnerability. And what I mean by that is every time somebody comes to work every single day, what kind of experience do you want them to have? And if you're highly volatile, if you allow yourself to have one-liners or passive aggressive behavior or thinking you're making a joke and you think it's funny, but it's not really funny to that person, or if you tolerate certain behaviors, that then goes throughout the entire organization. And for the most part, 99.999% of people don't like that at all. And so what I've realized over the course of time, especially in the past 10 years, is what you say, how you treat people, and what you give permission for other people and how they should be treating one another determines everything. And so my whole ambition-- go ahead.

JENN DEWALL: No, can I ask a little bit further on that? Because I think you and I talked about this in the pre-call, you have a big-- from what my understanding of working with you like, it is really important for you to protect your employees, to protect the treatment of how they experience. And that is something that is not common because people will not maybe-- they'll keep the office jerk around, they'll keep the top performer, they'll keep the best client, if you will, that mistreats or abuses or creates a toxic atmosphere. But I feel like that's something that you actually are very good at directing or saying, we're not tolerating that. Is that right?

GUI COSTIN: Oh, well, 1,000,000,000%. We won't even tolerate bad clients. You know, customers, we'll fire them as fast as we can if they treat our teammates badly. I mean, like on the spot, we'll give them their money back, we'll do whatever. So we have a no you-know-what policy. I don't want to say it-- a curse word on the podcast, but that's very, very important. But I'll tell you what it comes back to, is that if you-- every business book writes about this, I don't think there's enough why behind this, but it comes down to your core principles, what you stand for. And so if you write down what you stand for, and certain circumstances come up, then you point to the core principles or all the eyes are on you. All right, coach, you said these were core principles that person just violated. Well, what are you going to do now? And they don't say those words. They just look at you. And that's happened a couple of times. And I said, give me 24 hours. It didn't take me that long. I took corrective action basically immediately to honor my word of the core principles. And then what ends up happening is over time, everyone kind of gets in line to the leader's behavior. So how I treat everyone else is how they treat everyone else. And the ambition is, why can't we have a place when you come to work every single day where you can have fun, you can feel challenged, you can feel like you're becoming the best version of yourself, and you're being respected by your teammates, and it's a ball. And you don't have all of that, this boss, that boss. Oh, my gosh, like, there's so many examples, we could go on forever, the people. So I just try to make it all about our teammates and then being able to come to Dakota, grow their career, become the best version of themselves, and have to avoid any of the crazy personalities that a lot of organizations tolerate.

JENN DEWALL: I just love that because I, as a coach, as a speaker, as a trainer, as a friend, I've heard too-- as a partner, I've heard too many examples of organizations that don't back up their values. And I really--

I commend the ones that do, especially the ones that are willing to walk away from business if someone is doing that, because I think that is often a toxic relationship that's just allowed in workplaces because we, of course, need to get paid. But at what cost? Because the turnover and the ripple effects, of course, with allowing that. But I want to talk about growth because you even talked about, you know, hey, you'll address the not-ideal behaviors. And I know that you talk about one of your personal growths or how you've grown over the past 20 years, and you have what you referred to as your Bobby Knight moment. What does that mean? I mean, people may not know Bobby Knight. I know about-- yep, I was around during the Bobby Knight era.

GUI COSTIN: Yeah, to say this is a straight line would be a total fallacy. It's been a-- it's been a process. It's a lot of self-examination. It's a lot of exhibiting the bad behavior that you realize is really toxic and really bad, and then correcting that behavior every single day. It's a work in progress. I mean, I think over the past four to five years, or, at least, the past three years, I've gotten onto a plane, if you will, where the boat's planing, it's on plane, and I'm not-- I don't have to evolve as much from the earlier days.

But I'll give you my Bobby Knight story. It's a quick one.

Communication, in my view, is everything about any organization, communication, keeping people in the loop, if you will, making sure that you're sharing information versus hoarding information, hiding information, not copying people. Like, you start to think about all of that, sharing knowledge, everything. And I had one guy who I loved to death, we are still good friends, the whole thing. I was kind of-- I've been a mentor to him. And he again didn't copy me on something, and it just happened to be where he walked in the room. There was a bunch of people there. It's in our great room, in our office, in the suburbs, and one guy is next to him who's still with us. Nick, and I just started. And he

was across the room and I started, and then it's just one of those moments where I just kept going higher and higher and higher and higher to the point where it was just literally like screaming because I was so angry at the fact that there was such a violation. And he couldn't get it out of his DNA, despite being one of the sweetest people I've ever met. And eventually, he had to go do something else and, listen, he knows it today. He's a wonderful guy. And, of course, I apologized, and everything. But then I looked at that and I thought to myself, is that really the leader I want to be. Right? I mean, Jamie right here, Jamie, our videographer, when we were first getting the video going-- and I've probably told this story 100 times to him and in front of him and everything-- like, we just had a little moment where he's trying to coach me up on how to do video this thing. I'm getting pretty frustrated. We're going back and forth. And I sat him down afterwards and I apologized. He goes, Gui, he goes, I used to video for MMA people. OK, you're a cupcake, OK? Just don't even-- But it still didn't make me feel good. I had to do better. I had to do better than that and be much more compassionate. And my whole ambition is to have very low-- at work, we want super low vol emotionally, as a group, with super high performance, but not a lot of stress. We don't need stress. We don't need agita. We need low vol personalities, like, check all that craziness at the door. But let's come in and totally perform and be a great teammate.

JENN DEWALL: I love that. And thank you for your vulnerability in sharing that story, because I've been on the side of sitting in HR and doing mediation with someone that the employees had decided had reacted aggressively. And then in that conversation, he did. And I get all the reasons that we can have-- I'm an emotional person. I understand when the stakes are higher, when there's uncertainty, all the reasons that we might not regulate our emotions that we want to. But I think

giving yourself that grace, but also owning it, is the biggest piece of being an effective leader, of saying, this is what I did, I'm sorry. And if you're a leader listening to this that has done the same or something similar, give yourself grace, apologize, but don't pretend that doesn't have an impact. Own it. Thank you so much for sharing it. Let's go ahead and dive in. So a modern leader's guide to sales success, where do you think, from your perspective-- I mean, I can probably answer this as an entrepreneur, where do people struggle with sales? Please tell me this is probably your coaching session to me. Where do people struggle?

GUI COSTIN: So, number one, it's a very, very emotional game. It's the most, in any work, in any function at work, it's the most emotional. And what I mean by that is because you're constantly being rejected by somebody out in the ether who doesn't who you are. You're just another email person. Because it's sales success over time, you do have to be able to get in front of people, which requires cold outreach in one way, shape, or form, unless all you're doing is responding to warm leads. But there's a lot of rejection. Even when you get to know somebody, there's a lot of rejection. So number one, tons of rejection, highly emotional. Where most organizations fall down is they make it all about themselves and not about the sales person. What does that translate into? The need for process, the need for structure. And the structure always has to come back to the best interest of the sales person. So you need to be able to create-- I always call it a box or a factory. You need to create a box that establishes the role and in responsibility of a salesperson. And there has to be a why behind each aspect of the sales process. But it has to be defined, and it has to be checked in on daily and reported on weekly, progress against the plan so there's no wiggle room. So everybody knows going in. And by the way, it's not about the organization or about the sales manager. This is all about you and your

professional growth. But we believe these are the things that you should be doing as a salesperson, and we're here to support you. If this doesn't work for you, that's totally cool, right? You just should do something else, and that's fine. But if you are going to stay and you're going to do this, this is how we're going to play the game. And then it has to do with an intense amount of compassion around the leadership with the salespeople. So it can't just be coming in, hey, Gui, how come you haven't hit your numbers? Because Joe is hitting his numbers and you're not. What's going on with you? That's making it all about you as the leader, not about the sales person. You ask the sales person, like, all right, look, things aren't working. Everything OK? Or you found the sale, or you found the process? Talk to me. What's going on? And then what ends up happening, they might say, well, yeah, I've sent my 90 emails. I've done it this way. I'm just not getting any responses. Well, let me look at your email. Oh, jeez, I didn't know, right? So it's a constant coaching, but the process at the end of the day is what's most important. And you have to make it about the salespeople and in their best interest of doing these activities because you have to show them how this is going to grow their career.

JENN DEWALL: Yeah. Well, I mean, I love your emphasis on the why because how do you even want to get up and make the cold outreach calls or deal with another rejection? It is hard. And if there's not a big why, why bother? I would walk away from that so fast. How--

GUI COSTIN: Yeah, well, I'll tell you just the sweetest part about the why around sales is because it's always going to be cold. You're not going to know the person, like, today. Well, we met on our prep call, but today meet someone like this, you do cold outreach, then we get on a Zoom or we get face to face. Didn't know you yesterday. Now I know you. Also, now we're connected. And then we get deeper. We learn about

each other. We're doing this. We develop a relationship, a connection, right? So it's not about the transaction for anybody. It's all about the connection with the buyer, if you will, with the person you're doing business with and developing a friendship and a relationship. And then, all of a sudden, that's the goal. That's what you want to get to. And eventually, if a sale makes sense and they want to use your product or your service or whatever it might be, but you're focusing on getting that connection and building relationships with people, so you have to get over the full mountain, which is basically the cold outreach and that rejection to get that. But then when you get face to face, let's say to our team, look, you guys are all incredible people. They just don't know you right now. As soon as they know you, they're going to fall in love with you, OK? So you just have to just turn your brain off, send the emails, book the meetings, and then, boom, you're going to blossom when you get in front of them.

JENN DEWALL: Gui, I feel like you're talking to me, as someone that is-- sales are incredibly hard for me. It's just hard for all the reasons that you listed. You need a process. And I'm very, like, whoa, and not great at grounding and process and the emotions, that rejection. I know I saw the shirt that said "I Eat No's for Breakfast." I commended that mindset. I do not have that mindset. But I want it. And we keep talking about outreach, and my next question was going to be leaning into what's changed? What's changed with the pandemic what's changed with outreach? I feel like sales is so different in terms of direct mail pieces or trying to call someone when you have no idea where they physically are in the world. What has changed? I want to ask that question in general, but what have you noticed in terms of what's changed with cold outreach?

GUI COSTIN: You have to believe that the product you're, quote unquote, "selling" will add value to your customer if they get exposed to it. You have to believe that in your DNA, like, in your soul because if you can actually believe that, you're going to add value to their life, it's going to make it so much easier to deal with people not responding to you. And take yourself for example, all you need to be able to do is get on one Zoom, much less get face to face. People are going to love you. They're just going to be like, I just want what she's buying. Her energy, her enthusiasm, you know, all of that. So if anything's changed, only thing I would say that's kind of stayed the same for a long period of time is that you have to embrace-- in sports, they call it embrace the suck. Because there's a lot of-- you don't get the good. You don't get to be in the relationship if you don't do the front end. So if you can buy into the, quote unquote, "suck," if you will, of just doing that, and if you can turn your brain off and realize it has nothing to do with you, that people aren't getting back to you, has nothing to do with you, and you don't take it personally, what ends up happening is-- but it has to be consistent. It has to be-- every single day, there has to be a discipline to the cold outreach. And if you stay disciplined to that, you're going to have more opportunities than you could ever imagine. And if you can find someone who, early on in your career, is the person that teaches you that and forces you into that discipline-- because it's about-- it's about 12 to 18 months to fully develop the muscle in your soul of cold outreach and how that can literally change your life. And if you can do that, the rest of your life is-- you're made in the shade because you have the hardest skill, you've developed the hardest skill, the hardest muscle to develop.

JENN DEWALL: Yes, that's the selling, what? Selling a ketchup popsicle to a woman with white gloves. Once you get to that level, it's-- I mean, I love it. But it's coming back-- there's so many questions I want to go

because I know in our precall, you also talked about, if you have really good branding, sales is one of the easiest things you can ever do. I think you had said something around that. Is that true? Because I think people don't realize, like, when they don't have-- when they have a disjointed brand, everything is going to be that much more complicated in terms of sales.

GUI COSTIN: Yes, and I've always had to represent unknown brands in the marketplace or unknown companies. And then we go build their brand through direct sales. A lot of people put sales and marketing in the same bucket. They're related, but they're very, very separate. You wouldn't need sales if you had perfect marketing because if you had perfect marketing, then people would see whatever you might send out via an email or an ad or whatever it might be, and they would just buy the product. They never need to interact with a salesperson. However, most businesses do require interaction with a salesperson. But, obviously, the branding can be very helpful. The point I would make, though, is I wouldn't wait around to call on your highest probable prospect, if that makes sense. If I know that you and your firm are a perfect match for the type of service or product that we have, why would I wait till tomorrow to try to reach out to you to introduce myself versus just doing it right now? A lot of people-- oh, I'll do that in February. I'm going to get to Denver in February, I'll do that. I'm like, but they look just like-- they just look just like everyone in Philadelphia does that uses our service. Why don't we call them right now? Because I think we can add such value to their organization and change how they grow their business. Let's just reach out to them, introduce ourselves, learn what they do, describe what we do, and see if there might be something that would be a match.

JENN DEWALL: I love that. Why wait? Why wait when you're just leaving money on the table or maybe they're looking for your solution? I want to go back to the question that I was going to ask in terms of what's changed. We talked a little bit about the cold outreach. What else have you noticed that might be new or changing within sales that modern leaders would need to know?

GUI COSTIN: The biggest thing that's changed is I believe there's a lot more compassion from a sales leadership perspective than there was back '80s, '90s kind of when I got going. Way harsher. Very little compassion. Really, really tough. And not a lot-- there's not a lot of softness, if you will. I believe the way that you win is you have to have compassion for the challenge and the job. Now, can't have compassion if somebody's not going to follow the process that you set up. So this doesn't mean, like, we're just going to sit around and kumbaya and it's all good. It's like, no, this is a process. It's hard. I have a lot of compassion for how hard it is. And if you're signing up for the job, let's get after it because I'm going to support you. So I think where we're different today, there's a lot more evidence in the marketplace today, there's a lot more training, there's a lot more information that we can rely on, that being a compassionate leader is by far and away the way to go. But remember, we're all people. We're all human beings. We all grew up in whatever environment you grew up in. And we all bring different stuff to the workplace, if you will, and how we treat one another. And it's not always perfect. But I do believe from a sales leadership perspective, you can control what you say. You just have to be very, very thoughtful. And the more you can make it about everyone else and not about yourself, that's where the gold lies.

JENN DEWALL: It's that it's not we, not a me. I have to ask, like, a piece that's about the mechanics of sales because I think, in my experience,

what I've seen some sales-- you know, you've talked about compassion, and I have an issue in terms of follow up. Can we just take a moment to talk about what people should be doing or not doing for follow up? I don't know why, when I look and open up my LinkedIn, people might be-- if I don't answer the first one, because I know they're looking for the no, and then it gets to the second one, all of a sudden, people are aggressive. And , hey, if you don't want this-- it's almost like they all of a sudden become really rude for the product that you never even asked to be told about. Can we talk about compassion in terms of how people should be following up or how people should be using social media to contact people? Or what's your take? Because I've seen people maybe mislead and say, hey, I had a conversation or I was supposed to have a conversation with your boss, pick up the phone and call, and they're misleading. They never were supposed to have a conversation. And also that follow up in terms of it can get progressively ruder or weirder. What's your take on follow ups today in terms of the lens of compassion?

GUI COSTIN: So we have a lot of-- we have a very strict way we believe our team should be, quote unquote, "following up." And so I'll give you-- I think you're going to answer it in two ways. One, the follow up needs to occur-- needs to occur in your meeting. Basically, what we say in investments or software is at the end of the meeting, hey, I really enjoyed our time together today. I think you really got a sense of how we work and what we do or how we invest or what have you. And then we just like to ask specific questions is, do you think there's an opportunity that would our product ever fit within your asset allocation mix, which is terminology in the investment business. So basically, you're asking them, is there something to do here or not? Could this ever be a fit? If they say, no, actually there is, now, most people won't ask that. Most people leave the meeting and then email people and ask

that question. Then they wonder why they're getting ghosted, because the person doesn't want to give them bad news over the email. So you have to ask the two toughest questions in the meeting. Question number one is what I just asked you, is basically, is there an opportunity at all? We're selling vanilla ice cream. Would you ever want to put this in your store? Like, you know what, Gui, I love your ice cream. It's homemade. It's been around for 150 years. It's the best, but we literally don't sell ice cream. Then why did you take the meeting? Well, we were considering it. We kind of thought it'd be a good idea, but you know what, in all likelihood, we're not going to move forward with selling any ice cream. So it doesn't matter how good yours is. OK, that's good to know. Quick no, I'm out of there. Secondly, if they say, yes, I'm into your-- then, yeah, absolutely. We sell ice cream. We love it. Well, do you think there's an opportunity? Well, they might say, you know what? We already have literally three ice creams that are already-- vanilla is absolutely our number one seller. And these are the three best that we've sourced. So we're good right now. Or hey, you know what? We do have a good vanilla ice cream, but I'm telling you we're always looking for more. So we would love to be able to put you in front of our taste testers to try this. Now, that's in the meeting. You're asking them-- you're not asking them to close the business. You just ask them, is there an opportunity? And if there's not, I'm fine. I can move on. That is the key secret to follow up. Do it right there while the relationship is warm, while we're smiling at one another. And you're not asking for the sale. You're just asking, is there a chance to compete? And most-- 99.9% of salespeople will not do that.

JENN DEWALL: Yeah. I feel like I could-- I've been in many meetings where I feel like it's always that awkward dance. Like, I'm not going to ask, I'm not going to ask. And then the meeting ends. Oh, we'll be in touch. We'll be in touch. And that's when the ask comes. And you're

absolutely right in terms of ghosting or I don't know because of the meeting after the meeting where you might have to think about resources or whether they were a good fit, and then that you know that you're not going to come back and probably do business with them. So then you feel bad. I've absolutely done that before.

What's your take on how people initially build the relationship? Because I think maybe then when I'm going out with LinkedIn, if you're trying to convert from a cold to a warm, why are you being weird on a platform? And weird might be overly possessive or aggressive in your approach. Weird might be some generic version of a compliment that you think you're making that I know that you're making to someone else. What are your-- if you're maybe a new leader, what would be the best way that you should cold outreach someone on, let's say, LinkedIn, for example, or if you're going out to meet someone in general? And do you get what I'm saying? When it's the weird first impression.

GUI COSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Well, I mean, if I showed you my LinkedIn right now, I get so many of those, I get so many emails and all that stuff. I'm not trying to be pushy, you know, this. They're calling on us and we have a 14-person BDR team, and they're going to tell us how much better their advice can be than what we have and the whole thing. And I think at the end of the day, I think what you're saying is it's just have to have authenticity. And you're not going to make the sale over email. And really, what you want to be able to do in the email is fully admit up front. So if I was cold emailing you through LinkedIn and messaging and I was forced to do that and I wanted to build a relationship, I just might simply say, you know, we've never met before. I just wanted to introduce myself. My name is Gui Costin. I work at Dakota. And I'm might just go a few more words about who we are and what we do. I'm going to be in Boston. I'm going to be in Denver. I'd love the opportunity to introduce myself and the capabilities of our firm. This is

what we do for this many Fortune 500 companies. So if it's something like that where someone's like, OK, wow, they're being respectful. They're giving me enough information, and they're simply asking for a meeting, it seems like, jeez, what they do for a lot of other firms is similar to our firm, then if I have an interest, now I kind of know who they are and what they do, and I know what they're ask is. And it comes down to-- because where people fall down in the outreach is they don't give enough context rapidly where the reader can quickly get what the product or service is. Either they make it too hard on them to figure it out, thus you delete or you move on, so it's too hard, or they try to make the sale in the email. You know what I mean? It's like, no, the sale should be-- can we just jump on a call? Can I just have an opportunity to introduce myself when I'm in town? Or could we do a Zoom? Because this is what we do for firms very, very similar to yours. I'd love to tell you how we've been able to be successful, that they've been able to be very successful using our product or service. Then all of a sudden, it's like, wow, that person really understands me. I'm always looking for opportunities to grow our business. And if you think-- if you've done it for XYZ firms and that's worked, maybe it does work for us. I'd love to jump on a 10 minute discovery call. But for the most part, I've gotten hundreds and hundreds of, like you said, of the weird cold outreach and the whole thing. That's so strange. I'm like, just be a human being. Hey, I'm Gui. We've never met before. I'd love to introduce myself.

JENN DEWALL: I think that might be one of my barriers, is I just don't want to be weird to people. And so then I just don't do sales, which is then not there. I rely on word of mouth. But you are such a wealth of knowledge. And so there's a lot of questions that I would want to ask an overarching question, which is what-- but before I dive into that of, like, your final sales advice, how do you build and start your relationships in this world where it's a little bit maybe different in terms of how we're

actually getting out and doing business with people? So are you someone that is a referral, or are you someone that gets out there and is interfacing? How do you grow your business in terms of sales? What have you found effective in generating new relationships?

GUI COSTIN: There's a lot of businesses that only can be done through referrals. One of them would be wealth management. So your wealth manager, you're trying to get in front of people and you want them to give you their half million dollars, \$1 million dollars, \$5 million, and so you will help them manage their wealth, right? That's such a high, high trust relationship. A lot of times, it's like, hey, I'd like to introduce you to my guy, my woman, whatever it is, who's my financial advisor to a friend or what have you. Putting those aside, most of that like insurance stuff like that can work on referrals, podcasts can work on referrals, hey, you should really do this. I believe in cold outreach. And I know we've talked about it. If you can target your ideal customer profile, if you can target your perfect customer and you can build that list, it's simply reaching out to them on. As much as I'd like to get a referral, I'm not going to wait around because if I really believe in my product, I really want this person to that at least we exist, where we've been able to help a lot of similar people to exactly what they do on a day-to-day basis. I just wouldn't wait around. I know we've covered this maybe 10 minutes ago, but that really is our approach. It's cold email and cold outreach, and it's a positive thing because most people are looking for ways to help them enhance, grow their business, or how they do what they do. And if they don't know about you and they don't have the time in the world to constantly be out researching, doing this, it just people aren't thoughtful enough in terms of how they're presenting themselves to people.

JENN DEWALL: Yeah, because then I feel like I have to ask this question. If it's cold outreach, knowing that it's so important, knowing that you've touched on structure multiple times, what insights can you share with that new leader within sales or the modern leader about how they should be approaching structure? Do you have something where on certain days of the week, do you do time blocking? What are some of your effective techniques for structure?

GUI COSTIN: Yes, I couldn't agree more. It's sales process, so I recommend-- this is a lot for people. I recommend a daily check-in. But more importantly, have to write down exactly the sales process on a piece of paper. And then as you go through each element of your sales process, you have to write down the why behind why we're doing in this way. For us, it's always each sales person has to have five cities they're scheduling for at any given time. They have to circle 9:00, 11:00, 1:00, 3:00, and 4:30.

And then what that becomes for a sales person, it gives them purpose and focus. Then they go into the database and say, OK, I'm going to Boston. These two days, I have 10 meeting slots to fill in, and I have all my qualified buyers in my database, and we happen to supply a database of qualified leads, so it's easy using our database. You go into Boston section of our database. You see the qualified buyers. You send a very specific email, subject line, meeting request, date and time. One to two sentences max on who you are and what you do and why they should take the meeting, why they should care, and then a clear call to action. I can't tell you how many emails I've seen that don't have a clear call to action. Can you meet in Boston November 7 at 3:00 PM? Most people say very, very vague, sometimes not at all. So if you follow those core elements, it's almost impossible not to have success to some degree. And you get rejected a lot. But it all comes back to sales process.

JENN DEWALL: I love-- well, and those insights are huge, that-- especially with here's the meeting and why they care, but that call to action because I can't think-- at Crestcom, when we talk about even just how leaders and their emails-- like, if you have any questions, let me know. It's not a call to action and no one's going to guess.

GUI COSTIN: But do you want to something fascinating about that, if I really wanted to be somewhat harsh? That's so incredibly insulting to the person you're sending it to.

JENN DEWALL: Oh, tell me that. I want to hear why you're--

GUI COSTIN: Yes, what you really should be writing in parentheses is, by the way, I want you to do all the work for me. That's what you're asking them to do. No, no, no. I want you to do the work. I want you to find time on your calendar to meet with me. I'm going to put-- you're trying to sell me something, I don't care. You go find time on your calendar and meet with me. And then I'll tell-- Like, what? Like, you want me to do all the work? Now I have to be interrupted. I have to go to my calendar. I have to look at what dates and times might work. You're not going to just suggest the time so I can look? Like, OK, yeah, 3 o'clock works or no, 2 o'clock works. And so when I try to say to her, don't ask your potential buyer and your prospect to do your work-- for them to do your work for you. And what people don't really think about that, it's incredibly insulting and rude. Now, I know they're not trying to be rude, but they're just being lazy. But they're really saying you do the work for me. The more you can understand these core principles, then you realize, oh, OK. So in order to really get this done, I need to do the work for my prospect for them. I need to make it as easy as possible to book a meeting with me. And so they don't have to lift a finger, they

can simply say, yep, 3 o'clock works. Nope, I'm out of town. Nope, I have a kid's soccer game. I'm out. But at least, right, you're getting that response.

JENN DEWALL: I love that. I never thought about it like that, to be honest. It seems so obvious when you say it. I'm like, it's kind of insulting and it's lazy. You're expecting me to go and do it. Gui, I've really enjoyed our conversation. Any closing final thoughts that you would want to leave our readers with as it relates to how they could improve their sales, you know, what they could do tomorrow, anything? What would you want to leave our listeners with?

GUI COSTIN: You know, the only thing I would say at 57 years old and every day getting older, is just always be introspective about how you're treating people and making it all about them because I will tell you, it wasn't always this way for me. In 2011, there was a huge trigger that went off, and I realized we were making a little money, having some commissions. I felt it to be very, very empty, and I just sat back and reflected. It's like, kind of, is this all there is? Then I realized, you know what? Somehow it just I came to this conclusion of I have to make and have to help other people get what they want out of life. And that ends up being the give back. It's like if you're just helping other people get what they want out of life, that's been the philosophy of the company and my personal leadership style since 2011, it's such a more fulfilling life, making it about other people versus about yourself because, by the way, it gets pretty boring pretty quickly [CHUCKLING] if it's all about you. And then there's such a higher level of gratification when you're seeing other people prosper, when you're making it all about them. So that's my closing philosophical comment.

JENN DEWALL: No, I love it, help others get what they want out of life. Like, even just coming back to some of the highlights of what we've talked about, obviously, the need for structure and having a process and a plan for what you're going to do. But even starting with culture, it's how you treat people, how you connect with the individual that might be even doing your sales if you are the sales manager. I loved what you talked about, it's not about-- I'm trying to find my notes-- it's not about the transaction. It's about the connection. And people forgetting that it's not just a transaction and understanding that you have to believe in your value. And if you're new, it takes 12 to 18 months to develop-- or to develop that muscle. So give yourself grace. And the final one I'll say, remember those questions. Is there any opportunity at all to do business? Ask the tough questions at the end. And if you're emailing, please have a clear call to action so they understand. And don't say, if you have any questions. Gui, did I get some of the highlights right?

GUI COSTIN: You were amazing. I've never seen anybody do it that cleanly. That's insane. Crazy.

JENN DEWALL: It's like that easy way to summarize it. But, Gui, you have obviously so much knowledge and expertise. How can we do business with you? How can we get to know more about you? Where can our audience or listeners get in touch with you?

GUI COSTIN: Dakota.com is our website, and you can reach out, or you can just email me directly at gui@dakota.com. G-U-I@dakota.com. We'd love to hear from anyone listening. We are doing a lot of cool stuff, if you will, as it relates to sales, sales leadership, culture, everything. It's a lot of fun. And if you're in the investment business, we have an amazing

cold outreach database that we have over 5,000 salespeople using every single day to book meetings. So--

JENN DEWALL: Wow, wow, wow. Gui, I loved our conversation. Thank you for being you, thanks for your vulnerability, and thank you so much for your insights. I really appreciate you coming by The Leadership Habit.

GUI COSTIN: All right. Well, thank you very much for having me.

JENN DEWALL: Thank you so much for listening to this week's episode of The Leadership Habit Podcast. So many great tips. So many great tips in terms of the two questions that you need to ask when you're in the meeting, also coming back to how you need to treat people. The results that you want as a leader all comes down to how you treat people and also how you set them up for success. As Gui shared insights into needing to have a process or making sure that you have structure, giving people what they need, and also making it about them. How can you help them get what you want out of life, which I think works for both your internal customers and your external customers? And, of course, if we at Crestcom can help you get what you want out of leadership, to be the best leader that you can, to navigate the challenges, difficult conversations, to create strategy, we would love the opportunity. Crestcom is a leadership development organization. We operate in 60 countries around the world, and every month, we offer two distinct leadership topics that have tools, application, and community all built in. Leadership is important to us. We know that when you feel your best and you have the tools to be successful, that you create a ripple effect in your organization and the lives outside of it. If you're interested in hearing more, go to crestcom.com. You can request a leadership skills workshop. We will make it easy for you. It will

not end with a, "if you have any questions, we'll follow up." Head on over to crestcom.com, and there you can request additional information. And finally, if you someone that could benefit from hearing Gui's philosophy and insights, share this podcast episode with them. And don't forget to leave us a review on your favorite podcast streaming platform. Until next time, take care of yourself.