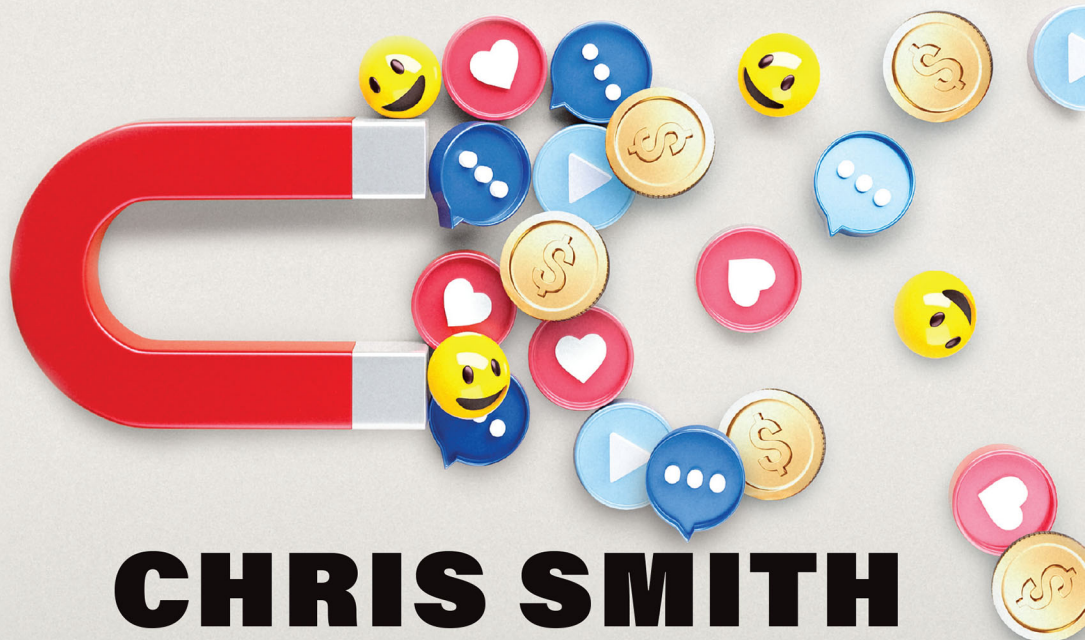# THE CONVERSION CODE

2ND EDITION COMPLETELY REVISED AND UPDATED

STOP CHASING LEADS AND START ATTRACTING CLIENTS

CHRIS SMITH

WILEY

THE
CONVERSION
CODE

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To Anna, Lucas, Maya, and my family: I thank you for your love and support in good times and in bad.

To Jimmy and the Curaytor team (past and present): I've been lucky to learn from and work alongside you.

To clients and fans: your support and gratitude make me feel like the work I do matters.

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Preface: The Global Impact of *The Conversion Code* and What's New in the Second Edition

When I originally wrote *The Conversion Code* in 2016, I was confident it would be well received. I did not, however, expect what happened to happen . . .

I could have never gotten into Johns Hopkins University, so you can imagine how it felt when I learned they were using *The Conversion Code* in their "Marketing Your Startup" course.

I could have never afforded to go to NYU, so you can imagine how it felt when they asked me to give a guest lecture about *The Conversion Code* for their e-commerce and digital marketing students.

I could have never dreamed growing up in a small town with cow pastures, chicken farms, and orange groves that people in Japan, Brazil, Russia, Turkey, and Poland would know who I am because my book was translated into their languages.

I could have never pictured when I was cold calling leads on a landline from my cubicle that I would teach inside sales at two software companies that ended up getting acquired for a quarter of a billion dollars.

I could have never thought, as I was failing out of business school, that the American Marketing Association would name me one of the four best marketers under 40. I even had to wear makeup for the photo shoot.

All of these accolades and experiences are thanks to you.

You are the ones who bought and read and reviewed and shared and suggested *The Conversion Code* to a colleague.

You are the ones who helped get it featured in *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Adweek*, and *USA Today*.

You are the ones who helped me land bucket list speaking gigs at Hubspot's Inbound and with YPO chapters.

I will be eternally grateful, and I do not take it for granted.

In fact, I felt like I owed you a lot more than this poorly disguised humble brag. So, I went back into the lab and rewrote the book from the ground up.

It's *The Conversion Code* 2.0 (or, as my publisher prefers me to call it, the second edition completely revised and updated). This book is jam-packed with new tips, tricks, tools, templates, platforms, research, data, and best practices.

I'm especially excited about the DO THIS RIGHT NOW challenges I've sprinkled throughout. These are quick and easy-to-do marketing or sales tactics you can do and get results from while you read.

I'm sure every author says that their second edition is better than the first. Well, I'm saying it, too. I took a critical and humbling look at every word in the first book and immediately knew I could do better.

Much better: 11× better.

Plus, let's face it. Any book about digital marketing, social media, lead generation, or lead conversion gets quickly outdated. What worked yesterday may not work tomorrow. This stuff changes in the blink of an eye.

Want proof? The proof is in the privacy.

The era of annoying people is officially over.

Consumers won. They demanded privacy and transparency, and they got it. New laws and regulations targeting marketing and salespeople are now in place and strictly enforced. They will get stricter moving forward.

Here are just a few of the massive changes that have happened since *The Conversion Code* was originally written:

- On January 27, 2021, Apple announced iPhones "will require apps to get the user's permission before tracking their data across apps or websites owned by other companies."[1] Said simply; there is now a pop-up in every app that asks for permission to track you.
- 96% of people who are given that choice say no.[2]
- Then on June 7, 2021, Apple announced that iOS 15 would require a pop-up in the Mail app for the user to consent to sharing whether they opened or clicked an email. For decades marketers knew who opened and clicked their emails. Most salespeople rely on notifications that an email was opened to stay on top of the leads who are the most likely to close. Not anymore.
- In May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation went into effect in Europe and caused websites worldwide to require a cookie consent notification. Since then, I can't visit a website without being interrupted by a pop-up asking to track my activities.
- Only 11% of visitors click to accept cookies.[3]
- 89% either ignore it, close it, or say no.

- Verizon (and all of the other carriers) have changed how unwanted phone calls are handled and now label many of them as suspected spam. In 2020, according to the FCC, "U.S. consumers received nearly 4 billion robocalls per month."[4]

No wonder phone manufacturers and carriers have made it easier than ever to identify unwanted calls. They had to. The government gave them a June 30, 2021, deadline to do so.

Wouldn't you agree that it is harder than ever to get a lead to answer their phone?

Don't you ignore nearly every call you get while hoping they don't leave a voicemail? I do.

On August 13, 2018, HUD sued Facebook over housing discrimination.[5] That completely changed how you're allowed to target ads for several industries. For example, in real estate, you can no longer target by neighborhood or even ZIP code. Hundreds of other valuable filters disappeared overnight.

Facebook has gotten so much heat about privacy and censorship that they got their ass out of the kitchen and changed their name to Meta.

The fallout from the HUD lawsuit has reached well beyond Facebook (and Instagram). Google, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and TikTok either already have or will soon also remove filters that could be deemed Fair Housing Act noncompliant or discriminatory.

No matter your industry, if your marketing team hasn't adjusted to these new ad targeting rules, you will be paying more money for campaigns that don't work as well.

The privacy revolution is here, affecting every way you do marketing and sales. You must make changes, too.

These new rules are being enforced to make it harder for you to contact people. The solution is to get people to contact you.

STOP CHASING LEADS; START ATTRACTING CLIENTS

That is what this new and better version of *The Conversion Code* will teach you: how to generate higher-quality leads that are easier to convert. Without being annoying.

All in the same simple, straightforward, and step-by-step way the first book did.

The book that changed my life.

I hope this new one changes yours.

<div align="right">

Enjoy,
Chris Smith

</div>

PS. If you text me a selfie with your book right now (407-305-3870) and share it on social media with the hashtag #TheConversionCode, I will send you some special bonuses.

PPS. If you follow me right now (@Chris_Smth on IG or Twitter) and send me a screenshot that someone bought *The Conversion Code* because you recommended it, I will send you some limited edition sales and marketing merch as your "commission" for closing them.

Introduction:
How I Created
The Conversion Code

The Conversion Code is a step-by-step guide to marketing and sales that will grow your business faster. The outcome for those who follow it is the highest lead conversion rate possible.

Doing what is outlined in this book will get you better website traffic, a larger email list, higher-quality leads, and more social media followers.

Most important, you will close more sales and make more money.

I did inside sales for two different billionaires during my career: Dan Gilbert and Lou Pearlman. Gilbert is most notably the founder of Rocket Mortgage (formerly Quicken Loans) and owns the Cleveland Cavaliers. Pearlman notoriously made household names of Britney Spears, *NSync, and the Backstreet Boys.

I've got a decent three-point shot and occasionally sing in the shower, but they didn't hire me for those skills. Instead, I was an elite-level salesperson for their billion-dollar organizations. I called tens of thousands of internet leads for them from their boiler rooms.

At Quicken Loans for Gilbert (It was called Quicken Loans when I worked there. Now they are named Rocket Mortgage, but for the book, I will refer to them as Quicken Loans because that is what it was called when I was employed there) I sold mortgages (when interest rates were over 7% and the housing market was crashing).

At Fashion Rock, I sold event vacations in Orlando for Pearlman, where talent agents were (sort of) looking for the next big thing. Like a pre–*American Idol*.

At both companies, I sold over the phone from a cubicle. I was dialing for dollars. I called people who had requested more information online (or through a radio or TV ad). I was given a name, a number, and

a phone. My job was to call the leads and close them that day, including getting their credit card number.

For the loans I wrote, I even had to get the lead to give me their Social Security number over the phone, within the first five minutes of the call. Plus, I had to get them to sign a good faith estimate electronically (or fax it back). Remember, this was long before anyone had ever heard of things like DocuSign.

In fact, for most of the people I helped refinance their mortgage, it was the first time in their life doing so without physically going into a bank or credit union and getting help from a person. Nearly everyone I spoke to was skeptical, and many even thought it was a scam.

In *The Conversion Code*, I'm going to teach you exactly what to say and when to say it, so that day in and day out, you convince people to buy from you. There is a sales script in Section Three of this book that works so well and is so easy for you to use that it should almost be illegal (spoiler alert: some of what I learned at Lou Perlman's company was).

I'm also going to show you how to do marketing so that it generates higher-quality leads that are easier for sales to convert. I will walk you through how these billionaires' companies filled their funnels using ads focused on turning leads into clients fast.

What you will learn in this book gives you an unfair advantage.

Taking what I learned doing inside sales (the legal and ethical parts) for Gilbert and Pearlman, I landed an outside sales job with Top Producer, which was owned by Realtor.com. I taught real estate agents how to use mobile apps, email marketing, videos, and social media to get more listings and grow their brands. Then I would do a sales pitch at the end.

At the time, Realtor.com was the most popular website to search for homes. Zillow and Trulia were still relatively new to the scene and were second and third. Top Producer was the most used CRM in the real estate industry. Think Salesforce, but for Realtors.

To start, I drove to two offices each day throughout the state of Florida and sold marketing and sales software to real estate agents. I had to leave my appointments with a signed contract, or the sale went to the inside sales team, and I didn't get the commission. I also spoke at national trade shows and conferences, again having to close that day or not getting a commission.

Doing what I teach you in this book, I won the President's Club Award in my first year. I was number one overall and was outselling even the most seasoned reps. At this point in my career, I had no experience in outside sales or selling SaaS (software as a service) products, so everyone was pretty surprised that I went from 0 to 100, real quick.

During my time at Top Producer and Realtor.com, I started using a Facebook Page, YouTube channel, and blog with the only purpose of

being able to stay top of mind with the real estate agents I was meeting during my office visits. I decided to build a brand (with Steve Pacinelli, my boss at the time) called Tech Savvy Agent.

I had seen how cheesy a lot of the marketing that real estate agents were doing was and that they had an affinity for plastering their faces and names on everything. So, I decided not to go that route. Plus, what I was doing was against the rules at my publicly traded company, so using the pseudonym was a way not to get caught.

Within no time, I got more than 100,000 page views per month on my blog and garnered tens of thousands of fans and followers. I had only been a salesperson my entire life until I started Tech Savvy Agent. Now, I was a marketer, too. A marketer who started with social media and deeply understood the content and cadence needed to build a new and popular brand in a digital-first world.

After winning both the best blog in real estate and the most influential person in the real estate industry awards, I was hired by Inman News to be their chief evangelist. I toured the US and Canada as an emcee and keynote speaker at their popular events. Working there gave me insights and learnings from millions of page views and decades of content on Inman.com. More important, it connected me to the who is who of the real estate industry.

After Inman News, I was hired to be a sales coach and public speaker for the inside and outside sales teams at dotloop, a transaction management and electronic signature venture capital–backed SaaS startup. My official job title was "chief paper killer."

As I taught dotloop's sales and marketing teams the conversion code, you could see the light bulbs going off. They left every sales coaching session empowered and excited to get back on the phones. They would often tell me they "just needed help closing." But they would leave telling me that my advice was the "best sales coaching ever." It was a game-changer they could start using on their next call.

During my third year with the company, Zillow acquired dotloop for $108 million. Not quite another billion-dollar experience, but a start-up that takes on DocuSign and achieves a nine-figure exit is not too shabby. After leaving dotloop, their founder, Austin Allison (the coauthor of my first book, *Peoplework*) cofounded Pacaso, which became the fastest company ever to become a unicorn and reach a billion-dollar valuation.

Nowadays, I teach what you are about to learn in *The Conversion Code* at workshops, colleges, companies, and conferences. I'm also the cofounder of Curaytor. At Curaytor, we specialize in helping listing agents win more listings. We help them attract clients. We help them stop chasing leads.

We build sales and marketing software, and we offer professional marketing, advertising, and lead conversion services. We get hired by Realtors who are too busy to do everything themselves. They just want their marketing done right. They care tremendously about their brand. They want to be number one in their market. They demand an ROI (return on investment). Or else they churn.

Every month we generate tens of thousands of leads. We manage millions in ad spend. Our customers send hundreds of thousands of emails and have created tens of thousands of pieces of content on our platform.

Simply put, we do the conversion code for them.

Here are a few testimonials from our clients:

"Before using Curaytor, I was making $200,000 a year. It looks like my next 12 months will be in the $600,000–$750,00 range."

"In the first six months, we bypassed our total sales from last year."

"My business increased by over 100% in 12 months."

"This will be our best year ever."

"My business is up 52% since we partnered with Curaytor, and we are looking at growing another 50% next year!"

"Best investment I've made in my 14 years. Hands down."

Using the conversion code for ourselves, Curaytor made the Inc. 500 list as the 303rd fastest-growing company in America. To ensure the success of my first startup, I got back on the phone and sold a couple of million in ARR (annual recurring revenue) using the same strategies and scripts in this book.

In the first two sections of *The Conversion Code*, I will teach you exactly how we generate high-quality leads that are easy to convert. I will detail how we use technology, people, and automation to turn our leads into an endless supply of quality appointments for our sales team.

With that being said, I truly believe automation is overrated and is being used as a crutch. Automation gives you an excuse not to do the actual work of picking up the phone and talking to people about if what you do is the right choice for them. If you want to make more money with digital marketing, social media, and online leads, you have to pick up the phone.

The idea of e-commerce is a myth for most. Sure, we may buy things from Amazon without ever speaking to a sales rep, but if you are in a professional services business like a real estate agent or a loan officer or if you sell B2B (business-to-business) SaaS products and you think you can simply get leads to buy from you without ever talking to them, you're wrong.

You aren't Shopify.

Bottom line? Most companies need to pick up the phone to close a lead but are so obsessed with working smarter, not harder, that they are tripping over nickels to pick up pennies. Conversations are what create customers.

Think of it this way: if you have more usernames and passwords than conversations with prospective clients, you are doing it wrong.

I feel blessed that I learned how to sell before I learned how to market. I learned how to convert leads before I learned how to generate them. So when I became a marketer, I saw a big responsibility in that role.

My marketing approach came from my work in the inside sales cubicle, knowing from firsthand experience how difficult it can be to dial for dollars every single day. I can't bring myself to do marketing that gets very good vanity metrics but very bad leads.

I know my sales script works, and I respect a salesperson's time because I am one, so when I teach you how to generate leads, my goal is quality, not just quantity. Marketing can do a much better job of sending leads to sales that are ready to transact. I bet if most marketers had to call the leads they're generating, they'd want to quit their job or fire themselves.

It's one thing to get someone to "like," "follow," or subscribe by email—it's another to get their time and it's a whole other thing to earn someone's business.

Every lead is now an internet lead. We're all online, every day, all day. The world changed. Your strategies need to change, too. Whether someone submits their information through your website or not, every human is now conditioned to look online and on social media before purchasing.

We look at Facebook on our phones more than we look at each other in the face.

We text people more than we talk to people.

Sad, but true.

My advice for you is not to be nostalgic about the past. Instead, be excited about the future.

Whether you're a seasoned pro or brand new, *The Conversion Code* is your guide to growth if you're in marketing or sales.

Disclaimer:
How to Read
The Conversion Code

HOW YOU SHOULD CRACK *THE CONVERSION CODE*

Similar to any code, *The Conversion Code* has multiple steps. There is valuable information in each, but I want to give you the help you need the most right now. I am keenly aware that many salespeople do not have to generate their own leads or even set their own appointments. They simply work for a company (like Quicken Loans or Curaytor) that does that for them.

I am also aware that most marketers never make sales calls. So, think of *The Conversion Code* as a choose-your-own-adventure book by asking yourself the following questions:

- Do you need to generate better leads?
- Is your problem that you just don't have enough qualified leads to call?

    Then start with Section One. After you read and do what you learn in Section One, you'll have a consistent flow of high-quality leads.

    I know it might seem impossible to get new leads every day; it's not. It's pretty easy when you know what to do.
- Do you have leads but need help getting more of them to answer the phone?

    Then Section Two is where you should start. Using specific tools and tactics, I will teach you how to turn leads into appointments so that you are pitching to new (and old) qualified prospects every single day.
- Do you already contact a lot of leads and want to know what to say to increase your conversion rate?

    You're going to want to start with Section Three, which covers exactly what to say to close more leads. Better conversations are

what create better conversion rates. So, I have built an easy-to-follow sales framework you can use starting with your next call.

Inside each section is an easy-to-follow blueprint for improving your business right now.

What does your business need to thrive in today's internet era? It needed the same things a decade ago and will still need a decade from now. Leads, appointments, and sales. In *The Conversion Code*, I'll teach you how to get all three.

Being good at traditional marketing and belly-to-belly sales does not make you good at digital marketing and inside sales. Most of the best-selling books about marketing and sales were written before social media even existed. They were written before everyone had a smartphone. They were written by people who have never had to call even one internet lead.

These are new trends that require a new teacher. Unless you have called a hundred internet leads a day every week for years, you simply can't teach what is in this book.

THE CONVERSION CODE CREEDS

The Conversion Code is packed with the science of sales and marketing. I'm going to teach you many things that will improve your business. But if you ever feel overwhelmed, I want you to stay focused on the fundamentals. I call them *The Conversion Code* creeds, and there is one for each section of the book.

The Conversion Code **Marketer's Creed**
- Leads are people, too.
- Image is everything.
- Social media is the internet.
- Analytics are overrated.
- Every word counts.

The Conversion Code **ISA's Creed**
- Every second matters.
- Zero cold calls.
- Human companies win.
- The fortune is in the follow-up.
- Every word counts.

The Conversion Code Closer's Creed
- *Yes* is not an accident.
- Conversations create clients.
- Dig deep or go to sleep.
- You're in charge.
- Every word counts.

The Conversion Code will sharpen your marketing and sales axe for the modern and digital world we live in. It will help you consistently crush your quota.

Section

|

How to Do Marketing That Attracts High-Quality Leads

The Biggest Challenges Facing Marketing and Sales (Plus What Happens When You Crack *The Conversion Code*)

Do you want the good news or the bad news? I always like the bad news first so let's start there.

Here's the harsh reality of what marketing and sales are up against:

- Nearly 90% of people won't answer the phone anymore.[1]
- Across every generation, people are 3–8× more likely to prefer a text from you than to talk to you.[2]
- More than 40% of people between the ages of 30 and 50 are "almost constantly" online.[3]
- Only 3% of people trust marketers and salespeople (Figure 1.1).[4]
- 25% of companies have absolutely no idea if their social media advertising is working.[5]
- More than 50% of companies do not have a documented social media strategy.
- 90% of sales and marketing professionals say they are misaligned across strategy, process, content, and culture.[6]
- Only 12% of marketers are very satisfied with their lead conversion rate (Figure 1.2).[7]

Do any of those pain points resonate with you?

I spend most of my time researching and teaching lead conversion. When it comes to successfully converting leads into customers, the