

Ready To Say Yes: Using Research to Build Decision Confidence Before and Beyond the Pitch



A practical guide for agency leaders and expert providers who want prospects to move forward with clarity, confidence, and less hesitation.

Why Are Great Prospects Hesitating?

You've had the conversation. They're a great fit. You've sent the proposal.

And then things slow down.

They're "still talking internally."

They're "interested, just not sure about timing."

They're not saying no — but they're not moving forward either.

At this stage, the issue usually isn't persuasion.

It's uncertainty about whether moving forward will feel safe and defensible.

Where Trust Breaks Down in the Decision Process

Many teams assume the proposal is where confidence gets solidified.

But by the time a prospect reaches that stage, they're already carrying questions and concerns formed earlier.

By that point, they've already formed impressions based on everything they've seen, read, and heard — often without realizing it.

If your content doesn't help them feel:

- Seen
- Understood
- Confident in how you think

...hesitation creeps in. Even when interest is genuine.

Not because they doubt your capability — but because they aren't yet confident enough to move forward.

The Research Advantage

When your messaging is grounded in audience insight, it builds trust earlier:

- It shows you understand what's really at stake for your clients
- It reflects their language, priorities, and decision-making mindsets
- It signals that you're not just capable — you're aligned in how you approach risk and decisions

Trust doesn't come from saying you're trustworthy.

It comes from showing up in ways that feel relevant and safe — across multiple moments, not just one.

A Real-World Example

One of our clients had no shortage of leads — but far fewer confident decisions. Sales calls went well. Proposals went out. But decisions dragged on, slowed by internal uncertainty, or disappeared entirely.

Through segmentation research, we discovered that one of their key audience segments had a strong skepticism of outside vendors.

They didn't need better pricing or shorter proposals.

They needed confidence that their decision would hold up internally.

So the agency started publishing research-backed insights that reflected those concerns:

- Thoughtful POVs on risk, collaboration, and fit
- Content that answered unspoken objections
- Messaging that aligned with audience values, not just services

Soon, prospects were walking into sales calls with fewer unanswered questions and more confidence already in place.

“It wasn't that we didn't know trust in outside providers might be an issue. It's that we didn't know it was the MAIN issue for many of our prospects — and we weren't talking about it. Once we did, conversations moved forward more easily — and hesitation no longer stalled decisions.

*Client
(Anonymous by request)*

The Confidence Audit

This exercise helps you identify where hesitation is showing up in the decision process — and what you can address before prospects are asked to commit.

Step 1: Think About the Last “Almost”

Recall a prospect who:

- Was qualified
- Was engaged
- Didn’t move forward (or took a long time)

Write down one moment where you sensed hesitation. And remember — it’s possible it’s not based on the problem you’re thinking about, but something else (including the culture they’re working in).

Step 2: Identify the Unspoken Question

Ask yourself:

- What might they have been unsure about?
- What decision risk were they weighing?
- What would they have needed to feel safer moving forward?

Complete this sentence:

“Before saying yes, they likely needed more confidence about ____.”

Step 3: Check Your Content

Scan your website or recent content.

Ask:

- Do we address this concern anywhere before the pitch?
- Is there proof we understand this hesitation?
- Or are we assuming the sales call will handle it?

Trust gaps often live outside the proposal, where they’re never addressed.

Step 4: Create One Confidence Builder

Turn that hesitation into a piece of helpful content:

- “What to consider before hiring a ____”
- “When this approach works — and when it doesn’t”
- “What most teams worry about before committing”

Helping prospects think clearly — especially about risk and fit — is what shortens the path to a confident decision.

How Else Can We Help?

At Audience Audit, we help agency leaders, consultants, and other experts use original research to create insight that supports confidence — before, during, and after key decisions.

It's not magic. It's a method that keeps working when insight is used well.

Let's talk about what original research could unlock for you.

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