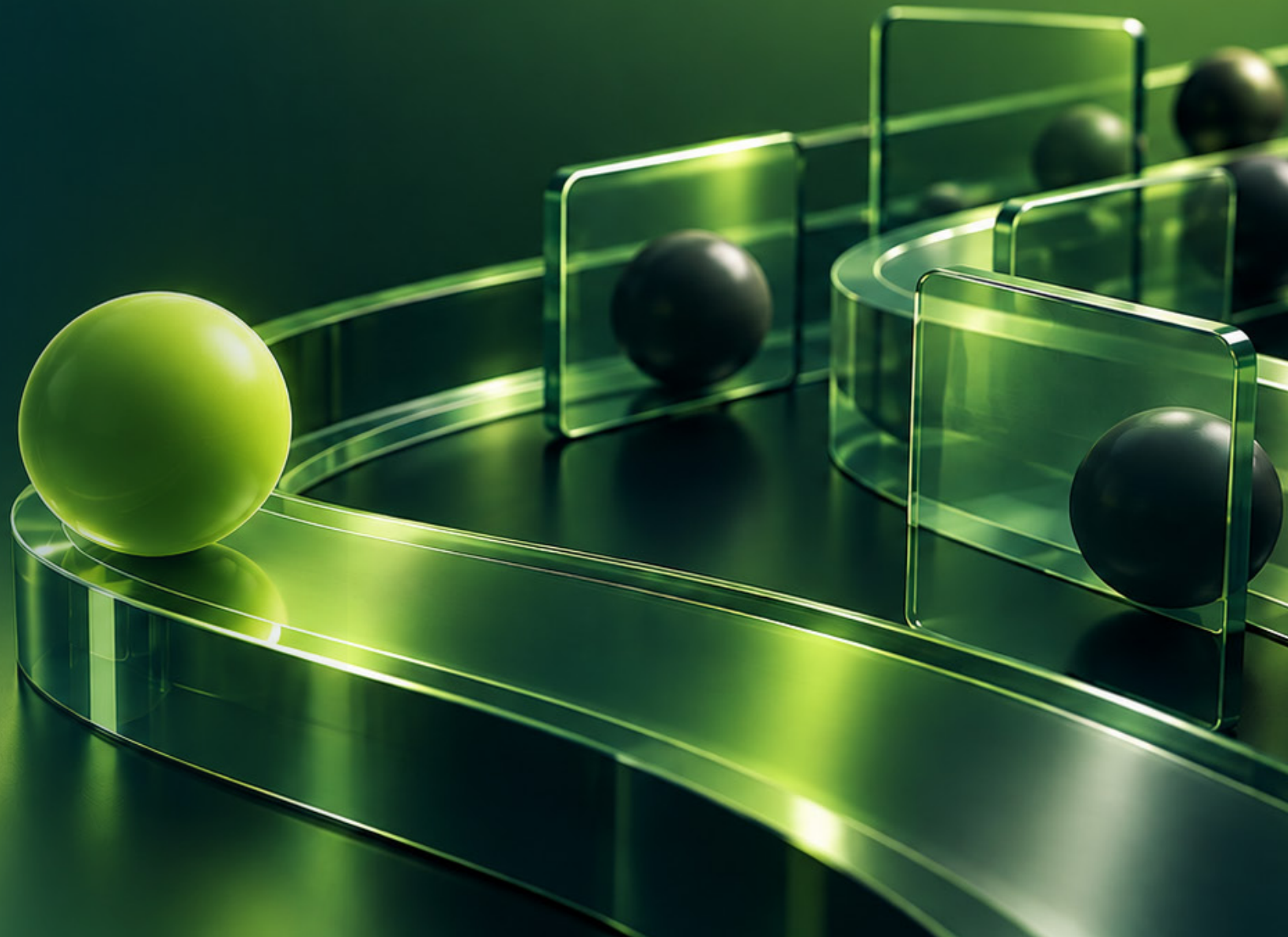




The Hidden Veto

Half of enterprise shortlists are vetoed by someone the seller has never even met.

Executive Summary



The Committee You Never Met

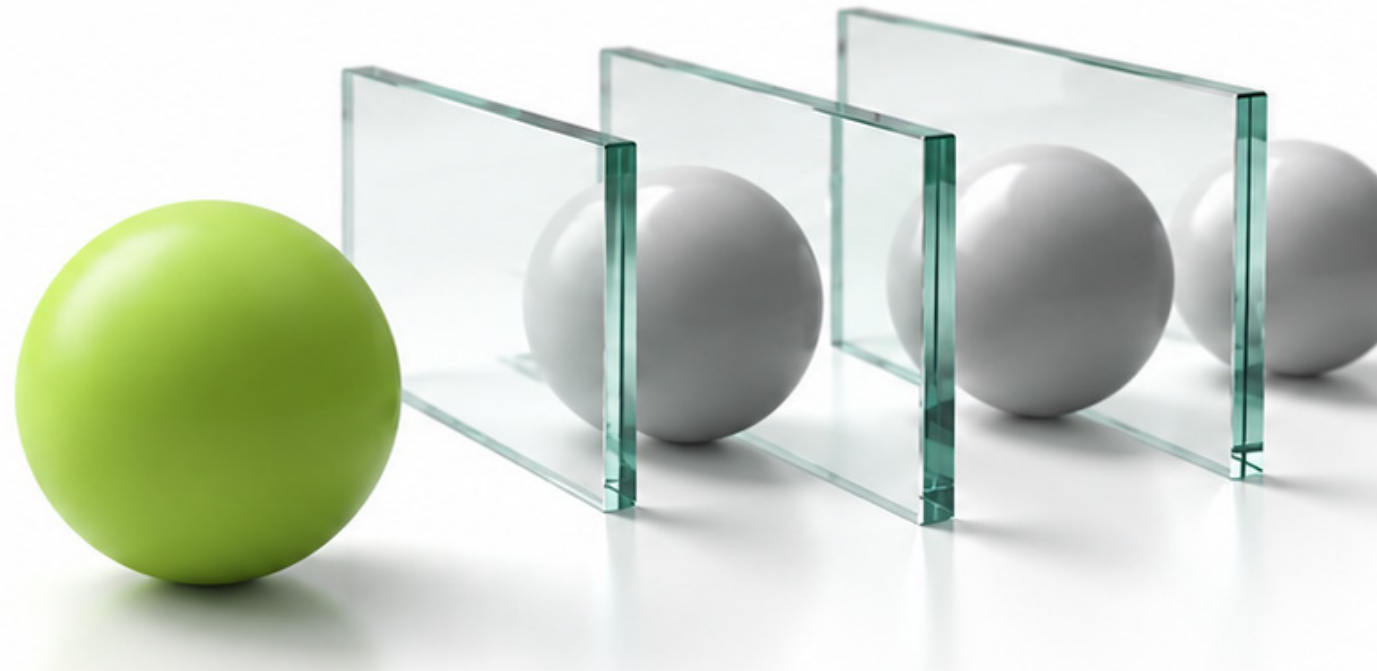
A deal reaches month four looking exactly as it should. The champion's still responding to emails, the demo landed well, and procurement asked for the security pack three weeks ago, which usually means something's moving.

Then it goes quiet. No objection surfaces, no competitor gets mentioned, just six weeks where nothing happens and nobody on the deal team can explain why.

Somewhere inside that account, someone had already said no, just not to the seller. It happened in a meeting the seller wasn't in, and the decision was effectively made before the champion even knew it had happened.

Roughly half of enterprise shortlists get vetoed by a stakeholder the seller never engaged. A champion going quiet at least gives the seller something to react to, a reason to pick up the phone. Someone who was never part of the conversation in the first place doesn't, because there was never anywhere for an objection to go.

Quick tip: pick whichever deal is closest to closing right now and ask the person running it who could still say no. A specific name they've actually spoken to is a reasonable answer. Anything vaguer than that, and it's probably a good candidate to examine a bit more deeply.



Why the Blind Spot Keeps Growing

In 2015, the average B2B buying group ran to about 5.4 people. Today it's 13 internal stakeholders and nine external participants, spread across finance, legal, the CISO's office and procurement, and whichever operational function has to live with the decision.

A champion relationship covers one person, and even a well-run, multithreaded deal three or four contacts deep only covers a fraction of a committee that size. The maths gets worse every year the group keeps expanding.

This matters for forecasting as much as diagnosis. A deal can hold a consistent stage in the CRM for months while the actual group behind it changes shape entirely, gains a new gatekeeper, loses an old sponsor, and none of it shows up in the stage-gate data.

The average B2B buying group has more than quadrupled in size over the last decade.





The Five People You Haven't Met

They don't all show up the same way, but five types account for most of them.



The sponsor pulled in late. A champion who's hit the ceiling of their own authority brings in someone senior, often in the final weeks, who's never seen a single piece of content and has no reason to trust the vendor yet.



The external advisor. An outside consultant brought in to validate the decision, increasingly common at enterprise scale, forming a view based on research and conversations the vendor never sees.



Procurement or legal, activated late. First contact is often a contract or a security questionnaire, and the requirements that surface then are ones nobody briefed the deal team on months earlier.



The informal influencer. A peer colleague whose opinion carries real weight inside the committee without ever holding a formal role in the evaluation, someone the rest of the room takes seriously even though the seller's never heard of them.



The veto holder. Often one of the four above, though their authority isn't always obvious from their title. Their objection may never get formally raised anywhere; the deal simply stops moving, and nobody can point to the moment it happened.

⊘ Where They Enter, and Why It's Already Too Late

Hidden stakeholders tend to surface at two points. The first is right at the start, when someone inside the account is already forming a view before any seller has made contact. The second is at the very end, when a veto holder finally exercises the authority they've had all along.

Both are bad moments to find out, for different reasons. Too early, and there's no relationship yet to build on. Too late, and there's no time left to build one.

By the time a hidden stakeholder becomes visible, in a rejected contract clause, in a security review that reopens questions everyone thought were closed, the chance to influence them has usually already gone. The moment that mattered was weeks earlier, when nobody knew to look.



Why the Usual Systems Can't Catch This

CRM records what a seller did, not what a buyer decided. Intent data flags that an account is researching a topic, but only at account level, never broken down to individual people. ABM tools optimise the delivery of content to named accounts without ever confirming which specific committee members actually receive or act on any of it.

None of these systems were built to answer a more basic question, which is who hasn't engaged at all. A platform can only report on activity that actually happened, and there's no field anywhere in any of them for the person who never showed up.

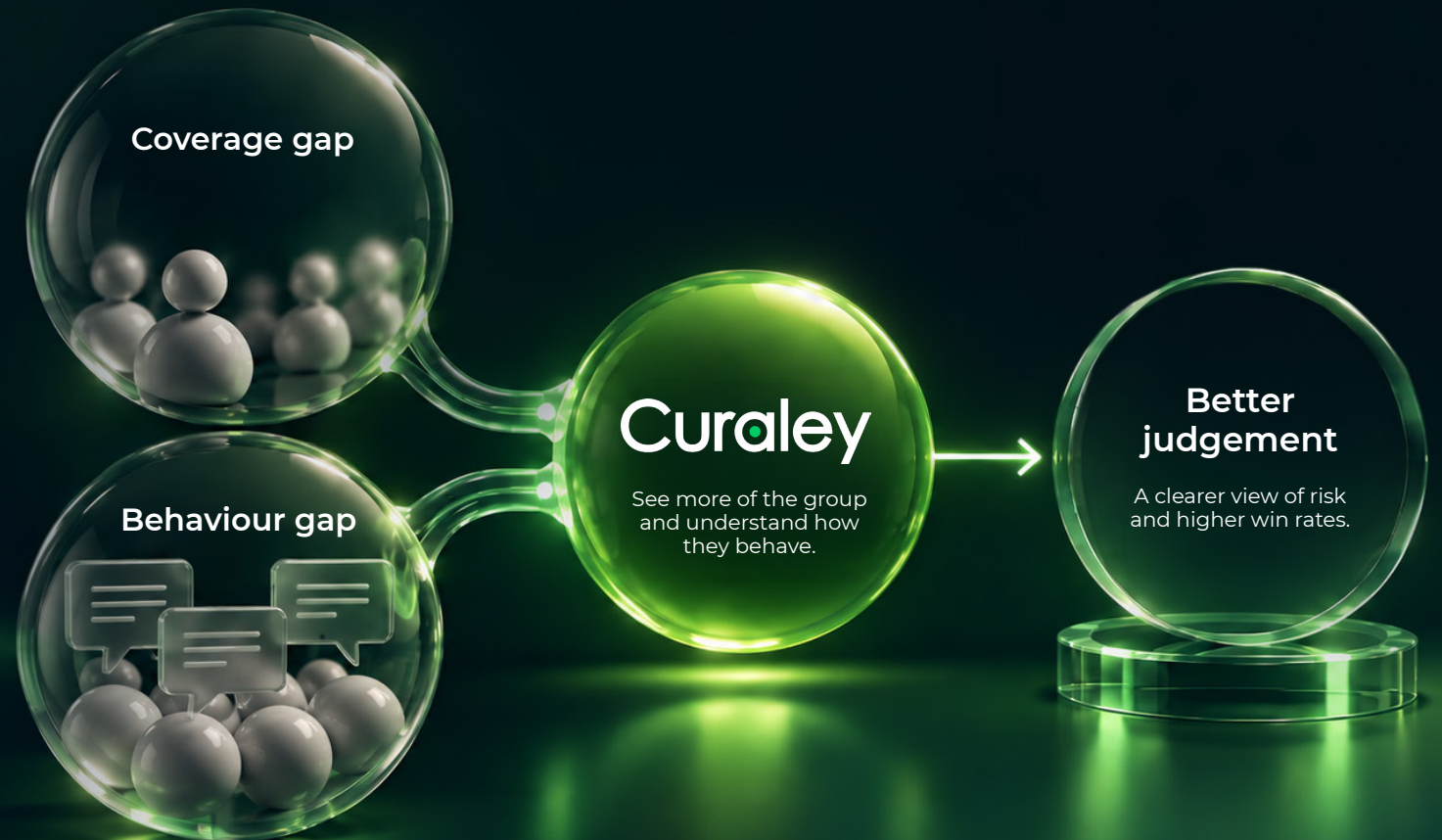
Better configuration doesn't close this gap. The gap is made of people none of these platforms were ever able to observe in the first place, however well the tools get set up.



From Behavioural Evidence to Full Coverage

Beyond Pipeline argued that pipeline stage isn't proof of buyer conviction, and that behaviour across the buying group tells you more. That is still true, still holds. but reading behaviour well only helps for the portion of the committee that actually engages.

Coverage and behaviour are two different questions. One asks how the people you can see are acting. The other asks how much of the group you can see in the first place. A deal can score well on the first and still fail on the second, and most pipeline reviews have only ever asked the first question.



↕ What Changes in a Live Deal

None of this is abstract once it's sitting on a pipeline review.
Three changes are worth making straight away.

01

Ask the coverage question, not just the confidence question. Instead of only asking how confident the champion is, ask who on the account nobody's spoken to yet. If the honest answer is "we don't know," that's the actual risk on the deal, not the stage it's sitting in.

02

Treat late-stage silence as a signal, not a delay. A deal that's gone quiet for three weeks past an expected next step deserves a different question than "is it slow." It might already be decided, by someone who was never in view.

03

Revisit the buying group at every stage, not just at qualification. The group mapped in the first meeting is a starting point, not a fixed list. Committees change shape as a deal moves, and the map needs to move with it.

None of this replaces the judgement a good account team already brings to a deal. It gives that judgement something more specific to check for.



Every buying group has people in it nobody's spoken to yet. What's genuinely still open is whether anyone finds them before they decide.



8. Extending the discipline

Most commercial teams that have started reading Buying Behaviour are already ahead of where they were. They can see engagement broadening or narrowing, consensus strengthening or weakening, inside the part of the buying group they can actually observe. What's still missing is a disciplined way of finding out how much of that group they're observing in the first place.

Curaley was built around that same gap. It didn't set out only to make Buying Behaviour observable; it set out to make the buying group itself visible, so coverage becomes something a commercial team checks on every live deal rather than something a loss review uncovers afterwards.

The outcome isn't a directory to maintain, or a guarantee every stakeholder gets found. It's a fuller basis for the judgement a commercial leader was always going to have to make, now informed by how much of the room they can actually see, as well as how that room is behaving.

Book a call with the Curaley team to learn more.