SBANT Discovery Playbook: How to Qualify a Client on the First Call

Why discovery decides the sale

Every site visit that fails to close was lost on the first call. Varun's rule: if many site visits are not closing, the discovery call went badly, because discovery is what tells you exactly what to show the buyer.

This playbook is built from Varun's training session with the sales team. It covers how to take a CRM lead call using SBANT: **S**cenario, **B**udget, **A**uthority, **N**eed, **T**imeline.

A good first call leaves you knowing:

- Who the buyer is, why he is looking and what he has already seen.
- Whether he is worth your time. If not, you disqualify him.
- Who decides, and how fast.
- The emotional reason behind the purchase, so you know what to show him and where to take him.

Three ideas sit under everything that follows:

1. **Help, do not sell.** Varun's test: if a friend is unwell, you naturally ask what happened and what he ate. Flip the call from "this is a sales call" to "how can I help this guy". You ask the SBANT questions because you need the answers to help him.
2. **Trust separates you from the other 25 to 30 callers.** There are thousands of brokers and salespeople. People stay on the line, and do not ghost, the one who genuinely tries to help. You help for real, while holding a map in your head of where you want to take the client.
3. **Real estate is bought on emotion.** You are not selling technical features. It is huge money, paid for an emotion. The rent maths in the Need section shows why.

Before you dial

Tap every new lead within 30 minutes. That is the standard Varun set for the team.

- **Working hours** are 10:30 to 6:30. The standard applies inside these hours. Varun said he will not ask about leads that arrive after 6:30.

- **Keep the CRM refreshed.** A notification fires when a new lead lands. Tap that lead first.
- **No excuses on quiet days.** Monday to Wednesday or Thursday there are fewer site visits, so those days are for maximizing calls. On those days, "we missed it by 20 minutes, 45 minutes" is not accepted. Before 30 minutes, the lead is tapped.
- **Why speed matters.** The lead is also contacted by other channel partners and brokers, and may land on a website by himself. If you wait 6 to 7 hours, someone else has probably called. If that salesperson does a better job, he may already be sold there and not care about you.
- **Read the pickup.** Call and see if he picks up. A client who picks up is usually free. A busy one will not answer. So do not open with "Is this a good time?" Go straight into the conversation.
- **Record every call.** Everyone has an Android phone with call recording. All calls are recorded. Varun reviews them daily and checks that SBANT is covered.

Opening the call

Open without naming the company, and keep asking questions so he never takes control of the call.

Never say "Hi, this is so-and-so calling from Raghava." The minute you say it, you sound like a telecaller and he cuts the call. He is already being called by 25 to 30 other people. Sound like someone he does not know, not like a sales representative.

Do this instead. Varun's example, step by step:

1. Greet plainly: "Hi sir, good afternoon." Then stop and wait for him to respond.
2. Confirm who you have: "Am I speaking with [his name]?"
3. He asks, "Who is this?" You give your first name only.
4. He asks, "[Your name] who?" Now you refer to his enquiry: "I believe you made an inquiry about checking out Raghava properties, for [project name]. I just wanted to understand a few more details and see how exactly I can help you. Or whether I can help you at all."
5. Move into discovery: "You applied for this property or the other? I just want to know a lot more about it and what your requirements are."

Keep control. The ball is in your court. You ask the questions. The minute he starts asking you questions, you have lost control of the conversation. Example from the session: a lead asked the caller about square footage at the very start of the call. Varun's point was that if the opening had been held the way he describes, the lead would not have been the one asking.

Tonality does the work. Varun: "In sales it's not about what you say, it's how you say it." If you sound like you are helping, he comes forward with you. If not, he goes to a channel partner or another broker.

Do not open with requirements. Asking for size and money first gets you an answer limited to that size and that money. Ask what got him looking instead. That is the Scenario question, next.

SBANT at a glance

SBANT is the classic BANT with one letter added at the front: **S** for Scenario. Varun teaches it in the order S, B, A, T, N.

Letter	Stands for	What you find out	Where it lands in the call
S	Scenario	Who he is and what got him here: profile, family, how long he has looked, what he has seen	The opening 5 to 6 minutes
B	Budget	What he can spend, learnt through properties he has seen and why he did not buy them	After rapport, never as a cold opener
A	Authority	Who makes the decision and who pays	Mostly visible from Scenario, then confirm
T	Timeline	How long he has been looking and how long he will take to decide	Alongside Authority
N	Need	The emotional reason he wants a house	Last, after about 15 minutes, once trust exists

Rules for using it:

- **Every call.** SBANT is adhered to on every call. Site visits that do not close usually trace back to a first call that skipped it.
- **A map, not a script.** Sometimes the timeline comes out during Scenario or Authority. Do not ask it again. If you tick letters off a script, you repeat questions and sound scripted.
- **Need comes last** because it only works once trust is built.
- **It is not rocket science.** Varun: it is you being human and a little smart, genuinely helping the person.

S for Scenario: who he is and what got him here

Scenario is everything about the buyer, and it takes about five to six minutes. Everything else in SBANT builds on it.

What to find out

- Profile: working professional, IT professional, businessman, NRI, HNI or middle class. What he does for a living and which company.
- Family: how many people, whether he has children, who lives in the house.
- Purpose: investment, or end use for himself and family.
- What got him to look at this property, and how long he has been looking.
- Whether he has checked Raghava online before, and how he came to know about it.
- Which other properties he is viewing.

Why each one matters

- Profile tells you what to show him and whether he has the money to spend. An HNI can be pitched bigger projects. A middle-class corporate buyer is paying from his own work.
- A new buyer takes longer: more time to learn the property, see it and see others. What he knows about Raghava tells you how much to explain.
- Whether he is viewing other properties tells you if he should be handled very seriously or slightly less seriously. If he is, you ask which ones.

The key question. Ask what got him here: "What got you to look at this property?" He will tell you his full story: why he started looking for a house and what he needs. Your job is to keep him talking and pick out the months he has been looking, the properties he has seen and how he found Raghava.

Why not ask size and money first. If you ask "what is your requirement in size and money", he only answers within that size and that money. The story question gets you the whole picture.

Then narrow down. Once the story is out, ask: "Could you be a little more specific about your requirements? Why are you buying this?" After that, the area in square feet, then budget (next section).

Build rapport on the way. Before you reach Need, have a few laughs with him and learn whether he has children. Varun's reminder: we are all just humans. If you are hesitant with Varun, you will be hesitant with a client.

B for Budget: ask after trust, and ask through his past properties

Do not ask budget cold. Ask after Scenario, when rapport exists, and frame it as helping him.

The objection raised in the session. A team member said management told them asking about budget is bad manners. Varun's answer: once Scenario is done, you have built a level of rapport and trust. At the start, a budget question sounds offensive. After time in the conversation, it sounds like help. If you are in a zone where you are actually helping, the guy gives you the budget.

Phrase it as help, not as "how much can you pay":

> "I want to know your budget just so that I can show you the right properties I have for you."

The indirect route (use this first)

1. Ask which other properties he has already viewed.
2. Ask what budget those were quoted at. You now know what the other properties are worth. You are subtly finding out.
3. Ask why he did not like the property, or why he did not move forward with it.

Whatever he says (budget too high, location not good, amenities, anything else), write it down. It is what you must "address very beautifully" when he comes for the site visit. You also learn what he does not want from Raghava.

If he has not viewed anything. Then you ask the budget directly, after trust is built.

Example of the payoff. In the session, a buyer volunteering an all-in number ("1.4 including all") was used as the picture of what rapport produces: the client states his own budget.

If he cannot give you a budget and has never looked at a property before, ask yourself whether he is the right kind of lead. That is the qualification call, covered in the Qualify or disqualify section.

A for Authority: find who decides, then get them to the site visit

Authority is who makes the decision. You cannot ask it directly, because in real estate no one gives a straight answer to "who is going to make the decision". You work it out from the Scenario.

Rules of thumb from the session

- A working IT professional in a single family is usually the one paying.
- Anyone above about 40 to 45 is usually paying himself.
- A middle-class corporate buyer has worked all his life to get here. His father usually does not have much money, so he is the payer.
- A young buyer: it is usually his father or grandfather making the payment, especially on larger properties.
- An HNI or an investor who is not working: find out what they do and who will make the decision for them.

This project is mostly end use. The ticket price is low and the project sells easily, so most buyers are not investing. They buy for personal use. Figure out who the end user is.

Varun listed the limited cases that can happen, all of which you identify in Scenario:

1. Investment.
2. A father giving the home to his son and wife, or to his daughter.
3. Someone gifting it.
4. A corporate professional buying on his own.

Confirm it on the call. Ask something like: "Are you buying the property yourself, or looking for someone else?" Use the family details you already collected in Scenario.

Then act on it. If someone else decides, invite them: "Why don't we book a site visit where you can bring your entire family?" The decision maker is then in the room. If he comes alone, he has to go back and tell his father, which takes time. With time, people lose urgency or buy something else.

Example from the floor. When Varun walked in as a visitor the day before, nobody asked who was buying the property. The team read him as a marketing person from how he looked and did not push on budget. Varun's point: you could have got more clarity by asking. On a call you cannot judge anyone by appearance, so you find out.

T for Timeline: how long he has looked and how fast he will decide

Timeline tells you how long he will take to decide, and therefore how much of your time he deserves. Sales is a game of priority.

Two things to learn

1. How long he has actually been looking for a house.
2. How long he will take to decide. That depends on how many options he has in front of him.

Get his feedback on the options he has seen. If he has met other options, ask what he thinks of them. After 15 to 20 minutes of talking, he will tell you exactly what he thinks. That tells you what to show him here and what not to show him.

Read the buyer

- Someone who has only just started looking will take a lot more of your time. Do not run an intense, long conversation with him. Get him to the site quickly, before anyone else can call him, while he is available to come.
- Ask yourself whether he is a serious buyer or doing time pass. Example from Varun: someone who will buy a property in 4 or 5 years may randomly have a free Sunday and decide to come and look.

Classify your leads. Sort them into potent and not potent. At the end of the day, even someone who has booked a meeting may not be a priority. Timeline tells you who your most priority leads are. Do not invest time in every lead in the same way.

Use urgency honestly. Very few units are left, so you can put out a package deal. For a buyer who plans to purchase in roughly 20 or 45 days, there are savings to point out. Varun also mentioned a scheme that was being launched. Confirm the current scheme details with management before you use them on a call.

Adjust the call to his answer. You are not just bringing him in and showing him everything. Fit what you show to what he has told you about his timeline.

Do not ask it twice. The timeline often comes out in Scenario or Authority. Do not repeat the question just to tick the letter.

N for Need: the emotional reason he is buying

Need is why he wants a house, and it is an emotional answer, not a practical one. You ask it last, once trust exists.

Why emotion. Varun's rent maths: at a rent of 30,000 per month, a year costs about 3,60,000. Over 10 years that is roughly 35 to 40 lakhs. Practically, renting makes more sense, so it does not make sense to invest in property on numbers alone. People buy for an emotional reason. It is a dream they have held for 20 years. It is crores, not a bike. It is a house you pass on to other people.

When to ask. After about 15 minutes of conversation, when friendliness and trust are established. Before that, have a few laughs with him and learn whether he has children and what his scenario is. Emotional connection only works with trust. A stranger will not open up to you.

How to ask: pattern breaking. You have been asking about what he wants. Switch the pattern with a soft, curious question:

> "I'm just a little curious. What does this house mean to you? Today you're purchasing a house."

The tone matters. The emotion that comes back is completely different from "Why are you buying this house?" Not "why do you want a house", not square foot, not a command or attitude. Ask politely and warmly.

Other questions Varun gave

- "What exactly do you look for in a house?" Give the reason: so you have better clarity to show him the properties.
- "What is a house, according to you, sir?"
- "Is this the first house in your life?"

The first house point. About 95 percent of buyers, especially for this property, are buying for the first time. First-time buyers are excited. The second and third time is not excitement. If it is not an investment and it is an end user, it is more or less a first purchase, or a father giving it to his son and wife.

Use it. Once he has told you his emotional reason, it is in your hands. Reflect it back to him in a very nice way: if this emotion is real, the decision follows from it. Because you have been walking and talking with him, it becomes less of a sales call and more of a conversation. The buyer buys from the person who helped him make a decision.

Qualify or disqualify: protect your time

Your job on the call is to qualify the lead or disqualify him. If he is able to sell himself to you, you are qualifying him. If he cannot, you are not obliged to book him.

The 24 meetings example. A team member had booked about 24 meetings. Varun's view: with the right time spent finding who is potential and who is not, the number would have been 14 or 15. The other eight or nine should have been disqualified. They were brought in only to show management that a meeting was booked. That should not be the case.

Time is money. Your time is directly proportional to money. Whether you close one or two sales a month or five to ten is in your hands, and it depends on the discovery.

The hidden cost. Bringing in a lead who is not potential uses his time, your time and the hour you did not spend calling. Many leads in the CRM have still not been dialed. Those need to be dialed.

Signals he may not be worth a meeting

- He cannot tell you a budget and has not looked at any property in the past.
- He is only viewing, with no sign of a decision window. Varun's "time pass" buyer.
- The Scenario, Authority and Timeline answers do not add up to a buyer who can decide.

What a good call looks like. Most calls end in three or four minutes at best. If you hold the conversation past 10 minutes, you have done a good job, because real estate runs on rapport. By the end you know:

- [ ] His profile and family, and what got him here.
- [ ] The properties he has seen, and why he did not buy them.
- [ ] His budget range, reached through those properties.
- [ ] Who makes the decision, and a plan to bring them to the visit.
- [ ] How long he has looked and how fast he can decide.
- [ ] His emotional reason for buying.
- [ ] What to show him, and what to avoid.

If you cannot tick these, do not book the visit yet.

Daily routine: record, review, sync

Quality comes from volume plus review, every day. Varun's loop for the team:

1. **Record every call.** Varun reviews them daily and checks SBANT was met. He then trains each person individually on what to do and what not to do.
2. **Review your own calls at home.** Listen to every call you had. Find exactly where you fell off. Make that a data point.
3. **Bring it to the morning sync.** Every day, each of the three callers brings their data points. The group decides how to change the conversation for the new leads of that day. This runs day after day.
4. **Keep up the volume.** Sales is a volume game. The only way to improve quality is more volume: more meetings booked and more analysis. Do that on a few structures and SOPs that Varun tracks, and you get better quickly.
5. **Move fast on leads.** Tap new leads within 30 minutes, and make sure leads are consumed within 48 hours. Delay costs urgency, or the buyer goes elsewhere.

What Varun tracks in the CRM. He asked for filters on four numbers: calls taken, calls connected, meetings booked and site visits.

Cheat sheet

Keep this open during calls. The questions are Varun's own phrasing, lightly shortened.

Letter	Ask	Listen for
S	"What got you to look at this property?" Then: "Could you be a little more specific about your requirements? Why are you buying this?"	Profile, family, how many months he has looked, how he found Raghava, other properties viewed
B	"Which other properties have you seen?" Then: "Why didn't you go ahead with that one?" Then, if needed: "I want to know your budget so I can show you the right properties for you."	The price of what he has seen, and what put him off: budget, location, amenities

Letter	Ask	Listen for
A	"Are you buying this yourself, or looking for someone else?" Then: "Why don't we book a site visit where you can bring your entire family?"	Who pays, who decides, whether the decision maker will come
T	"What do you think of the options you have seen?" and how long he has been looking	New looker or serious buyer, how many options, how soon he can decide
N	"I'm just a little curious. What does this house mean to you?" "Is this the first house in your life?"	The emotional reason, and whether this is a first purchase

Do

- Tap new leads within 30 minutes.
- Greet plainly and let him respond. Keep asking the questions.
- Take a few minutes for rapport before Budget and Need.
- Note why he rejected other properties, and address it at the site visit.
- Bring the decision maker to the visit.
- Record every call and review it the same day.

Do not

- Say "calling from Raghava" in your first line.
- Ask "is this a good time?"
- Open with size and budget.
- Ask a letter twice because the checklist says so.
- Book a meeting only to show management a booking.
- Ask "why do you want a house?" in a flat tone.

Practice drills for the morning sync

These drills are suggestions built from Varun's session, not part of what he said. Use them in the daily sync.

1. **Explain it back.** In Varun's session, the team was asked to explain SBANT in their own words and hesitated. Each person walks through S, B, A, T, N out loud, without notes, in under two minutes.
2. **Opener role play.** One person plays the lead, one the caller. The caller runs the five step opener and may not mention the company until asked.
3. **Rewrite the question.** Turn "Why do you want a house?" and "What is your budget?" into versions that follow the Need and Budget phrasing above.
4. **Find the fall-off.** Each person picks one recorded call from yesterday, names the letter they missed, and says what they would ask differently.
5. **Re-qualify the bookings.** Take last week's booked meetings. For each, say whether SBANT supports the booking. Count how many you would now disqualify.