



SELLING QUESTION PLAYBOOK: SICK Sensors

Who Is SICK?

Founded in 1946 in Waldkirch, Germany, SICK is one of the world's leading manufacturers of industrial sensors, machine safety systems, machine vision, and automatic identification technologies. Their products are built around a single idea: machines need intelligence, the ability to see, measure, detect, identify, and operate safely.

Product Offerings

- **Industrial Sensors:** photoelectric, inductive proximity, capacitive, ultrasonic, laser distance, fiber optic, contrast, color, fluid sensors, and encoders
- **Machine Safety:** safety light curtains, area scanners, safety laser scanners, safety controllers, safety relays, and safety switches
- **Machine Vision and Measurement**
- **Automatic Identification (Auto ID):** barcode readers, 2D code readers, RFID, vision-based readers, handheld scanners, and tunnel readers

Industries Served

- Packaging Machinery and OEM Machine Builders
- Material Handling and Conveyor Systems
- Automotive and Tier Suppliers
- Food and Beverage Processing
- Warehouse, Distribution, and Logistics
- Metal Fabrication, Plastics, and Pulp and Paper
- Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Manufacturing

Competitive Positioning

SICK Advantages

- ▶ Broad portfolio: sensing, safety, machine vision, and Auto ID under one vendor
- ▶ Industry-leading laser and measurement technologies for difficult detections
- ▶ Integrated safety controllers, not just safety devices
- ▶ Deep PLC, robotics, and industrial network integration (EtherNet/IP, PROFINET, IO-Link)
- ▶ Proven reliability in harsh industrial environments

Competitor Weaknesses

- ▶ Specialized in one or two pillars, requiring multiple vendors to cover what SICK handles alone
- ▶ Limited application support; reps sell the SKU, not the solution
- ▶ Compete on component cost rather than machine performance and long-term value
- ▶ Less depth across sensing, safety, vision, and identification as a combined offering

Sales Notes: Treat each of the four pillars as a separate conversation. Industrial Sensors is the most common entry point, but Machine Safety and Auto ID are frequently underserved in the same accounts.



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SPIN Selling Question Playbook

1. Situation Questions

- What sensing and detection technologies are currently running on your lines: photoelectric, inductive, ultrasonic, vision?
- Who do you currently buy your sensors from, and how are those relationships structured?
- How are you handling machine safety compliance today, and what does your barcode identification setup look like?

2. Problem Questions

- Where on your lines are you seeing the most reliability issues: false trips, missed reads, or inconsistent outputs?
- What does your machine safety compliance picture look like today, and where are the gaps that still need to be addressed?
- When a sensor spec is not quite right for a difficult application, how is your team resolving it?

3. Implication Questions

- When a sensor fails unexpectedly, how much downtime does it create, and what does that cost per hour?
- How does managing multiple sensor vendors affect your team's time and your ability to get technical support fast?
- If a barcode misread triggers a quality escape downstream, what does that cost you in rework, recalls, or chargebacks?

4. Need-Payoff Questions

- Would it help your team to have one sensor vendor covering sensing, safety, vision, and Auto ID across the plant?
- How valuable would it be to have application engineers behind the product who can spec sensors for difficult detections?
- What would it mean for your quality metrics if read failures at your identification points were eliminated?

Objection Handling

"Our machine builder already specified another brand."

Ask what else is running in the facility. Machine revisions, retrofits, and difficult detections are where SICK wins. The OEM spec on one machine rarely covers everything on the floor.

"We already use Keyence / Banner / ifm / Balluff."

This is not about switching everything. Ask where they are running into detection problems, safety upgrades, or traceability gaps. SICK's strength is the applications that push a standard sensor past its limits.

SICK seems expensive compared to what we are running now."

Ask what their current sensor has cost them in unplanned stops or repeat replacements over the last year. Detection reliability and sensor life change the comparison.

"We do not have any immediate sensor needs right now."

Ask if there is a capital project, a line rebuild, or a safety audit on the horizon. The best time to learn SICK's capability is before there is an urgent problem.