FIG. 01 · READING THE PUBLIC RECORD

NOTES, UPDATED JUL 18, 2026

How do I read a 10-K and earnings call without getting lost in the numbers?

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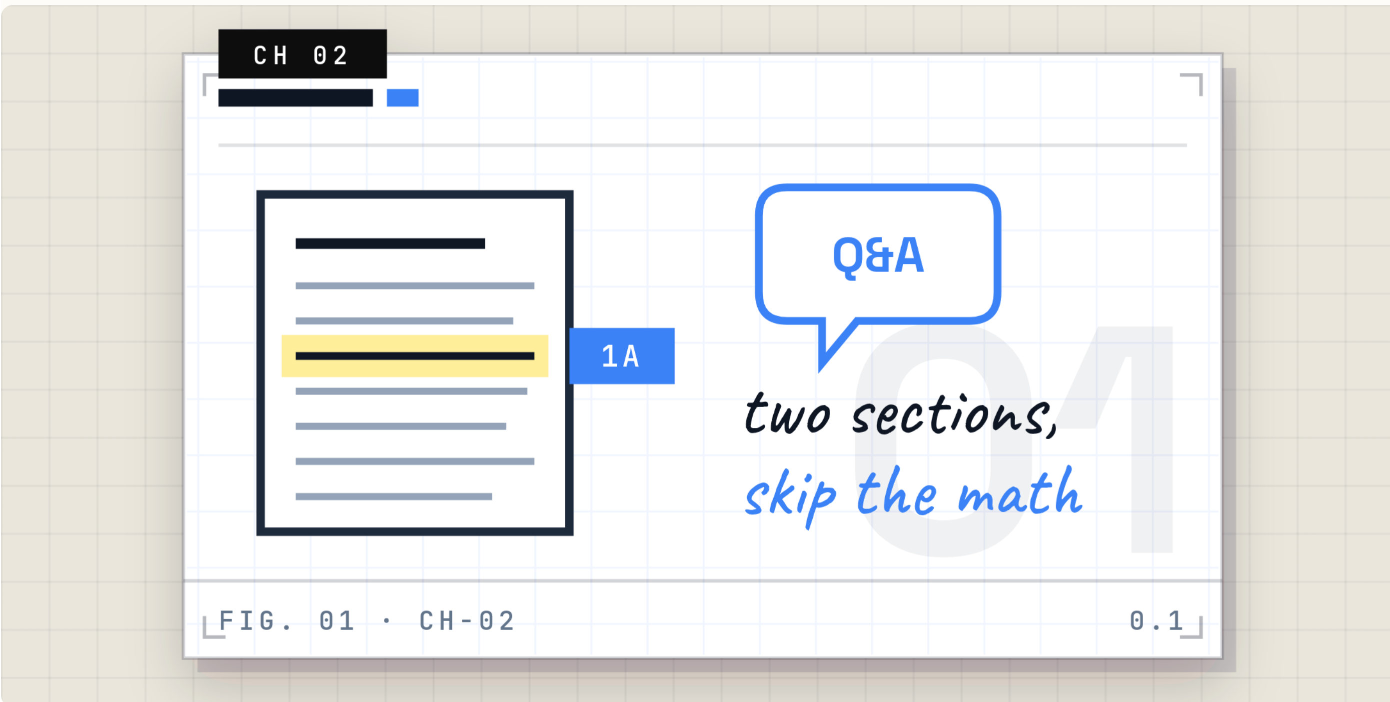

SHORT ANSWER

Scan the company's 10-K Item 1A for risks and the latest earnings call Q&A for executive priorities, rather than reading the entire financial document. Focus on customer acquisition challenges, product launches, and regional expansions to show hiring managers you already understand their immediate commercial pressures.

Staring at a hundred page financial filing can make you feel like you are failing a math test before your sales interview even starts. I will show you how to find the critical strategic signals in a 10-K and earnings call in under fifteen minutes. You do not need an accounting degree to speak the language of the executive team.

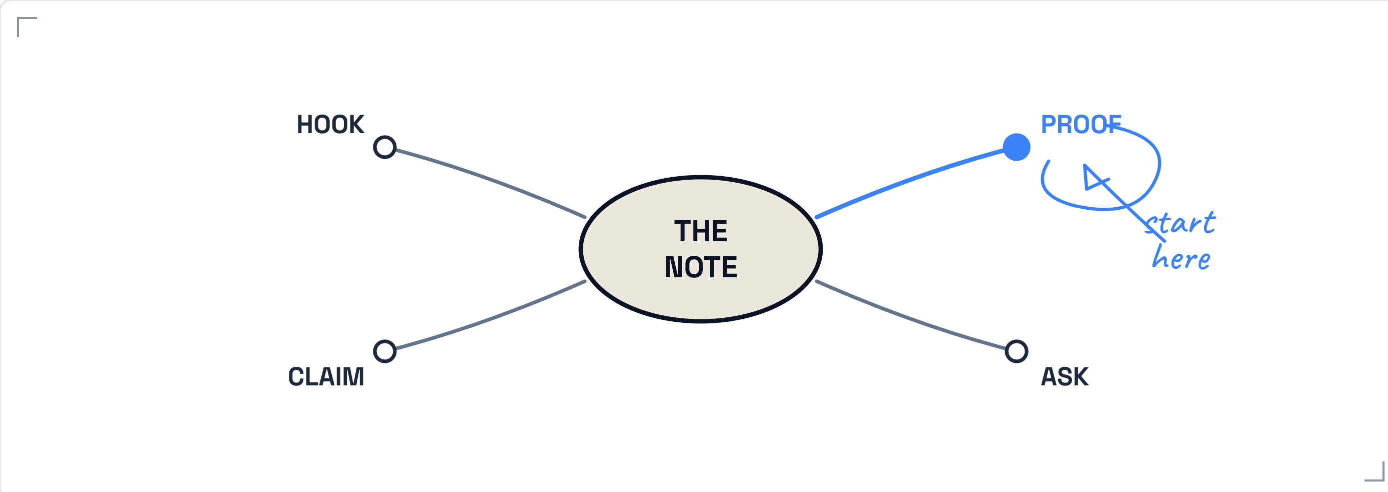

FIG. 02 One central idea with four short branches, an at a glance map of how a sheet is built. The proof branch is the one to start from.

§ 01

Where do I actually start looking in a massive 10-K?

Skip the balance sheet and head directly to Item 1A, titled Risk Factors, and Item 7, Management's Discussion and Analysis, to find the real story. These sections translate complex financial spreadsheets into plain English, explaining exactly what is holding the company back and where they plan to invest resources.

I always tell candidates to treat the Risk Factors section like a cheat sheet for their interview. If the 10-K notes that they are struggling to expand into the enterprise market, you can tailor your entire presentation around your enterprise sales experience.

You can literally say, I noticed in your latest annual filing that customer concentration is a growing risk, which is why my experience managing large accounts is highly relevant here.

§ 02

What is the difference between the 10-K and an earnings call?

The 10-K is a backward looking legal document detailing yearly performance, while the quarterly earnings call is a forward looking conversation about current strategy. Use the 10-K to understand historical stability and structural risks, but use the earnings call to capture the immediate initiatives the sales team is executing today.

Think of the 10-K as the foundation of the house and the earnings call as the weather forecast. The earnings call transcript is where executives must defend their choices to analysts.

I recommend reading the transcript of the Q&A section at the end of the call. That is where the scripted PR talk stops and the real, unpolished challenges slip out.

FIG. 03 My real prep note has three things done and one still open, with the company research highlighted, because it is the item that actually changes the conversation.

§ 03

How do I use this financial data in a sales interview?

Connect the strategic goals mentioned by the CEO directly to your daily sales activities instead of just reciting raw revenue numbers to the hiring manager. Frame your past achievements as solutions to the specific growth bottlenecks and market challenges the executive team highlighted on their latest call.

Most candidates drop a random revenue stat to sound smart, but managers see right through it. Instead, connect their strategic goals to your execution.

For example, if the CEO mentioned increasing average contract value by twenty percent, talk about how you upsell existing accounts. Show them you do not just close deals, you close the specific kinds of deals they need right now.

§ 04

Is it possible to overprepare with financial filings?

Yes, you can easily ruin an interview by sounding more like a financial analyst than a quota carrying sales professional who gets things done. Your job is to close deals and support customers, not to audit their books or offer unsolicited advice on their capital allocation strategies.

Here is the honest caveat where the easy promise breaks down. If you spend your interview debating their debt to equity ratio, you will look like a liability.

Keep your financial insights limited to the commercial side. Use the public record to understand their target market and customer pain, then pivot immediately back to your sales process.

WORKED EXAMPLE · 30/60/90 LINE

BEFORE	AFTER
I will study the product line and try to identify new accounts in the mid-market segment.	Based on the Q3 earnings call focus on mid-market churn, I will dedicate my first thirty days to auditing our current onboarding sequence for accounts under fifty thousand dollars to find where we are losing engagement.

What most people do	What actually works
Memorizing the total annual revenue and reciting it to show they did research.	Identifying the specific product line driving growth and pitching relevant experience.
Reading the entire hundred page PDF from start to finish and getting overwhelmed.	Scanning Item 1A for risks and the earnings call Q&A for immediate priorities.
Giving generic advice on how the company can improve its overall corporate strategy.	Connecting executive goals to daily sales tactics like discovery and account management.
Assuming the public record tells the complete truth about daily sales team morale.	Using the filings as a strategic baseline while asking smart questions to verify reality.
Ignoring the public record entirely and relying only on the job description.	Using a Baldwin Blueprint to translate public filings into a personalized 30/60/90 day plan.

The takeaways

01 Read Item 1A to find the company's hidden sales challenges.

02 Use the earnings call Q&A to hear unscripted executive priorities.

03 Connect corporate growth targets directly to your daily sales plan.

04 Avoid financial jargon and keep your focus on commercial execution.

Questions people ask

Where do I find these public filings for free?

Go to the investor relations section of the company website or search the SEC EDGAR database directly. Every public company must post their 10-K and quarterly 10-Q filings there. You can also find free earnings call transcripts on financial sites like Seeking Alpha or Motley Fool.

What if the company I am interviewing with is private?

Look at their closest public competitors instead to understand the broader market pressures. Private companies face the same industry headwinds, regulatory changes, and customer shifts as their public rivals. You can use public competitor filings to make highly educated guesses about the private company's strategic challenges.

Is this deep research really necessary for an SDR or AE role?

Yes, because it instantly separates you from ninety percent of candidates who only read the homepage. Showing that you understand executive priorities tells the hiring manager you can have peer level conversations with enterprise buyers. It proves you are a strategic consultant, not just a transactional order taker.

Will the hiring manager think I am just trying to kiss up by quoting their CEO?

They will if you just quote platitudes without connecting them to your actual sales skills. Avoid saying things like I loved the CEO's vision for innovation. Instead, focus on operational realities, such as how you can help them hit the expansion targets they promised to Wall Street.

SOURCES

- SEC EDGAR Company Search
- Seeking Alpha Transcripts

BUILD SHEET

This is the plan a Blueprint drafts for your exact role.

Paste in a real job posting and your resume. Get a tailored 12 page Blueprint in minutes. Your first draft is free.

Start your free Blueprint

Free, no card. No account needed to draft.

Or read a real finished Blueprint first. Free, no signup.

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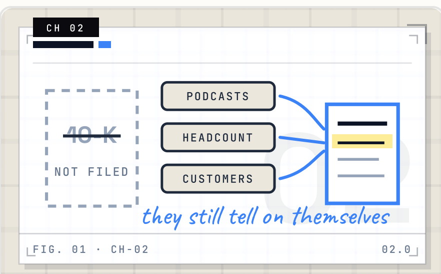

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