

The Most Important Questions a Salesperson can Ask

By Bill Brooks

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Sales can be a confusing thing. Everyone seems to have a different perspective or their own set of secrets to sales success. The truth is that selling really is very simple. But, as you know, simple isn't always easy.

It's simple to drive in a city. But if you've tried to do it at rush hour you know that's not necessarily so easy.

Given this confusion, let's boil the whole issue down to a few basic, fundamental concepts. Here they are:

- Sales is a function of asking yourself one simple question.
- Successful selling is a function of asking your prospect another powerful question.
- Completing the sale is a function of asking the single most powerful question of all.

What does that mean? Simply this: there are 3 essential ingredients in any sale - you, your prospect and the process you use to make the sale. In addition, successful selling is a function of asking the most powerful questions you can address to each of those entities. Let's look at each in order:

- The most essential question to ask yourself is this: Why would this prospect be interested in buying my product or service? Without the right answer to this penetration question you will be flying in the dark. You need to be absolutely, 100% sure that you are in front of qualified prospects, at the right time, with the right message and in the right format. Without a crisp, precise answer to that question you could likely be presenting your wares to the wrong audience or, just as bad, to the right audience incorrectly.

- The single, most dynamic and powerful question to ask your prospect is this: What is the most critical issue you'd like to resolve about _____? This question really cuts to the core of the issue. It allows your prospect (and you) to get to the heart of their problem, need, agenda or irritation. This question allows you to build to follow-up on additional questions based strictly on their response. Questions like:

"Why do you say that?"

or

"What else causes you concern"

or

"If that were solved, how would it make your job/life easier?"

There is a unique and dynamic relationship between three very essential elements that occur in any sale. These often overlooked components are tension, resistance and objections. Each has its own unique role to play and needs to be identified and dealt with in the context of a sale.

Let's take a look at the three:

- Tension - The level of dynamic, kinetic aggressive that exists between the salesperson and prospect in any sales interaction.
- Resistance - The degree of negativity that either buyer or seller feels as related to the interaction and ultimate buying decision.
- Objection - The tools used by the prospect to register the degree to which the tension and/or resistance have been effectively reduced to allow a clear path to a buying decision.

The unique relationship between these three issues leads to a more penetrating, and in many ways, most essential question. Asking the prospect to buy. Without that you have nothing. Based upon the level of tension, resistance and objection, as a sales professional, you need to know precisely when and how to ask the prospect to buy. The answer to the first question is easy:

- Ask the prospect to buy when you're sure they won't turn you down!

The answer to the second is not so easy. This is, perhaps, the greatest mystique that has surrounded sales for years - how do you ask someone to buy? I'll suggest to you that the simple and easiest way is to determine when they're ready and ask the following question:

- "Are you ready to get started?"

If you are hesitant to do that, I'll suggest that you have either failed to determine the level of tension, resistance or objection or have failed to ask the correct question or simply don't know when to ask it!

Three questions and three emotional states. Learn then and your sales career will flourish. Fail to and it will flounder. The choice is easy. Doing something about it is a little more challenging.

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