

Are Your Questions Engaging or Frustrating Your Clients

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As inside sales representatives, the way we close business is by asking questions. Often, we ask the same questions of each customer. Sometimes, these questions move people to make decisions, but at other times, they don't, leading us to wonder "what happened?" Selling over the phone should not be a crashout. By asking the right questions, we can move people down the funnel.

One way of looking at questions is to categorize them as:

- **Fact**
- **Perspective**
- **Possibility**
- **Feeling**

Fact questions reveal the situation. They establish the background or give context to the interaction. Often, they begin with who, what when, and where. If this is the first conversation, we have to begin with these questions to find out basic information. However, these should not be the only kinds of questions we ask. If they are, prospects will begin to feel interrogated. To help people make a decision, we need to ask a variety of questions. We can ask perspective, possibility and feeling questions.

Perspective questions are those that ask the individual to analyze and evaluate, see the big picture or look at the cause and effect of a particular event. By doing so, both you and the prospect can better determine what the real needs are and focus on the solution. Some examples of perspective questions would be "What effect did Hurricane Katrina have on your business and your industry as a whole?" or "Why do you think there are so many manufacturing problems?"

Another kind of question is **possibility**. These questions help individuals view their world differently by adding or eliminating constraints or by testing a hy-

pothesis. They are useful to you as an inside sales rep because once the individual sees how a situation would look if certain issues were solved, he or she is typically very interested in proceeding. Examples of possibility type questions would be: "If the product could be warehoused offshore, how would that affect the shortage caused by the devastation? Or "Additionally, if the products were warehoused offshore, what might be the potential savings to your organization?"

The final kind of question we should be asking is **feeling**. If asked too soon, they are "off-putting." Feeling questions explore the personal impact of a situation on the prospect or his company. They are questions such as, "How is this situation impacting your workload?" Or "What pressure is the situation having on you." These questions are useful once a relationship has been established because they help you to be seen as a business advisor, more so than a vendor.

Questions are critical to any inside sale person's success. Poor investigation skills make sellers less motivated to move forward. Top sales performers remember to ask thought-provoking questions. They plan out what they might say and take the time to learn as much as they can about the prospect before placing the call. They ask a variety of questions.

Question: *We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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