

FOUR SALES QUESTIONS THAT HAVE TO BE ANSWERED

According to research at Tom Reilly Training, 86% of salespeople are asking the wrong questions. Since asking questions guides the sales conversation, 86% of salespeople are leading the sale down the wrong path.

Many salespeople will lead with self-serving questions or questions that don't help them understand the customer. They will ask a question already knowing the answer, or they will answer their own question right after they ask it. These types of questions are meaningless and turn off the customer.

In Marilee Goldberg's, *The Art of The Question*, she mentions that a question asked at the right time, to the right person, and in the right way can spark creativity. Goldberg has the right idea. Every question asked should serve a purpose. The four questions listed below will help you understand the customer's business, expectations, and processes.

How's business? Whether their answer is great, good, okay, or horrible, this question is very significant. The answer to this question will indicate the motivation level of the customer. You want things to be good, but not too good. You also want things to be bad, but not too bad. In this case, "good" and "could be better" are the best answers. When the customer is in limbo they are willing to try new things. Don't be alarmed if their business is great; it means they have money to spend.

How will this decision be made? The answer to this question is often misinterpreted by the salesperson. This information is important because it identifies the key decision-makers. Too often a customer will tell you they are the ultimate decision-maker when they are not. A great follow-up question is, "Who is impacted by this decision?" Any additional names that they mention are part of the process. It is up to you to determine how significant their role will be. Whoever is impacted by the decision is part of the process.

What are your expectations? Expectation is the most significant predictor of customer satisfaction. By asking the question, you know the benchmark. By understanding their expectations, you have the opportunity to exceed them. This will also give you an opportunity to manage any unrealistic expectations they might have.

Where do you need help? In the same way a doctor asks where it hurts, you need to know your customer's pain. The customer's pain level will motivate them to change. If this question is asked at the right time, to the right customer, it can be powerful. What's more, if your value proposition matches their need for help, a sale is probable.

Asking the right questions will cause the customer to think differently about their business. The right questions create dialogue between you and the customer. Asking the right questions can also build rapport, create distance between you and the competitive solution, and surface the customer's needs. A thorough customer needs analysis begins with these basic questions to understand the customer's expectations, their process, and their needs.

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