

The One True Sales Question

“All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know.”
Ernest Hemingway

For Ernest Hemingway, the Holy Grail was that one true sentence. He spent his life searching for it and wrote plenty of them. For salespeople, the Holy Grail is that one true question. This question unlocks the buyer’s mind and lays open the promise of a strong business relationship. It’s a simple question, fifteen words in all. It’s a question that is pregnant with possibilities.

“What would you like to be able to do tomorrow that you cannot do today?”

This is a powerful question. It’s optimistic and open-ended. In Value-Added Selling, we call this a projective question. It transports the buyer into an ideal situation where he or she can have any solution that the heart desires—realistic or not. It spotlights the gap between the buyer’s needs and how he or she is attempting to meet these needs. This brings dissatisfaction with the status quo to a boiling point and dissatisfaction is a powerful motivator.

This is a liberating question. It unshackles the buyer from low expectations. You are asking him or her to dream about possibilities. Too many customers are burdened with low expectations because of their experiences with competitive alternatives. These customers do not know that it’s okay to dream of a better solution. A better solution doesn’t have to be the impossible dream.

This is a preemptive question. It preempts price resistance because you are transporting the buyer to the future. Buyers who make long-term decisions worry less about price. When you guide the conversation down a path that leads to the future, it gives you more opportunities to add value and discuss this value with the buyer. You have shifted the focus from price to value. Value is the outcome of your total customer experience vis-à-vis the customer’s needs.

Your prescription is to ask one true question. Ask the truest question you know. Then, listen.

Author byline: Tom Reilly is a professional speaker and author of twelve books. Tom is literally the guy who wrote the book on *Value-Added Selling* (McGraw-Hill, 2010), the book that started the value selling revolution. Check out Tom Reilly’s new book, *The Humility Paradox*. You may read more about this at AMAZON or visit us online at www.TomReillyTraining.com. Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/tomreillyVAS> Watch us on You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zvb4nw6_I4&feature=share