



The Leadership Institute

Lighting the Way

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS WITH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

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The Leadership Institute

Lighting the Way

"Inspiring Dreams, Realizing Potential"

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

WELCOME

OVERVIEW

1. WELCOME

2. OVERVIEW

Uncovering a client's needs is one of the single most important ingredients in the sales process. It does not matter what you have to offer, how enticing your rates are, how dramatic the latest readership survey is or how well you know your closing techniques. You cannot successfully manage the sales process nor can you relate how your client will benefit from your product without first understanding their need.

Today's Topics Include:

- Developing the skill of probing to uncover the client's need.
- Discussion of the types of questions to be used.
- How to prepare the questioning portion of the sales call so we can fully understand the client's business situation.

For the sake of today's discussion, let's use the word problem in place of the word need.

True or False?

The bigger the problem, the more anxious we are to find a solution.

True.



IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

GETTING
BEYOND
WHAT “I”
WANT

TLC
THINK
LIKE A
CUSTOMER



3. GETTING BEYOND WHAT “I” WANT

As salespeople, we all know what YOU want—you want the sale and you want it now. You may also want to convince the customer of how exciting and important your product is and how it can change their lives forever.

But, you need to move past what you want in order to truly get what *you* want!

You must always TLC—Think Like a Customer!

- *People don’t believe they have a need just because you tell them they have one.*
- *Try not to rush the conversation so you can get to the “good stuff.”*
- *Patience, patience, patience.*
- *Know how much time you have to spend.*

Look at the sales process as an emotional one. It doesn’t matter what they’re buying, when someone chooses to make a purchase, it is because emotionally, they have decided that it fills a need they have.

“Every sale is an emotional one.” - Tom Hopkins

Through the interview process, you are positioning yourself as a problem solver! Information provided gives you insight in the customer’s “Hot Buttons,” and allows you to answer the customer’s ultimate question, “What’s In It For Me?” (WIIFM)

Be certain to sign up for TLI’s “Making Recommendations using Features, Benefits & Value” to turn the findings from your questioning into a great recommendation!

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

LIKE A DOCTOR,
YOUR CUSTOMER IS
LOOKING FOR
YOUR EXPERTISE

COMMON PROBLEMS



Imagine yourself a doctor performing an examination; you're questioning the client, aka the patient, to locate the problems or symptoms. By isolating the symptoms, you can identify the patient's need(s). When the patient walks in and says, "Give me medicine, I'm sick..." as a doctor, you immediately launch into examination mode. You don't give the patient medication without questioning him or her first. In the advertising sales scenario—you are the doctor and you cannot make a recommendation until you first identify your client's business needs.

Think of your sales call as the exact same scenario as the patient- doctor relationship.

- You probe or ask questions at any point in the sales process when you want to gain more information about the customer's circumstances. Many times, you will ask questions to clarify what you believe the customer is saying. The amount and type of questions you ask will be determined by the complexity of the customer's situation.
- It allows us to gain insight into what really matters to our client, allowing us to build packages specific to their needs.
- It gets them talking about their favorite subject—Their Business!
- It's essential to any type of relationship-based selling.
- People are more apt to buy when they are talking, and are less apt to buy when you are talking.
- Don't forget to listen to what the person is saying.
- Questioning is CRITICAL in understanding what the client really needs.



Sign up for "Communicating through Effective Listening," to sharpen your listening skills!

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

HOW DO WE
UNCOVER
THESE
PROBLEMS?

QUESTIONS
WILL
UNCOVER THE
ANSWERS
YOU NEED



Don't interrogate the client—interview them.

Common Business Problems

Just for a moment, let's put the cart before the horse and figure out some of the problems a client might encounter during the course of doing business. In developing the skill of probing, it is important to be prepared for all sorts of answers, but generally, most business problems can be boiled down into a handful of categories.

Some of the most common problems include:

- *Poor name recognition*
- *Competition*
- *Image (good, bad, need a change?)*
- *Target a new demo or market*
- *Reduce inventory*
- *More traffic (not the same as more business)*
- *Customer awareness*

It is important to help the client understand and identify one or more of these problems that needs correcting in his own business.

3. UNCOVERING PROBLEMS

So how do we uncover these problems? By asking **QUESTIONS**, of course! The **QUESTION** is the answer!

Most of the questions we'll ask will fall into 4 main categories:

- *General Business*
- *Advertising*
- *Competition*
- *Budget*

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

QUESTION IN 4 CATEGORIES:

GENERAL BUSINESS

COMPETITION



Questions in these 4 areas will not only help you with uncovering the client's needs, it will also help with the following:

- *Building rapport*
- *Understanding the client's short and long-term goals*
- *Help you design an effective advertising campaign*
- *Locate an appropriate budget*
- *Setting appropriate expectations*

Let's examine some questions that steer the conversation in the right direction (remember, the right direction is to get the customer talking about his or her business; these questions are suggestions only—you need to be prepared with a variety of questions in case the customer is not overly talkative.)

1. General Business

- Tell me about your P&S.
- What do you sell the most and what is your most profitable item(s)?
- What is your average sale?
- How often does that occur?
- Margin on the sale?
- Where do your customers come from?
- Who are your customer(s)?
- What keeps you up at night about your business?



2. Competition

- Who is your competition?
- What sets you apart and makes you unique?
- How much of the market are you currently capturing?

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

QUESTION IN 4
CATEGORIES:

ADVERTISING

BUDGET



3. **Advertising** (*You may already be familiar with some of their advertising through your initial prospecting.*)
 - How are you currently letting people know you're the best in the area?
 - What types of print media are you currently using?
 - What size(s) are your current ads and are they in full color?
 - What's the frequency of your advertising?
 - How long is your advertising scheduled to run?
 - What do you like about your advertising? What would you change if you could?

4. **Budget**
 - Do you have a budget you would like to work within?
 - What would you comfortable investing on a weekly/ monthly basis to let people know you are the best _____ in the area?

Many of the answers to the questions above will actually provide you with a great deal of insight into the customer's business—without the customer specifically detailing the problem or issue.

When you gather and verify facts, you can uncover problems that are present in the customer's business, and, by uncovering these problems, you can match the features and benefits of your products to help solve those problems!

Additionally, as you question the customer's specific situation, you can also assess how the customer feels about the situation. While you may believe a situation to be extremely important to correct, your customer may not view it as such. Finally, thorough questioning will help you not only to understand what is important to your customer, but *why* it is important.

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

CONCLUDE
THE EXAM

THE BIGGER
THE NEED,
THE MORE
EAGERLY
THEY WILL
SEEK A
SOLUTION!



5. CONCLUDE THE EXAMINATION

As you uncover the customer's needs, you should confirm that the customer wants to do something about the situation. Through your questioning, you should uncover at least one or two problems.

From here, you need to review the situation and implicate.

For example: *"So John, it sounds like your competition is a big problem for you right now; let me ask you one last question on that subject—What do you think will happen if you don't do something about it?"*

Chances are, John will respond with:

"Well, I don't know, I suppose I'll continue to lose money and may be forced to go out of business."

Your response:

"I'm confident we can help you and keep that from happening."

Remember, the bigger the problem, the more eager they will be to find a solution—regardless of budget, objections, etc...



IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

SUMMARY

6. SUMMARY

Remember the following key points when questioning a potential or existing customer:

- *Your questions should focus on uncovering the customer's needs*
- *Like a doctor, you cannot make an effective recommendation until you question thoroughly.*
- *Focus on developing questions on 4 areas: General Business, Competition, Advertising, and Budget.*
- *Don't interrogate—interview.*
- *Once you are satisfied you understand the customer's situation, recap what you believe to be the customer's greatest need. Remind or ask the question to answer what will happen if the need isn't solved. (Help build the need in their mind.)*
- *Utilize the attached suggested question list to fully develop your questioning skills.*

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION



QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

On behalf of The Leadership Institute, thank you for attending this class. We believe that the continued growth of the free paper industry begins with a well-trained, energized sales force.

For more information on TLI's course offerings, check out the afcpconference.org website.

*"I know the price of success: dedication, hard work and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen."
—Frank Lloyd Wright*

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

GENERAL BUSINESS

COMPETITION



Additional Suggestions for Questioning

General Business

1. What led you to the _____ business?
2. What are your goals for the next quarter? 6 months? Year?
3. What do you see as your greatest strengths as a company?
4. Tell me about your products & services?
5. What are the most profitable products/ services?
6. What is your average sale?
7. How often does that occur?
8. Who is your customer?
9. How far do your customers travel to shop here?
10. What is a typical customer worth to you?
11. Is there a group of customers you have trouble reaching?
12. If I asked your current customers why they shop here, what would they tell me?

Competition

1. Who is your competition?
2. What sets you apart and makes you unique?
3. How much of the market are you currently getting?
4. Who are your competitors? Local firms? National chains?
5. How has the competition affected the market?
6. What have you done differently to meet your competition?
7. Are there areas of your business where you face more or less competition?
8. If I asked you why I should deal with you rather than your competition, what would you tell me?
9. How is the market changing?
10. What new challenges do you see in the future?
11. If you had a magic wand that could change anything about your business, what would it be?

IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING NEEDS THROUGH EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

ADVERTISING



Advertising

1. How are you currently letting people know you're the best _____ in the area?
2. What types of print media are you currently using?
3. Size, color offer?
4. How often (frequency)?
5. For how long?
6. What do you like about your current advertising?
7. What would you change about your current advertising?
8. What keeps you up at night regarding your business (also falls under General Business Category as well.)

