

Magic Words That Increase Your Sales *The Questions Are the Answers!*

Sales techniques have changed drastically during even the last five years. The old selling style went something like this: The salesperson talks, the customer listens, the salesperson "makes the pitch," and the customer does or doesn't buy. In the old style, the salesperson tries to *win* or *sell* to the customer. However, this philosophy doesn't

work as well with the business owners and buyers of today. Now selling isn't "selling" — it's fulfilling the needs and wants of the customer and finding solutions to their problems. And the way to find out a prospect's needs and wants is to ask questions.

The new philosophy for salespeople is "prospect interaction." People are more willing to listen to you when they feel they can trust you and feel you understand them. People also are more likely to respond to questions you ask them than to unsolicited information you give them. The perception is that if you, the salesperson, say it, the prospect doubts it. If the prospect says it, it's true.

So how does a salesperson involve the prospect in the selling process? Your approach should prepare people to listen to you, to physically and psychologically unfold their arms! With this objective in mind, the main reason for a salesperson to make a statement is to prepare the way for a question. It is useful to follow every statement you make with a question, perpetuating the prospect's involvement.

Ron Willingham's popular book *Integrity Selling* offers some useful tips when approaching a prospective customer:

- Tune the world out and your prospect in
- Put the prospect at ease and make him or her feel important
- Get a prospect to talk about himself or herself
- Hold eye contact and listen to how your prospect feels

Willingham also has important guidelines to use when speaking to a prospect:

- Ask open ended, direct questions that draw out wants or needs
- Listen to and paraphrase all points — write them down
- Identify dominant wants or needs — get the prospect's agreement
- Assure the prospect that you want to help him or her select the right product or service

It's important to remember that people buy a product or service because of what it

will do for them or because of how it will make them look to others. People don't buy anything because you want them to or because of what it is. With that in mind, there is a set of questions about your product or service that will have to be answered:

- What benefits does the prospect receive?
- What needs and wants does it meet?
- What problems does it solve?
- How will the product or service make the prospect look and feel?
- What is the sizzle in your product or service?

Questions That Help Prospects Make Decisions

1 Alternate Choice

Give a choice of doing something one way or another, never of doing or not doing.

2 Active Question

This is a question that the prospect might ask if he or she bought your product or service. It requires a thinking response, not a "yes" or "no." For example, a salesperson could ask, "Where would you put your sofa? What would you put in this cabinet, groceries or kitchen china?"

3 Assumptive Tie-Down

Make an assumptive statement, then tie it down. This method focuses on the benefits for which the prospect is looking. If you don't understand the buyer's wants or need at this point, your assumptive tie-down will flush them out. Tie-downs include the following: "Isn't it?" "Won't you?" "Don't you?" For example, a book salesperson might ask, "Your primary interest is having resource information at home to help Suzy with her homework, isn't it?"

4 Comparative Question

This eliminates a possible objection to the sale by focusing your prospect's attention on a benefit. Always tie down your statement by making it a question. For example, a realtor could ask, "Isn't it true that the operational cost is more important than the original investment?"

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5 Multiple Conclusion Question

This is designed to surround a possible objection with benefits and bury an objection. For example, an electronics salesperson might say, "I know that you want greater accuracy [benefit]. So isn't it true that the size of the equipment [possible objection] is less important than your confidence in the information you receive [benefit repeated]?"

6 Challenge Question

This hits a major problem right on the head and eliminates it, or makes the prospect tell you if there is a hidden objection. The structure is "Why is [problem] more important than [benefits]?" For example, "Why is the fact that you have never owned one of our trucks

more important than the additional profits I can prove our trucks will make for you?"

7 The Feedback Question

This is designed for an aggressive answer or question. It allows you to reflect an objection back to a prospect. This makes the prospect try to explain to you why he or she has an objection. Very often prospects talk themselves out of their objections. For example, if the prospect says your product costs too much, respond by asking "It costs too much?" This tactic forces the prospect to own up to the validity of the comment.

8 The Decisional Question

This is designed to force a decision. Its

structure is "Am I right to assume that if [sales person action], you will [prospect action]?" For example, a speaker or trainer could ask, "Am I right in assuming that if I do my keynote speech for a lower fee, you will purchase my videotape for each meeting attendee at the 45% bulk discount?"

Using these philosophies and words will help make selling meaningful, customer-oriented, and fun.

Article by Dr. Dilip Abayasekara, Speaker Services Unlimited, (302) 834-2385. Dilip will be giving the Chamberworks presentation "Speaking Off-the-Cuff" on January 27, 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. See page 7 to register.