**Effective Sales Questioning**

There is no way we can make a good recommendation unless we understand the customer’s needs and there is no way we can understand the customer’s needs without strong questioning. The ability to question in an engaging and friendly way is an essential part of any sales person’s toolkit.

This module will help you to-

* Use a range of questions to uncover customer needs
* Structure your questioning
* Use Summarising as a way of keeping track

# Mix it up

It is often said that the best questions to use in sales are ”open” questions that demand more than a “yes” or “no” answer. It’s true that these can get you an awful lot of information, but a closed question can be just as useful in fine tuning your information to a single point. The truth is that the key skill is knowing when to ask the questions.

Open questions open the conversation up and encourage the customer to discuss their situation so they at the top of the funnel.

*“What can you tell me about your usage?”*

We can then narrow down to specifics as we go down the funnel.

*“How specifically”*

To our final summarising question.

*“So you need something with…and…and…have I captured everything?*

It is useful to employ a range of questions and they will focus on three key areas-

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Goal-Where you want to get to** | **History-What you had before** | **Lifestyle-How you live** |
| Useful Questions | What would you like to be able to do?  What made you decide to buy one of these?  What do you want from your new…? | What did you like about your old one?  How much have you used in the past?  What made you decide to replace it? | Can you talk me through your typical day?  What hobbies do you have?  How many of you will be using this? |

**Tactful questioning**

Effective questioning requires tact and the questions need to be relevant to the purchaser, but really useful information could be found in any of the Goal, History, Lifestyle areas to help uncover useful needs and so strengthen your recommendation.

**Take notes**

Great questioning will generate a wealth of detail which you will want to capture and build on so do take notes and try to capture the customer’s language as this will make any summary even more engaging.

**Show you care**

We show we value and appreciate the customer through showing an interest in them and their needs. Questioning is the most obvious way to demonstrate our interest in their needs.

**Useful Questions**

Below is a list of useful questions. As you will see they fall into three clear areas- **Goal, History and Lifestyle**. What questions might you add?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Goal** | **History** | **Lifestyle** |
| What are you looking to do?  What is your reason for changing?  What would you love to be able to do?  What is the most important thing for you?  What are your top three reasons for buying? | What have you used in the past?  What did you like about your old..?  What really annoyed you about you old...?  How have you used it up to now?  If you could have changed one thing about your old... what would it be? | How will you be using your...  Can you tell me a little about your lifestyle?  Can you talk me through how you might use this during a typical day?  What hobbies do you have time for? |

Of course you’ll remember to start with the broad open questions and work down to the specifics with your metaphorical funnel!

**Show you were listening**

As we ask the questions we are listening acutely for the clues. What is the customer telling us that will really help us to build a strong recommendation? It could be the smallest detail that becomes the hottest button!

Here are a few top tips to demonstrate listening

* Take notes and let the customer know you’re doing it.
* *Just bear with me while I make a note of that...*
* Check the details
* *What do you mean by heavy usage?*
* Encourage with verbal nods etc.
* *That’s great..uh huhh...mmm..*
* Build on previous questions
* *And ease of use is really important to you in your new one?*
* Use their language in your questions
* *So I should avoid any “fancy gizmos”?*

...and the killer

**The summarising question**

This one has everything. We are showing we were interested, we are showing we listened and we are even progressing the sale.

*“Let me check that I have got this right. You’re looking for a ... that does... and has a powerful...but is still simple to use. Have I missed anything there?*

**Key Learnings**

* Have a funnel in mind.
* Use a wide variety of questions to keep you fresh.
* Ask questions that cover goal, history and Lifestyle.
* Explore customer emotions-What do they love, what do they hate?
* Demonstrate verbally just how hard you are listening.
* Your penultimate question is likely to be a summarising one.
* Your final question will be a close!

This has kindly been supplied by Rob Wilkinson

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